

Stone and Douglas Reunite for Shakespearean Sequel Well Worth the Wait

Written by Film Review by Kam Williams



Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps

Michael Douglas won an Academy Award in 1988 for his captivating performance as Gordon Gekko, the ruthless corporate raider-turned-cultural icon best known for contributing the avaricious credo “Greed is good!” to the popular lexicon of the Me Generation. Although a couple decades have elapsed in the interim, he and director Oliver Stone have thoroughly refreshed the Wall Street franchise with this timely sequel designed as much with the concerns of today’s troubled Ninja Generation (“No Income, No Jobs or Assets”) in mind as those of us aging Baby Boomers. But where Gordon was a fairly contemptible character in the original, this go-round he operates as more of an empathetic antihero in search of deliverance.

The movie unfolds in flashback fashion, with narrator Gekko reflecting upon his parole in 2002 after serving an eight-year sentence for insider trading. This amusing sequence effectively establishes how the disgraced, white collar criminal had not merely fallen from grace but no longer had a finger on the pulse.

For among the personal effects returned to him upon his release is a cumbersome, obsolete cell phone thick as a brick. And when he subsequently exits the prison a little later that day, the stretch limo idling outside the gates is not waiting for him but for a flamboyant gangsta’ rapper. How the mighty have fallen!

Fast-forward to the present, and we find Gordon on a promotional tour for “Is Greed Good?” his new best seller forecasting doom for the deregulated financial services industry, because of its capitulation to a culture of corruption. “The mother of all evil is speculation,” the rehabilitated crook announces during a lecture at Fordham University, adding, “like cancer, it’s a disease, and we have to fight back.” That line actually proves to be a goose bump-inducing distraction,

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given Michael Douglas' well-publicized, real-life battle with a malignant throat tumor.

Sitting in the audience is Jake Moore (Shia LaBeouf), an ambitious trader at ill-fated Keller Zabel, a thinly-veiled version of the beleaguered Bear Stearns brokerage house. He just happens to be the boyfriend of Winnie Gekko (Carey Milligan), an anti-capitalist tree hugger who still blames her father for her only sibling's suicide.

After the speech, Jake approaches Winnie's old man not for investment tips but to inform him of their impending engagement. Gordon counters by asking his future son-in-law to help orchestrate a reconciliation with his long-estranged daughter. Ever the dealmaker, Gekko also talks a little shop, suggesting a formula to figure out exactly who had gutted Keller Zabel.

All evidence conveniently points to competing hedge fund manager Bretton James (Josh Brolin), a readily-contemptible uber-villain whose maniacal manipulation of the market pushed Jake's late mentor (Frank Langella) to leap in front of a subway train. Not to worry, Jake has found a suitable replacement, provided Winnie is kept unaware of his making an unholy alliance with the father she sees as the devil incarnate.

What ensues is a fictionalized account of the 2008 stock market crash, revisited as an intimate tale of Shakespearean proportions told from the diverging perspectives of the pivotal players, and touching on a host of universal themes ranging from love and betrayal to revenge and redemption. Crime might not pay, but greed is still good!

Excellent (4 stars)

Rated PG-13 for brief profanity and mature themes.

Running time: 127 Minutes

Studio: 20th Century Fox

To see a trailer for Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ7bkoMYD80>