

Sunday Driver

A FI Review

By: Adam Dombrow

FI is the perfect example of a movie that doesn't belong in the Best Picture category. Maybe I'm too harsh a critic for saying that, but I am dying on the hill that there are far too many nominees year after year. That isn't to say *FI* is a bad movie by any stretch of the imagination—quite the contrary actually: *FI* is a very good movie, but it's a very safe, very formulaic sports drama movie, and the Academy *loves* those.

The acting in *FI* is all top notch. You will be hard pressed to ever hear me say any unkind words about Brad Pitt. The guy is a top guy for a reason: he rarely—if ever—misses. I don't care if you are trying to make Pitt the biggest asshole character on Earth, you *still* somehow end up rooting for him in the end! Pitt is great here as “could have been but never was” driver Sonny Hayes. The movie does a great job *showing* us that Hayes has been through the ringer, and despite it *telling* us that Hayes is an asshole, the way Pitt plays him makes him instantly likeable. Pitt is great in the kind of “seen some things, learned from them” teachable mentor type role, and he proves it here again. Javier Bardem is also generally solid as an actor, and although he doesn't have very much screen time here, he plays Rubén Cervantes just right, providing us with another character we want to root for. The two real stand-outs in *FI* are Kerry Condon and Damson Idris. Condon's Kate McKenna provides us with the perfect compliment to Hayes: she's a bad ass female fighting for her life in a male dominated sport. Condon plays McKenna with just the right balance between attitude and compassion—she is stern and wants to win, but she truly cares about her team. Idris' portrayal of Joshua Pearce requires him to go from unlikeable, untrainable, approval seeking rookie driver to redeemed teammate rather quickly, and he does so wonderfully

(albeit with the assistance of a major, plot-point wreck that serves as the ultimate teaching lesson, but I digress). Special shout out goes to Tobias Menzies, who doesn't get enough screen time to be the full-on antagonist Peter Banning—the smarmy, corporate money guy. Menzies maximizes his time, making you instantly hate him.

Cinematographer Claudio Miranda (who has had an absolutely stellar career, churning out banger after banger) deserves a lot of credit, but it kind of feels like cheating: *FI* looks great, but it's a racing movie, with a lot of cool cars shot in action close up—it would be kind of a huge let down if it *didn't* look good. That being said, there are some incredible shots of Las Vegas and Abu Dhabi that sealed the deal for me giving Miranda his props, and he's also *really good* at shooting crashing cars!

While the racing itself looks *great*, there is the small caveat that the movie is *painfully* unrealistic in that sense. I'm not the most diehard racing fan, but even a novice like me can tell you that the racing scenes themselves are shot purely for action, not for realism. The most realistic aspect of the entire production might be how highly regarded it treats actual racer Max Verstappen.

Besides how *unreal* the movie is, I don't have any major complaints. Like I said, it's a safe, formulaic sports drama. I'm glad that it did well at the box office, and if you are into racing, cars, or Brad Pitt, it is most definitely worth a watch on as large a screen as can be seen. That being said, the movie has absolutely no business being nominated for Best Picture.