



FILM: **HIT MAN**

FDG RATING: 3.5 😊😊😊○○  
Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Richard Linklater: *director, co-writer*  
Glen Powell: *actor, Gary*  
Adria Arjona: *actress, Madison*

DATE: July 21, 2024

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **HIT MAN**

A published critic praised the 2023 film, Hit Man, saying like it's a film that knows what its clients need, shifting from comedy to romance to thriller to a philosophical study of the human capacity to change, like its protagonist who changes identities depending on the situation.

The protagonist, Gary Johnson, is a philosophy-psychology college professor at a community college in New Orleans. He has stringy hair, wears wire rim glasses and dresses in sports cargo shorts. His social life is dismal, he's a bird watcher, and also has a couple of cats. Not a very interesting guy. As he talks about Nietzsche's concept of living passionately, one of his students mutters under his breath, "You drive a Civic." At night, he assists the police department with menial electronic techie tasks like planting bugs and connecting wires in the surveillance van. But things change, big time.

The police surveillance team follows up leads from people who want to hire a hit man. When the regular undercover hit man gets suspended for 120 days for needlessly roughing up a group of teenagers, and a call comes in, they realize they need an immediate substitute. His supervisor stares at Gary and says, "You're up."

Although he has listened in on many sting operations, reluctantly and nervously, Gary steps in, improvising on the fly. It turns out, he's really good at it, and convinces the sleazebag client that he's a professional killer by detailing his technique when it comes to body disposal. Sold! Gary is now the new police undercover hit man, Ron.

We enjoyed seeing Gary's persona, confidently, completely shift for each assignment and the personas were extreme adding the ambiance of a thriller. He seriously researches each mark so that they are more likely to handover the payment and his expertise in philosophy and psychology allows him to "read" people and then shape himself into the right man for the job. Could this be a commentary on how an actor prepares for his role in a film? Can this steady role playing change the person? We were definitely impressed with Powell's acting chops, playing so many roles in a single film.

Gary becomes more Ron than Gary. And then along comes Madison and the element of romance bubbles up. Several discussion participants really liked the film up to this point but became less enchanted after the relationship ensues. They first meet in a diner as Madison is trying to hire a hit man and describes her very abusive husband. Ron overhears her and decides to save Madison by convincing her to go away and start a new life rather than spend her money on a hit.

What follows is continuously unexpected and what some critics described as unpredictable brilliance. Several discussion participants disagreed. One stated that the repeated acclaim awarded this film is a mystery. Is it just a Linklater halo effect? It was more complicated than an airplane movie, with the same feel of "pretty good" conception and execution but unlike many good twisty movies, such as Knives Out and Sleuth, the surprises were not satisfactory. Too artificial, was another critical comment. But most thought Hit Man was delightful, quirky, sexy, and a fun exploration of the nature of "self". Don't over think it, said a discussion participant, just sit back and be entertained.

Hit Man hit a middle range mark of 3.5 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!  
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