

ENTERTAINMENT

Pacific Heights entertaining, but average thriller



By Chris Bouneff
Emerald News Editor

The Eugene rental market never had it this bad.

And it's a good thing, because if *Pacific Heights* is any indication of what it's like to rent in San Francisco, then the thing to do is move to the suburbs.

Loosely based on screenwriter Daniel Pyne's real-life experience with trying to evict a tenant, *Pacific Heights* quickly shifts from a landlord-having-problems-with-tenant film to more of a stalker flick.

Patty Palmer (Melanie Griffith) and Drake Goodman (Matthew Modine) try to live out their dreams by buying an old Victorian in San Francisco's Pacific Heights, but to realize this dream they have to leverage themselves to the hilt.

The saving grace are the two rental apartments downstairs that, if rented immediately, will allow Patty and Drake to

make the mortgage payments. Their first tenants are the nearly perfect Watanabe family, who turn their apartment into a paradise, but Patty and Drake have difficulty renting the other unit.

In comes Carter Hayes (Michael Keaton), who drives up in his Porsche and starts flashing large bills in Drake's face. Being cash-poor, and seeing that Carter is a respectable fellow, Drake agrees to rent the place to him without checking his references.

And this is where the heart of the movie begins. Carter moves in without paying any rent, and Drake and Patty soon learn that once a renter is in, it's difficult to get them out.

At first, Drake thinks the whole thing is just a misunderstanding, and that the money should be coming any day. In the interim, Carter boards up the windows, brings in a buddy and begins dismantling the apartment.

Tensions between landlord and tenant grow worse during some late-night hammering, and Drake plays right into Carter's hands when he takes extreme measures to silence the work.

The next day, Drake learns that the law is on Carter's side when the police show up and tell him that he better apologize

to Carter for his actions and get himself a good lawyer in case Carter decides to file suit.

From there, it turns into a puppet show with Carter pulling Drake's strings. Drake's temper boils again after he finally discovers Carter is the kind of guy who suckers unsuspecting landlords all the time.

Director John Schlesinger (*Midnight Cowboy* and *The Falcon and the Snowman*) keeps the pace moving quickly, and he cleverly clues in viewers to Keaton's evil character in the opening scene.

Keaton, who is better known for his comical characters, does a wonderful job as the psycho who almost breaks up Patty's and Drake's relationship and drives them into bankruptcy.

Griffith, in her first film since *Working Girl*, continues her string of roles where she plays a whiny, victimized character who eventually takes matters into her own hands.

Modine, on the other hand, is a real surprise. He almost perfectly plays the repentant character whose temper rises as he realizes the stupidity of his mistake.

But even Keaton and Modine cannot shadow some improbable occurrences to move this stereotypical thriller plot along.



Courtesy Photo

Melanie Griffith and Michael Keaton play on opposite sides of the fence in this psychological thriller.



Courtesy Photo

Matthew Modine, who rents Keaton the room, searches for clues as the plot unfolds.

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