

The Heat is On

Exploding the status quo

HOT FUZZ: Directed by Edgar Wright. Written by Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg. Music, David Arnold. Cinematography, Jess Hall. Starring Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Jim Broadbent, Timothy Dalton, Martin Freeman, Steve Coogan, Bill Nighy and Paddy Considine. Rogue Pictures, 2007. 121 minutes. R. ★★★★★

A short list of the people, things and notions sent up by *Hot Fuzz*: authority, lazy gits, workaholics, big-city arrogance, small-town self-righteousness, stupidity, cleverness, church fairs, bad taste, teetotaling, bad acting, *Point Break*.

Yes, that is a short list. *Hot Fuzz* is directed by Edgar Wright, who in 2004 brought us a new genre — the zombie romantic comedy — with the brilliant *Shaun of the Dead*, cowritten with Simon Pegg, the film's hungover, everyman lead. *Hot Fuzz* reteams Wright, Pegg and costar Nick Frost, whose earnest, hapless delivery and physical presence as small-town cop — sorry, police officer — Danny Butterman are a perfect counterpoint to Pegg's tan, weirdly yellow-blond Nicholas Angel, the hottest cop in London (his arrest record is more than 400 percent above the next best officer's).

Angel is a by-the-books kind of man who corrects other officers' improper vocabulary and drinks cranberry juice in the pub. His superiors — played by Martin Freeman, Bill Nighy and Steve Coogan in



Brain freeze? Nick Frost and Simon Pegg in *Hot Fuzz*

just one of the movie's moments of inspired casting — are sick of looking bad next to Angel. So they ship him off to the pastoral, homogenous country village of Sandford, where everyone is white and over 50 (children excepted), everything is picturesque

and nothing ever happens. Except, of course, when it does.

Part of *Hot Fuzz*'s clever structure is that it spends its first 40 minutes convincing you

it's only going to be good, but not great. While Angel chases a missing swan and meets the NWA (that's the Neighborhood Watch Alliance), a sort of gentle pall of amusement settles in over the audience, though the sharp cuts and gleefully over-

done sound effects suggest Angel's tough city-cop demeanor is still going to come in handy.

It only takes one scene for *Hot Fuzz* to blast off; the fact that that scene has to do with a large cache of guns is par for the course. The next thing you know, people are getting killed, Angel is forming theories and Butterman is trucking along behind him in search of some real action — shooting two guns at once while leaping through the air, for instance. Using the same precise admiration and attention to detail with which they rebuilt zombie tropes via English pubgoers in *Shaun*, Wright and Pegg (and everyone else involved) eviscerate — lovingly — action and buddy cop movies here. There are firefights, there are explosions, there are bonding moments and clichés; there are references to *Bad Boys II*, *Chinatown*, John Woo and, oh, *Shaun of the Dead*, to name just a few.

Humor often isn't funny when you talk (or write) about it, and trying to explain what exactly makes *Hot Fuzz* so damn funny would be a pointless exercise. Much of the humor quotient is in delivery, and a good deal more is in the visual and character-centric slyness that underlines the sparing and quipping and gives the film a certain amount of social heft — if you can see it through tears of laughter. *Hot Fuzz* is a devastatingly funny commentary on the futility (and stupidity) of clinging to a forcefully maintained (and in this case very British) idealized status quo. But the key words here are “devastatingly funny.” **EW**

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