The Specialist: The big, dumb action flick

Directed by Luis Llosa.
Written by Alejandro Serrao.
Starring Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, James Woods, Rod Steiger, and Eric Roberts.
Lewes Cherri.

By Teresa Esser

This latest in the long line of Stallone testosterone action flicks was everything that I expected it to be. It was a nearly movie, indeed, but that meant so ground-up re-processed that I had a hard time identifying it as so.

The movie followed a very standard agenda. You see, Sharon Stone's character watches her parents get murdered, and later becomes obsessed with plotting the deaths of the three assailants. Sylvester Stallone is a professional killer who comes out of retirement because of the way Stone's voice sounds over the phone.

Can you guess what happens from there? It Stone avenged? Can Stallone carry out three more routine killings? But don't worry. There's more to The Specialist than the plot.

The Specialist is a movie of moments, of which "the cat" was my favorite. At the start of the film, a random cat begins to rub itself against Sly's leg. Sly bends down, picks it up, and takes it back to his apartment. (Bravo!) The cat shows Sly's empathy, and the cat is very popular with the audience.

Later, Stallone manages to justify a box办公室 (which ended with the villains being thrown through a bus window) because one of them refuses to give up the seat that Stallone had allocated to a pregnant woman.

Unfortunately, The Specialist's chivalrous writers gave their female characters some of the worst roles imaginable. Aside from the murdered mother, a slew of prostitutes, and a single police-force underling, Sharon Stone plays the only female character. To make matters worse, Stone's character is largely a spineless victim. It was disappointing to realize that what started out as Stone's revenge scheme ends up as a feud between old army rivals. Why did Stone have to give herself away (yet again) as a cheap sexual object?

Some of the minor character roles throughout the movie were, however, rather amusing. I found that I could predict some of the action in the film by paying careful attention to the Sharon Stone's clothes and hair. In the beginning, in the very opening scenes, MacMann/Adrian Rice/Sharon Stone is in control. She calls Stallone, thereby summoning him from his "retirement." She alone convinces him to help track down her killers. Accordingly, the filmmakers dress her in white, specifically in the same white micro-tunic that she wore in Basic Instinct. She wears her hair pulled back in a tight ponytail, and she keeps her jaw set in a firm line.

Later in the film, when it is revealed that she was being used as a decoy by Stallone's personal enemy, she is shown in silver or brownish outfit. When she is being slapped around by the "bad" guy, her hair is messed up. Toward the end of the film, she builds a climax, Stone wears black in every scene, and her hair is neat. Her hair is neat regardless of the bombs exploding all around her, or the wind rushing past her on Sly's speedboat. What does it matter?

Conversely, Stallone's appearance remains constant during the entire movie. It doesn't matter whether he is taking out thugs on the city bus, or setting explosives between the swinging doors of a boat. Missing or right, in the bedroom or in church, Stallone wears a white cotton tee-shirt and two days' stubble.

You've got to admire a man who can blow up buildings without turning to look at them. You've got to marvel at a man who can throw street thugs through reinforced bus windows without losing his breath. Yes, I believe that a human being could build another in a house without breaking a sweat himself. But Stallone does! And miraculously, not once during the entire movie do Sly's arms get stained!

Ah, Hollywood. You've got to love it. But you don't have to watch it.

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