A5297  AMERICAN GANGSTER  (USA, 2007)

Credits: director, Ridley Scott ; writer, Steven Zaillian ; original article “The return of Superfly,” Mark Jacobson.


Summary: Crime/melodrama set in the early 1970s in New York. Following the death of his employer and mentor, Bumpy Johnson, Frank Lucas (Washington) establishes himself as the number one importer of heroin in Harlem. He does so by buying heroin directly from a source in South East Asia, and he comes up with a unique way of importing the drugs into the United States (in the coffins of American soldiers killed in Vietnam). As a result, his product is superior and his prices are lower. His alliance with the New York Mafia ensures his position. Richie Roberts (Crowe) is a dedicated and honest policeman who heads up a joint narcotics task force with the Federal government and is determined to bring down Lucas’ drug empire. Based on a true story.

Adams, Mark. “At the movies; Scott the lot; Film of the week American gangster …; Ridley hits new highs with drugs war epic” Sunday mirror [England] (Nov 11, 2007), p. 46.


Bentley, Rick. “‘American gangster’ pulls no punches; Brutal honesty and fine acting make it a must-see” Fresno bee (Nov 2, 2007), Seven, p. 16.

Biancolli, Amy. “Crime drama; ‘Gangster’ actors score big” Houston chronicle (Nov 2, 2007), Star, p. 3.


Bradley, Ed. “‘American gangster’ a tale for two” Flint journal [MI] (Nov 2, 2007), Entertainer, p. F03.
Bradshaw, Peter. “Film & music; Film reviews; Harlem scuffles” The guardian [London] (Nov 16, 2007), Guardian film and music pages, p. 9.
Brooks, Amanda. “Movie review: Solid performances in ‘American gangster’” Santa Maria times [CA] (Nov 9, 2007), Ac, p.? 
Collin, Robbie. “American gangster” The news of the world [England] (Nov 11, 2007), Film, p.?
Gabrenya, Frank. “Robbing the ‘hood; Harlem drug lord’s rise and fall makes for compelling drama” Columbus dispatch [OH] (Nov 2, 2007), Life & arts, p. 1E.
Harrison, Will. “‘Gangster’ an entertaining film” Fayetteville observer [NC] (Nov 7, 2007), Life, p.?
Heiss, David James. “‘American gangster’ fails to evoke emotion” Redlands daily facts [CA] (Nov 8, 2007), Entertainment, p.?
Kelly, Christopher. “It’s good to be bad? Denzel Washington tries to have it both ways by playing a despicable, murdering, drug-dealing mob boss with a heart of gold in Ridley Scott’s flawed crime drama” Forth Worth star-telegram (Nov 2, 2007), Go, p. S5.
Lang, George. “‘American gangster’ takes epic look at Vietnam-era drug war” The Oklahoman [Oklahoma City, OK] (Nov 2, 2007), Weekend look, p. 6D.
Levy, Shawn. “Brilliance, but too long a wait” The Oregonian [Portland, OR] (Nov 2, 2007), Arts & entertainment, p. 27.
Lloyd, Christopher. “Near-miss; Great cast can’t take ‘Gangster’ quite far enough” Indianapolis star (Nov 2, 2007), GO, p. GO5.
Long, Tom. “Gang mentality; The generic ‘American gangster’ is so derivative of other crime films that it has little life of its own” Detroit news (Nov 2, 2007), p. 1F.
Massey, Lyn (see under Massey, Cal)
Matthews, Jack. “Devilish Denzel; He’s a high point as drug lord, but needs to do more (screen) time” Daily news [new York] (Nov 2, 2007), Now, p. 41.
Morgenstern, Joe. “Weekend journal; Review/Film; Epic ‘American gangster’ stands up to mob genre; Scott’s tight direction…” Wall Street journal (Nov 2, 2007), p. W1.
Morris, Wesley. “‘American gangster’ is all business in tale of Harlem drug lord” Boston globe (Nov 2, 2007), LivingArts, p. 1D.
Morrison, Alan. “Movie reviews; Denzel's gang show; Washington is back on top form in true story of drugs baron who used dead soldiers to help flood Harlem with heroin” Daily record [London] (Nov 16, 2007), p. 56.

Moss, Stephen. “G2; The late developer; Ridley Scott didn’t start making films until he was 40, but he’s been cranking out a hugely varied list of hits ever since, from Thelma and Louise to Gladiator. As his new film American gangster is released on the eve of his 70th birthday, he tells Stephen Moss why he’s far from done yet” The guardian [London] (Nov 7, 2007), Guardian features pages, p. 6.


Persall, Steve. “True crime with ’70s feel” St. Petersburg times [FL] (Nov 1, 2007), Weekend, p. 8W.


Phillips, Michael. “It’s the ’70s again (and that’s a good thing) as Denzel and Russell face off in ‘American gangster’” Chicago tribune (Nov 2, 2007), Movies, p. 1.


Pols, Mary F. “Star power adds little luster to mob movie” Contra Costa times [Walnut Creek, CA] (Nov 2, 2007), TimeOut, p. to3.

Puig, Claudia. “‘Gangster’ an arresting crime epic; Washington, Crowe command attention” USA today (Nov 2, 2007), Life, p. 3E.


Sandhu, Sukhdev. “A heroin king, not a hero; Ridley Scott’s film paints a romantic picture of the man who flooded 1970s Harlem with cheap drugs” The daily telegraph [London] (Nov 16, 2007), Film on Friday, p. 12.

Saulnier, Beth. “‘American gangster’ is an American masterpiece” Ithaca journal [NY] (Nov 8, 2007), Ticket p. 6M.


Schultz, Cathy. “‘Gangster’ glosses, gloms real-life story” Herald news [Joliet, IL] (Nov 2, 2007), Special tab, p. 2.


Turan, Kenneth. “At the movies; Critics’ picks; ‘American gangster’” Los Angeles times (Nov 8, 2007), Calendar, p. E3.

_____________. “Movie reviews; The nerve to be epic; ‘American gangster’ has it – just look at the title – and pulls it off with verve” Los Angeles times (Nov 2, 2007), Calendar, p. E1.

Verniere, James. “Movie review; ‘Gangster’ taken down by lack of originality” Boston herald (Nov 2, 2007), The edge, p. ?


Whittington, Paul. “Ridley Scott, the man who brought us Blade runner, Alien and Gladiator – to name a few – is back, this time with American gangster and even though he’s about to turn 70, he shows no signs of slowing down; Interview” Irish independent (Nov 16, 2007), p. ?


c2008 J.K.M. Enterprises