

'Get Low': amusing, likable despite 'grave' subject

MOVIE REVIEW

By Sandy Schaefer
Daily Utah Chronicle, U. Utah via UWIRE

Flames engorge a distant building in the middle of the night during the opening shot of the independent comedic-drama "Get Low," while mournful, folksy music croons gently on the soundtrack.

It is a peculiar visual note to begin on for a film so generally understated in tone, but "Get Low" is no ordinary tale. The story is based on a real-life incident involving an eccentric hermit living in 1930s-era Tennessee who decided to throw himself an elaborate funeral party—despite the fact that he was, of course, still alive.

In the film, that fellow is Felix Bush, played by the ever-naturalistic Robert Duvall. Bush's unkempt appearance and withdrawn manner during the past 40 years have earned him quite the reputation with the locals. Nearly everyone is familiar with the guy and has a yarn to spin about some of the horrible acts he purportedly committed.

Bush has decided that the end of his life is nigh—or, as he puts it, "It's time for me to get low." He eventually approaches mortician Frank Quinn, played by Bill Murray, and his assistant Buddy, played by Lucas Black, about holding a funeral for himself now—an event that Bush decides should include everyone that has a story to tell about him. Quinn, desperate for business,

takes this idea and everything else Bush throws his way in tow—the decision to cast the master of deadpan himself, Murray, in the role of Quinn pays off well in that regard.

The plot takes a few more unexpected turns from there, though it treads on familiar ground during scenes with Mattie, played by Sissy Spacek, a woman who knew Bush many years ago and is familiar with his troubled past. By the time the third act rolls around, it becomes clear that the film is a redemption tale of an unusual sort—the story of a man near the end of his days and attempting to find some peace of mind before he departs.

"Get Low" marks the directorial debut of Aaron Schneider, who previously worked as a cinematographer. The film reflects Schneider's keen eye for composition. It is overall a beautifully somber feature, colored with desaturated hues of brown and gold and moodily lit throughout. The diluted visuals appropriately reflect the Depression-era setting of the story and Bush's status as a man nearing the winter of his existence.

One of the individuals responsible for scripting the film, Chris Provenzano, also worked for a time on the critically acclaimed TV show, "Mad Men." The narrative structure of "Get Low" is similar to an episode of the series, even though its screenplay is unable to tie together the various, open-ended subplots it hints at with the main story line as easily as "Mad Men."



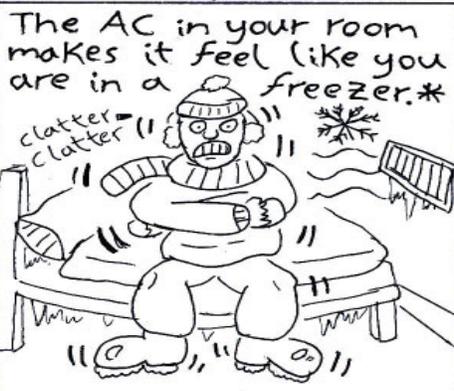
For a film with an inarguably morose subject matter, "Get Low" is a generally amusing work. The cast is solid, and Duvall in particular gives another great performance that should both move and charm most moviegoers. The movie also features a pleasant, strings-heavy score, with the occasional old-fashioned song thrown in for good measure.

"Get Low" takes a leaf from its protagonist's book and transforms the event of a troubled soul at the end of its life into an oddly enjoyable affair.

Editor's note: "Get Low" opens today at the Co-ed Cinema in Brevard.

Comic by Karam Boeshaar

SIGNS THAT YOU PICKED A BAD ROOM



* Only applies to residents living in AC rooms.