

# Veteran actors score with substantive performances in 'RED'



**RED**

**Rated PG-13**

**3.5 bagels out of 5**

**By Howie Nave**

I can't tell you how fun it is to see a bunch of well-seasoned actors in a movie where it genuinely looks like they're having the time of their lives. This movie will not get any Oscar nods even though the actors here have won a few.

But just like Clint Eastwood's "Space Cowboys" (and "Gran Torino"), Michael Caine's "Harry Brown" or Stallone's "The Expendables" this movie, if anything, shows that Baby Boomers and the Greatest Generation can still kick some geriatric butt and not have to be relegated to "On Golden Pond" or wait for Ron Howard to do another "Cocoon" flick. I don't know, maybe Hollywood took notice after "The Expendables" became an unlikely hit at the box office and thought there might be an audience out there that was cool with wrinkles on its stars. I know, quite a shock, huh?



Helen Mirren

The plot to "RED" (which btw stands for Retired, Extremely Dangerous) is predictable. But what movie isn't sometimes? At least the cast here pokes fun (and have fun) at themselves just showing you how real they are and not hiding behind any Botox or boob job to try and look pathetically young for Hollywood's taste. And in this case experience trumps youth.

I think director Robert Schwentke gave his geriatric actors quite a bit of leeway in their roles especially with Bruce Willis' character. He's at the center of this story playing Frank Moses, a former agent who essentially knows too much for his own good. His own people (namely the CIA) want to eliminate any potential threat from Frank sharing his secrets so they decide to take him out. Oh, let me inject here that Frank has been having a long distance romance with a lady who handles his pension checks, Sarah (played hilariously by Mary-Louise Parker) and ultimately she gets caught up in the madness. Frank doesn't want to take any chances and kidnaps Sarah knowing she too is at risk as a target from these high tech assassins out to kill him.

This is when it gets to be a kick as Frank assembles his old (and I do mean old) team back to assist him in a counter offensive. Helen Mirren must have had so much fun being the cougar (no, make that a saber-toothed tiger) playing Victoria, the classy and well-dressed dame if knocking off the baddies and rarely flinching at all because she just has to. Speaking of which in yet another role that makes him a standout (like his character in "Secretariat" as the horse trainer) John Malkovich is hands-down the funniest in this movie. He plays

the over-the-top Marvin who could have easily been modeled after him. Again, I think Robert Schwentke (as mentioned earlier) gave him liberty to create his character how he saw it which is part whack-job, part "Lethal Weapon" and all confidant.

Some of his best work is low tech, too. Who would have thought you could take out a team using just a baseball bat anyway? Go, Giants!

Morgan Freeman is another joy to watch and makes you think that living in a retirement home is the surest way to shorten one's life. And like Tommy Lee Jones' character in "Space Cowboys" doesn't really have many options left in his old age, so life really begins once he comes out of retirement.

With some added support from Brian Cox, Richard Dreyfuss and Ernest Borgnine (still alive yes!) "RED" is fun to watch and it'll be interesting to see if the younger generation out there checks this out. Hey kids, it is based on the DC Comics miniseries so maybe that'll get your interest up. I know there are no vampires or brooding relationship issues, but that alone is worth giving this a look-see.

"RED" is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of action violence and brief strong language with a running time of 1 hour and 52 minutes.

*Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.*