

# 'The Judge' – near perfect story, acting

By Jeremy Miller

Finally! I've waited for what feels like an eternity for something that really amazed me in theaters. Not since "Guardians" have I truly been blown away, until now.

Unsuspecting director David Dobkin ("Wedding Crashers," "The Change-Up") was behind the camera while Nick Schenk (Gran Torino) and Bill Dubuque manned the screenplay for "The Judge". Right there you've got a pretty sure-fire recipe for success.

Hotshot lawyer Hank Palmer (Robert Downey Jr.) returns to his childhood hometown of Carlinville, Ind., when he received word that his mother passed. He's met by brothers Glen (Vincet D'Onforio) and Dale (Jeremy Strong) and immediately you feel some seriously haunting backstory lingering.



The Miller Meter – 4.5 starts out of 5.

The most dominant conflict was between Hank and his father, the reputable Judge Joseph Palmer (Robert Duvall). Hank had obviously been excommunicated by the family for reasons untold until the very end (sorry, no spoilers). What Hank intended to be a cameo appearance turned into an obligatory extended stay when he received word that the Judge was suspected of



murder.

In addition to the familial conflict Hank is trying to get a hold on, he's met with some serious sexual conflict when he runs into his high school sweetheart Samantha played by the illustrious Vera Farmiga.

After long bouts of father vs. son, Hank finally convinces the Judge to let him represent him in court. Hank's reputation and success rate lead him to believe it'll be a quick case, but he's proved wrong when he meets the opposition in the form of Dwight Dickham (Billy Bob Thornton) who's got a personal bone to pick with Hank due to Dwight's commitment to riding the right side of the law.

The rest of the flick is pure suspense in the courtroom mixed with sexual tension and familial conflict and revelation. Simply put, I've been waiting for this movie for a long time. The summer provided a couple big blockbusters, but nothing in the emotionally powerful department. This movie on the other hand was an absolute powerhouse. From start to finish I felt blown away by the characters and the story they told.



Robert Duvall brought so much electricity to this film I could barely take it, as did every member of the supporting cast. Robert Downey Jr. expectedly stole the show. His performance was hands-down the best of his career. I've never seen him so play as passionate a character.

For about the first 30 minutes I was genuinely concerned that RDJ was cast simply because Hank is a high power, filthy rich, makes every man jealous kinda guy, and I've seen him play that

part for too long to see it again, especially outside of the Marvel Universe. Almost as quickly as I assumed that's how it would be, he turned it around. He played a vulnerable, flawed, average honest guy that I've always wanted to see him play, and he did it better than I've seen in longer than I can remember.

The chemistry between RDJ and Duvall was nothing short of spectacular and tore my heart into pieces throughout. Overall, the film hits home with anyone and everyone who's had familial conflict, and for that reason I was completely captivated by it. My only hesitation from giving this thing a five was that for a few split seconds it got too cheesy and took away from the script's believability, but like I said, they were seconds. A perfect story backed by a perfect screenplay, presented with flawless acting and given to us with top notch directing lands this puppy a 4.5 on the meter.

*South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews [online](#).*