

A Very Special *Police Gazette* Movie Review: "Parker" Packs a Peck of Pickled Fists!

With Jason Statham, Jennifer Lopez
Directed by Taylor Hackford



Five *Police Gazette* medals

In the category of the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, we here at the *Police Gazette* like to mix humor and seriousness in just the right proportion. And wouldn't you know, *Parker*—the new movie based on stories written by our publisher's father—does the exact same thing.

American action movies grow like weeds anymore. You can't swing a dead henchman without hitting another Hollywood shoot 'em up. And the majority are either just plain bad—shallow, stilted, badly acted, etc.—or find it impossible to avoid endlessly retreaded clichés. *Parker*, directed by skilled veteran Taylor Hackford, glides through this potential minefield not by doing what some movies do and cover a lack of storytelling skill with an insanely complicated plot, but by going all the way in the opposite direction and telling the simplest story but with just the right balance of tension, blood, humor, and sex.

The plot of *Parker* does not get any more basic: a man is double crossed and he seeks revenge to set things right. The bad guys and good guys are delineated early and stay that

way. So the tired action-movie cliché of the guy you thought was an ally turning out to be on the other side is avoided. All you're left with is a man on a mission. Very straight forward. As such, *Parker* the movie could not have been a better reflection of Parker the character as written by Donald E. Westlake under the pen name Richard Stark. Westlake wrote Parker to

have the simplest values and most basic worldview. But most importantly, these values and worldview are absolutely unshakeable. Nothing in heaven or on earth will ever cause Parker to change, modify, or even second guess those values. Ever.

Which brings us to the only minor quibble we have with this otherwise finely crafted piece. Jason Statham is gangbusters as Parker, delivering physical action and most of his dialogue with consummate skill. It's only when he's compelled to explain Parker's value system to others that Statham is not entirely convincing. Parker's values are the deepest things about him. Love, death, money... everything else takes a back seat. Since this character is nothing if not rock solid, his explanation of what keeps him grounded should be at least equally direct and compelling. Don't believe those who try to tell you life is complicated. Life is simple. Parker reminds us of that.

Unlike most other movie reviewers, we avoid making a detailed synopsis of the plot narrative part of the review. It adds nothing to the discussion of a film's quality and dulls the viewer's first impression when those scenes are encountered. So suffice to say at the point the audience hears the line "Thank you, Father," you know you're in for something that operates on a higher level of cleverness than your typical actioner, and it's also the first example of Taylor Hackford's mastery at tension and release that is evident throughout.

See pages 4 and 7 for more *Parker*.



Paul Juser and The City from Another Universe



The Vampire of Doom City Part 1

When people tell me they loved Rocky's Pizza, I know they only ate there after midnight. We were located above the Rathskeller, so every weekend was a kitchen dance party. When the college bars emptied the restaurant filled to sardine capacity with drunken meatheads and orange girls doing their best to sober up before dawn. Location location location made us enough money between midnight on Thursday and 4am Sunday that we could afford to be open the rest of the week.

I take full responsibility for being part of management, even if there was always some question to my official position. My promotion came a month after my hire with no prior food service experience, so I never let the title carry much weight. During a stretch that lasted several weeks, every single person on staff was a manager. New hires were often pressed for recipes the first night.

As a pizza delivery driver, you try not to get too involved in the lives of your customers, but I remember frequent deliveries to Bambi

Madden's house on aptly named Winding Way. I don't remember much about her, though she was briefly employed at Rocky's as well. I remember the man who identified himself as her husband. He was an older gentleman, and always very appreciative of our efforts. He came in Friday afternoons to order a sheet pizza to be delivered to his wife at 5:30pm. He was going to be away for the evening and wanted her to have food. He paid with a twenty-dollar bill, and I'd keep the substantial tip whether I took the delivery or not.

Not only was I manager and pizza chef, but bouncer as well. Our bathrooms broke every night at 10pm sharp when people began trickling out of the State Street bars. It was a normal night if I found myself pummeling a frat boy that peed in the potted plants. Rocky's employees lasted because they could not find work anywhere else. I was called in early one morning because another manager's meth lab exploded. We were proud of her for being the first in New York State. Withdrawal in the kitchen wasn't uncommon. The foyer of Rocky's remains the only place I've been pepper sprayed. I only took it in the cheek, which still burned bad enough that I went home, but the manager we called "Tree Trunk" got it full in the eyes, and I'm probably one of a few people alive that have seen him cry. I arrived one afternoon to find the owner had been taken to prison. He ran the store by collect calls for the next three months.

Sober customers stayed with us less time than employees. If they got a decent meal delivered once, it would be uncooked the next time, or burnt to the point of being unrecog-

nizable. Delivery drivers would occasionally threaten physical abuse to answer complaints. To improve our reputation, the owner would keep the same location, menu, phone number, and staff, but change the name, believing customers would forget the terrible experience they had with us. I've watched Chef Ramsey inspect kitchens that were sanitized for surgery compared to what could be found in a Rocky's refrigerator. The only time we did change location, it was around the corner, and we did it in the middle of the shift. Customers could see us making dough at one location and rolling it down the street on metal racks to cook in the new restaurant.

One afternoon, a couple years after I turned in my pizza paddles, I passed the restaurant to find it unsurprisingly empty. I found the manager sitting in the kitchen, feet on the table. With one hand, he was smoking a blunt, and with the other he endlessly polished the stove handle with a rag. He was the first to tell me my connection to Bambi Madden, who disappeared without a trace on January 11, 2006.

Bambi lived in an area off Front Street called the "Gateway to Binghamton," which was lost to Viking raiders sometime during the mayoralship of Juanita Crabb. The city has been trying to reclaim and rebuild the area for years to little avail. Bambi left her home with \$5 for cigarettes at the gas station less than half a mile away. She never reached the store, and she was never seen again. She enjoyed drinking beer and eating at McDonald's. She smoked Newport and had a history of drug abuse. Bambi was tattooed and rough, and her disappearance

(continued on page 14)