

Review by Jenny Priestley, Screen Jabber, screenjabber.com

Wild Target review ★★☆☆½



Stars Bill Nighy, Emily Blunt, Rupert Grint, Rupert Everett, Martin Freeman, Eileen Atkins, Gregor Fisher, Graham Seed, Adrian Schiller
Written by Lucinda Coxon
Certification UK 12A
Runtime 98 minutes
Directed by Jonathan Lyne

Victor Maynard (Nighy) is a hitman – not just any hitman, but the number one hitman in the country. His father was a hitman and Victor learned the family business from him. Now Victor's in his 50s, living in the house he grew up in (his mother's just moved into a nursing home) and starting to wonder if this is it.

Victor's so good at his job that none of his clients ever meet him – their only way of contacting him is through his (many) mobile phones. His main client is Ferguson (Everett), a shady London businessman with a weakness for the finer things in life. When Ferguson is scammed into buying what he thinks is a priceless painting by free-spirited thief Rose (Blunt), he knows exactly who to call. And that's when Victor's problems start – he falls for her pretty much instantly and decides that instead of killing her, he's going to protect her. Through a series of misunderstandings Victor also ends up with new "apprentice" Tony (Grint) who thinks he's actually landed a job with a private detective.

Wild Target is one of the better Brit flicks we've seen over the past few years, although really it's a remake of a French film from 1993. Nighy almost feels born to play the role of Victor – the repressed, desperately in need of love, hero. As always he brings his comedy chops to the role as well as great pathos, although this man is a cold blooded killer you want him to find happiness. Blunt is an interesting choice for Rose; apparently she took the role because she wanted to show she could play comedy, and to a certain extent she can. My problem is that it feels almost a bit "icky" when Rose and Victor's relationship takes the inevitable romantic turn. Maybe my problem is that I knew Blunt wasn't the original first choice for the role, it was going to be Helena Bonham Carter, and there are certain things that the character does that would have been carried off better by the older actress.

The two leads are ably assisted by the rest of the cast, it's good to see Grint breaking out of the Ron role, and for female fans you get to see a little more of Rupert than usual. I thoroughly enjoyed Freeman's work as the country's second best hitman, obsessed with appearances – you won't see a better set of teeth on film this year. Atkins gets a pivotal role and though she in flits in and out, she's still very good. The film's directed by Jonathan Lynn whose last two films are The Fighting Temptations and The Whole Nine Yards – I promise you, this is much better!