

Movie Review

The Facts

Stars: Keanu Reeves, Al Pacino, Charlize Theron, Judith Ivey

Rating: R (nudity, language, violence, adult content)

Title: "Devil's Advocate"

Director: Taylor Hackford

Grade: A-

Five Words: Thriller packs a devilish wallop.



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Pacino pulls weight in 'Devil's Advocate'

Satan lures lawyer into sin

By GERRY BELTZ Film Critic

Pacino playing the devil. OK, boys and girls, can we say, "intense"?

Now, we find out the devil is a lawyer. Now, can we say, "typecasting"?

Hotshot Florida defense attorney Kevin Lomax (Keanu Reeves) has never lost a case. No matter how slimy, scummy or even guilty his client may be, Lomax can work a jury to his favor.

He has a wonderful marriage to Mary Ann (Theron), and even his Bible-quoting mother (Judith Ivey) is proud of him. However, when a powerful New York law firm shows a special interest in Kevin, his curiosity gets the better of him, and off he goes to the Big Apple.

The man who has summoned young Kevin is John Milton (Al Pacino), the founder of a firm that represents clients of every kind all over the world.

Milton throws money, sex and power into Kevin's face, and Kevin accepts a position with Milton's circle of ... lawyers.

However, things start to change. Mary Ann begins to unravel, taking a slow, twisted journey into insanity, and Kevin's mother turns up unexpectedly to warn him of the evil Milton. Kevin sloughs them both off, becomes more and more obsessed with winning his cases at any cost and is constantly trying to impress Milton. In addition, he's resisting

temptation to "bang his gavel" with sexy co-worker Christabella (Connie Nielson).

Let's just say Kevin is having one hell of a time adjusting to New York, and this is just the tip of the pitch-

Director Taylor Hackford ("An Officer and a Gentleman") brings together a superb tale, mixing drama, horror and suspense with a little dark humor thrown in for good measure. The film actually has two endings as it were, both are somewhat surprising.

Reeves, despite his eternal California surfer dude dialect, continues to show signs of growth and learning as a performer, though a death scene later in the film is rather overacted and almost pitiful. Hey, at least it isn't "Bill and Ted Join Satan's Law Firm." He's growing and learning, so let's give him some space to do so.

Theron is terrific. Her slow, terrible journey from happily married to twisted victim of an insane situation is brought out incredibly well. She's the only sane voice of reason with a chance of reaching Kevin, and the only obstacle between Milton and his possession of Kevin's ... services.

Pacino is a shining star. He's hypnotic, funny, scary, you name it. The role is done with subtlety and an almost rambunctious attitude. Once the truth is found out, his emotional monologues begin.

All in all, "Devil's Advocate" is the hot choice for this week.

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