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'Affair' good appetizer for James Bond fans

PATRICK MINER
 Staff Writer

The Facts

Title: "The Thomas Crown Affair"
 Stars: Pierce Brosnan, Rene Russo, Denis Leary, Faye Dunaway
 Director: John McTiernan
 Rating: R (nudity)
 Grade: B+
 Five Words: Russo shines in romantic-caper flick

Those eager for Pierce Brosnan's latest James Bond film, due out in November, should be temporarily satisfied with "The Thomas Crown Affair." Directed by John McTiernan ("Die Hard," "The Hunt for Red October"), "The Thomas Crown Affair" is a romantic remake of the 1968 caper film of the same name which starred Steve McQueen.

The movie is the tale of billionaire Thomas Crown (Brosnan), who is rich yet unwilling to part with cash for all the paintings he treasures. After a valuable Monet painting turns up missing, few suspect the wealthy and classy Crown, although insurance investigator Catherine Banning (Rene Russo) has her suspicions.

The film uses subtle moments of Crown checking his watch and placing his briefcase by the museum entrance to develop the painting heist scene to its fullest. Although the audience quickly learns Crown took the painting off the

wall, his intentions to do so aren't fully established so quickly. The roundabout way of storytelling helps the film greatly.

Catherine quickly becomes obsessed with proving Crown was the thief, and she uses all of her assets to get Crown to confess. Meanwhile, she starts to fall in love with the lonely yet debonair man. Russo, who looks nowhere near her 45 years of age here, plays Catherine's balancing act between love and business to perfection.

Brosnan, being the actor who is

now James Bond, portrays the cool, mysterious billionaire with ease. The chemistry between he and Russo was excellent, and they seemed to be the prototypical actors to play the two parts.

Denis Leary plays the logical Michael McCann, the police detective on the case and the man tries to keep Catherine's unconventional tactics in check. He plays McCann like Denis Leary.

Faye Dunaway, who appeared in the original "The Thomas Crown Affair" in Russo's role, makes an appearance here as Crown's therapist.

A majority of the film flowed very well, and there were very few moments that were either dragging or unnecessary. But while Brosnan and Russo's scene at the island beach house had wonderful scenery, it was too lengthy for what it accomplished for the film.

Despite that one exception, this is one of the few movies this summer where you don't have to look at your watch at any point. The film keeps you guessing all along, with an ending that's unpredictable until it happens.

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