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Dr. Alex Cross is a family man, an intellectual psychologist and above all, a good detective in the Detroit Police Department, but despite the role being a welcome change of pace for star **Tyler Perry**, the movie didn’t really stand out.

Based on books by **James Patterson**, the film follows the titular character played by Perry as he tries to uncover some brutal murders by an unnamed sociopath played by **Matthew Fox**. The villain hits Cross and his partner and childhood friend, Tommy Kane (**Edward Burns**), close to home and the film takes a revenge-flick tone.

Unfortunately, the plot of “Cross” doesn’t really move in any coherent direction for most of the film. The fact that nothing is known about its sociopathic villain, identified as “Picasso” in the end credits, or his motives is annoying and how he achieves some of his villainy is questionable.

For instance, he of course, knows the exact location and time Cross will be out to dinner with his wife. Well enough, in fact, that he’s able to position himself inside a neighboring building with a high-powered rifle with perfect line-of-sight to their table, which they sit down at after “Picasso” finds his position.

The film tries to build a cat-and-mouse game between Cross and “Picasso” but doesn’t do it very well. After his first murder, “Picasso” leaves a clue hidden in a drawing that identifies his next victim. Why he does this is anyone’s guess and it’s implausible to think he’s targeting Cross to string him along because they really establish no connection between the two from the past.

The bad guy doesn’t have a vendetta against Cross, or really know who he is, until meeting him

face-to-face while Cross tries to prevent the murder that “Picasso” hinted about in his drawing.

Fox is strange in his villainous role. He puts on a good psychopathic voice and tough guy demeanor, but his weird spells that appear like seizures or waves of pain-induced euphoria are just puzzling and borderline comical.

Since the film takes place in Detroit, I got the sense that Director **Rob Cohen** wanted to highlight that city’s current economic state or just its landscape. I didn’t think he succeeded as well as someone like
Spike Lee
manages to do with his films set in New York City.

Cross is an interesting character, benevolent in wanting to help others, a good family man, and apparently a great detective and I was happy to see Perry in that kind of role. He looks odd sometimes carrying around a 12-guage shotgun, but he fits the part of a tenured detective well-enough.

The film’s other shady character, Leon Mercier, played by (**Jean Reno**), is supposed to play a large role but the film’s identity-crisis in the second-half leaves him too much on the sideline.

“Cross” abandons the plan and plot set out in the first half and goes full-on revenge mode after about 45 minutes. Then in the final 10, returns to the plot started in the first half and puts a little bow on everything, even if the journey from point A to point B is somewhat unclear.

The film could completely do without supporting character and Detroit Police Chief Richard Brookwell, played by **John C. McGinley**. You can’t take him seriously at all and he just fits a stereotype of the police chief who wants to be Mayor and is more concerned with politics than doing police work.

He is there simply as a foil to the hardworking, justice-seeking Cross and Kane, nothing more, nothing less.

I can’t speak to how all of this relates to the books, but looking back, “Kiss the Girls” in 1997 and “Along Came a Spider” in 2001, both starring **Morgan Freeman** as Cross, and both based on Patterson’s novels, were much better movies.

“Alex Cross” is rated ‘R’ and is now playing in local theaters with a runtime of 101 minutes.

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