



Before the Devil Knows You are Dead

Autumn
Season
2011

Release: 2008

Cert (UK): 15

Runtime: 117 mins

Directors: Sidney Lumet

Cast: Philip Seymour-Hoffman, Ethan Hawke, Marisa Tomei, Albert Finney



Sidney Lumet received his Honorary Oscar two years ago, and should therefore have had the decency to retire and bask in the glow of past glories. Except that the now 84 year-old has no such plans: the director of *12 Angry Men*, *Serpico* and *The Verdict* is not only still working, he's doing some of his best work, as this bleak, almost Shakespearean tragedy conclusively proves.

The script, by veteran playwright and debutant screenwriter Masterson, is an intricate affair, retelling events to build a three-dimensional sculpture of the crime – the robbery of a “mom and pop” jewellery store by the two sons of the mom and pop concerned. And delivering a script that flirts with but never succumbs to melodrama is a cast that scarcely puts a foot wrong.

There are hints of awards-baiting Acting with a capital A in a few instants, but this is a classical tragedy in a modern setting, each character's failings coming back to haunt them in the worst possible way.

Sidney Lumet who died yesterday at the age of 86, was one of the most significant film directors of his time, a man dedicated to the cinema as an art form and to the pursuit of truth and social justice as a dramatic theme....On his return from the second world war, having served as a radar engineer in the far east, he turned to directing, becoming associated with the Actors' Studio and creating an off-Broadway theatre. In the early 1950s he entered the heady world of New York television, most of it broadcast live with small budgets, restricted rehearsal time but an invitation to innovate. With Hollywood in the doldrums and TV drama buzzing on the east coast, Lumet was one of a small group of directors who made the transition to the big screen. His debut was a critical – though not box-office – triumph; an adaptation of Reginald Rose's TV play *12 Angry Men*.

Fifty years and nearly 50 films later he directed his last, at the age of 83, *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*, another superbly acted film about crime in New York, but this time he jumped back and forth in time and employed numerous locations.

The Guardian - Obituary

Helen O'Hara - Empire

