



lying around. Seafood restaurants do. They often have a tank with a bunch of introspective lobsters, heavy rubber bands around their claws, thinking to themselves, "What the heck have I gotten myself into this time? And how am I going to get back home?" Some try to make the best of the situation. Last time I went to a Red Lobster I saw one amorously inclined lobster climbing on the back of

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another. Kind of a last fling, whether he realized it or not. It kind of cast a pall on the whole evening. As I remember, I ended up ordering a salad.

Anyway, the local fisheries operate on a lower budget so do not have fancy tanks for their lobsters. When you see the fish, most of their struggles are already over. I generally can look the ice case without seeing anything particularly bothersome. Well, this time it wasn't actually the fish itself that was so sad. It was a sign announcing that today's catch of the day was "Brazilian lobster tail." Now for it to be the catch of the day it must have come from around here. I don't know how far you can get a fish in one day, but if a fishery has it and it was caught today it must be from pretty nearby. If they really are Brazilian lobsters, they must have been caught a long way from home. And if they caught enough to make it the catch of the day, it was a lot more than one stray. It must have been a whole family on a vacation cut short by disaster. Maybe even more than a family. Maybe a whole clan who are not going to see the waters of home again. They died far from home where nobody knew their names. Be warned, little lobsters, get your tails out of this area.

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A FISH CALLED WANDA  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
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Capsule review: Very funny, well-written crime story/comedy combines the story-telling of the old Ealing comedies with the pace and outrageousness of FawltyTowers. This film makes one long for the days of better films by better writers. We don't see many like this any more. Rating: high +2.

I got complaints recently on my review of MidnightRun. I only mildly liked a comedy-adventure in which you got to know somewhat two conflicting character types, set on the background of a sort of race across country that included cars chasing cars, helicopters cars, and double crosses. Now, eight days later, I see an English comedy-adventure, AFishCalledWanda. It too has chases, conflicting personalities, and double crosses, but the poor British cannot afford to blow up helicopters and crash cars, so they economize by getting good

writers who can really write dialogue and create characters, and at the same time be funny and tell a good story that keeps an audience guessing how things are all going to turn out. In short, A F i s h C a l l e d W a n d a is not only a film that does things right, it is a film that does some things astoundingly right.

The film begins with a mismatched set of crooks pulling off a jewel heist. There are two English brothers (played by Michael Palin and Tom Georgeson) and an American brother and sister, Otto and Wanda (played by Kevin Kline and Jamie Lee Curtis). The jewels are just barely stowed away when the first double cross happens. The second double cross is only a short time after. One double cross might have caused problems; with two, all hell breaks loose in an amazing set of misunderstandings, dirty tricks, counter-plots, and revenges. Soon into the fray comes barrister Archie Leach (does that name sound familiar?), played by John Cleese. Wanda wants to use Leach against the English brothers, but Otto's basic anti-British prejudice starts fouling things up.

A F i s h C a l l e d W a n d a was written by John Cleese and directed by Charles Crichton (who directed great British comedies like T h e L a v e n d e r H i l l M o b). It was based on a story by Cleese Crichton. With that background, it is not surprising that it has a feel of F a w l t y T o w e r s combined with M o n t y P y t h o n crossed with old Ealing Studios comedy. A F i s h C a l l e d W a n d a has good three-dimensional characters, has a good story, and is very funny at the same time. Rate it a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE DEAD POOL  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
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Capsule review: There is a slightly lighter touch to the new "Dirty Harry" film, but otherwise it is the strict "Dirty Harry" formula, including lots of action and impossible escapes. Eastwood takes potshots at the bad guys, TV news, and horror movies. Rating: +1.

Dirty Harry is back in The Dead Pool. I don't have to tell you what kind of film it is. There just isn't a whole lot of variation from one "Dirty Harry" film to the next. There are car chases, there are explosions, there is a violent murderer, there are machine gunnings. (Hey, an aside here. At one point thugs go after Harry with machine guns. When the machine guns hit a car door they make a nice regular perforation; when they hit a windshield they make holes in a random pattern as if from single-shot guns, and even with a machine gun, the thugs can't seem to hit Harry. They swiss-cheese his car and Harry steps out without a scratch. I guess that too is a hallmark of a "Dirty Harry" film.) In fact, the only thing really new is the jokes. And one of the best of these is borrowed from Garden s of Stone.

This time around the plot involves a convicted Mafioso who has it in for Harry, an attractive TV news reporter, and the murder of a rock star on the set of the new ripoff film of a cult horror film director (uh, he calls it an "homage"), Before it is over the film will take potshots at the invulnerability of Mafiosi and the standards of TV news reporting, but it will save its biggest salvo for how nasty and violent horror films are. (I am sure that Mr. Eastwood, sensitive soul that he is, would never allow violence to creep into one of his films.) We also see three people blown up in explosions, two people carved with knives, and one extremely hypocritical actor playing the lead.

It is good to see Evan C. Kim getting a major role as Harry's new partner. Kim did a hilarious imitation of Bruce Lee in Kent uck Fried Movie and in the interim I remember him only in Holl y wood Vice Squad. Beyond that there is some creativity in The Dead Pool, including the only car chase I have really enjoyed since Foul Play (in spite of the fact that it makes little sense), some wildly improbable escapes for Harry and a new "mean line" to replace "Make my day." All in all, it is a "new 'Dirty Harry' film," even if that is an oxymoron. Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

