

## “RED LIGHTS” (Movie Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
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While the vast majority of fictional characters are on some sort of path to discovery, there certainly seems to be a lot more searching these days. From the grand cosmic queries of PROMETHEUS to the more personal probing of this summer's horror offerings RED LIGHTS and THE AWAKENING, it seems the world's frustration with the balance of science and spirituality, and our own searches within them, are becoming externalized more frequently.

Rodrigo Cortés' RED LIGHTS is about such searches. His much grander, more expansive follow-up to the confined BURIED establishes lead parapsychist duo Tom Buckley (Cillian Murphy) and Margaret Matheson (Sigourney Weaver) as a traveling pair of professional debunkers, shattering illusions of hauntings and psychic prowess. Of course, as most believe of skeptics, the film poses Matheson as actively looking to be proven wrong (her son lies in a longtime coma), but only finding fakery time and time again with no assurance of something beyond. Upon the return of massively famous, and quite possibly very dangerous, psychic Simon Silver (Robert De Niro), the excitable Buckley insists on an investigation. A new journey is embarked upon, and self-discovery lies at the end.



From its onset, RED LIGHTS feels old-fashioned and energized. Shot on (and hopefully projected in when you see it) 35mm, the grain and magic of cinema is palpable as early as the prologue, in which Matheson and Buckley are called to a routine assignment. Also palpable is the duo's undeniable chemistry. Weaver and Murphy are a team, and it feels as such, making the often eye-rolling large amounts of exposition a bit easier to digest. They are fun, enthused

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and a pleasure to watch working together (did we even realize how sorely we missed seeing Weaver on screen?), and Cortés’ introduction in a supposedly haunted house is easily one of RED LIGHTS’ highlights.

The writer/director’s game isn’t entirely revealed until its very last moments, however, so as the film presses on, its pace tends to falter. There’s a lot of information to be imparted, via the aforementioned massive amounts of exposition. It’s as if these longtime co-workers (Toby Jones’ believer scientist included) are having many conversations for the first time. While Cortés finds worthy detours, it stretches RED LIGHTS to something that is often a bit “all over the place,” and feels longer than it actually is. It’s hard to blame the filmmaker for playing, and it certainly feels he is after the lack of breathing space in BURIED. Cortes takes the tale all over Toronto (and Barcelona, standing in for the Canadian city) and various wide open spaces (lofts, expansive offices, opera houses), as the scope enlarges alongside, peppering neat flourishes of the eerie and unexplained throughout.

About midway through, it becomes clear just whose film this is, which leads the audience to more time with De Niro’s impressively low-key and mysterious performance. Even his eventual spill into over-the-top grandeur is a wonderful bit of showmanship, selling both Simon Silver’s magic and malice. Of course, that’s when it all comes to a head, and the film’s final twist/reveal will either endear or infuriate. Truthfully, it feels like a trick, and very well may be. There are logistical questions that come with RED LIGHTS’ ending, whose lack of answers are like a missing puzzle piece, but one it’s not much fun to draw yourself. This unfortunately overshadows the larger concerns (all that searching, finding, learning), and could leave the audience frustrated rather than pondering the universe and all we don’t know about it, and ourselves.

