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These diamonds not an aud's best friend

By TODD McCARTHY

You need at least one very good reason to exhume the moribund jewel heist genre, and the makers of "After the Sunset" can't find one. It's hard to imagine what attracted the in-demand talents before and behind the camera to this trifle, other than the prospect of a well-paid holiday in the Bahamas. Resulting mild take on the mossy premise of retired diamond thieves tempted by one final job will, unsurprisingly, stir only mild B.O. interest.

In a grizzled variation on his successful starring turn in "The Thomas Crown Affair," a remake that arguably justified itself with its high style and added twists, Pierce Brosnan takes it easy this time as Max Burdett. Max is a thief who, having made a huge "final" score with g.f. and partner-in-crime Lola Cirillo (Salma Hayek), finds it difficult to stay out of trouble in paradise despite the comforts of a beachfront villa and Lola's ever-ready enticements.

Following the couple from Los Angeles to the islands is FBI agent Stan Lloyd (Woody Harrelson), a maladroit oaf who's been trying unsuccessfully to nail Max for years. The forging of an at-times intimate relationship be-

tween hunter and prey reps the script's one stab at something vaguely fresh, but the erratic comic timing of director Brett Ratner and thesps not especially known for generating hilarity makes the eruptions of humor intermittent at best.

The arrival in the Bahamas of an enormous cruise ship featuring a jewelry exhibit with the third Napoleon diamond as its centerpiece gives Max the itch again and provides Stan with one more chance to snare him. As Max is thought to have snatched the first two Napoleons, there is presumably no way he can resist this one. All along, he promises the loving Lola he's through, even as he pays a casual visit to the ship to examine the enormous rock and its high-security chamber.

Odd and unconvincing subplot sees Max being courted by the island's top gangster, transplanted Yank Henri Moore (Don Cheadle), to form a partnership to grab the jewel.

Somewhat more engaging teamwork comes courtesy of Harrelson's Stan and local cop Sophie, played with spirit, if a variable island's accent, by British thesp Naomie Harris. After initially arresting him, Sophie warms up to the goofy Stan professionally and emotionally, and their boisterousness somewhat offsets the more

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AFTER THE SUNSET

Directed by
Brett Ratner

Starring:
Pierce Brosnan and
Salma Hayek



Pierce Brosnan and Salma Hayek star in jewel heist movie "After the Sunset," directed by Brett Ratner.

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FTER THE SUNSET

A New Line Cinema release of a Firm Films/Contrafilm and Rat Entertainment production. Produced by Tripp Vinson, Jay Stern, Beau Flynn. Executive producers, Patrick Palmer, Toby Emmerich, Kent Alterman.

Directed by Brett Ratner. Screenplay, Paul Zbyszewski, Craig Rosenberg; story, Zbyszewski. Camera (CFI color, Deluxe prints; wide-screen), Dante Spinotti; editor, Mark Helfrich; music, Lalo Schiffrin; music supervisors, Gary Calamar, Thomas Golubic; production designer, Geoffrey Kirkland; art director, Steve Arnold; set designer, Noelle King; set decorator, Jennifer Williams; costume designer, Rita Ryack; sound (SDDS/DTS/Dolby Digital), Kim H. Ornitz; supervising sound editor, Gregory King; supervising sound mixers, Steve Maslow, Gregg Landaker; visual effects, Warner Bros. Visual Effects; associate producers, Keith Goldberg, Chris Pollack, James M. Freitag, Alissa Ferguson; assistant director, Freitag; second unit director/stunt coordinator, Conrad E. Palmisano; second unit camera, Kyle Rudolph; casting, Victoria Thomas. Reviewed at Sunset Screening Room, West Hollywood, Nov. 2, 2004. MPAA Rating: PG-13. Running time: **97 MIN.**

Max Burdett	Pierce Brosnan
Lola Cirillo	Salma Hayek
Stan Lloyd	Woody Harrelson
Henri Moore	Don Cheadle
Sophie	Naomie Harris
Rowdy Fan	Chris Penn
Agent Stafford	Mykelti Williamson
Zacharias	Obba Babatundé
Jean-Paul	Russell Hornsby
Agent Kowalski	Rex Linn
Lue	Troy Garity

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grounded personalities of Max and Lola. While Brosnan and Hayek canoodle frequently and with ease, Brosnan — in a role Robert Mitchum could have played smashingly in his sleep — broods and strategizes by becoming recessive, to diminishing returns. Casting the rigors of “Frida” behind for the moment, Hayek flaunts her sexiness in a rare mainstream turn.

While “After the Sunset” is never exactly dull and is smartly cut to a brief running time, it never quickens the pulse, despite numerous lin-



HARRIS

gering views of Hayek’s scenic décolletage that are as precisely staged as payoff shots in 3-D films. The faces, locations and costumes are attractive and colorful, but Ratner and lenser Dante Spinotti don’t take matters a step further to imbue the picture with a lustrous sheen and seductive style to augment the scattered amusements of the story.

Vet composer Lalo Schiffrin contributes some agreeably retro frissons working in a traditional romantic thriller musical vein. Many viewers will laugh and/or smirk at the opening sequence, set at a Lakers/Clippers game that prominently features shots of Kobe, Shaq, Karl Malone and coach Phil Jackson, among other former teammates.