

## Film Review: *The Heat*

This is a "*buddy film*" in which a nerdy female FBI Agent named **Sarah Ashburn** (Sandra Bullock) and an unkempt and foul-mouthed Boston Detective named **Shannon Mullins** (Melissa McCarthy) implausibly roll up a murderous Boston drug-cartel all by themselves. Not since "*I Love Lucy*," when *Lucy Ricardo* and *Ethel Mertz* concocted one of their more harebrained schemes have two female comics been more hilarious together. Every scene was outrageously funny, even some that would normally be considered tragic.



*Agent Sarah Ashburn* is the perfect "*straight-man*" to *Detective Mullins*. She is arrogant, obsessive, competitive, and highly ambitious. Naturally, she clashes with *Detective Mullins*, who is street-smart, while being slovenly and contemptuous of either official procedure or the Fourth Amendment when it comes to clearing the streets of bad guys. There's a synergy in their combined humor, which takes their comedy to a rarified level.

Several scenes appear to be *homages* to earlier films of note. At one point the two cops must transport *Mullins'* uncouth South Boston family to a motel for their protection. *Mullins'* two parents, her four brothers, various girlfriends, and an enormous *Great Dane* with bad breath are crammed into an old van for the ride, while each complains bitterly about the inconvenience. The scene is reminiscent of the "*stateroom scene*" from ***A Night at the Opera*** (1937,) where something like 15 people somehow managed to cram into the Marx Brothers' tiny stateroom on their cruise ship.



***Stateroom Scene from "A Night at the Opera"***

Likewise, in another scene, *Ashburn* is being held by a bad guy, who threatens to cut her throat if *Mullins* doesn't put down her service revolver. Having earlier observed *Mullins* employ the identical trick, *Ashburn* head-butts the bad guy behind her and knocks him out to free herself. This was similar to the denouement in ***High Noon***, where the victim (Grace Kelly) momentarily distracted the bad guy by scratching his eyes so the good guy (Gary Cooper) could shoot him and save her life.

Nothing is sacred in this film: if you are a feminist expecting the film to make a sympathetic case for women in law enforcement, you will be sorely disappointed. In fact, it lampoons them. Neither female cop is a team-player: *Ashburn's* peers at the FBI despise her arrogant and officious manner, and *Mullins* is equally unpopular with colleagues in her precinct, most of whom she terrifies because of her threats to do all manner of unpleasant things to their private parts. The two women also bicker childishly, and have at least one *catfight* in the Boston PD's interrogation room.



Melissa McCarthy and Sandra Bullock are a comedic match made in Heaven. I remember rolling on the floor and laughing at *Doctor Strangelove* when I was a kid, and later, when watching *The Producers*. Now, I'm too arthritic, but I was laughing at every scene in this film, which consists of a long but excruciatingly funny sequence of scenes that left my belly muscles aching.

**WARNING:** the film has a disclaimer because of its exceptionally coarse language...

--- Earl P. Holt III