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Adam Sandler Should Be in More Dramas

'Hustle' might be my new favorite Sandler movie.

By Rebecca Carlyle | Last modified: March 7, 2024



Loneliness takes a toll on everyone, but sometimes it takes an alien spider to point it out. (Image: Free Association)

When I think of **Adam Sandler**, movies of the comedic variety come to mind; after all, it's where Sandler got started. Sandler has been acting for 40 years, starting on "The Cosby Show" before being discovered and moving on to "Saturday Night Live" and then starring in movies. I was dubious when I heard Sandler was cast as the lead in a drama, but I'll admit — it piqued my interest. As a millennial, Sandler appeared on my TV screen a lot as a kid. At my mom's house, it was rom-coms with **Drew Barrymore**; at my dad's house, it was sports comedies.

Looking back, it's easy to see how Sandler was typecast as the goofy but loveable guy. We see it repeatedly in his movies such as "The Wedding Singer." He's also been typecast into outrageous movies like "You Don't Mess with the Zohan," "Happy Gilmore," and "Anger Management." All the characters he played in those movies are particularly over the top. But not all Sandler's characters were zany or bombastic. Two characters in particular, Barry Egan in Paul Thomas Anderson's "Punch-Drunk Love" and Howard Ratner in "Uncut Gems," hinted at his dramatic chops.

I watched both of Sandler's more recent dramas, "Hustle" and "Spaceman" and wholeheartedly believe Sandler should take on more drama roles. Hear me out.

Sandler Knows How to Dial It Down



"The Wedding Singer" is one of Sandler's more loved rom-coms. (Image: New Line Cinema)

Sandler usually plays over-the-top characters, so I was surprised to see him in a role where he wasn't. I expected to cringe at his performance in "Hustle," but I enjoyed it. Sandler's character, Stanley, is downtrodden. He's spent his time scouting potential players for the NBA team, the 76ers. All he wants is to be home with his wife and children and to be the assistant coach. Throughout the film, his luck seems to turn on him, and only his perseverance and passion land him on top in the end.

Sandler's take on Stanley was the opposite of everything I've seen him in before. Instead of overacting, it almost seemed he was *underacting* and letting the character take over. He utilized silence and thoughtfulness to bring to life the emotional pain Stanley endured. Outbursts weren't chaotic like in "Happy Gilmore," but instead contained and appropriate.

The same could be said for his latest film, "Spaceman." His character, Jakub, was lonely and ambitious to a fault. Overall, the film had a melancholy atmosphere, and Sandler did an incredible job displaying his loneliness from being separated from his wife, Lenka (**Carey Mulligan**).

Sandler's Known for His Iconic Facial Expressions



Sandler's character experiences a wide range of emotions for someone named Happy. (Image: Universal Pictures)

With Sandler, I think of all the excessive facial expressions that go hand in hand with his overacting. Sandler fans know what I'm talking about. He has a crying face and an angry face, just to mention the iconic ones (see the photo above for his crying face!).

In his latest movies with these serious roles, his usual facial expressions aren't appropriate. There are hints of these expressions throughout "Hustle," in small moments to bring levity to the film's somber tone. I found the subtle expressions a familiar comfort, reminding me this was still the same actor. This time, Sandler has grown and matured.

Sandler's Average Looks Work in His Favor



Loneliness can be debilitating, but it doesn't stop this astronaut from doing his job. (Image: Free Association)

Lead male actors usually have six-pack abs and chiseled jawlines. While I have nothing against some eye candy, it often takes away from the story's believability. This is another reason why I love that Sandler was chosen for "Hustle" and "Spaceman." He's got that average Joe look, making him more relatable to audiences. The underacting method combined with his dad-bod figure creates a real caricature that's easy to believe.

Sandler in Mature Relationships is Believable

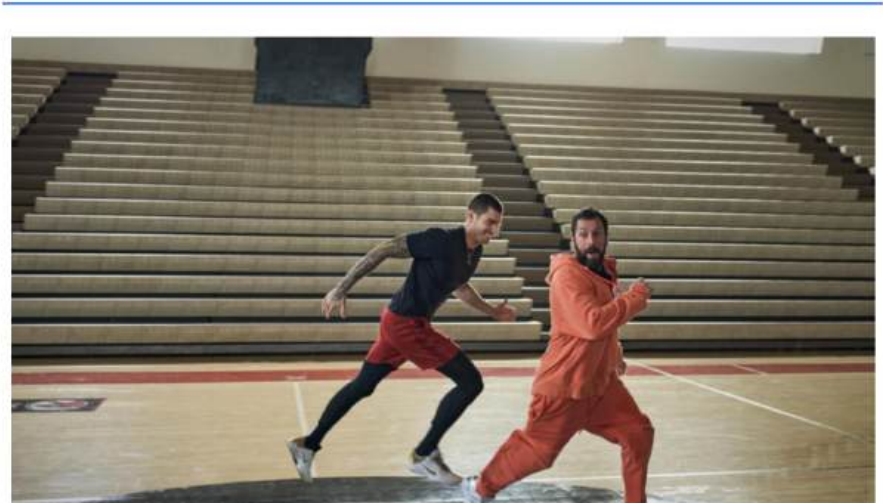


The support this couple showed each other is commendable, and I wish Queen Latifah had more screen time. (Image: Happy Madison Productions)

Sandler is no stranger to having [relationships on screen](#). He's always had good chemistry with the women he's paired with, like Drew Barrymore in "50 First Dates" and **Jennifer Aniston** in "Murder Mystery." It's hard to say if they match his energy or if he matches theirs. For his two drama films, I can say that Sandler matched Mulligan and **Queen Latifah**'s energy.

The relationship between Sandler and Queen Latifah in "Hustle" was heartwarming. The couple prioritized celebrating small wins together, supporting each other in rough times, and encouraging each other's dreams. They had an adult relationship I admired and believed to be attainable. Sandler's relationship with Mulligan in "Spaceman" is viewed through rose-tinted glasses, at least by his character. Seeing the disconnect between husband and wife was poignant. Both relationships were realistic.

Sandler Delivers Heartfelt and Authentic Performances



Sandler was more than just a coach to his upcoming star player. (Image: Happy Madison Productions)

Sandler has spent 40 years honing his craft. Finally, we get to see his true talent. Although he started his career doing stand-up, he's not just a comedian. It's clear from watching his new drama films he's spent all these years learning and improving his acting skills.

Sandler's emotions in "Spaceman" and "Hustle" are authentic; they aren't forced or overplayed. The result speaks for itself: two incredibly heartfelt films by the actor. I'm not a basketball fan, yet I thoroughly enjoyed "Hustle," a movie centered on the sport. That alone should tell you his acting deserved an award. If that's enough persuasion, Sandler was nominated in 2023 for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor at the [Screen Actors Guild Awards](#).

I hope to see Sandler in more dramas soon. Until then, both films, "**Hustle**" and "**Spaceman**," are on Netflix.

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