



## FILM REVIEW: The Laundromat (Soderbergh, 2019) USA

### Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Oscar-winning director Steven Soderbergh (*Traffic*, *Erin Brokovich*, *Magic Mike*) reunites with writer/producer, Scott Z Burns (*The Informant*, *The Report*) in *The Laundromat*, starring three-time Oscar-winner, Meryl Streep, as Ellen Martin. Martin is enjoying a wistful vacation with her husband when a tragic boating accident on Lake George happens. Martin is bereft yet manages to keep a positive outlook as she engages in meetings with her lawyer to discuss her financial options regarding her husband's life insurance and wrongful death settlement. Martin plans to use the settlement money for a down payment on a condominium overlooking the Las Vegas strip. Actress Sharon Stone makes a cameo as a pent-up, high strung, real estate agent who delivers a searing blow to Martin's plans. Bewildered and befuddled, Martin sets out to discover whom and what is behind these financial shenanigans she's encountering. All roads eventually lead to a Panama City law firm, Mossack Fonseca, and two lawyers, Jurgen Mossack, played by Oscar-winner Gary Oldman, and Ramon Fonseca, portrayed by Golden Globe nominee, Antonio Banderas.

The film is adapted from *Secrecy World* by Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Jake Bernstein and is based on true events emanating from a 2016 journalistic whistleblower release of 11.5 million documents, known as the Panama Papers, containing pages of dubious and nefarious transactions designed to protect and enhance the wealth of the world's richest people. Hats off to Soderbergh and Burns in taking a very dark subject and turning it into comedy. Allowing Oldman and Banderas to portray Mossack and Fonseca in comedic characters enables the subject matter an easier digestion.

Oldman and Banderas provide an abundance of comic relief with voice-over narrations and appearing on-screen as the dapperly-dressed legal counselors. The duo attempt to justify their actions as they hilariously provide background information on how our financial system came into existence and what all people have in common - money. Their explanations as to why they did what they did involve vignettes in China, Africa, Mexico, the Caribbean Islands and wind up ending in Panama as they ultimately reveal the various and sundry illicit and absurd actions such as bribery, murder, and tax

evasions the super-wealthy engage themselves in to support the world's financial system and protect themselves from losing wealth. Streep delivers an exceptionally solid performance as Ellen Martin and manages to deliver the finest moment in the film without missing a beat.



*The Laundromat* follows a number of films dealing comedically with the dark matter of our current financial system. Adam McKay's 2015 Oscar-winner [The Big Short](#) (Best Adapted Screenplay) and Martin Scorsese's 2013 AFI Movie of the Year, *The Wolf of Wall Street* readily come to mind. Yet, Soderbergh captures a moment in time without most audience members realizing what is taking place on-screen. And, like Scorsese and McKay's work, *The Laundromat* artfully and skillfully provides an exquisite commentary on more than just the current state of our world's financial system. Hint: It's in the details. One of the year's most important films. Highly recommended.

## Category

1. Feature Film

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