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Kidnapping Inc.

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Abstract
This is a film review of *Kidnapping Inc.* (2024), directed by Bruno Mourral.

Keywords
Haiti, Social Critique, Crime Drama

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Kidnapping Inc. (2024), dir. Bruno Mourral

*Kidnapping Inc.* is a political thriller with dashes of comedy that really don’t assimilate, and this is the film’s flaw. It has a sense of urgency and gusto, and there is an underlying treatise on the levels of corruption, kidnapping, and murder on the streets of Haiti where this genre-fluid movie is set, but the way that this film is executed tries one’s patience. Two kidnappers-for-hire are given the job of abducting the country’s leading Presidential candidate so that he can be seen to be someone who understands the needs and tribulations of the people, though the kidnapping has been engineered by his aides, and when it goes wrong and his son is accidentally killed the consequences and recriminations are seismic.

The pacing is so fast, however, that it is impossible to keep up—and this is a film that feels like it has an important message which is obviated by its relentless style and penchant for dark humor via the absurdist dialogue and constant screaming and yelling of many of its characters. These include a nine-month pregnant woman who would rather risk gunfire than give birth to her
baby in her country. There is no consistency of style, and various subplots are thrown together, leading to the equivalent of a rollercoaster ride; visceral but lacking in serious intent, despite the gravity of the subject matter which concerns economic turbulence and political unrest. One of the most disturbing scenes involves the kidnappers carelessly running over a dog, whose mutilated remains the camera focuses on afterwards—and it is this kind of gratuitous, irreverent, even slapstick humor which jars.

There are many Hollywood tropes on display here, including car chases and the machinations of the higher levels of government, which we are used to in conspiracy thrillers and action movies. The intent here is to emulate that while situating it on the streets of Port-au-Prince, a capital that is not often the setting for a feature film. However, this takes away from the authentic social and economic realities of the lives of Haitians, and it feels like a work of misdirection with bumbling criminals not so different from those in a Coen Brothers film or even an Ealing comedy. The final scene is potentially moving as we see a boat full of Haitian refugees heading for the United States, with the failed kidnappers (now marked for their failure to deliver the goods) amongst them. It is here that we see what in another tonally more focused and consistent film would be an emotionally poignant indictment of poverty and failure, but here it is literally all at sea.