

Two for the Money has a formidable cast: Al Pacino, Matthew McConaughey, and Rene Russo (Get Shorty) play compulsive personalities caught up in the high-testosterone world of sports betting. Brandon Lang (McConaughey, Sahara), a once-promising football player sidelined by an injury, has an uncanny knack for totting up the statistics and personalities involved in any football game and picking the winner. But he doesn't gamble himself: He offers tips via a phone line. His string of successful picks attracts the attention of Walter Abrams (Pacino, The Godfather, Dog Day Afternoon), a man building a media empire on sports tips, even though he himself can only resist his own gambling addiction thanks to the fierce devotion of his wife, Toni (Russo, Tin Cup, Get Shorty). Brandon swiftly becomes Walter's protege and transforms into an aggressive, high-risk salesman, even going so far as to change his name to create a new self. But when Brandon starts to think of his knack as magic, everything Walter has built around his golden boy starts to teeter. Two for the Money starts with punchy dialogue and razzle-dazzle acting, but midway it starts to founder; the characters never quite feel real, the plot grows labored and implausible, and the basic themes