

Film Review: ‘Kill the Irishman’ Offers History as Explosions

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 18, 2011 - 4:54pm

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CHICAGO – The amalgamation of big time unions and organized crime in post-WW2 industrial America is as enlightening as any struggle for power. Cleveland, Ohio, in the 1950s thru the ‘70s was both on the waterfront and had the East Coast influence of New York City’s most notorious crime families. That history is wasted in “Kill the Irishman.”



Writer/director Jonathan Hensleigh ignores the result of the union/crime grip on Cleveland to focus on one ruffian who seemed unable to die, despite many attempts on his person. Kill the Irishman is the true life story about the rise of Danny Greene, a longshoreman who worked his way up to union organizer, only to be corrupted by its money and power. His comes off in the film as crass and uninteresting, which seems the opposite of what probably is true.

Greene is portrayed by Ray Stevenson, who plays him from early 1960s dock worker to the Irishman with a price on his head. His early worker organizing is shown as heroic, it is a crusading reporter that discovers the money skimmmg he’d been practicing with union dues. After enduring a couple of indictments with no jail time, he starts his career anew by renewing mobster activities.

After getting involved in waste management activities, Greene gains some crime family muscle in the form of John Nardi (Vincent D’Onofrio) and Shondor Birns (Christopher Walken). Greene always seems to be one step ahead of disputes, and actually gains a grudging admiration from Cleveland Detective Joe Manditski (Val Kilmer). He continues a life dominated by deals (with New York City mafia ties), his unerring ability to violently dispatch his opponents and his dodging of the many attempts on his life.

When war breaks out between the fissured factions of Cleveland’s organized crime community, there seems to be a hit or car bomb every week. Although Danny Greene is targeted, he manages to outlive many of his close associates. And despite the rallying cry of kill the Irishman, Greene goes down fighting to the very bitter end.

“Kill the Irishman” continues its limited release in Chicago on March 18th. Check local listings for show times and theaters. Featuring Ray Stevenson, Vincent D’Onofrio, Val Kilmer, Christopher Walken, Steve Schirripa and Paul Sorvino. Written and directed by Jonathan Hensleigh. Rated “R”

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Overdue Expiration: Ray Stevenson as Danny Greene in 'Kill the Irishman'
Photo credit: Kim Simms for Anchor Bay Films



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