

## Film Review: Sirens Flash Red for Woody Harrelson in ‘Rampart’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 17, 2012 - 5:59pm

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CHICAGO – The “thin blue line” is a police term. It represents the designation between the protection the police provides and the anarchy that is on the other side of that protection. The cop that Woody Harrelson portrays in “Rampart” crosses that line repeatedly, formulating his own retribution.



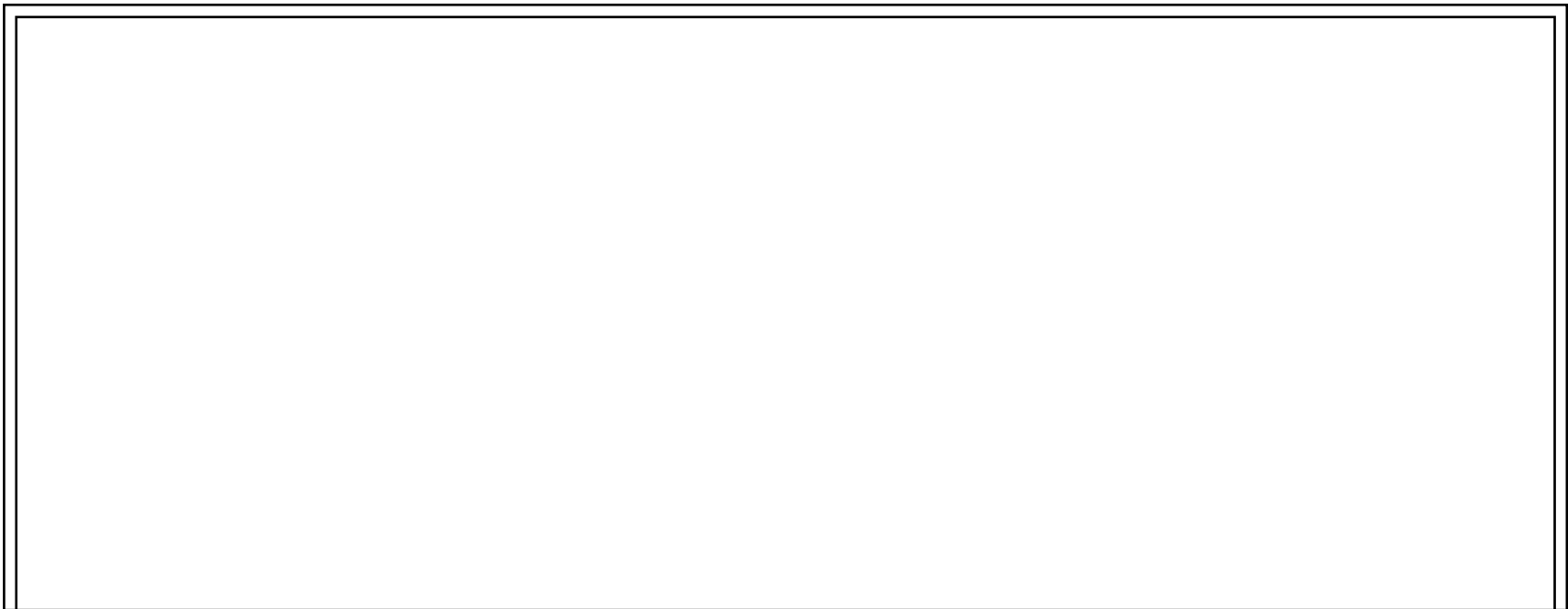
Set in 1999, within the cesspool of a corrupt Los Angeles police department (“Rampart” refers to a cop district near downtown L.A.), the film represents overall corruption through Harrelson’s character – a profligate boozier, womanizer and anger addict. Harrelson’s portrayal embraces the entire sad system of broken law enforcement, in which longtime street cops become as amoral as the criminals they are trying to corral. Harrelson is another “bad lieutenant,” both a victim of his mental breakdown on the streets and the prime cause of it.

It is the late 1990s, and the Rampart division in Los Angeles is suffering through a cause-and-effect scandal within their ranks. Officer Dave Brown (Woody Harrelson) comments on the ensuing investigation, while at the same time showing signs of his own desperation on the job. He deals with a home life that includes two ex-wives, who are sisters (Cynthia Nixon, Anne Heche), and a daughter from each of those marriages. He is unsteady in his approach to everything, drowning his emotions in booze and one night stands.

A crisis develops when his patrol car is struck at an intersection. The driver of the other car seemingly attacks Officer Brown, but the only evidence of the encounter is a video of Brown beating the driver nearly to death. He is now involved in a Rodney King-like situation, where the prosecutor (Steve Buscemi) and the defense attorney (Sigourney Weaver) both are out to get him. His only insider becomes a retired cop name Hartshorn (Ned Beatty), and he leads him on a path to another means of destruction. With an internal investigator named Timkins (Ice Cube) on his tail, and a dysfunctional coupling with a shady lawyer (Robin Wright), everything this cop once trusted to save him is now inaccessible.

*“Rampart” continues its limited release in Chicago on February 17th. See local listings for theater and show times. Featuring Woody Harrelson, Cynthia Nixon, Anne Heche, Sigourney Weaver, Steve Buscemi, Robin Wright, Ned Beatty and Ice Cube. Screenplay by James Ellroy and Oren Moverman. Rated “R”*

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To Serve and Protect: Woody Harrelson (Officer David Brown) in ‘Rampart’  
*Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment*



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