Film Review: Bad Luck of the Irish Was in Belfast During ''71'

Submitted by **PatrickMcD** [1] on March 13, 2015 - 11:33am

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CHICAGO – Sectarian violence and terrorism were the norm in the days of the late 1960s and early '70s in Northern Ireland. Often mistook for a religious clash between Catholics and Protestants in the region, the conflict was actually about keeping the industrial region either part of Britain or part of Ireland. The extreme nature of the conflict is tensely played out in "'71," the year when it all boiled over.

Rating: **3.0**/5.0

The area devolved so quickly that British troops had to be called in – further escalating tensions – and the story of "'71" focuses on one such soldier, stuck in the war zone. The film doesn't take any sides, preferring to emphasize the dishonor of the clash between the enemies, and the "double agents" who caused more harm by taking advantage of the need for infiltration and subterfuge. The story also takes a personal turn, and that is where it's a bit weak, using some war movie cliches like the improbably kind citizens and the son that waits for the soldier back home. But the film is also transporting, to a time in which politics – which is nicknamed in British history as "The Troubles" – created enemies out of brothers and sisters.

The year is 1971, and the street war in the Northern Ireland city of Belfast has turned for the worst. The nationalist Irish Republican Army (IRA), made up mostly of Catholics, are fighting to join a united Ireland, while the loyalists – made up mostly of Protestants – want to remain under English rule. The British army is sent in to quell the violence, and a solider named Hook (Jack O'Connell) gets lost on the streets.

His strange journey leads him to a boy named Billy (Corey McKinley), a miniature street fighter who provides him a safe haven. When an extreme act of calamity separates him from the boy, a badly injured Hook is taken in by Eamon (Richard Dormer) and his daughter Brigid (Charlie Murphy). However, getting the soldier into to the right hands to save his life might prove to be difficult.

"'71" continues its limited release in Chicago on March 13th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Jack O'Connell, Sam Reid, Richard Dormer, Charlie Murphy and Cory McKinley. Screenplay by Gregory Burke. Directed by Yann Demange. Rated "R"

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A British Solider Named Hook (Jack O'Connell) in Belfast During ''71'
Photo credit: Black Label Media

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