

Troubled 'Thin Ice' With Greg Kinnear Barely Works

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 23, 2012 - 5:57pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Over a decade ago, Jill & Karen Sprecher made waves on the indie scene with “Clockwatchers” and “Thirteen Conversations About One Thing” but then virtually disappeared. They’re back with another arthouse piece, a “ Fargo ”-esque black comedy called “Thin Ice,” starring Greg Kinnear, Billy Crudup, Alan Arkin, and more. The strong ensemble makes the relatively weak script (as presented...more on that later) easier to take as the film skates over some treacherous rough patches but never falls through.

Mickey Prohaska (Kinnear) is a jerk (and it's the complete lack of a likable or relatable protagonist that is one of the film's biggest drawbacks). He's an insurance salesman who uses lies and deceit to scare people into buying policies they don't need. And he rips them off whenever possible. In one of the first scenes in the film, he sleeps with a drunk girl at a casino conference, who rips him off after he passes out in his boxers. Sleeping with a stranger to steal his wallet really isn't far up the moral ladder from what Mickey does to his clients.



Thin Ice

Photo credit: ATO Pictures

The wear-and-tear of being a pretty scummy guy has started to impact every part of Mickey's life. He is separated from his wife (Lea Thompson) but she considers taking him back before being again reminded of his low personal human value. His company is falling apart. At the casino, he sees a competitor hiring a new agent named Bob Egan (David Harbour) and his male competitive instinct kicks in. Even though Bob seems to have a different value scheme than Mickey, he woos him away with a higher percentage offer.

It's not long before Egan finds a potential client, an old fella named Gorvy Hauer (Arkin) who can barely keep track of his hoarder-esque lifestyle. Bob tries to sell Gorvy what he needs and only what he needs but Mickey sees a chance to up-sell. He goes from his standard sleaze to something much more complicated when he happens to be at Gorvy's house when a violin salesman (Bob Balaban) comes looking for what could be a very valuable item hidden in the junk. Before you know it, there's a violent alarm company employee (Billy Crudup) blackmailing Mickey, a dead body cut up and thrown in the lake, and a police investigation that's getting closer to nailing our troubled anti-hero.

The script for "Thin Ice" ends with a montage and a voiceover explaining the plot-heavy movie that you just saw from a different angle. Some will walk out thinking that they had just seen something remarkably clever. In fact, they have just seen something remarkably mangled. According to Jill Sprecher herself, the film was drastically cut. She tells [Roger Ebert](#) [13], "*The producers and distributor of our film completely re-edited it without me. Nearly 20 minutes were cut; the structure rearranged; out-takes used; voiceover and characters dropped; key plot points omitted; a new score added. Although our names contractually remain on the film, my sister and I do not consider 'Thin Ice' to be our work.*"



Thin Ice

Photo credit: ATO Pictures

Even the most casual filmgoer will be able to sense production problems with the film. I didn't know any of the above until after I saw the final product and I could tell that something was missing. The final act seems rushed. Character development is almost non-existent as the producers clearly wanted more plot and less motive. The problem is that it leaves "Thin Ice," well, thin. We never get to know or like any of the characters and the movie becomes pure exposition – explaining itself over and over again as the plot gets more complex.

It's somewhat remarkable then that I am still barely recommending the final product, even with all of that behind-the-scenes drama. They may have tried to completely destroy the film but the producers of "Thin Ice" couldn't reshoot the performances and Sprecher works well with her talented ensemble. Mickey may be an unlikable protagonist but Kinnear makes him engaging, showing excellent comic timing yet again. Crudup is the exact opposite acting style – external anger as opposed to Kinnear's internal depression – and the film comes to life when he appears. And, of course, Arkin built a career around characters like Gorvy Hauer. It's another fun one for him.

I hope that Sprecher gets back what she lost with "Thin Ice" and can re-cut it for Blu-ray and DVD. Right now, it's a barely-good film, but one can look through the sheet of ice placed on it in post-production and see the potentially-great one underneath.

"Thin Ice" stars Greg Kinnear, Billy Crudup, Alan Arkin, Bob Balaban, Lea Thompson, and David Harbour. It was written by Jill and Karen Sprecher and directed by Jill Sprecher. It will be released in Chicago on February 24th, 2012 and is rated R.



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