

Ben Affleck Shoots Nothing But Blanks in ‘Live by Night’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 12, 2017 - 11:11pm

- [Anthony Michael Hall](#) [2]
- [Ben Affleck](#) [3]
- [Brendan Gleeson](#) [4]
- [Chris Cooper](#) [5]
- [Chris Messina](#) [6]
- [Clark Gregg](#) [7]
- [Elle Fanning](#) [8]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [9]
- [Live by Night](#) [10]
- [Matthew Maher](#) [11]
- [Max Casella](#) [12]
- [Movie Review](#) [13]
- [Remo Girone](#) [14]
- [Robert Glenister](#) [15]
- [Sienna Miller](#) [16]
- [Spike Walters](#) [17]
- [Titus Welliver](#) [18]
- [Warner Bros.](#) [19]
- [Zoe Saldana](#) [20]



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Movies released in the first weeks of January are invariably either awards hopefuls trying to gain momentum or studio dreck being buried in the dead of winter, and quickly forgotten by Valentine’s Day. “Live By Night” aspires to be the former, but ends up being the latter.

Ben Affleck stars as a Boston stickup man Joe Coughlin, the son of a Boston police officer, who reluctantly becomes part of a gang to get revenge on a rival mob boss. If you think back to the time before “Argo,” “The Town,” and “Gone Baby Gone,” this is the kind of movie you’d think of as a movie directed by Ben Affleck, before that became an improbable sign of quality filmmaking.



Ben Affleck Seeks Revenge in ‘Live by Night’

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Affleck certainly looks the part, with his square jaw and chiseled features, and at times resembles one of those less grotesque Dick Tracy villains. But he seems to let the chin do most of the work, rarely trying to find the character underneath the fedora. While the movie starts in Boston, it mostly takes place in Florida...with Affleck playing a crew boss for the Italian mob out to corner the rum market, while getting revenge in the process on the exiled Irish gangster who nearly killed him and iced his girlfriend.

One of the chief problems is Affleck doesn't seem to know what kind of a movie he wants to make. "Live By Night" can't decide if it wants to be a Ben Affleck gangster picture – full of shoot-em-ups – or a serious brooding drama focusing on a morally compromised antihero, or a sort of winking gangster comedy where the characters seem to almost know they're in that kind of movie. The one spark of wit seemed to belong in some other kind of movie altogether. During a meeting with a troublesome KKK member, Affleck's henchmen ambush him but inadvertently wound Affleck in the process. His conversation with chief sidekick Dion (Chris Messina) about who shot who seems to have sprung from some lost Abbott and Costello or Three Stooges routine. It's entertaining, and it shows an energy that's sorely lacking through most of the rest of the picture, even though it's out of place.

The supporting cast can't quite make much of the story either, even as Zoe Saldana, Brendan Gleeson, Chris Messina, and Chris Cooper do solid work. But the two biggest female figures in this gangster story are also two of the weakest. Sierra Miller sports a dodgy Irish accent which seems to come and go, and her portrayal nothing but a collection of actorly tics as she tries to capital-A-Act playing Affleck's secret girlfriend, who just happens to be the number one girl of Irish Gangster Albert White (Robert Glenister).



Elle Fanning in 'Live by Night'

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

And in addition, there's poor Elle Fanning. She's a more talented actress than her sister Dakota and is usually watchable in just about anything. But in this film she's lost at sea, playing the daughter of the Tampa Police Chief (Cooper) and wannabe actress who got hooked on drugs. For reasons crucial to the plot – and nothing else – she becomes a religious zealot preaching against the demon drink and gambling. This gives the Affleck character a foil in his journey through the gangster ranks.

Along the way there are flashes – a line of dialogue here, a stylish gangland killing there – that shows us the movie that might have been. But this plodding enterprise mostly just rambles on, and even the inevitable gunfight finale doesn't have the style or excitement you'd expect. In "Live By Night," Ben Affleck is shooting nothing but blanks.

"Live by Night" opens everywhere on January 13th. Featuring Ben Affleck, Elle Fanning, Brendan Gleeson, Chris Messina, Sienna Miller, Zoe Saldana and Chris Cooper. Screenplay adapted by Ben Affleck, from a novel by Dennis Lehane. Directed by Ben Affleck. Rated "R"



[21]

By [SPIKE WALTERS](#) [22]

Contributor

HollywoodChicago.com

spike@hollywoodchicago.com [21]

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/27142/ben-affleck-shoots-nothing-but-blanks-in-live-by-night>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/anthony-michael-hall>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ben-affleck>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brendan-gleeson>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/chris-cooper>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/chris-messina>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/clark-gregg>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/elle-fanning>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/live-by-night>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/matthew-maher>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/max-casella>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/remo-girone>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/robert-glenister>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sienna-miller>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/spike-walters>
- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/titus-welliver>
- [19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/warner-bros>
- [20] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/zoe-saldana>
- [21] <mailto:spike@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [22] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#SPIKE>