

## Stellar Cast & Director Fail to Build ‘The Snowman’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 22, 2017 - 8:43pm

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The biggest mystery in “The Snowman” is what in the world talented actors like Michael Fassbender, Chloe Sevigny, Toby Jones, and Val Kilmer are doing here in the first place. Fassbender’s character’s name alone should have sent off alarm bells. This is based on a series of detective novels featuring detective Harry Hole, and characters have voluminous opportunities to repeat it, although with nary a snigger.

Hole (giggle) is on the trail of a serial killer who strikes at first snowfall and makes a habit of dismembering his victims and turning them into SNOWMEN. It’s not that disposable pop pulp like this can’t be well made, it’s that it’s rare to see such a cornucopia of awfulness all in one place. Fassbender’s detective is supposed to be one of those brilliant alcoholic legends, but we aren’t treated to much in the way of brilliance. Instead, he seems to disappear on benders for weeks at a time and makes a regular habit of getting falling down drunk in ditches and bus depots. When he complains to a superior that he needs a case, the captain responds with a joke about Norway’s boringly low murder rate.



The Title Character is a Bit Frosty in ‘The Snowman’

*Photo credit: Universal Pictures*

However, that all changes when Harry Hole tags along with a fellow police officer (Rebecca Ferguson) on a missing persons case, which bears some striking similarities to a string of other cold cases from around Norway. This leads us down a number a dead ends, red herrings, and a subplot involving Harry's ex-girlfriend who has now taken up with a plastic surgeon – but still has a soft spot for Harry – and her son also sees Hole as a father figure. There's also an extended flashback to another Norwegian town with Val Kilmer playing a detective on the trail of the first snowman killing. Kilmer's turn here is almost "The Room"-like in its strangeness. Kilmer hams it up while swigging directly from a bottle of booze he carries around, and his voice has been bizarrely and badly dubbed for some unknown reason. And it's only one of many instances of poor quality control in a major studio movie.

From there Harry and his partner assemble a team to study the evidence and try to track down a killer who preys mainly on young mothers with children, leaving those telltale snowmen behind. There's also some corporate intrigue thrown in with J.K. Simmons sporting an indecipherable accent as a captain of industry heading Oslo's bid for the Winter Games, and whom Ferguson appears to be nursing a grudge against.

The film flashes back and forth while withholding details in hopes of deepening the mystery, but the biggest question I had was why no one in Oslo seems to know how to button a coat. Fassbender as Hole wanders around the frigid landscape and through the snow for so long with so little protection it's a wonder he doesn't freeze solid right on camera. Which brings us to those Snowmen. As much as the film would like to terrorize, Snowmen aren't exactly the things to send chills down your spine. And the sight of a human head on a Snowman's body is more likely to induce chuckles than shrieks.



Michael Fassbender is Harry Hole (Chortle) in 'The Snowman'

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

"The Snowman" was executive produced by Martin Scorsese, and filmed by "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" director Tomas Alfredson – so the quality was there behind the camera. But Alfredson has said the production was rushed and they didn't actually film the entire script, so they had to bring in Martin Scorsese's longtime editor Thelma Schoonmaker to find the movie in the editing room. "The Snowman" is sometimes astonishing in its awfulness, but for me it never reached the so-bad-it's-good level... it was just a slog.

*"The Snowman" opened everywhere on October 20th. Featuring Michael Fassbender, Rebecca Ferguson, Charlotte Gainsbourg, J.K. Simmons, Val Kilmer and Toby Jones. Screenplay adapted by Peter Straughan, Hossein Amini and Soren Sveistrup. Directed by Tomas Alfredson. Rated "R"*



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