

## Vigilante Overkill Defines Ultra-Violent ‘Death Wish’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 2, 2018 - 10:22am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Man, talk about bad timing. With the Stoneman Douglas shootings still making news, America will now entertain itself with a vigilante doctor shooting anything he sees? Yeesh. Bruce Willis is game in the watchable-but-ultra-violent “Death Wish.”

The preview audience I saw it with was obviously itching for some revenge lust, because each of Willis’s quality kills were applauded like a home run. There are plenty of shootings, open wounds, head shots and brain splatterings... the fake blood budget probably equaled Bruce’s paycheck. This is ultimate fantasy, the type that NRA arguments against gun control rely on – that the “good guy” with a gun can overcome all evil others who possess that same weapons. I got news for you, only the movies can get away with it, and “Death Wish” should really be a reminder that ordinary folks with arsenals can snap like a twig at any moment.

Dr. Paul Kersey is a Chicago doctor with the type of perfect family that movies love to exploit, the sparkling Lucy (Elisabeth Shue) as the wife going for her PhD, a college bound daughter named Jordan (Camila Morrone), and a ne’er-do-well brother Frank (Vincent D’Onofrio) to provide some local flavor. Everything about Paul’s life is shattered when burglars kill Lucy and puts Jordan into a coma.



Bang Bang: Dr. Paul (Bruce Willis) has a ‘Death Wish’

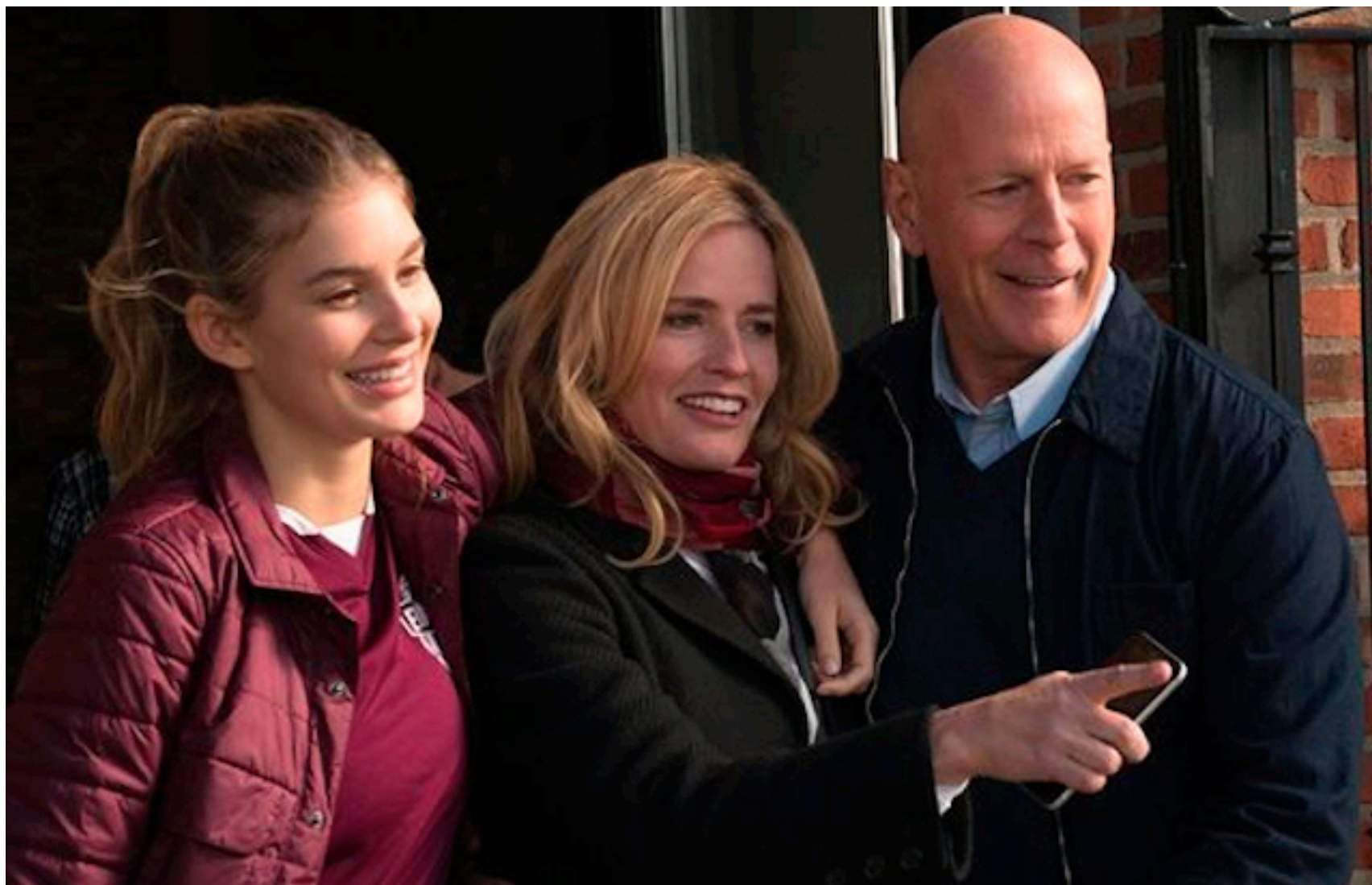


Photo credit: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

The doctor descends into a kind of madness, motivated by the inability of two Chicago detectives (Dean Norris and Kimberly Elise) to find the killers. Spurred by internet gun videos, Paul begins to train on weaponry, bent on his own vigilante justice. His first kill is captured on viral video, and he is given the nickname "Grim Reaper." Working outside the law, he gets closer to the actual perpetrators of his wife's murder.

"Death Wish" is a reboot of sorts, as Charles Bronson played the Bruce Willis character in five movies from 1974 to 1994. The vigilanteism is the same, but the kills are grosser with the doctor is in the house. Close ups of wounds were director Eli Roth's thing, tied into some pretty elaborate torture scenes by both the perpetrators and their punisher. I'm not a big fan of movie violence, so this is stomach turning stuff, and in connection with the recent school shooting it's horrible or welcome timing, depending on your point of view.

Bruce Willis wears a hoodie as the "Grim Reaper," as he did in M. Night Shyamalan's "Unbreakable" in 2000, and the tantalizing possibility that it could be the same character (who was invulnerable) was dashed when Paul suffers an injury shooting a gun. Willis is his usual steady self, but maybe he needs to do a comedy, for his stone face action hero act is fading. The low key approach he has as the doctor vigilante is contrary to what he actually does in the film at times, but it can be rationalized that his wife's murder broke him. Had the film kept with that theme, it might have been more subtle.



Dr. Paul Manages a Smile with Lucy (Elisabeth Shue, center) and Jordan (Camila Morrone) in 'Death Wish'

Photo credit: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

The ending is very irritating, it looked hastily tagged on after a test screening rejected another ending. Director Roth and story adapter Joe Carnahan teetered on the edge of doing something different, there were some cinematic stylings inside the man-on-a-mission scenario, but it never gelled and devolved into ordinariness... the ending came from a mile away. Was there another ending? It could have been woven into what Charles Bronson said regarding the original Death Wish..."If my films have a lesson, it's that violence doesn't pay. My opinion is that violence only breeds violence."

So amid the current gun debate and desperate sadness of another mass shooting we get the movie hero who always hits his target, and always recovers from his wounds. We also get an array of firearms, a gun store with large breasted female clerks, and Bruce Willis kicking ass once again. Ain't that America...

*"Death Wish" opens everywhere on March 2nd. Featuring Bruce Willis, Elisabeth Shue, Vincent D'Onofrio, Camila Morrone, Dean Norris and Kimberly Elise. Screenplay adapted by Joe Carnahan. Directed by Eli Roth. Rated "R"*



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