

Kill the Irishman

Ah, the age old question: How many people can you blow up in a film before it becomes gratuitous? Kill the Irishman tells the true story of Daniel Greene (played by Ray Stevenson), an Irish dock worker who becomes union boss, then thug, then even worse thug. Stevenson executes the role of sinner/saint, which is I guess how director Jonathan Hensleigh wants us to see Greene. Sure, maybe the word “executes” isn’t the best choice.

I didn’t want to report in this review that this film is just another mob movie. Well, it is but it’s maybe a notch above most mobster films. Greene rose to power in the 1970s, and the film captures the feel of the 70s mostly through cars. Then, those cars are blown up, along with a great supporting cast namely Christopher Walken, Vincent D’Onofrio (from Law and Order fame). Yep. All blown up. Does anyone remember Second City TV, when John Candy was one of the performers (this goes way back)? There was a skit where two hicks review movies—and they give the best reviews to those films where “things blowed up real good.” This film would have won their equivalent to an Academy Award.

Val Kilmer plays Joe Manditski, the cop after Greene. I would say he’s “chasing” Greene in the film, but sheesh I don’t think Val Kilmer is chasing anyone these days. And I thought Vincent D’Onofrio let himself go. What happened to this sexy, trim actor who turned on audiences as the lead in Batman Forever (1995) and in The Doors (1991) lead singer Jim Morrison? Could it be he wasn’t getting the sexy roles anymore? Like the lead in The Ten Commandments: The Musical (2006, really look it up; I’m not kidding).

Okay, now I really feel bad because of what I said about Val Kilmer. I hope this is the turnaround role for him, really. On second thought, it’s not going to be. His part is (like most of the roles in this film) a stereotype. This movie reminds me of The American (2009) with George Clooney—you want it to be so much better. Admittedly, Kill the Irishman gets a little closer to its mark than the Clooney film, but in the end not by much.

So if you’re one who likes to see things “blow up real good,” then definitely see Kill the Irishman. There are some great lines, but in the end this is really just another mob film that aspired to be more. We lost Hollywood legend, Elizabeth Taylor, this week. For a free pass to the 2011 Cape May Film Festival (October 21-23), be the first to email us at capemayfilm@hotmail.com the names of both films for which she won the Oscar.