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The Bricklayer (2024 film)

The Bricklayer is a 2024 American action thriller film directed by Renny Harlin and written by Hanna Weg and Matt Johnson, based on the 2010 novel of the same name by Paul Lindsay under his pen name Noah Boyd, and starring Aaron Eckhart, Nina Dobrev, Tim Blake Nelson, Ilfenesh Hadera, and Clifton Collins Jr.

The film was released on January 5, 2024 in the United States by Vertical Entertainment.

Plot

Steve Vail, a disillusioned and hardened CIA field agent, has moved on in life to become a bricklayer with a penchant for classical jazz. When three international journalists have been murdered within a month, the CIA needs him again. The victims included an outspoken critic of U.S. intelligence activities across the world, and the CIA is being framed as being responsible for the killings. Kate, a highly trained expert agent at CIA headquarters, scours surveillance footage and discovers former asset Victor Radek is alive and likely responsible for the murders. Vail had been his handler and friend. Kate and CIA Director O'Malley fly to Philadelphia to recruit Vail but he declines. They tell him that Radek, who had aligned himself with the CIA to gain asylum, had had his cover blown and his family killed by the Russians. He faked his death and has been on a vengeance-fueled rampage since. Vail has to determine who the traitor in the CIA is, stop Radek's killing spree, and salvage the CIA's reputation. Returning to his bricklaying, Vail is shot at and attacked. Discovering the men were sent by Radek, he reluctantly takes on the job.

Arriving in Greece, Vail ditches their cover and instead gets a whole new more glamorous cover and equipment from his old friend Patricio. Vail then ditches Kate at their hotel and sneaks away. Vail enters a fancy party and meets his old flame and local CIA station chief, Tye. He tells her his mission to find Radek, she warns him Kostas is a target, and that former informant turned gangster Sten might have information about Radek. Vail confronts Sten at a pool party and gets into a fight with his security. Having placed a tracker on him earlier, Kate arrives in time to help him get away. Vail explains that he had been the one assigned to kill Radek. The CIA receives a threat and ransom message from a person who wants to punish them for their wrongdoings,

The Bricklayer



Release poster

Directed by	<u>Renny Harlin</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Hanna Weg</u> <u>Matt Johnson</u>
Based on	<i>The Bricklayer</i> by <u>Paul Lindsay</u>
Produced by	<u>Jeffrey Greenstein</u> <u>Yariv Lerner</u> <u>Jonathan Yunger</u> <u>Heidi Jo Markel</u> <u>Robert Van Norden</u>
Starring	<u>Aaron Eckhart</u> <u>Nina Dobrev</u> <u>Tim Blake Nelson</u> <u>Ilfenesh Hadera</u> <u>Clifton Collins Jr.</u>

demanding a huge payment in Bitcoin. Vail knew about Kate's tracker and had transferred it to Sten. They break into Sten's house and look for evidence. Using his expertise Vail notices something in the brickwork and discovers hidden documents. Kate finds Greta Becker's phone. Sten's bodyguard enters the house unexpected. Despite her training Kate fails to shoot the man, but ultimately Vail is able to kill him. Analyzing the phone Patricio tells them where they can find the next target Alekos Melas. They reach the location and see a peaceful march turning into a fight. Vail suddenly receives a call from Radek. Radek believes the agency blew his cover because he couldn't complete one of their assignments. That's why he started blackmailing the CIA. Before Vail can catch him, Radek kills Melas and drives away.

Kate fears that Radek’s list of active targets will antagonize the agency. Vail suspects that O'Malley is the mole. Vail finds it difficult to trust the agency, and his accusations anger Kate. He visits Tye and reignites their old spark. Kate finds two burner phones in Vail's bag and begins to suspect him too. Vail admits he is in contact with Radek but does not disclose why.

They reach Patricio's storehouse but he has been tracked and killed by Sten's men. Vail starts shooting them one by one. However, they find Kate and blackmail him to act as per their needs. He offers himself in exchange for her safety. Moments after, a bomb goes off leaving all of Sten’s crew dead, whereas Vail walks out safely. O'Malley decides to remove Vail from their mission after the difficulties he has caused with local police. O'Malley sends Kate to make the ransom drop. Vail refuses to end the mission and tracks Kate, taking her place at the money transfer. Vail enters a café backroom and finds a laptop to transfer the money and speaks with Radek. Radek plans to assassinate Kostas and reveal what the CIA has done. The room is booby trapped with a bomb but Vail barely manages to survive the explosion. Vail goes to where Kostas is making a speech, and spots Radek on a platform disguised as a cameraman. Finding a sledgehammer, Vail knocks the platform causing Radek to miss. Vail apologizes to Radek for failing to protect his family then shoots Radek dead.

O’Malley covers for Vail with the local police, saying he was working for the agency. The CIA finds Radek's manifesto with all his targets. Vail meets Tye in her hotel and learns she worked against him and helped Radek with the list. Tye leaves while men come to kill Vail. Kate arrives and doesn't hesitate to shoot and kill Tye who is driving straight at her. The case fully resolved, O'Malley offers Kate a promotion, but instead she decides to find another way to serve her county outside of the agency. Vail returns to his work as a bricklayer. Vail says that a brick's form gives him purpose. O'Malley considers that to be just an incoherent rambling.

Cinematography	Matti Eerikäinen
Edited by	Iain Erskine
Music by	<u>Walter Mair</u>
Production companies	<u>Millennium Media</u> Eclectic Pictures
Distributed by	<u>Vertical Entertainment</u>
Release date	January 5, 2024
Running time	110 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	\$896,846 ^[1]

Cast

- Aaron Eckhart as Vail, a former CIA operative and bricklayer
- Nina Dobrev as Kate, a junior CIA agent working with Vail
- Clifton Collins Jr. as Radek, a former operative and friend of Vail
- Tim Blake Nelson as O'Malley, the Director of the CIA
- Ilfenesh Hadera as Tye, CIA Thessaloniki Station Chief

- Ori Pfeffer as Sten

Production

The film was announced in August 2011, with Gerard Butler set to star and produce.^[2] In January 2022, it was announced that Eckhart would replace Butler as the lead.^[3] In February 2022, it was announced that Dobrev joined the cast.^[4] Later that same month, it was announced that Tim Blake Nelson and Clifton Collins Jr. joined the cast.^[5] In May 2022, it was reported that Hadera was also cast.^[6]

Principal photography began in Thessaloniki, Greece, in March 2022.^[7] Filming took place at Nu Boyana Film Studios in Bulgaria and Greece.^[5]

Release

In May 2022, it was reported that Screen Media acquired the North American distribution rights to the film.^[6] However, Vertical Entertainment was reported in October 2023 to have picked up the rights and set an January 5, 2024 day-and-date release in the United States.^{[8][9]}

Critical reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 50% of 22 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5/10.^[10]

Dennis Harvey of Variety wrote: "There may be nothing memorable enough here to stir great enthusiasm for another Steve Vail outing, given basic genre components sufficiently generic to seem more MacGruber than 007. But while you're watching, Harlin and company provide a fun ride".^[11]

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