

= Kill the Irishman =

Kill the Irishman (alternatively known as Bulletproof Gangster) is a 2011 American biographical crime film directed by Jonathan Hensleigh , and starring Ray Stevenson , Vincent D 'Onofrio , Christopher Walken , and Val Kilmer . Written by Hensleigh (along with Jeremy Walters) , it is based on the life of Irish @-@ American gangster Danny Greene , and was adapted from the book To Kill the Irishman : The War That Crippled the Mafia by Rick Porrello .

Before entering production , Kill the Irishman had a troubled development stage that lasted over a decade . Production commenced in 2009 , with filming taking place in and around Detroit . The film chronicles the rise and fall of Danny Greene . He worked as a longshoreman in the Cleveland docks , until being chosen to serve as interim president in 1961 . In 1964 , he was convicted of embezzling \$ 11 @,@ 500 of the union 's funds . After his conviction , Greene rose through the criminal underworld in Cleveland , and waged war on the Mafia for control of the city . After many failed attempts , Greene was assassinated on October 6 , 1977 by contract killer Ray Ferritto . His death ultimately led to the demise of the Cleveland Mafia .

Released in the United States on March 11 , 2011 , Kill the Irishman premiered at the Landmark Sunshine Cinema in New York City . Most of the cast , including Stevenson and D ? Onofrio , were in attendance . Shondor Birns ' niece was also present . The film was met with mixed @-@ positive reviews upon release , but some criticized the purported similarities to Martin Scorsese 's Goodfellas . Kill the Irishman grossed \$ 1 @,@ 188 @,@ 194 at the domestic box office , against a production budget of \$ 12 million .

= = Plot = =

In 1960 , Danny Greene and his childhood friends Billy McComber and Art Snepenger are longshoremen at the Cleveland docks . Meanwhile , the members are exploited by corrupt union boss , Jerry Merke and the leadership of the ILA union urges Greene to run against him . Meanwhile , Snepenger can 't pay a gambling debt to Cleveland Mafia Capo John Nardi . In return for Snepenger 's debt being forgiven , Greene supplies Nardi 's crew with goods stolen from the docks . Merke finds out , demands a cut of Greene 's profits , and then sends an enforcer to kill him . Instead , Greene beats up the enforcer , then beats up Merke , throws the union leader out of his office , and is later elected union president . He improves the working conditions at the docks while continuing his dealings with Nardi .

Greene 's corruption is exposed by the Plain Dealer newspaper and Cleveland Police Detective Joe Manditski , who grew up with Greene in Collinwood , arrests him . Bankrupt and facing prison , Greene plea bargains to lesser charges in return for becoming an FBI informant and being banned for life from organized labor . Greene is released and moves his unhappy wife and daughters back to Collinwood . Nardi gets him work as an enforcer for Hungarian Jewish loan shark Shondor Birns , and later helps pitch a deal to Mafia Capo Jack Licavoli : Greene will force the city 's garbage haulers to join the union Licavoli controls . Greene , McComber , Snepenger , and ex @-@ Hells Angel Keith Ritson terrorize many into joining , but Greene 's friend Mike Frato refuses . Licavoli orders Greene to kill Frato , but Greene balks because Frato has ten children . Nardi tells him privately , though , that , " You wanted to play in the big leagues . Sometimes you have to do things you don 't wanna do . "

As Greene prepare 's to kill Frato with a car bomb , he learns from the FBI that Snepenger has returned to gambling , and has become an informant for Manditsky . That night , Greene assigns Snepenger to set the bomb under Frato ? s car and presses the detonator as he does it . An enraged Frato later shoots at Greene in a park . Greene returns fire , kills Frato , and is arrested for murder , but released after Frato 's driver tells Manditski that Greene acted in self @-@ defense . Having had enough , Greene 's long suffering wife leaves him and takes the children .

Greene sees his elderly Irish neighbor , Grace O ? Keefe , being evicted . He intervenes , pays her rent , and she gratefully gives him her father 's gold Celtic cross to wear for protection . Greene begins to use his money and connections to help other Irish @-@ Americans in need , and earns

the nickname " The Robin Hood of Collinwood " .

Greene wants to open his own restaurant , and asks Shondor Birns to help him . Birns arranges a \$ 70 @, @ 000 loan from the Gambinos , but Birns ' courier buys cocaine with the money and gets arrested . Birns and Greene argue over which of them should pay back the money ; when Greene refuses to pay , Birns hires a hitman to kill him . Greene narrowly escapes , and later kills Birns with a car bomb .

After Mafia boss John Scalish dies , both Nardi and Licavoli are considered for succession . Licavoli is chosen due to his closer ties to the Five Families and decides to charge Greene 30 % " street tax " for doing business in Cleveland . Greene refuses to pay , crudely mocks Licavoli 's Italian heritage , and vows , " The Irishman 's in business for himself now . "

An outraged Licavoli has Greene 's house blown up , but he survives . He then attempts to demote Nardi and take away his crew , only to have the latter join forces with Greene . Vowing to take over Cleveland together , Greene and Nardi start by organizing the murders of Licavoli 's associates , many of whom are blown up . Thirty @-@ six car bombings occur during the summer of 1976 , drawing national attention and humiliating Licavoli . After failing multiple times to kill Greene , Licavoli is forced to humbly ask Genovese boss Anthony Salerno to help him kill Nardi and Greene .

Having learned of this from the FBI , Greene claims that he wants to leave Cleveland and buy a ranch in Texas , but needs to raise \$ 2 million . Wishing to size up their enemies , Greene and Nardi travel to New York and invite Salerno to invest in the ranch . After they leave , Salerno orders his associates to hire professional hitman Ray Ferritto to kill them both . Nardi is killed in a car explosion , McComber dies in a bombing at the Cleveland docks , and Ritson is shot near his house . Detective Manditski lets Greene know that a master killer is after him . He offers Greene protection , but is told , " My enemies will be taken care of . "

After a dentist 's appointment on October 6 , 1977 , Greene notices Ferritto driving by slowly , and accepts that he is about to die , giving his gold cross to an admiring boy . Ferritto detonates a bomb on the car next to Greene 's , killing Greene instantly . An epilogue , by Manditski , reveals that the investigation of Danny Greene 's murder led to the collapse of the Mafia , not only in Cleveland , but all over the United States .

= = Cast = =

= = = Principal = = =

Ray Stevenson as Danny Greene , an Irish @-@ American gangster .

Vincent D 'Onofrio as John Nardi , an Italian @-@ American labor racketeer and Greene 's ally .

Val Kilmer as Joe Manditski , a Cleveland cop who investigates Greene . The character is partly based on former Cleveland Police Chief Edward Kova?i? .

Christopher Walken as Alex " Shondor " Birns , a Jewish @-@ American loan shark .

= = = Supporting = = =

= = Development = =

Kill the Irishman had been in development since 1997 . Producer Tommy Reid heard that Rick Porrello , an Ohio policeman , was about to publish a book about Greene called To Kill the Irishman . Reid flew to Ohio and met with Porrello , who told Reid his grandfather was a high @-@ ranking Mafia figure in Cleveland during the prohibition era . The meeting went well , and on March 17 , 1998 , they signed a deal for the film rights to the book . Getting Kill the Irishman produced was difficult . Reid frequently left deals unconcluded , and discovered that the script he ? d commissioned was attached to a cover with another screenwriter and producer ? s name listed . According to Reid , this was a common occurrence in Hollywood , and he claims to have spent over

\$ 1 million to ensure the film was made .

= = Pre @-@ production = =

= = = Inspiration = = =

Reid was a fan of mafia movies (including The Godfather and Goodfellas) and aspired to become a film maker . Being of Irish and Italian ancestry , he wanted to make a film that would relate to both nationalities . Reid first heard about mobster Danny Greene from his roommates in Ohio , and believed that New York , Chicago and Boston were the " three meccas of mafia crime " . According to Reid , there wasn 't much documentation on Greene 's life , but after hearing that Porrello was about to publish a book on Greene and the Mafia in Cleveland , he was determined to make a movie about him .

= = = Background research = = =

Prior to making Kill the Irishman , Reid did research on Greene 's life and organized crime in Cleveland . He spoke with Sister Barbara Eppich , a nun , who helped raise Greene during his childhood . Sister Eppich told Reid of how Greene was abandoned during childhood and was raised by his grandfather . Because his grandfather worked nights , Greene was left to walk the streets . He would go to school dirty on a regular basis , so Sister Eppich would have to wash him . She also stated that Greene would sleep all the time , but was a " phenomenal athlete " .

Reid spoke to number of law enforcement agencies , including the FBI . The FBI wanted to make sure that Reid wasn 't glorifying the Mafia . Reid stated he had no intentions of glorifying crime , and that " the whole message at the end of the movie is that crime doesn 't pay " . On a similar subject , Hensleigh also said the " film [doesn 't suggest Greene] was a hero " . However , he did note the film provides a balanced perspective .

While researching his role , Stevenson looked at TV footage of Greene , and read Porello 's book ; To Kill The Irishman . According to Stevenson , there was " quite a bit " of research material available . D 'Onofrio , on the other hand , had the opposite experience . Information on Nardi was scarce , so Hensleigh allowed him to improvise on his character .

= = = Screenplay = = =

Although the screenplay was adapted from his book , Porrello had " minimum involvement " in its writing (most of which was done by Hensleigh) . Hensleigh regularly contacted Porrello and they agreed not to use the real names of anyone who was still alive , " out of respect and sensitivity " towards them .

= = = Casting = = =

Due to the troubled development of Kill the Irishman , Reid decided to make a documentary about Greene 's life ; known as Danny Greene : the Rise and Fall of the Irishman . Due to the research he had done for the movie , Reid became specialized in the Northern Ohio crime scene and Greene 's life . Reid felt that by doing the documentary , at least he could go to his " grave ' saying I tried " . In 2009 , with 17 hours of the documentary shot , Reid was told his film had been green @-@ lit . He joined forces with production company Code Entertainment and engaged with a " reliable " director ; Jonathan Hensleigh . They then signed actors Val Kilmer and Christopher Walken to the project . This was followed by the signing of actors Vincent D ' Onofrio (Full Metal Jacket) , Paul Sorvino (Goodfellas) , and Irish actor Ray Stevenson , respectively . Stevenson was filming The Book of Eli when he got a telephone call from Hensleigh , so they arranged to meet in Los Angeles . According to Stevenson , he was drawn to the script and immediately made a deal .

= = Production = =

= = = Filming = = =

On May 19 , 2009 , the film entered principal photography . It was shot within seven weeks , mostly in and around Detroit . This was partly because the city gave tax credits which Cleveland would not match . According to the 2009 report by the Michigan Film Office , *Kill the Irishman* received roughly \$ 3 million in subsidies . Michigan 's film rebate pays up to 42 percent of filmmakers ' expenses for costs incurred while filming in the state . Ohio offers only 25 to 35 percent in subsidies , meaning that if the producers spent the same amount filming in Cleveland , they would have received \$ 500 @ , @ 000 to \$ 1 @ . @ 25 million less in subsidies . On the other hand , Stevenson said that they wanted to film in Cleveland , but the city had " prettied itself up " and changed , whereas Detroit was - in his opinion - still " on its knees " .

Two incidents occurred during filming . On the first , seven bullet holes were shot into one of the trucks used during production . On the second , the cast and crew were driving from the set , and a pedestrian was shot in the neck outside a supermarket . The ambulance took 35 ? 45 minutes to arrive , and waited a further 35 ? 45 minutes for the police to arrive . The paramedics refused to take the victim to the hospital without a police escort . According to Stevenson , there was a possibility that rival gangmembers would shoot at the paramedics for trying to resuscitate the victim .

= = Post @-@ production = =

= = = Effects = = =

Due to the limited budget , some of the effects seen in the film couldn 't be replicated . Stevenson said everyone " had to be on point " , and that any mistakes couldn 't be rectified by re @-@ filming . For example , the producers couldn 't afford to shoot the film 's final scene (in which Greene is killed via a car explosion) twice . Before filming , the production crew and actors had to check everything on the set . Time was also lacking , with Stevenson saying everyone " had to be extremely focused " .

= = = Editing = = =

Porrello had second thoughts about one scene being included in the film . This particular scene included the murder of two police officers . Porrello felt uncomfortable approaching Hensleigh , but did so anyway . Porrello said to him : " if you are going to kill a cop " , it is " going to change the tone of the story " . The scene was nevertheless included in the final cut .

= = Release = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

Kill the Irishman received mixed @-@ to @-@ positive reviews from film critics . Giving the film a positive review , Mike LaSalle , of the *San Francisco Chronicle* , said ; " What makes this film special and memorable is the character of Danny Greene , who is not the usual neighborhood hoodlum you see in movies , the kind who gets in deep and gradually loses his soul " . Marshall Fine , of the *Huffington Post* , gave the film a mixed review . He criticized it for jumping through different events in a " jerky fashion " , but summed up the review by calling it a " movie with a lot of meat on the bone , even if some of it is tough or stringy . It 's not fancy , but it 's always tasty " .

Rotten Tomatoes reported that 63 % of critics gave the movie a positive review , with an average rating of 5 @. @ 6 out of 10 . Whereas on Metacritic , the film has a score of 50 out of 100 , indicating " mixed or average reviews " . But despite the mixed @-@ positive reception , a number of critics have called the movie a ripoff of Goodfellas . Robert Abele , of the LA Times , said " the film plays like an explosion 's aftermath ; shards of mob movies that add up to the usual Goodfellas knockoff " . Scott Tobias , of the A.V. Club , had similar views ; saying " the biggest problem " with the film " isn ' t that it rips off Goodfellas " , but that plenty of " good films " have " ripped it off well " . In regards to the controversy surrounding Kill the Irishman and its purported similarities to Goodfellas , critic Dave Van Houwelingen said :

" There are certain movies that serve as a standard bearer for a genre ? a high water mark that filmmakers always try to hit , but seem to always come up short . To me , I think Martin Scorsese ' s Goodfellas is that type of film for the gangster genre . In the 21 years since the film was released , so many filmmakers have tried so hard to copy Goodfellas ' success , and so few have gotten even close to capturing the magic that Scorsese did in one of his very best films . The 21 years have been littered with a bunch of pale imitations . To that list , you can add Jonathan Hensleigh ' s Kill the Irishman , which wants so desperately to be Goodfellas , and comes up so very , very short . "

Hensleigh 's directing was criticized . Scott Tobias said the directing " doesn ' t do much beyond filling in the template " . He noted that Hensleigh was telling the " true @-@ life tale " of the mob 's decline in Cleveland , but also said that " every character and setpiece felt like it fell off a truck " . LA Weekly 's Nick Pinkerton held similar views , saying that although " Hensleigh perks up when filming violence , the atmosphere throughout is past @-@ prime , stymieing any strut " . Lisa Schwarzbaum , of Entertainment Weekly , also concurred , calling the film 's structure " pretty square " .

Despite criticizing the film 's structure , Schwarzbaum called the cast " tasty " , and singled out D 'Onofrio , Kilmer , and Walken for praise . Clint O 'Connor , of The Plain Dealer , held similar views , saying the " film 's greatest strength is its cast " . On the contrary , David Rooney held the opposite opinion ; saying the " low @-@ wattage cast " is what turned the " potentially strong " film into a " routine crime thriller " .

= = = Box office performance = = =

On its opening day , Kill the Irishman earned \$ 42 @, @ 925 from five theaters (with an average gross of \$ 8 @, @ 585 per theater) . On its second day , the box office receipts increased by 46 percent ; earning \$ 62 @, @ 446 from five theaters (with an average gross of \$ 12 @, @ 489 per theater) . Then on the third day , the film 's box office performance dropped by 36 percent ; earning \$ 40 @, @ 059 from five theaters (with an average gross of \$ 8 @, @ 012 per theater) . The gradual decline in box office receipts continued until the eighth day , where the film 's gross sharply increased by 373 percent ; earning \$ 36 @, @ 119 from 21 theaters (with an average gross of \$ 1 @, @ 720 per theater) . The film continued to have periodic fluctuations at the box office . By the end of its box office run , Kill the Irishman grossed a total of \$ 1 @, @ 188 @, @ 194 at the domestic box office , against a production budget of \$ 12 million .

= = = Home media = = =

After a limited theatrical release , Kill the Irishman was released on DVD by Anchor Bay Entertainment on June 14 , 2011 . As of October 22 , 2015 , the movie has grossed \$ 2 @, @ 498 @, @ 115 in domestic DVD sales .

= = Soundtrack = =

The soundtrack for the film includes 26 songs .

= = Historical accuracy = =

Kill the Irishman contains four historical inaccuracies . This has been noted by critics , one of whom said the film 's main problem is that it seemed " all too willing to sacrifice historical accuracy in the name of an easy @-@ to @-@ digest narrative " . Shondor Birns was murdered on March 29 , 1975 , whereas in the film this occurs on March 8 . The movie also misspells the name of a nearby parish known as ' St. Malachi 's ' ; in the movie it is spelled ' St. Malichy 's ' .

= = = The death of Alex " Shondor " Birns = = =

In the movie , Greene kills Shondor Birns by detonating a bomb on his car . In reality , even though Birns was killed by a car bomb , there was no evidence to link Greene to his murder . Even though it is commonly speculated that Greene killed Birns , his murder remains officially unsolved .

= = = The death of Art Sneperger = = =

In the movie , Greene discovers his friend Art Sneperger is about to become an informant , so he decides to kill him in a car bombing . Greene has Sneperger place a bomb on Mike Frato 's car , and as he is doing it , Greene detonates the bomb early , killing Sneperger in the process . In reality , Greene was questioned by the police , but was never proved to have killed Sneperger .