

Dead Man Down: Revenge-minded neighbors enter pact in convoluted thriller

Written by Kam Williams



Grief-stricken Lazlo Kerick (Colin Farrell) never recovered from the gruesome murder of his wife (Beata Dalton). It came on orders from a vicious mob boss intent on preventing her from testifying in court. Amoral Alphonse Hoyt (Terrence Howard) also had the couple's only child (Accalia Quintana) slain in her sleep, which left the disconsolate widower with nothing to live for except sweet revenge.

So, Lazlo changed his name to Victor, assumed a new identity, and infiltrated the ranks of the ruthless gangster's crime syndicate. But rather than pouncing at the first opportunity, he opts to toy with his prey by playing a mind-bending game of cat and mouse. He starts by killing one of Hoyt's favorite henchmen (Aaron Vexler), stuffing the corpse in the gangster's freezer with a cryptic message ("719, now you realize") clutched in its hand.

The plot thickens when Victor's felonious activities are observed by a neighbor (Noomi Rapace) whose high-rise, Manhattan apartment sits directly across the courtyard from his. Instead of calling the cops, embittered Beatrice blackmails him into helping her even the score with the drunk driver responsible for her badly-disfigured face.

The two terminally-haunted anti-heroes proceed to forge an unholy alliance in the name of the

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God of retribution prior to dispensing a particularly grisly brand of vengeance all around a New York City that looks more like Philadelphia. I've lived in both cities, so it was a little weird to see Philly being passed off as The Big Apple.

Because he's from Sweden, director Niels Arden Oplev must have naively figured that nobody would notice the urban switcheroo. But misattributed locales aside, "Dead Man Down" is a decent payback flick featuring all of the staples of the gruesome, high body-count genre.

Oplev certainly knew what he was doing in tapping Noomi Rapace to play Beatrice, since he had already cast her as a similarly-tortured soul in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Though the wheels gradually come off the increasingly-preposterous production, all is forgiven on account of the convoluted adventure's compelling storyline, arresting special f/x, and satisfying, if farfetched resolution.

The Girl with the Vigilante Agenda!

Very Good (3 stars)

Rated R for sexuality, violence and pervasive profanity

In English, French, Albanian and Spanish with subtitles

Running time: 110 minutes

Distributor: Film District

To see a trailer for "Dead Man Down", visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9a1J5Cs-e7U>