

'The Outfit' puts new spin on mobster genre

By Peter Sblendorio
New York Daily News

Oscar-winning filmmaker Graham Moore wanted to bring new style to the mobster movie genre.

The Columbia University graduate makes his directorial debut with "The Outfit," a crime drama about a Chicago tailor whose primary customers are merciless gangsters.

The story came together after Moore and co-writer Johnathan McClain took interest in London's famed Savile Row tailoring district and started researching the industry for a potential film.

Moore molded the lead character after his grandfather, whom he described as an up-standing man who ran a small-town medical practice where notorious Genovese mobster Jerry Catena was a patient.

"The first bug that the FBI ever planted in its history was to get at the mob, and they planted it in Chicago in 1956 inside a tailor shop," Moore told the Daily



Nick Wall/Focus Features/TNS
Mark Rylance stars in "The Outfit."

News. "Once we read that, we lit up. It was like, 'Oh, this is the movie!' It's about a man like my grandfather: a sort of gentle soul who makes these clothes for vicious killers."

"The Outfit" stars Mark Rylance as a former Savile Row tailor named Leonard, who operates a high-end shop in Chicago where the deep-pocketed gangsters who buy his suits are the only ones keeping him in business.

"All he wants to do is lock himself in his shop and make these beautiful objects, and he wants to pretend the outside world doesn't exist. He wants to pretend that some of the violence and the danger that lurks just outside the door isn't there," Moore, 40, said of the character.

"The problem with that is it doesn't work. You can't do that. Bad people are out there, and

violent people are out there, and at some point they're going to come knocking on your door, and then Leonard, like everyone, has to make a decision about what he's going to do about it."

Moore, who was born in Chicago, won the Oscar for best adapted screenplay in 2014 for the World War II-era drama "The Imitation Game" starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley.

The filmmaker said he wanted "The Outfit" to pay homage to classic Alfred Hitchcock thrillers such as 1948's "Rope" and 1954's "Rear Window."

"We wanted to make a movie that would keep audiences guessing until the very end," Moore said. "It's a puzzle piece, but not quite a whodunit. We talk about it a lot as a chess match. Every character in the film has their own agenda. Every character in the film is lying about something."

Moore was thrilled by the chance to work with Oscar-winning Rylance, whom he praised as "the best actor in the world."

"Mark is an expert craftsman himself," Moore said of the actor who won his Academy Award for "Bridge of Spies." "As our lead character has devoted decades and decades of his life to perfecting the craft of tailoring, I think Mark has devoted decades and decades of his life to utterly perfecting the craft of acting."

Moore, who now lives in Los Angeles, spent 10 years in New York, and says his time studying at Columbia helped him become a thorough researcher.

"I tend to work on these historical pieces, or pieces like this one that are inspired by a real event," Moore said. "I learned so much from my time there about how to approach doing research on a huge topic."

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