

# Fast paced thrills in Contraband



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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There's nothing more satisfying than watching a well-made and thoroughly engrossing crime thriller. With all the CSIs, NCISs, Law and Orders and a plethora of other crime series on the home-entertainment front - and a spate of blood-soaked action-thrillers on the big screen, it is stimulating to reboot and discover a fresh and clear-cut film.



You only have to look at the titles to know that you in for a great experience: an adaption of the Nordic heist-thriller Reykjavik-Rotterdam, it is produced by Working Title Films, one of the world's leading film production companies, co-chaired by Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner since 1992.

## Shady dealings

Contraband is a fast-paced thriller about a man trying to stay out of a world he worked hard to leave behind and the family he'll do anything to protect.

Mark Wahlberg plays a legendary smuggler who had abandoned his life of crime to settle into a life of comfortable domesticity with his wife and their two young sons. But after his brother-in-law, Andy (Caleb Landry Jones of X-Men: First Class, No Country for Old Men), botches a drug deal for his ruthless boss, Tim Briggs (Giovanni Ribisi of Avatar, Public Enemies), Chris is forced back into doing what he does better than anyone - running contraband - to settle Andy's debt.

With the help of his best friend, Sebastian Abney (Ben Foster of 30 Days of Night, 3:10 to Yuma), Chris quickly assembles a crew that includes their childhood friend Danny Raymer (Lukas Haas of Inception, Brick) to head to Panama and return with millions in counterfeit bills. They must pull this off under the suspicious eyes of the ship's Captain (JK Simmons of Juno, Young Adult), whose long history with Chris' father makes him suspect the younger Farraday of even shadier dealings. Things quickly fall apart and, with only hours to reach the cash, Chris must use his skills to navigate successfully a treacherous criminal network of brutal Panamanian drug runners, such as Gonzalo (Diego Luna of Y Tu Mamá También, Milk), cops and hitmen before his wife, Kate (Beckinsale), and his sons become their target.

## A stellar cast

It features a stellar cast headlined by Mark Wahlberg as the temperate criminal who needs to get his life back on track, with Giovanni Ribisi and Ben Foster delivering powerful performances as malevolent and corrupted rogues, and you are guaranteed potent emotional turmoil and explosive action. It is a dark-and-gritty trip into the underworld of crime and shady characters; a bleak and dismal world in which death is an easy way out and staying alive a deadly cat-and-mouse game in which only the savvy and street-smart survive.

Besides its realistic and impactful depiction of crime, corruption and drug trafficking, it is ultimately a film about people; people who matter and compassionately care about the wellbeing of other people.

There's a moving introspection of the revered relationship between brothers, the poisonous and loathsome combination of evil minds, the gentle but loaded love-hate relationship between husband and wife; as well as undying loyalty and respect between friends.

Contraband is one those great films in which you bond instantly with characters and empathise with their torment, no matter how corrupt they are, hoping that their lives will turn out for the better.

Scandinavian director Baltasar Kormákur, who also directed the superb 101 Reykjavík, has a captivating visual style and commands his cast.

If you are looking for a crime thriller that is solid and not riddled with cliches, make sure to see Contraband.

## Behind the scenes

In 2008, writer Arnaldur Indriðason and writer/director Óskar Jónasson crafted the Nordic heist-thriller Reykjavik-Rotterdam, developed and financed by the film's star and its primary producer, Baltasar Kormákur. The thriller follows a security guard named Kristófer as he is reluctantly drawn back into the world of alcohol smuggling when he takes a job on a container ship that departs Reykjavik, Iceland, and heads to Rotterdam, Holland. A labour of love for Jónasson, Indriðason, Kormákur and their entire team, Reykjavik-Rotterdam was well received in its home country, Iceland, and throughout Europe. Two years later, Kormákur brought the idea of reimagining the film for English-speaking audiences to one of his agents. In turn, this led to British filmmakers Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner deciding to develop the project as an English-

language thriller under their production banner, Working Title. Read more at [www.writingstudio.co.za/page3988.html](http://www.writingstudio.co.za/page3988.html)

*Rating 4/5*

## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Derksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)  
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