

# “COMPLEX NUANCES IN THE UNDERWORLD: DUSK FOR A HITMAN” BY KEN HALL

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*A brutal tale of a hitman that is very effectively presented  
without excessive resort to shock violence...*

Based on the criminal life of a notorious hitman, who operated until 1980 for a Quebec mob outfit, this film, directed by Raymond St-Jean, employs a semi-documentary, minimalist style, with date cues like Summer 1980 to divide the timespan into narrative blocks. The French-Canadian audio track carries English subtitles. The score includes popular music appropriate to the 1979-1980 narrative span.

The brutal tale of the hitman, including some of the work for his boss, and his eventual split with the boss, who tries to force him to kill his own brother, is very effectively presented without excessive resort to shock violence. The performances are uniformly very convincing. Especially memorable are the lead actor Éric Bruneau as the hitman and supporting actor Sylvain Marcel, who plays the tough but fair interrogator, who guides the hitman by using tactics ranging from cajoling the prisoner to warning him of the dire consequences of non-cooperation, to his eventual deal with the authorities as he informs on the mob boss (played by Benoît Gouin). Although the film does not shrink from presenting the violent underworld populated by the boss and his underlings, the well-directed narrative succeeds in developing complex nuances of character and emotional involvement between the hitman and his threatened family, which includes his wife (played by Rose-Marie Perrault) and their young daughter, as well as his feckless brother (played by Simon Landry-Désy).

**Ken Hall** (Ph.D., University of Arizona, 1986; MA, University of NC-Chapel Hill, 1978) is professor emeritus of Spanish at ETSU, where he had taught since 1999. His publications include *Professionals in Western Film and Fiction* (McFarland, 2019), *John Woo: The Films* (McFarland, [1999] 2012), *John Woo's The Killer* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009), *Stonewall Jackson and Religious Faith in Military Command* (McFarland, 2005) and *Guillermo Cabrera Infante and the Cinema* (Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs, 1989). His essay, “**Femme Fatale Assassins and the Time Clock**” was published on *Retreats from Oblivion* on Nov. 17, 2021.

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