Death Wish 4: The Crackdown

Death Wish 4: The Crackdown is an American 1987 action crime film, and the fourth installment in the Death Wish film series. The film was directed by J. Lee Thompson, and features Charles Bronson, who reprises his leading role as Paul Kersey. In the film, Kersey is once again forced to become a vigilante after his girlfriend’s daughter dies of a drug overdose. He is recruited by tabloid owner Nathan White (John P. Ryan) to take down various crime figures of the Los Angeles drug trade.

Michael Winner, who directed the first three films in the series, was replaced by J. Lee Thompson. Death Wish 4: The Crackdown had a substantially lower budget and a more limited release than its predecessors. It was released in North America on November 6, 1987. The Bollywood film Mohra is an unofficial remake of the film. The film marks the seventh collaboration between Bronson and director J. Lee Thompson (following 1976’s St. Ives, 1977’s The White Buffalo, 1980s Caboblanco, 1983’s 10 to Midnight, 1984’s The Evil That Men Do, and 1986’s Murphy’s Law).

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Plot

Erica Sheldon (Dana Barron), the teenage daughter of Karen Sheldon (Kay Lenz), Paul Kersey’s current girlfriend, goes with boyfriend Randy Viscovich (Jesse Dabson) to an arcade to meet up with a man named JoJo Ross (Héctor Mercado) and another buddy, Jesse Winters (Tim Russ). JoJo offers her crack cocaine, and Erica dies from an overdose. Having seen Erica smoke a joint with Randy while in his car the previous night, Paul suspects Randy was involved with Erica’s death, so he follows him to the
arcade. Randy confronts JoJo and threatens to go to the police. JoJo murders Randy to prevent this. Paul promptly shoots JoJo, who falls onto the roof of the bumper-car ride and is fatally electrocuted.

At home, Paul receives a call from secretive tabloid publisher Nathan White (John P. Ryan). Nathan says that because his daughter became addicted to drugs and eventually died of an overdose, he wants to hire Paul to wipe out the drug trade in LA. There are two major gangs competing for the local drug supply: one led by Ed Zacharias (Perry Lopez), the other by brothers Jack (Mike Moroff) and Tony Romero (Dan Ferro). Kersey accepts and Nathan supplies him with weapons and information. LA detectives Sid Reiner (George Dickerson) and Phil Nozaki (Soon-Tek Oh) investigate the arcade deaths.

Paul infiltrates Zacharias's manor. After bugging a phone, he witnesses Zacharias murder a colleague who has stolen a big deal of cocaine from the cartel's South American connection. Zacharias discovers and captures Paul and orders him to help carry out the dead body. A hired hitman, Al Arroyo, helps Paul hide the corpse in the trunk of a car. Paul kills Arroyo with the car's trunk cover in self-defense.

Paul proceeds to kill three of Ed Zacharias's favored hitmen at a restaurant with a bomb concealed in a wine bottle. He kills drug dealer Max Green (Tom Everett), leader of Romeros' street dealers, disguised as a sex video trader. He confronts the Romeros's top hitman Frank Bauggs (David Wolos-Fonteno) in order to find out more about their cartel, but a fight ensues and Bauggs falls off his apartment to his death. A few days later, Nathan instructs Paul to go to San Pedro, Los Angeles, where a local fisherman wharf acts as a front for Zacharias's drug operations. Breaking in, Paul kills eight more criminals and blows up the drug processing room with a bomb. Detective Nozaki reveals himself to be a corrupt cop working for Zacharias, and demands that Paul tell him who he works for. Paul refuses and kills him. Paul lures Zacharias and the Romero brothers into a trap, leading to a shootout in an oil field in which both cartels are completely destroyed. Paul personally kills Zacharias with a suppressed and scoped high-powered rifle. Nathan congratulates Paul, but sets him up with a car bomb. Enraged, Paul returns to the White Manor only to find a stranger who claims to be the real Nathan White; the impersonator who hired Paul was actually a third drug lord who used him to dispose of the rival cartels. Paul is approached by two cops, who arrest him, but he recognizes them as fakes, causes their car to flip over, and escapes.

To get rid of Paul, the Nathan White impersonator kidnaps and uses Karen as a bait. Detective Reiner waits inside Paul's apartment to kill him out of vengeance for Nozaki's murder, but Paul knocks him out. He arms himself with a M16 with a M203 grenade launcher and goes to the meeting place designated by the drug lord, the parking lot of White's commercial building. The car rolls forward and the drug dealers spray it with bullets before realizing that Paul's not in it. Paul fires a grenade, destroying a van full of bandits, then fires another to kill Jesse as he betrays his crew and tries to drive away. Paul follows the drug lord into a roller rink, but he escapes through a back door, still holding Karen hostage. Karen attempts to escape, but the drug lord shoots from behind and kills her. Distraught over Karen's death, Paul fires a last grenade that finishes him off. Reiner arrives and orders him to surrender, threatening to shoot as Paul walks away. Paul replies, "Do whatever you have to", and Reiner lets him go.

### Cast

- Charles Bronson as Paul Kersey
- Kay Lenz as Karen Sheldon
- John P. Ryan as Nathan White
- Perry Lopez as Ed Zacharias

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_Wish_4:_The_Crackdown
- George Dickerson as Reiner
- Soon-Tek Oh as Nozaki
- Dana Barron as Erica Sheldon
- Danny Trejo as Art Sanella
- Tim Russ as Jesse

### Production

Cannon Films announced the creation of a new sequel to *Death Wish* in 1986, estimating that it would be ready for release by spring 1987. Although, the film company was by this point facing financial problems. Its greatest box office hit was still *Missing in Action* (1984) with $38 million domestic gross. Cannon had lost money through box office flops such as *Pirates* (1986). Consequently, they tightened the budgets of upcoming films to under $5 million per film.


*Death Wish 4* was the first film in the series not to be directed by Michael Winner, who was occupied filming *Appointment with Death* (1988). Even so, Winner expressed no interest in directing *Death Wish 4* because Bronson was displeased with their previous collaboration on *Death Wish 3* (1985). Both Bronson and Kohner had in mind assigning directorial duties to J. Lee Thompson, who had worked with them in several previous films, and had also had a good working relationship with the producers of Cannon Films.

When it came to a screenplay for the film, there were several available. Writing duties were ultimately assigned to Gail Morgan Hickman, who had previously contributed rejected scripts for *Death Wish 3.* Hickman's first script, which had Paul Kersey struggling with a crisis of conscience and trying to reconnect with Geri Nichols (Jill Ireland) from *Death Wish II*, was rejected because Ireland was battling breast cancer. The second script, which had Kersey going after an international terrorist, was rejected due to its premise having similarities to *Wanted: Dead or Alive* (1987). The final script had the premise of Kersey playing two gangs against each other. Hickman was influenced by the use of this premise in the films *Yojimbo* (1961) and *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964).

Hickman also came up with the idea of a millionaire benefactor for Kersey, with both of them having lost a daughter (surrogate in Kersey's case) to the deadly effects of the illegal drug trade. Kohner found this an interesting idea in need of a plot twist. Hickman came up with the idea of the millionaire being a drug lord who is using Kersey to eliminate his competition. According to Hickman, he also understood that Cannon producers Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus "wanted a mindless movie with nonstop action", so he came up with "cartoonish" action scenes. Hickman revised his screenplay from February to March 1987, during which time he wrote from 9 a.m to 9 p.m. on a daily basis.

Hickman toyed with the idea of giving Kersey a surrogate son called Eric, to avoid repetition in having the character lose another daughter. He changed his mind and turned Eric into Erica, because he felt that the death of a girl would be a stronger echo to the original loss in Kersey's life. Hickman was also the father of a daughter and could better understand the agony of losing a girl. The previous three films of the series featured youthful street punks as villains, while the fourth covered new ground featuring adult representatives of organized crime. During filming, Bronson requested further rewrites of certain elements of dialogue and action scenes. Hickman recalled going through several rewrites on a daily basis.

### Release

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_Wish_4:_The_Crackdown
Media Home Entertainment released the film on video in April 1988, having agreed with Cannon to a 2 million dollars advance. Over 100,000 cassettes were sold to rental stores. It was the best selling entry of the series in the video market.[2]

Reception

Caryn James of The New York Times criticized the "cartoon thin" characters and the fact that the hero is essentially a dangerous sociopath, but concluded that the film serves as solid entertainment for those willing to suspend their sense of moral outrage.[3] Kevin Thomas commented that while the film's plot is "preposterous" and its characters thin, it serves as "a solid textbook example of crisp exploitation picture craftsmanship." He credited this mainly to director J. Lee Thompson having a strong sense of efficiency and humor, ensuring that hero Paul Kersey's apparent invincibility makes the audience laugh in a way that is "friendly rather than derisive."[4] Variety poked fun at Paul Kersey's naive approach to eliminating the drug trade but summed up the film with "What raises Death Wish 4 above the usual blowout is a semi-engaging script and sure pacing by veteran action director J. Lee Thompson."[5] Richard Harrington of The Washington Post poorly reviewed the film, citing the rudimentary and predictable plot, amateurish dialogue, inept villains, lack of tension, mindless violence, and Charles Bronson's weak performance.[6] In the UK film magazine Film Review, critic James Cameron Wilson praised director J. Lee Thompson's vision saying that "it's flashy without being distracting and more or less gets on with the job of storytelling." He also criticised the script, noting it needed to be smartened up, but preferred Thompson's direction over the original director Michael Winner.

Box office

The film debuted at No. 6. It brought a profit of nearly $2 million out of the other $5 million it grossed (the equivalent of $14,550,159 in 2016 dollars).[7]

Death Wish 4 lost money. From Film Inquiry: "On a budget of $5 million, the film only procured a lowly sum of just under $7 million, adding to the large list of financial failures for the Cannon group who were on the verge of collapsing."

Sources


References

2. Talbot (2006), p. 75-103

External links

- Death Wish 4: The Crackdown (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0092857/) on IMDb
- Death Wish 4: The Crackdown (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/death_wish_4_the_crackdown/) at Rotten Tomatoes
- Death Wish 4: The Crackdown (http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=deathwish4.htm) at Box Office Mojo
- Death Wish 4: The Crackdown (https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v12936) at AllMovie


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