

Review: Keira Knightley shines as dogged reporter in 'Boston Strangler'



CHENNAI: Although the term “serial killer” wasn’t coined until about a decade after the events of new film “Boston Strangler,” out now on Disney+ in the Middle East, the Keira Knightley-starring thriller delves into the case of one of the US’s most notorious serial killers, who police say killed 13 women between 1962-64.



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Writer-director Matt Ruskin weaves this true-crime tale into a film following two female reporters who charted the case for local newspaper the Record American at the time.

What is great about Ruskin’s work is its novel approach — it has a significant splash of gender politics (which is crucial considering all the killer’s victims were women) as we see how reporters Loretta McLaughlin (played with compelling ease by Knightley) and

Jean Cole (Carrie Coon) fight a male-dominated police force and to help trap the Boston Strangler.

Besides the police, McLaughlin — who begins by begrudgingly working as a Lifestyle reporter, testing out new toasters — also faces hurdles from her editor, who is reluctant to let her onto the male-dominated crime beat. But after her first front page story draws the ire of Boston Police Commissioner McNamara (Bill Camp), the editor asks another reporter, Cole, to help McLaughlin and there is no stopping the two dogged journalists, whose passion and dedication finally help get the Strangler (well, sort of — real life events saw Albert DeSalvo fail to be convicted of any of the murders, although he did confess to them, before a posthumous DNA test in 2013 revealed he did in fact murder the last victim, Mary Sullivan).

There are dramatic liberties taken as anyone who dives deeper into the real story will realize after a quick Google search, but the film is riveting.

Interestingly, 30 years after the murders, McLaughlin wrote an article in the Boston Globe about what egged her on to chase the case.

“An editor disputed the worth of a series on the four dead women, noting that they were ‘nobodies,’” she wrote. “That was it exactly, I felt. Why should anyone murder four obscure women. That was what made them so interesting... sisters in anonymity, like all of us.”

Paul Leonard-Morgan’s score is creepy enough to get our hair to stand up on end, though Ruskin wisely avoids showing gore, relying instead on lighting and cinematic tension to instill a sense of horror.
