

Women troop out of 'The Kitchen' to maul the mafia



CHENNAI: Andrea Berloff's latest adventure, "The Kitchen," begins ... well, in the kitchen, but soon takes to the streets of 1978 New York. Set when female empowerment was not widely championed, this is a tale of the patriarchal Irish mob. Yet, even with that historical background, the theme, and the portrayal of the characters and the era, comes across as dated.

There is enough plot to whet the interest, but the script and dialogue, too, is a let down. An abused wife finds love outside of her marriage and, in one scene, egged on by her lover, begins slicing up a corpse apropos of nothing. This scene, along with several others, borders on the hysterical, if not downright implausible.

The woman in question is Claire Walsh (Elisabeth Moss). When her gangster husband and two other men working for the Italian mafia are jailed after they are caught during a liquor-store hold-up, Claire joins two other mob wives – Kathy Brennan (Melissa McCarthy) and Ruby O'Carroll (Tiffany Haddish) – in an effort to survive. Let down by their husbands' bosses, the women arm themselves with guns and turn to their very own gangsterism.

Their neighborhood trembles, and the mafia is uncertain about how to deal with the trio, especially their Jekyll and Hyde personalities. Kathy is a loving mum of two adorable kids used to living by her husband's rulebook. Ruby, meanwhile, is treated like an outsider by her husband's family.

The women's acting is admirable in parts, but when the men get out of jail, their power peaks, then wanes, and so, frankly, does the writing. The male cast members are essentially non-performers, bordering on props, and the character development, such as it is, remains unconvincing. The wives may get a raw deal in this gory tale – but not as raw a deal as the audience.
