

BIG BREAK

The Chicago Code

Grant Park is a very, very dangerous place to jog



By Michael Juliano February 8, 2011

The Chicago Code—Pilot

What we see: Chicago landmarks, like City Hall, Soldier Field, and the El, with a laughably large number of cops on foot or in cars confronting a much smaller number of criminals around and under said landmarks. This is all brought to you by Shawn Ryan, Illinois native and creator of *The Shield*.

On this tour: Choose between three scenic travel packages: the skyline as seen from a helicopter, stretches underneath the Green Line as seen during high-speed car chases and walking/running tours of bad neighborhoods, or scenes of Humboldt Park and Austin as the show refers to them.

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Local standout: With so much time dedicated to scenes on Chicago streets, the pilot runs surprisingly short on local business cameos, except for a shot of the glowing neon sign outside of **Gibsons** on Rush Street and a subsequent, quick dinner scene.

Da Stereotypes: The show's version of the Chicago accent is thankfully understated and devoid of "da"s for "the"s, although the accent apparently made stops in Brooklyn and Boston, before entering the city through Beverly, for an extra hint of Irish flavor. The pilot does, however, quickly serve up some references to Irish punks and mobsters, Hispanic street gangs, and "dumb Polacks." And of

course, there are enough Cubs and Sox references to fill Wrigley Field. Holy cow!

Most predictable line: “You think you can change how things get done in *Chicago*?!”

How we fare: Given the quotes that bookend the show, “An empire of corruption is going down; the Chicago code begins now,” and, “If there’s one thing Chicago knows, it’s how to punch back,” it’s probably not too much of a stretch to figure out what goes on in between. Gang wars, drug busts, police raids, paying off city officials, government-linked crime, and corruption of all types—these are all just part of the local sightseeing, although some of this is uncomfortably close to the truth. Apparently all of these criminal activities converge in the Loop, the most violent of all Chicago neighborhoods, thanks to its concentration of art museums, universities, and musical theater outlets. Two officers get shot underneath the El while, in a separate incident, another officer talks to a gang hanging out on the historic Quincy platform. When the dead bodies of a couple who were out for a morning jog turn up next to Buckingham Fountain, one officer addresses the “two fresh bodies lying in Grant Park” as if they’re a perennial attraction.

By far, though, the most delightful exaggeration comes in the depiction of Alderman Ronin Gibbons (Delroy Lindo), a modern day Boss Tweed. He’s a slimy yet slick politician at the top of the political machine (he’s apparently “way more powerful than the mayor”), who pulls the strings on corrupt construction deals and orders hits. His leather- and mahogany-filled private office offers a view of a beautiful gothic courtyard that looks an awful lot like the Northwestern University Law School. For the significant number of viewers who will probably have no clue what an alderman actually does, the position says kingpin more than the real-life mundanity of the City Council. (It is true, however, that 30 Chicago aldermen have been convicted of various forms of corruption in the past four decades.) “They say Chicago is the city that works,” according to Gibbons. “What some poeple don’t understand is it works in a lot of different ways.” Good luck figuring out what that really means, but at least it makes Chicago politics sound like a whole lot of backstreet and illegal fun.

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daveshayne

Haven't seen this.

Because I really don't need another gritty police procedural show in my life right now but every time I see a preview with these adorable police people talking about eliminating corruption in Chicago I wonder if they plan to arrest themselves. Not say that all CPD officers are corrupt minority beating monsters but a large enough portion of them are that firing everybody and starting from scratch is probably the only way to get all the bad ones out.

Also the loop as a murder scene? During the day there are far too many witnesses around and at night there's nobody to kill. (seriously even the homeless wino bums are gone back to whichever viaduct in the neighborhoods they sleep under by 6:30.) It makes no sense.

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