

## Conviction

This is a heartbreaker of a film with a fine central female performance. “Conviction” tells the true story of one Betty Ann Waters, a single mom of twins, who worked 18 years to educate herself through high school and college, then gain a law degree to be able to personally challenge the conviction of her brother Kenny on a murder charge (he was sentenced in 1983). Her pursuit of justice hits many snags before she finally is able to make a breakthrough with the help of “The Innocence Project,” which has exonerated, through DNA evidence, many of those falsely convicted.

Hilary Swank does the honors here, in the kind of part that seems made for her: that of an unassuming, lower-middle class (she works at a bar in Massachusetts) striver who doggedly, even obsessively, goes after her goal. That goal is not “to become a lawyer” but solely to win the release of her brother by learning the legal system.



Swank is seconded nicely by her colleagues, Sam Rockwell, who plays her brother not as a sympathetic paragon but as a flawed, mercurial man, Minnie Driver, as Waters’ true, no-nonsense friend Abra Rice, and Melissa Leo, who plays a tough cop in on the original arrest.

But Swank’s character is the core of “Conviction,” and she is driven by a kind of filial devotion that is sometimes hard to credit—except that it actually

happened. The movie was directed by Tony Goldwyn, a long-time actor (he was the villain in “Ghost” 20 years ago) who here handles his material and his company with total—what can we say—conviction.

*(Rated “R”, it runs 107 min.)*

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