

The Main Feature



Season 34 - Issue 1 (screening 12.9.13)

USA
Cert 12

UK release 7.11.12
120 minutes

Directed by Ben Affleck
Director of Photography Rodrigo Prieto
Original Music by Alexandre Desplat

Cast:

Alan Arkin,	Lester Siegel
Ben Affleck	Tony Mendez
Bryan Cranston	Jack O'Donnell
Christopher Denham	Mark Lijek
Clea DuVall	Cora Lijek
John Goodman	John Chmabers
Kerry Bishe	Kathy Stafford
Rory Cochrane	Lee Schatz
Scot McNairy	Joe Stafford
Tate Donovan	Bob Anders
Victor Garber	Ken Taylor

Ben Affleck's third film as director tells an amazing story set against the context of the Iranian hostage crisis.

It is a matter of some controversy as to how much of the film is true (see page 3), but we see events mainly through the eyes of CIA operative Tony Mendez (Affleck).



Affleck has stated:

“Well, the movie is about kind of a sub-story in the larger drama of all the hostages and the whole takeover—Argo is just one small piece of that. The story itself was in Time magazine and is actually pretty well documented, but overall, it got kind of upstaged by the larger issue of the hostages. This incident in Argo happened on, like, Day 78 [The diplomats ultimately left Iran on Day 86], but it was on Day 444 that the hostages were released, so the events that we focus on in the movie were like this glimmer of hope that quickly subsided into the general malaise and depression about the fact that we had these people stuck over there and we couldn't do anything about it.”

The story that unfolds is always gripping and often very funny, especially when a Hollywood producer (Alan Arkin) and make-up artist (John Goodman) become involved and cast a cynical eye over the scam.

In a way, the film is all about the technique of movie-making, the spinning of stories that will persuade an audience they're true.



In a similar way to the film Apollo 13, going into this film knowing the outcome does not diminish the enjoyment of the movie provides, as Affleck has combined laughs and thrills with plenty of verve, thereby continuing his smart directorial career with a stylish, gripping hostage drama.

Argo is well-made, persuasively using Istanbul to stand in for Tehran, notably good at recreating the technologically backward period setting, and surprisingly enjoyable.

Chris Terrio wrote the screenplay based on Joshua Bearman's 2007 Wired magazine article called The Great Escape, "How the CIA Used a Fake Sci-Fi Flick to Rescue Americans from Tehran." The article was written after the records were declassified.

Addressing the criticism Affleck asserted: "Because we say it's based on a true story, rather than this is a true story, we're allowed to take some dramatic license. There's a spirit of truth" and that "the kinds of things that are really important to be true are—for example, the relationship between the U.S. and Canada. The U.S. stood up collectively as a nation and said, 'We like you, we appreciate you, we respect you, and we're in your debt.'... There were folks who didn't want to stick their necks out and the Canadians did. They said, 'We'll risk our diplomatic standing, our lives, by harbouring six Americans because it's the right thing to do.' Because of that, their lives were saved."



There are reports that plans are afoot in Iran to produce a riposte to Ben Affleck's Oscar-nominated movie Argo, which depicts a CIA attempt to rescue six Americans from Tehran during the 1979 hostage crisis.

Director Ataollah Salmanian told the Iranian news agency MNA that he was working on a film to be called The General Staff, and which "should be an appropriate response to the ahistoric film Argo". Ever since its premiere in the US in October 2012, Argo has been viewed with disfavour by the Iranian establishment, and Salmanian hopes to secure funding from the Art Bureau wing of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organisation.

Argo's thriller and comedy elements work together deliciously well, and one can see why Hollywood would effectively give their own industry a pat on the back for their involvement in the hostage issue by voting it Best Film at this year's Oscars.

Iain McGlashan

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Argo has been criticised for its historical inaccuracies; especially for minimizing the role of the Canadian embassy in the rescue of the American fugitives, and for falsely claiming that the Americans were turned away by the British and New Zealand embassies.

Sir John Graham, the then British ambassador to Iran, said, "My immediate reaction on hearing about this was one of outrage. I have since simmered down, but am still very distressed that the film-makers should have got it so wrong. My concern is that the inaccurate account should not enter the mythology of the events in Tehran in November 1979."

On March 12, 2013, the New Zealand House of Representatives censured Affleck by unanimously agreeing to the following motion, initiated by New Zealand First leader Winston Peters:

... this House acknowledge[s] with gratitude the efforts of former New Zealand diplomats Chris Beeby and Richard Sewell in assisting American hostages in Tehran during the hostage crisis in 1979, and express[es] its regret that the director of the movie Argo saw fit to mislead the world about what actually happened during that crisis when, in reality, our courageous diplomats' inspirational actions were of significant help to the American hostages and deserve the factual and historical record to be corrected.

In response to this criticism, Affleck changed the postscript text to read: "The involvement of the CIA complemented efforts of the Canadian embassy to free the six held in Tehran. To this day the story stands as an enduring model of international co-operation between governments." The *Toronto Star* wrote, "Even that hardly does Canada justice."

Interviewed by Piers Morgan on CCN President Jimmy Carter was asked about the film:

MORGAN: "You've seen "Argo," I take it? How accurate is it from your memory?"

CARTER: "Well, let me say, first of all, it's a great drama. And I hope it gets the Academy Award for best film because I think it deserves it. The other thing that I would say was that ninety per cent of the contributions to the ideas and the consummation of the plan was Canadian. And the movie gives almost full credit to the American C.I.A. And, with that exception, the movie is very good.

But Ben Affleck's character in the film was only—he was only in, stayed in, Iran a day and a half. And the main hero, in my opinion, was Ken Taylor, who was the Canadian Ambassador who orchestrated the entire process.

I was informed about it the first day. And I was very much involved with the Canadian government because the Canadian government would not legally permit six false passports to be issued. So the Canadian Parliament had to go into secret session the first time in history, and they voted to let us use six Canadian passports that were false "

MORGAN: "But when you first heard about this outlandish plan to create a fictitious science-fiction movie to get these hostages out, you're the President of the United States. I mean, if this had gone badly wrong, you would have been an absolute laughingstock. So it's a bold moment for you, for the Presidency, for the country."

CARTER: "Well, I don't deny that. But it was much bolder for the Canadian government to do it, because the Canadian government was not involved in the hostage crisis, as you know. They could have been hostages themselves had it been revealed.

But as I said, you know, they did the primary work. And as a matter of fact, the American hostages left Iran and landed in Switzerland and landed before the Iranians ever discovered that they had been there.

When I left office, I ordained that we would not reveal any American's involvement in the process, but to give the Canadians full credit for the entire heroic episode. And that prevailed for a number of years afterward.

But I think it's a great film, and it tells a dramatic story. And I think it's accurate enough."

Reactions to **Mary and Max** – 8.5.13

Score **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7** **8** **9** **10**
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Total received – 30

Average Score – 6.53

Your Comments

Beautiful, poignant and what an insight into human complexities! Wonderful
 Was not sure what to make of it Very deep, thoughtful film
 Appealing, original and pleasing film Very good camera work
 Have as long would have been twice as good A real gem!
 Did not find it amusing but sad and depressing Clever and amusing
 Clever communication of a message So weird!
 No great fan of animation but interesting although overlong
 A delightful film and could only have been done in animation
 What a peculiar film, though enjoyable and tackling a serious subject
 Very educational! Was that Robert Winston narrating (Editor: No, it was Barry Humphries)
 An unusual but entertaining and at times sad film. An excellent choice of film to end
 the club's season.
 Thanks to the Committee for great year.

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel	8.39
2 nd	The Artist	8.28
3 rd =	Hugo	7.84
3 rd =	Departures	7.84
5 th	La Fille du Puisatier	7.68
6 th	My Week With Marilyn	7.56
7 th	Le Ballon Rouge	7.33
8 th	Of Gods and Men	7.03
9 th	A Separation	6.97
10 th	Pal Joey	6.88
11 th	La Grande Illusion	6.67
12 th	Shadow of a Doubt	6.59
13 th	Mary and Max	6.53
14 th	Of Time and the City	6.31
15 th	Rumba	6.25
16 th	Peepli Live!	6.17
17 th	Coriolanus	5.84
18 th	Crin Blanc (White Mane)	5.83
19 th	French shorts combined score	5.65
20 th	La Boulangère de Monceau	4.81
21 st	Wolke 9	4.56

Our next film

**8pm on Thursday 26
September 2013**



JEAN-LOUIS TRINTIGNANT



EMMANUELLE BEART

AVEC LA PARTICIPATION DE
ISABELLE HUPPERT

AMOUR

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UN FILM DE
MICHAEL HANEKE