

## Review: Argo

Ben Affleck's latest film gives a thrilling account of hostel extraction in revolutionary Iran. The result is a remarkable historical depiction which is both tense and unpredictable

By [Stephen Thorne](#)

Monday 12 November 2012



**Director:** Ben Affleck

**Starring:** Ben Affleck, Bryan Cranston and John Goodman

**Length:** 120 minutes

**Rating:** ★★★★★☆

Ben Affleck is the closest thing there is to a cinematic polymath. He can act, direct, and once won an Oscar for best screenplay. Yet since *Good Will Hunting* he's had a rather turbulent career. For every State of Play there has been a Daredevil. However, since moving behind the camera, Affleck's credibility has seemingly been resurrected from the grave.

In *The Town* and *Gone Baby Gone* the action was set in Boston's grimy criminal underbelly. This unsettling world was presented in a style akin to the classic British kitchen sink dramas. *Argo*, on the other hand, could not be more different. The narrative focuses on the true story of a CIA attempt to rescue American embassy staff that evaded capture after the brutal 1979 revolution in Iran. Their only way of escape is a bogus science-fiction movie planned by CIA operative, Tony Mendez (Ben Affleck). The resulting film is a tense and unpredictable gem.

It begins with a chillingly realistic depiction of the embassy's invasion by a furiously rabid crowd of revolutionaries. I couldn't help but get an adrenaline kick out of the sense of danger from watching the manic scene. The terror it invokes cannot be rivalled by even the best horror films. From start to finish I was truly immersed in the characters' jeopardy. Moreover, it felt like I was watching a stylish documentary.

In addition, Affleck's gritty direction maintains pace right until the end credits. Even though there are laughs in the Hollywood section of the story, overall *Argo* is a nervy and educational affair. Who says history can't be exciting, eh?

Although the cast includes only a few recognisable names, the acting is universally impeccable. Having never seen *Breaking Bad*, I still thought of Bryan Cranston as Hal from *Malcolm in the Middle*: not after this though. His performance as a weathered old spy was the icing on a truly delicious cake. Also, John Goodman, Alan Arkin and Affleck himself are all on top form.

Once again, Affleck has produced a must-see awards contender. Considering relations with Iran were a key foreign policy issue during the recent Presidential election, *Argo* conveys a far better understanding of the Islamic Revolution than any history textbook.



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## One comment

Joe Roberts

18 Nov '12 at 1:37 pm

So, does Afflek's future lie in directing or can he sustain the player coach role?

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