

“Argo”

Based on a true event (although some liberties were no doubt taken with the screenplay), “Argo” is the story of six Americans who escaped from the American Embassy when it was taken over by an Iranian mob in 1979 (Their cohorts spent 442 days in captivity). After a perilous journey through the streets of Tehran they found refuge in the Canadian Embassy. While they were safe for the moment, it was only a matter of time before Iranian military intelligence discovered they had escaped and where they were hiding. So how to get them home safely? That job falls to CIA exfiltration expert Tony Mendez (Ben Affleck).

Inspired by his young son’s video game, Mendez comes up with a creative plan to spirit them out of Iran. Supported by his irascible boss Jack O’Donnell (Bryan Cranston), he will form a phony Hollywood production company and go to Iran, ostensibly to scout out a film location for a fantasy sci-fi film. Once there he will provide papers to the captives identifying them as his Canadian production crew and get them out of the country.

Arriving in Tehran, one of the first sights to greet Mendez on the way to his hotel are bodies hanging from construction cranes. So when he arrives at the Canadian Embassy he informs his new charges that there will be no margin for error. To that end he endlessly quizzes them until they can recite their cover stories in their sleep. The next step is to take them on a practice run to the local bazaar (which nearly ends in disaster) after which they will hopefully escape on a flight to Switzerland. While we know they all got out safely, their numerous pulse pounding close calls will keep you on the edge of your seat.

While “Argo” is a suspense film of the first order, it is also a spot on comedy whenever Mendez’ Hollywood partners in crime, shlock monster movie director John Chambers (John Goodman) and famed producer Lester Siegel (Alan Arkin), are on screen. Their various comments on the culture of the film industry are a treasure trove of inside Hollywood humor.

With its suspense, humor, production values, casting and editing ,“Argo” is a tribute to Affleck’s directorial talents.

(Amazon Prime)

