American Made Review

* A pilot gets recruited by the CIA and works as a drug runner in the south during the 1980’s
* Starring Tom Cruise
* Based on a true story
* Directed by Doug Liman: Swingers, The Bourne Identity, Mr. & Mrs. Smith

American Made was exactly “good.” To stretch that in either direction would be an embellishment; an embellishment I’m damn tempted to make, but won’t. I refuse. (I’ve gotta fool you into thinking I’m a man of character now, so I can lie for personal gain later, when there’s bribes on the table, you see. The long con, I believe it’s called.)

The story was compelling, and wonderfully captured by veteran director Doug Liman. Cruise crushed it. The supporting cast, led by Domhnall Gleeson, crushed it. Sound guy crushed it. Key grip crushed it. Craft services, I’m sure crushed it. However, the story fell victim to its own magnitude. It was such a wild ride that by 30 minutes in, the stakes were already as high as they could get, and the rest of the movie was just a matter of watching the substantial number of moving pieces get shuffled around.

This would have worked immensely better as a miniseries. The central characters actions were reckless and mesmerizing, but equally as compelling, if not more so, were the storylines that had to be left out, and rushed over in order to make the movies just under 2 hour running time: The ragtag fleet of pilot’s under Cruise’s characters command. The CIA’s puppeteering. The closing net of separately operated law enforcement groups and secret task forces independently trying to take him down, and the beginning of the Medellin cartel, just to name a few.

This isn’t a must-see, but if you’re in the mood for a movie, this one’s worth watching. It has great action, a cool story, and some real laughs.

PERSCRIPTION:

For a better Liman/Cruise combination: Watch 2014’s Edge of Tomorrow (Cruise’s co-star here is Domhnall Gleeson’s father, acting legend Brendan Gleeson)