

Film Review: Ben Affleck's 'The Town' Proves 'Gone Baby Gone' Wasn't Beginner's Luck

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CHICAGO – Only three years since the Chicago Film Critics Association awarded Ben Affleck as our most promising filmmaker, he's back in the director's seat a second time with "The Town". While the film dramatically centers on the business of robbery in his familiar streets of Boston, Affleck importantly proves that his 2007 Oscar-nominated film "Gone Baby Gone" wasn't just beginner's luck.



Affleck's success with "Gone Baby Gone" as a writer and director has not only been duplicated three years later but actually hones his ability to act. When Ben Affleck is playing the role of the filmmaker on subject matter he cares about most, we now see two examples of films that literally are made because he's monopolizing the most important elements of their creation.

Though the hardcore dramatic style of "The Town" is very similar to "Gone Baby Gone," there's just a small slathering of humor thrown in with calculated comic timing. But Affleck is clear his second time around that he once again wants you on the edge of your seat – guessing what's coming next – while developing an emotional attachment to his characters. And he succeeds on all three fronts.



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While Blake Lively of "Gossip Girl" fame makes a remarkable transformation into a junkie and sexual deviant, the estrogen in "The Town" is led amorously by Rebecca Hall. Just like her role in Woody Allen's spot-on "Vicky Cristina Barcelona," she's once again the naïve, innocent damsel who's being pursued by the rough-around-the-edges guy in distress.

Just as Woody Allen puts Hall's character to a tough choice in his 2008 film (starring Javier Bardem of Oscar-winning "No Country for Old Men" fame), "The Town" asks two enormously challenging questions: Do we choose our best friend or our great love? Also, do we choose our great love or the law? "The Town" constantly makes you keenly aware of Ben Affleck's and Rebecca Hall's internal struggle as they seek the answers to these big questions.

"The Town," which is written and directed by Ben Affleck, stars Ben Affleck, Rebecca Hall, Jeremy Renner, Jon Hamm, Blake Lively, Chris Cooper, Pete Postlethwaite, Slaine, Owen Burke, Titus Welliver, Dennis McLaughlin, Corena Chase and Brian Scannell from writers Ben Affleck, Peter Craig and Aaron Stockard. The film, which is based on the novel "Prince of Thieves" by Chuck Hogan, is rated "R" for strong violence, pervasive language, some sexuality and drug use. The run time of "The Town" is 130 minutes and the film opened everywhere on Sept. 17, 2010.



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Jon Hamm (center) as FBI special agent Adam Frawley in the crime drama "The Town".
Image credit: Claire Folger, Warner Bros.

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