

Blu-Ray Review: Ben Affleck Reaches New Career Peak in 'The Town'

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on December 23, 2010 - 11:46am

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CHICAGO – For filmmaker Ben Affleck, “The Town” marks a return to his roots in more ways than one. It’s a fresh and assured sophomore effort by the promising director, whose cinematic perspective on Boston is becoming as distinctive and exciting Scorsese’s take on New York City. Yet the picture also finds Affleck returning to the themes that have obsessed him ever since “Good Will Hunting.”

Like Will, the brilliant underachiever at the heart of “Hunting,” Doug (Affleck) is a man trapped by his familial hang-ups and dead-end lifestyle in “The Town.” He’s a bank robber not so much out of choice, but out of loyalty to the people who brought him up. He’s a native of Charlestown, Massachusetts, a neighborhood described in the opening titles as having “more robbers and thieves than anywhere in the world.” The film then proceeds to build a convincing argument for that bit of trivia.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

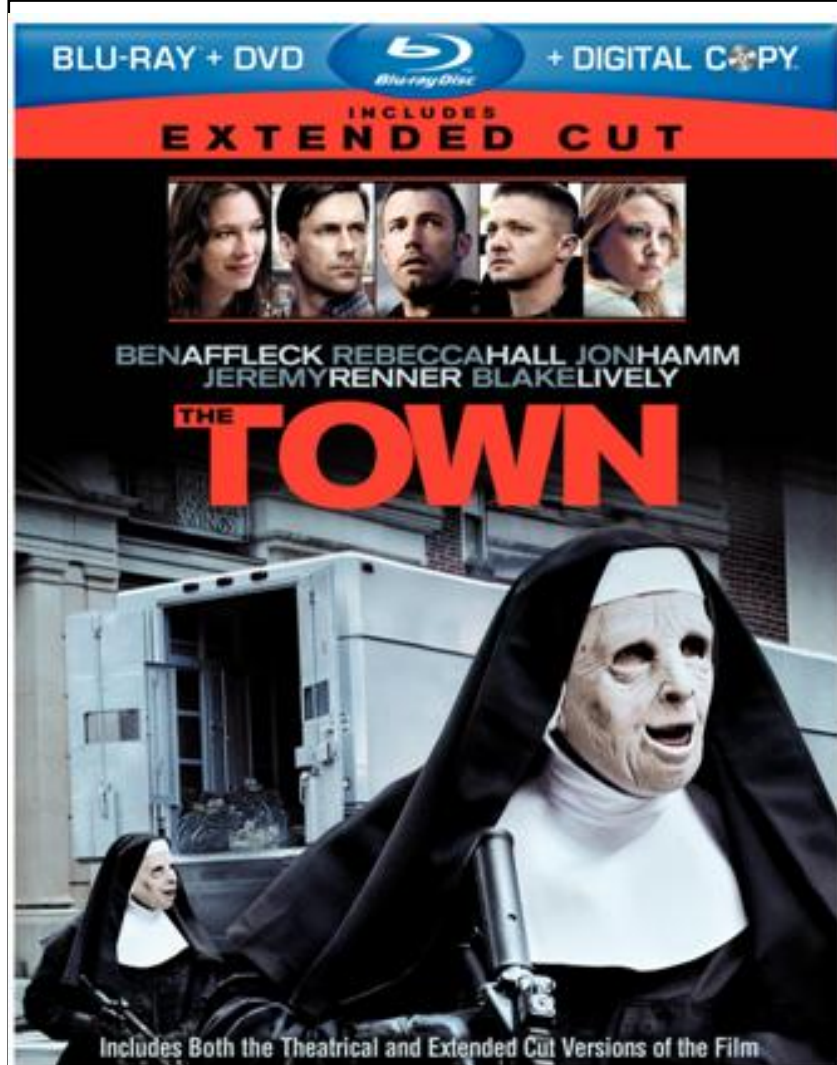
Confined in a community that allows for little growth, Doug dreams of his escape, while his volatile friend James (Jeremy Renner) urges him to stay in the business. In the aftermath of their latest crime spree, Doug finds himself falling for Claire (Rebecca Hall), the bank manager that he stole from. This rather contrived plot development results in several delicious moments of suspense, as Doug strives to keep his identity a secret while preserving her safety. Meanwhile, F.B.I. Agent Adam Frawley (Jon Hamm) attempts to strike fear in the hearts of local criminals, despite the fact that they always seem to be a few steps ahead of him. In one of the year’s most well-crafted action sequences, the robbers engage in a car chase through the cramped streets of Charlestown, while dressed as gun-toting nuns. The entire town begins to feel claustrophobic as it threatens to close in on the characters, much like the rising city streets in “Inception.”



Slaine, Ben Affleck, Jeremy Renner and Owen Burke star in Affleck's The Town.

Photo credit: Warner Home Video

From its attention-grabbing opening to its fittingly bittersweet end, “The Town” illustrates a growing maturity in Affleck’s work. It’s less gimmicky and gruesome than his debut effort, “Gone Baby Gone,” while managing to sidestep the well-worn cliches of the crime genre. Each actor is allowed the space to create a multi-dimensional character rather than a colorful cog in the plot machine. Hamm is so commanding as the F.B.I. that he acts Affleck clear off the screen during their key confrontation.



The Town was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on Dec. 17, 2010.

Photo credit: Warner Home Video

The ever-lovely Hall never once allows her character to become a damsel in distress, while Blake Lively makes the most of her limited screen time as stripper Krista, though she does still seem a trifle young for the role. And in one perfectly written and acted scene, Chris Cooper appears as Doug's father, and tells you everything you need to know about the troubled protagonist's upbringing, mostly through his eyes and body language.

"The Town" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.4:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, Spanish, French audio tracks, and includes a DVD and digital copy of the film. The theatrical cut can be viewed with Affleck's audio commentary and access to a half hour of focus point featurettes, which can also be viewed separately. It's a shame these glib "Ben's Boston" vignettes couldn't have been expanded into a more substantial making of documentary. These featurettes only skim the surface of how Affleck balanced work on both sides of the camera, while tackling some of the film's most daunting sequences, such as the armored car chase in Boston's North End or the fiery climax set in the bowels of Fenway Park. It's clear that Affleck's experience as a performer assisted him greatly in dealing with actors, such as when he directs Hamm in delivering a more urgent (and foul-mouthed) reading of the line, "Close the bridge!" Several Boston citizens-turned-actors are also highlighted, such as Slaine and Owen Burke, who complete Doug's quartet of thieves. Affleck says that gentrification played a major role in decreasing the public's "acceptance" of local bank robberies as commonplace.

The Blu-Ray disc also includes an extended version that is definitely worth a look though it's strange that Affleck chose not to make his 28 minutes of deleted scenes a separate feature altogether. Instead, he's stitched every scrap from the cutting floor into this cut—everything from needless bits of exposition to some true character-enhancing gems that give Hamm, Renner and Lively more moments to shine. Abandoned subplots emerge: James suggests that Krista's child may in fact be Doug's, while Adam takes Claire on a date, thus forming an awkward love triangle. There's also a major hint for how the film acquired its forgettably generic title. Affleck's expanded commentary is included on the extended version, which can also be viewed with helpful and unobtrusive "additional scene indicators." The commentary provides a wealth of insight into the Boston locations, as well as Affleck's approach to grappling with the themes of parents and children. He reveals that Claire's bank safe is modeled after the one used in Peter Yates' "The Friends of Eddie Coyle," one of his many artistic inspirations. He's also quite honest about the misgivings he remains to have about his work, and the question of whether he is repeating himself. When Doug charms Claire with the quip, "I always like a good cry at the nail salon," Affleck says, "That's a Will Hunting line."

'The Town' is released by Warner Home Video and stars Ben Affleck, Rebecca Hall, Jon Hamm, Jeremy Renner, Slaine, Pete Postlethwaite, Chris Cooper and Blake Lively. It was written by Peter Craig and Ben Affleck & Aaron Stockard and directed by Ben Affleck. It was released on Dec. 17th, 2010. It is rated R.

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