

Film Review: ‘Beirut’ is a Superbly Tense Geopolitical Thriller

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 11, 2018 - 9:17am

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CHICAGO – The psychological desperation of life-or-death decisions are in play within “Beirut,” the new geopolitical thriller featuring Jon Hamm (“Mad Men”). The various mazes within the story, set during the Lebanon civil war of the 1980s, is comparative to “Casablanca,” especially through the world-weary expression of Hamm’s character.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The writer is Tony Gilroy, who specializes in creating story mazes within films like ‘Michael Clayton’ and the Jason Bourne series. “Beirut” works primarily on an emotional level, with flecks of revenge, sorrow and time-bomb-ticking personal connections that are destined to explode. The geopolitical nature of the film is rooted in the 1982 Jordanian conflict, which split the decimated title city into “zones,” that placed enemies literally blocks from each other. Like Rick in the film “Casablanca,” the character that Jon Hamm portrays is motivated outside of any heroism, but is eventually brought into a situation that makes his assignment a saving grace. Rosamund Pike, who had a previous 2018 political role in “7 Days in Entebbe,” excels as a cool CIA operative that never shows her hand. The film is complex, precisely performed and artfully rendered by director Brad Anderson.

In the early 1970s, Mason Skiles (Jon Hamm) is an American undersecretary assigned to the powder keg of Beirut, Lebanon. He is the toast of the town, with his wife Nadia (Leila Bekhti) even fostering a local boy named Karim (Yoau Saian Rosenberg). One of his colleagues, Cal (Mark Pellegrino), interrupts a lavish party to warn Mason of a threat from Abu Rajal (Hicham Ouraqa), an Islamic terrorist who turns out to be Karim’s brother. The threat is carried out when Rajal suddenly shoots up the party, kidnaps Karim and kills Mason’s wife.

Mason leaves his post after the incident, and returns to the U.S., becoming a low level union negotiator. In 1982, he is recruited by the CIA to return to a Beirut that is in the midst of a civil war. Karim, now a young adult, has abducted Cal and now demands his imprisoned brother in an exchange... but he will only negotiate with Mason. This exchange will also involve the Israelis, the CIA (with Rosamund Pike as a street level operative) and the hope that a cease fire will hold while the negotiations take place.

“Beirut” opens everywhere on April 11th. Featuring Jon Hamm, Rosamund Pike, Mark Pellegrino, Dean Norris, Shea Whigham, Hicham Ouraqa and Idir Chender. Written by Tony Gilroy. Directed by Brad Anderson. Rated “R”



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Rosamund Pike and Jon Hamm in ‘Beirut’

Photo credit: Bleecker Street Media



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