

Feature: In Praise of Margo Martindale in ‘Blow the Man Down’

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- [Amazon Prime](#) [2]
- [Annette O'Toole](#) [3]
- [August: Osage County](#) [4]
- [Blow the Man Down](#) [5]
- [BoJack Horseman](#) [6]
- [Days of Thunder](#) [7]
- [Film Feature](#) [8]
- [Film News](#) [9]
- [Fisherman](#) [10]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [11]
- [June Squibb](#) [12]
- [Justified](#) [13]
- [Kathy Bates](#) [14]
- [Morgan Saylor](#) [15]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [16]
- [Sophie Lowe](#) [17]
- [The Americans](#) [18]

CHICAGO – One of the best character actors in the film and TV world is Margo Martindale. And, in a sense, she takes the spotlight this weekend in the new film, “Blow the Man Down,” available through Amazon Prime. Her role as bordello owner Enid Nora Devlin is a tour de force of duplicity, power and sheer originality.



Amazon Prime

Among all the cancellations of movie theater releases, “Blow the Man Down” has emerged as a the main release for the weekend of March 20th. The film is set in an East Coast fishing town, the type the evokes the Gorton’s Fish Stick Man, with sea chanteys, raincoats, high boots and New England accents. The film begins with a funeral of a single mother, who has left her two young adult daughters, Mary Beth and Priscilla (Morgan Saylor and Sophie Lowe), with a barely-hanging-on fishery and a house they’re about to lose.

There are women in town that want to “help” (two of whom portrayed by June Squibb and Annette O’Toole), and part of that coterie is Enid Nora Devlin (Margo Martindale), who runs a “Bed and Breakfast” that has always been known to be a bordello. When Mary Beth becomes involved in an accidental killing, it opens up a Pandora’s Box of hidden secrets and desperate lives. Madame Devlin becomes the centerpiece of the chaos, and holds several of the keys that unlock the hidden doors.

Without the right person to portray the Madame, the film could have become a conventional mystery without the right anarchy. Margo Martindale portrays Devlin with the perfect amount of sharpness and dread, interpreting the story of writer/directors Bridget Savage Cole and Danielle Krudy without going over the top. Her bordello manager never apologizes about her service to the community, and uses the

knowledge she has gained along the way to keep the local populace in control and away from her business. Even when the two young women become a problem, she acquires knowledge about the killing that keeps another ace up her sleeve. Martindale portrays Devlin with an alcoholic darkness that is seeking both respect and revenge, and that subtlety makes the character unforgettable.



Madame Devlin: Margo Martindale in ‘Blow the Man Down’

Photo credit: Amazon Prime

Texas-born Margo Martindale has always been an actor who has been noticed, from her early days on stage in the 1970s and ‘80s with fellow travelers Christopher Reeve, Jonathan Frakes and Kathy Bates. Her early appearances included originating the role of Truvy Jones in the Off-Broadway version of “Steel Magnolias.” She became a go-to film character actor from her first part in “Days of Thunder,” and afterward she had notable turns in “28 Days,” “Million Dollar Baby,” “Paris, je t’aime,” “Secretariat” and “August: Osage County.”

Among her many roles on television, she won an Emmy for her recurring role as Mags Bennett on the series “Justified” (2011), and has also appeared in the “The Americans,” “The Good Fight” and as the voice of “Beloved Character Actress Margo Martindale” in the animated Netflix series “BoJack Horseman.”

While in Chicago in 2013, promoting [“August: Osage County”](#) [19], she assessed her character of Mattie Fae, and drew a laugh from other cast members when she said, “I don’t think she’s close to me at all. I think I’m an empathetic, sympathetic and very compassionate person ... Mattie Fae has a different rhythm than I have, she has a different speech delivery, I see that and I see how it is different from me.” But she added to more table laughter, “I am from Texas, and she has the same kind of hair that I have, I like make-up and Mattie Fae looks like me.”



Margo Martindale, Julianne Nicholson, Juliette Lewis and Tracy Letts of ‘August: Osage County’
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

And that is what a character actor does, they absorb the persona of their assignment, while at the same time bringing the properties of their own look and life into the atmosphere of the story. Margo Martindale is that type of character actor, familiar in all those roles, but different in the way she interprets them. In “Blow the Man Down,” she controls an entire town through sheer will, her Madame Devlin is in the details. “Blow the Man Down” is currently available on the Amazon Prime streaming service. Featuring Margo Martindale, Morgan Saylor, Sophie Lowe, June Squibb and Annette O’Toole. Written and Directed by Bridget Savage Cole and Danielle Krudy. Rated “R”



[20]

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- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/august-osage-county>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/blow-the-man-down>
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