

## Tom Cruise in ‘American Made’ Never Gets Off the Ground

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 29, 2017 - 10:24am

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Tom Cruise was once a Top Gun, but his newest film “American Made” never really takes off. It wants to be a truth-is-stranger-than-fiction kind of satire where commercial airline pilot Barry Seal (Tom Cruise) winds up getting involved in the Iran Contra Affair and the Medellín drug cartel, but it never creates an enthralling place or story.

The biggest problem is repetition. Cruise-as-Barry takes off, does reconnaissance, picks up cargo, and evades authorities. Fly, drop, repeat. And more blame starts with Tom Cruise. Sporting a bad wig, smiling through that perpetual shit eating grin and a thoroughly unconvincing Louisiana accent, Cruise is distracting in the lead role. For a man who once inhabited the role of Maverick in “Top Gun,” Cruise looks surprisingly uncomfortable at times in a cockpit.



Off the Ground: Tom Cruise as Barry Seal in 'American Made'

*Photo credit: Universal Pictures*

Barry Seal starts off as a pilot for TWA who is frankly a little bored by shuttling passengers around the country. In his first scene, he's shown simulating turbulence purely for the shits and giggles of jolting a sleeping co-pilot awake. He attracts the attention of a CIA operative nicknamed Schaefer (Domhnall Gleeson), who recruits the pilot to take reconnaissance photos of communist guerillas in Central America.

But as is usual in movies like this, Barry Seal ends up with more than he bargained for. Unhappy with the pay, he winds up transporting drugs for what would become the Medellín drug cartel – think Pablo Escobar – to make some extra cash on the side. This leads to the usual montages where Cruise-as-Barry's voiceover explains how he wound up rolling in cash while working at the same time for the U.S. Government, the DEA and drug lords. Although he winds up coated in the stuff at one point, Seal doesn't appear to actually take part in any of the product he's pushing – he's just a good old fashioned businessman with his finger in every pie within reach. Naturally, he is then drawn into the Iran Contra affair, as the CIA calls on him to first transport guns to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, and then Contras themselves to the backwoods of Arkansas for training.

Tom Cruise narrates most of the movie in character, while recounting his epic story into an old school camcorder in a variety of seedy motels. He relishes his reliability and usefulness to both his CIA handler and the drug cartel, but seems to realize that with so many plates spinning in the air something would have to give eventually. When finally the jig is up and he gets caught in a crossfire of warring government agencies, there's relatively little danger. The film is more concerned with jokes about Ollie North, future president George W. Bush, and the Iran Contra hearings than with establishing dramatic momentum. But time and time again Cruise walks out almost unscathed.. much to his own smiling amazement.





Tom Cruise and Domhnall Gleason in ‘American Made’  
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Tom Cruise and director Doug Liman have made entertaining films in the past (“Edge of Tomorrow”), but this isn’t one of them. “American Made” isn’t excruciatingly bad, as it is just bland. It thankfully lacks the toxic smugness of some other woebegone political satires of the period, but it doesn’t have much to say or a cohesiveness to put it all together. In other hands this may be an engrossing story, but it comes across as exceedingly ordinary and one of the lesser quality products that have been “Made in the USA.”

*“American Made” opens everywhere on September 29th. Featuring Tom Cruise, Domhnall Gleason, Sarah Wright, Jesse Plemons, Lola Kirke and Caleb Landry Jones. Written by Gary Sinelli. Directed by Doug Liman. Rated “R”*



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**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 12:32am):**  
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