

Selleck guilty of bad acting

An Innocent Man
Capitol Square, West Mall, Gateway Cinemas

review by Kevin Law

The current Tom Selleck film vehicle *An Innocent Man* is a perfect example of a good film constrained by a couple of minor flaws, and one great big one: namely, the leading man.

Selleck plays Jimmie Rainwood, an aviation mechanic whose world comes crashing down one day when two crooked narcotics cops screw up an address given to them by an informant. After mistakenly entering Rainwood's home and accidentally shooting him, the cops plant cocaine on Rainwood, whereupon he is railroaded into prison.

If the story sounds cliched and trite, it is to a certain point. But the film, as directed by Peter Yates, succeeds in telling a good story that keeps the audience entertained. Yates is adept at economizing his shots. He sets up character and plot exposition quickly and effectively, without resorting to excesses in camera or compositional techniques. Yates' functional camera placement, combined with tight framing, serves the story well by keeping the plot moving forward at a steady pace with only a few inert movements. The prison scenes in particular are well shot. There is a real sense of verity in the flat lighting and unadorned surroundings inherent in the prison atmosphere. (It was filmed at Nevada State Prison in Carson City using real inmates as extras.)

Selleck's acting in the leading role, on the other hand, leaves much to be desired. One could say Selleck is a solid actor, solid as a blank pinewood two-by-four, and just as wooden. Selleck fails to incur almost any emotion in a character that should be awash with emotion. In the courtroom and in prison, he singularly is ineffectual at expressing anxiety, frustration, or fear. Instead, his attitude in the face of adversity is dour

and straight-faced, even when he is forced to kill a man in prison.

F. Murray Abraham, however, fares far better. As Virgil Crane, Rainwood's friend and mentor in prison, Abraham can exude all the anger, power, and hardness of his character with just a steely-eyed glare or a muted smirk. His prison-wise persona is essential in helping Rainwood overcome some frightening and tension filled moments involving a group of bad black dudes who want Rainwood's hide.

Also good is David Rasche as one of the cops who frames Rainwood. Rasche, best known for his private eye parody in the television cult comedy *Sledge Hammer*, is positively psycho as a coke snorting, temperamental detective with little compassion for anyone but himself. Laila Robins as Rainwood's wife, is suitably weepy, tirelessly working to have her husband freed.

Although Yates' economic direction keeps the film from sinking, it also lends a few flaws of its own to the production. When Rainwood is paroled after three years, there is no tangible sense of the time spent behind bars. The feeling of freedom is not climactic. Upon returning to their house, husband and wife act like they've just returned from shopping ("Would you like a beer honey?"). As a study of a character supposedly morally and physically tested in prison, Yates fails most notably on the home front. There is little thorough exploration of emotions concerning a man picking up the pieces of his life.

But again the plot withstands such a flaw when the pace picks up as Rainwood sets out to settle the score with the cops who done him wrong. Yates fluid pacing continues to keep the climactic resolution thrilling, giving the audience a satisfying conclusion to an innocent man's dilemma. It's a worthwhile film for the story, the audience applauded at the preview; just ignore Selleck's plywood acting.



Tom Selleck is too busy doing time in his latest film to enjoy sucking face with Paulina Porizkova. But he is an innocent man.

FM88 Playlist

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FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 4, 1989

TW	LW	WO	ARTIST	ALBUM	LABEL/DIST/ORIGIN
1	5	4	VARIOUS ARTISTS	<i>It Came From Canada</i>	OG/CC
2	6	3	SWANS	<i>The Burning World</i>	UNI/MCA/US
3	21	2	MILES DAVIS	<i>Amandla</i>	Warner Bros/WEA/US
4	14	2	VARIOUS ARTISTS	<i>The Song Retains the Name</i>	Attic/US
5	4	5	MECCA NORMAL	<i>Calico Kills the Cat</i>	K/CC
6	15	2	RAZORBACKS	<i>Live A Little</i>	WEA/CC
7	11	2	DOUGHBOYS	<i>Home Again</i>	Restless/CC
8	13	3	BUFFALO TOM	<i>Self-Titled</i>	SST/CARGO/US
9	32	2	THROWING MUSES	<i>Hunkpapa</i>	Sire/WEA/US
10	-	1	JANE SIBERRY	<i>Bound by the Beauty</i>	Duke Street/CC
TOP 5 SINGLES, EPS AND CASSETTES					
1	2	4	DIÑOSAUR JR.	<i>Just Like Heaven (EP)</i>	SST/Cargo/US
2	3	4	FUGAZI	<i>Margin Walker (EP)</i>	Dischord/Cargo/US
3	-	1	AJAX	<i>Mind the Gap (EP)</i>	Wax Trax/US
4	-	1	FRONTLINE ASSEMBLY	<i>No Limit/Damaged Goods (12")</i>	Wax Trax/CC
5	RE	3	SOUL II SOUL	<i>Back to Life (12")</i>	Virgin/UK

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- Compiled by Glenn Drexhage, Music Director

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