

Hollywood a land bordering truth and fiction

Hollywoodland
Directed By Allen Coulter
Starring Adrien Brody, Diane Lane,
Ben Affleck and Bob Hoskins
Opens 8 September
Empire Theatres

EDMON ROTEA
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Hollywood loves mysteries and conspiracy theories—especially when a suicide or murder concerns one of its celebrities. And when it comes to the plot of *Hollywoodland*, that's what it's all about: the death of a Hollywood celebrity during the Golden Age of filmmaking.

While the film concerns the events leading up to the 1959 suicide death of George Reeves (Ben Affleck), an actor famous for his iconic television portrayal of Superman during the 1950s, the film's interesting plot combines two independent, yet intertwining, narratives.

The first narrative takes place in the

present tense shortly after Reeves' death, and the audience is introduced to Louis Simo (Adrien Brody), a private investigator. Simo is your typical film-noir private investigator: he's a former detective, he's broke, he's divorced, yet he has a strong appetite for the truth—and he'll do just about anything to discover it. While investigating a run-of-the-mill case involving suspected marital infidelity, Simo entangles himself in the suicide case of Reeves. Simo does this as a means of not only gaining attention and media publicity, but also to earn a paycheck from Reeves' bereaved mother who believes that his son would never kill himself.

Despite the evidence and the police reports, Simo also believes that Reeves didn't commit suicide. However, the questions of who, how and why Reeves was murdered opens up a Pandora's box of possibilities, and eventually entices Simo to investigate further. Combined with a list of potential suspects, shadowy figures and several versions con-

cerning Reeves death, and you've got yourself a modern-day, film-noir style historical drama with a few twists.

The other interesting narrative concerns the life of George Reeves himself, which spans ten years of his personal life. While the story begins with his death, audiences get to learn more about the intimate details of the legendary figure, right from his early days as a struggling actor who later woos Toni Mannix (Diane Lane)—the wife of a powerful Hollywood film executive Eddie Mannix (Bob Hoskins)—to his final days as a struggling, washed-up actor whose only other job offer is a professional wrestling gig.

Both narratives are intelligently woven together, using a crime scene investigation style to tell the story of two Hollywoods: the glamorous Hollywood portrayed on the silver screen, and the dark and tragic Hollywood with its shady figures and unfortunate histories. Simo continually struggles to find the truth in a town concerned with fiction, while the film



momentarily switches back and forth to the true story of Reeves' personal life. Affleck convincingly portrays Reeves, who, by proxy, also does a convincing portrayal of the famous iconic superhero. Also worth mentioning is the performance delivered by Brody as the fame-seeking—yet truth-finding—private investigator.

The strong performances are com-

plimented by the film's tight script and characterizations. Reeves is portrayed as the man of steel, and audiences soon discover his human vulnerabilities and weaknesses, characteristics that are shared by Simo's character.

Ultimately, *Hollywoodland* is a satisfying "whodunit" thriller that will keep moviegoers guessing until the very end—and, perhaps, for days later.

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