

'Allied' secures some pulpy thrills, but its drama falls flat

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «« out of 4

Running Time: 125 min.

How well do you really know your partner? Honestly, you probably know your spouse a whole lot better than the lead in the new film *Allied*, but then there wouldn't be a movie without some kind of a juicy mystery. For the most part, this is more of a pulpy thriller than it is awards bait. And on that level it offers a few fun moments.

Unfortunately, the big reveal isn't a very rewarding pay off for what it sets up.

Set during World War II, the story follows Canadian intelligence officer Max Vatan (Brad Pitt). He parachutes into French Morocco, teaming up with French resistance agent Marianne Beausejour (Marion Cotillard) on a secret mission to infiltrate and assassinate a high-ranking Nazi ambassador.

Matters are complicated when the pair fall in love. Some time later, Max's perfect love life is rattled when his superiors (Jared Harris and Simon McBurney) report that they believe Marianne to be a double agent.

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Frustrated, Max obeys his instructions but also does investigating on his own to try and clear his partner's name.

The concept has the makings of a fun suspense picture and is enjoyable early on. There's good chemistry between the two stars and engaging banter as they get to know one another.

Of course, Marianne frequently talks about how to lie and keep a ruse going, offering some foreshadowing to what she will soon be accused of. There's also some thrills as the two attempt to befriend Nazi agents and enact their murder plot without getting caught.

Once Max begins to suspect Marianne, the film has some very entertaining and tense moments, as just about every simple action and look comes under scrutiny.

The locations (The Canary Islands) standing in for Morocco look impressive, as do the period costumes. One of the less successful production elements is the overuse of CGI. There are a couple of desert and sand dune scenes that look like green screen backdrops, with one in particular coming across as remarkably phony. Still, for a movie that initially feels like an old-fashioned thriller, the dodgy visuals aren't a deal-breaker.

After all, how seriously can you take a story in which characters excuse themselves for lovemaking sessions with a sandstorm raging (and a swelling dramatic score)?

It's the final act where things do fall off the rails. Honestly, it's obvious early on that the movie is anything but high art. Given the tone, this reviewer was hoping for a diabolical plot to be revealed or a character to be driven mad by paranoia and perhaps take rash action. Essentially, something big and in keeping with the grandiose scale.

Instead, the movie takes a more muted and melodramatic turn. As all is revealed, the rain pours down, the music swells and there's weeping. It feels out of place with the rest of the picture and ultimately disappoints.

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Allied is enjoyable enough when it is focused on generating suspense and isn't taking itself too seriously as a heavy drama. When it eventually does, it isn't nearly as effective and falls flat.

The stellar cast members do their best, the movie has a few good lines and a couple of pulpy thrills. Yet ultimately, these plusses don't quite end up saving the day.

***By Glenn Kay
For the Sun***