



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 5, 2010

George Clooney's "The American"

George Clooney's newest film, *The American*, directed by Anton Corbijn, is a sort of combination of Clooney's past films *Up in the Air* and *Ocean's Twelve/Thirteen*. In one sense, Clooney's character is deep, profound, and brooding, much like his character in *Up in the Air*. Yet though detailed and precise he is also an immoral "bad guy," which is of the same vein as the character he played in the *Ocean's* films. Unfortunately, *The American* deviates from the aforementioned films in that it fails to maintain the audience's attention, sympathy, or concern for the character's final outcome.



The American portrays Clooney as an assassin, Jack, who adopts the pseudonym Edward. After years of dirty work, Jack decides he's ready to leave the business, but not before fulfilling one last assignment that places him in a small Italian suburb. Unfortunately for Jack, leaving the business will not be a simple task since he has been discovered by Swedes who are hell-bent on bringing about Jack's demise.

However, it seems that Jack may have elected to resign from his profession a tad too late, as every person he encounters quickly determines that he is a man of "sin" and "secrets." On the other hand, Jack possesses the ability to put together a gun in record time, and can transform a simple handgun into a rifle equipped with a silencer, no small feat, particularly for an assassin past his prime.

Jack has loyalties to no one but himself, a malevolent character trait exemplified early in the film when Jack must kill the woman with whom he just made love in order to protect his own identity, though he is ridden with guilt that often materializes in nightmares.

Perhaps having learned that he himself is incapable of being trusted to not commit horrendous acts against someone about whom he cares, when Jack finds himself falling in love with his favorite prostitute, he realizes that he does not know whom he can truly trust. Discovering a small handgun in the purse of his lover, Clara (Violente Placido), certainly does not help the cause.

What unfolds is a highly confusing, seemingly unedited, and ultimately boring hour-and-45-minute-long film devoid of action, or even a plot, it seems. Redeemed only by an interesting and surprising conclusion that teaches an excellent lesson on the power of karma, *The American* is a film that one would be better to avoid, particularly if immorality, overt sexuality, and long intervals of silence are not your particular cup of tea.

Much of the film consists of random scenes following one another, adding length, but no real depth, to the film. On several occasions, viewers are provided a glimpse into Jack's nap patterns, which often result in abrupt awakenings, indicating Jack's inability to feel comfort or stability, but ultimately evoking yawns from the audience.

Similarly, the first time we encounter Jack's prostitute is an odd scene, involving Jack sitting on a bed awaiting his prepaid pleasure. Clara walks into the room, strips, and announces, "My name is Clara."



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Though we are spared sexual explicitness in that scene, we are not so lucky later in the film.

The film's randomness is not limited to the scenes, but also to some of the characters. For example, viewers are introduced to a priest, Father Benedetto (Paolo Bonacelli), who befriends Jack and makes sporadic appearances throughout the film. In most of those scenes, he is kindly but blatantly judging Jack for the sinner he is, and providing him with guidance and counsel, most of which is wholly ignored. The priest's presence contributes nothing to the story, except that he is one of the few characters with whom Jack engages in dialogue.

And no Hollywood film, it seems, would be complete without sticking it to Christianity, and in that sense *The American* does not fail. For some reason unbeknownst to me, it seems the writers felt it necessary to make the Catholic priest an immoral man incapable of judging Jack since he himself is guilty of transgression, being the father of a child born out of wedlock. The story has absolutely nothing to do with the overall plot, proving clearly that it was included to help advance an agenda on the part of the writers, Rowan Joffe and Martin Booth.

Finally, *The American* is virtually free of dialogue, with the exceptional inclusion of nuggets of "wisdom" ranging from "You're American. You think you can escape history. You live for the present," to "All men are sinners ... but some more than others." At times throughout the film, viewers will find themselves with the acute ability to hear every sound in the theater without competition from the *The American*. Though one cannot criticize *The American* for being a typical action film with more explosions than realistic dialogue, one can argue that *The American* lacked both action and dialogue.



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