

# FACT VS. FILM

Some Hollywood movies fudge the facts, while others elevate truth to an art form

BY MAX GLASKIN



**Sound and vision.** The TV set broke down early on. But Iranian TV wasn't up to much anyway, so housemates listened to English-language broadcasts on a shortwave radio. **FILM**

**Spitting image.** As director, Affleck didn't cast stars to play the secret six but went for look-alikes. He did well. Actor Scoot McNairy, with help from makeup, is the double of Joe Stafford in 1979. **FACT**

**By the script.** The fugitives weren't handed several sheets of details about their aliases, only one piece of paper each—just enough to learn quickly. In real life, Mendez also gave them the choice to be oil executives, teachers, or a film crew. They discussed the options and voted for the movie caper. **FILM**

**IRAN, THEN IFLEW** Can CIA agent Tony Mendez, played by Ben Affleck, extract six American diplomatic fugitives from 1979 revolutionary Iran? Perhaps—if they pretend to be a Canadian film crew scouting locations for a movie, a *Star Wars* knockoff, in **ARGO**.

**Missing link.** Agent Mendez had a colleague with him throughout the exfiltration op, a quiet understudy known only as Julio. He's not portrayed in the movie; Affleck does it all on his own. **FILM**

**Fictitious items.** *Argo* shows the fugitives living in the Canadian ambassador's home. They actually stayed in an empty house in the same compound. It had furniture but no ornaments or pictures. **FILM**

**Beginning and end.** The film has British and New Zealand embassies turning the six away—they didn't. As for Iranian airport guards chasing the plane down the runway at the end? Says Mendez: Their real-life exit went as "smooth as silk." **FILM**

**Smoke and mirrors.** Not only was Mark Lijek, played by Christopher Denham, a smoker in real life, he was also very shortsighted. He couldn't read the sheets if his glasses were hooked in his shirt. **FILM**



**VERDICT:** Details may be wrong, but the movie is powerful because it looks absolutely right and is based on more than a grain of truth. "It's a good story in real life, and that's why the film is good," says Mark Lijek, one of the six rescued fugitives.