

Movie Draft: *Man of Iron*

by Jameson Simmons

(*Man of Iron* is one of five made-up films generated during PoopReading.com's recent [Movie Draft](#).)

Remember when you didn't really buy Nick Nolte as a romantic lead (or a savvy investigative newspaper man) in 1994's *I Love Trouble*? Get ready to *really* not believe him in *Man of Iron*, as a world-renowned architect spending life in prison after one of his far-out designs collapses inward on a museum full of field-trippers. His case marks a landmark in the history of U.S. justice – the first time a class-action civil suit has resulted in jail time. He is a subject of fascination for hard-nosed newsman-turned-weary teleprompter-jockey Mack Dimmick (Brad Pitt, taking "phoning it in" to a new level - although with this dialogue, who could blame him?). So, when the opportunity arises to interview the infamous designer/manslaughterer, Dimmick jumps at the chance.

What follows is a bizarre and meandering second act that takes place mainly in prison visitation rooms and over the phone. A relationship develops between the reporter and the architect, based on shared intellectual (and carnal) pursuits, and a film that's billed as a conspiracy thriller spends an alarming amount of time just watching these two guys shoot the shit. Pitt's well-known architecture obsession leads to several conversational tangents that will be all but impenetrable for anyone not carrying an AIA membership. In the end, the truth comes out about the museum collapse and it brings "anti-climactic" to new heights not seen since 2010's *Rule #3*. It turns out Nolte was given false test data about the tensile strength of a new iron alloy, which enabled him to make bold choices about the structure of his famed design (as one example, the elaborately engineered ceiling of the gift shop was supported by a load-bearing light bulb). Turns out, corner-cutting by the steel manufacturer introduced weakness and impurity, but when the structure came down and impaled all those children, Nolte took the fall because the metallurgist's union had mob ties and threatened his family.

Now, all this comes to light because his daughter (played by Michelle Williams) is angling to unseat the 18-term incumbent senator who's in the pocket of the union boss who made her dad a patsy. She brings the whole situation to Dimmick's attention, playing on his interest in her father's case, in hopes that some good publicity will mean justice for her dad, and an upset win in her Senate bid. She clashes frequently with Glenn Close as Alicia Woodard, Dimmick's news producer, who is skeptical of the motivation behind her sudden appearance and plea for further investigation into her father. These scenes offer a rare reprieve from the self-seriousness and wooden performances of the rest of the film - partly because Glenn Close is always watchable when she's in feisty mode, but mainly because of the grace and subtlety that Michelle Williams brings to her performance. Squaring off against the dominant and domineering Close,

she adopts a proper deferential posture, but remains steadfast because the truth is on her side. Williams operates on flawless instincts, and delivers a gravity and warmth that makes the rest of the film almost believable. (Plus, her face is never ugly and her voice is never needlessly breathy. Her hair looks really nice - not bedraggled or plastic or gross at all.)

With Dimmick's career and reputation hanging in the balance, plus the chance at redemption and political upheaval on the line, to say that things come to a head in the final scene would be understating it severely. Whether you choose to remain in the theatre that long is a question only you can answer.

Man of Iron is rated R for profanity, gory re-enactments of a museum collapse, and some very suggestive scenes between Brad Pitt and a steel girder.
