



Impressions of <i>The Deal</i>

Posted by [Yankee](#) on June 18, 2005 - 9:54pm

At Prof. Goose's urging, we went to go see [The Deal](#) tonight. As Prof Goose noted, this is an independent movie that tries to address some of the issues surrounding our country's dependence on oil. As advertised, there's a love story plot, as well as some boardroom drama and violence to keep people interested.

Here's a summary of the movie in a nutshell. At the start, we learn that the US is at war with the "Confederation of Arab States"--which I guess is supposed to be like OPEC, but apparently can also wage war. Gas prices are at \$6/gallon because the US can no longer import gas from the region. Christian Slater plays an investment banker who's approached by an American oil company who needs his help to close a deal with a Russian oil company that has some wells in Kazakhstan. We soon learn that something about the deal is not quite right, and Slater's character faces a dilemma that puts his company--and his life--at risk.

(Note: The remainder of the post contains mild spoilers.)

The movie is an attempt to bring some of the issues surrounding the oil industry and our dependence on oil into focus. Primarily, how far will we go to keep gas prices low in this country, rather than looking for alternative solutions? If the deal goes through, not only does Slater's company get rich, but the government gets the oil it needs to placate the populace. More to the point, the [website for The Deal](#) puts it this way:

Senator Lucas in the film [played by [Rep. Jay Inslee!](#)] indicates that the government must continue to buy the oil, even though it means dealing with our enemies. How does this parallel our relationship with Saudi Arabia, post 9/11? Do you agree with the White House and its policies in regard to Saudi Arabia, given the apparent links to Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda?

The movie takes a further stab at the shortsightedness of the government by giving us Abbey, a sympathetic character whose passion is creating an alternative energy tax credit plan that will help small companies and encourage the development of other energy sources. Of course, the government decides to nix her idea, and we're led to think, "How typical--here the country is in chaos, and the government is still looking out for the oil companies."

Throughout the movie, there are little hints that the country is in a state of upheaval--a quick scene of a fight breaking out in a line at a gas station, a headline that says "US president's popularity plunges over oil crisis"--but there is actually very little depiction of the chaos that the oil shortage is causing. This may be for the purely practical reason that the movie was on a shoestring budget, but it causes a disconnect. The main characters are rich Wall Streeters, who still drive cars, fly in planes to meet their clients, and work in their 50-story New York office buildings. In one visual gag, a Hummer is driven to a senior partners' meeting. On one hand, it's

heartening--even when gas is at \$6/barrel, we'll still be able to fly from New York to Boston on business. (Why not have the characters take Amtrak?) But on the other hand, a viewer might see this as [the gap between the haves and the have-nots](#). Surely life wasn't going on as usual for the rest of the country, but we never saw their lives depicted. I think the movie would have been much more powerful if there'd be more visual representation of how the other half was affected by the shortages.

Still, while I may personally be eager to see how Hollywood might conceive of life during oil shortages, how corporate America and the government might deal with these issues is an important topic. One thing I should point out is that the further release of this movie depends on how it does in the places it's playing this weekend. I think the movie is important enough that more people should be given an opportunity to see it, so if you're in any of [these cities](#), please go see it so that others can also go.

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