

## The Bank Job

A Review

by Heather Craig

Everybody has wanted to be a thief. Every child has playacted some robbery scenario, pretended to hold someone up, or fantasized about coming into a large cache of money and/or jewels. That is why films about robberies never go out of style. Heist films are a movie staple. From *Ocean's 11* to *The Sting* to *The Usual Suspects*, heist movies are audience favorites because we can each vicariously be that cool, clever thief who is going to get one last big score. The audience can root for the crook, and laugh at the authorities who can't catch him.

*The Bank Job* is based on the actual Baker Street bank robbery in London in 1971. The amiable cast is led by the always appealing Jason Statham, whose breakthrough role continues to elude him (although I do count the first *Transporter* movie among my guilty pleasures). Statham portrays Terry Leather, who runs an auto repair shop, dabbles in small-time larceny, and is in debt to a loan shark. Statham, usually more of an action star, portrays Terry as world-weary but unwilling to give up. He's optimistic without being unrealistic. Terry is told by an acquaintance he trusts, Martine Love (Saffron Burrows), about Lloyd's of London having their alarms down, and the heist is born.

Terry is joined on this venture by his buddies, all equally small-time, equally likeable neighborhood blokes. The planning of the heist is very straight-forward and doesn't take up much screen time. However, there are subplots galore. Let's see : there's Michael X (Peter De Jersey), a Civil Rights activist and underworld figure who uses scandalous photographs of a member of the royal family to blackmail his way out of jail and whose own organization is being infiltrated by a government operative, Lew Vogel (*Poirot's* David Suchet – Hercule, I may never look at you the same way again) a porn magnate with a very important ledger regarding dirty cops, and Tim Everett (Richard Lintern), Martine's lover and the source of her information, who works very high up in the British government.

Knowing very little about the actual robbery, I've done some online research and been pleasantly surprised by how much of the plot seems to have actually occurred. Michael X was a real figure, as were most of the characters. Broadcasts between the thieves and their lookout really were picked up by a ham radio operator who duly reported it.

It is what happens after that that makes the movie even more interesting. The alerted police don't know *where* the robbery is occurring, and perhaps those higher up than the police don't want the robbers caught, at least not right away. And maybe Terry is wiser to the ways of the world than those higher-ups think. Without going into any more detail, I can safely say that all doesn't go as any of the interested groups plan, and the movie still ends very apropos.

*The Bank Job* is in parts a very violent movie, and a couple of times the British accent kept me from being sure what had just been said. However, the plot makes sense and is tightly structured. Director

Robert Donaldson (*The Recruit*) gives the film a gripping tension. At no point was I wondering what time it was or feeling that the movie was dragging. The protagonists, despite being thieves, seem to be average, decent fellows, and we are anxious for them to be all right and to outsmart the truly despicable characters, of which there are more than a couple. As in many British movies, everyone just plain looks more like real people than like actors, and this lends the movie even more authentic tone. While intelligent, *The Bank Job* still feeds that larcenous inner child.