



## *The International*

**Clive Owen, Naomi Watts, and Armin Mueller-Stahl star in a film written by Eric Singer and directed by Tom Tykwer.**

By Josef Woodard

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While he has made a number of varied films by now, German director Tom Tykwer is still best known for his adrenaline-ated and structurally clever *Run, Lola, Run*. To be sure, the running theme figures strongly in Tykwer's latest, in which characters run relentlessly from country to country and lead to lead. *The International* is an intriguing, if fuzzy, entry in the genre of breathless thriller, à la the Bond and Bourne franchises, in which a brave lone gun (Clive Owen) dogs an ominous, eerily transparent evildoer institution.

It used to be that the villainy in these thrillers came in the form of communists, terrorist organizations, or other highly funded rogues. Just in time for the bailout feverish economic

collapse, we have a fiduciary uber-villain—international banking group, IBBC—funding arms sales to guerilla wars and otherwise behaving immorally.

With his stubble and sleep-deprived determination, Owen makes for a ripe candidate in the role, relating in some way to his semi-unlikely hero in *Children of Men*. At one point, the bad guy turning good (Armin Mueller-Stahl) tells our man, “The difference between truth and fiction is that fiction has to make sense.” Eric Singer’s script doesn’t always make sense—or make us care—but as a film experience, Tykwer brings some new dark excitability and dynamism to an old form.

Whatever the warble factor in the narrative, the film itself is a kind of gritty joyride. Lubricating the sensory elements and giving the movie both atmosphere and propulsion are stellar, caring cinematography from Frank Griebe (also behind *Run, Lola, Run*) and under-your-skin electronic-leaning music produced by Johnny Klimek and Reinhold Heil.

Suiting the title and the naturally location-hungry nature of international thrillers, *The International* keeps moving, globally. The film is an exercise in finding the longest, dizziest route from an airport offing in Berlin to a deadly rooftop in Istanbul, with stops in Milan and a shootout in the spiral sprawl of the Guggenheim in N.Y.C. We’re used to the sight of bad guys perforating each other’s bodies, but seeing those bullet holes in Frank Lloyd Wright’s masterful museum gives us a slight case of the creeps.

*For showtimes, check the Independent's movie listings, [here](#).*