

The Invention of Lying Flat

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A Review by
Andrew Henry, Instructor
Tom Sims, Executive Director
Cape May Film Society
609-884-6700
capemayfilm@hotmail.com
www.capemayfilm.org

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Hollywood Henry's Report

Someone once said cops and writers know the sad truth, everyone is lying. But if no one even had the ability to tell a lie, would things be any better? That is one of the central themes in the new Ricky Gervais film *The Invention of Lying*.

Set in a world where no one has ever told a lie, let alone understand what a lie is, Gervais stars as a man who stumbles upon the concept of saying something untrue. He starts to create a life of fame and fortune, with everyone around him believing every word he says. Of course, lies only lead to more lies, and before long some of his most outrageous claims become a matter of national concern. The one thing he wants the most, the love of a girl, also seems to be the one area no amount of lying can help.

Gervais is best known for creating the original version of the television show *The Office* in the UK, and last year starred in his first leading man role in the film *Ghost Town*. The film rests on his shoulders, and he carries us through this alternate universe with ease. We see his motors working as he realizes what a lie is, and the sequence when he begins to understand how to lie is hilarious. The supporting cast is rounded out by a large group of comedic actors including Tina Fey, Rob Lowe, and Jason Bateman, just to name a few. The standout is Jennifer Garner, of *Alias* fame, portraying the girl who holds Gervais' affections. Her comedic skills are excellent and she keeps up with Gervais beat-for-beat.

The Invention of Lying is getting an above average review from me this week, but not an excellent one. I enjoyed the actors, and the premise is completely original and will lead to debates after the credits roll. But the execution hits a high mark in the first half-hour of the film, and what starts off as a unique story does turn into a somewhat standard romantic comedy by the end.

Sundance Sims' Response

I agree the film starts off well riding the wave of a good premise. It's funny but never laugh out loud, then it deteriorates in many ways that some might find unreasonable and others objectionable (except for maybe any atheists in the audience). Whatever you call it, it's a good premise poorly executed. Gervais was fabulous in *Ghost Town*, but more importantly the story was also well conceived and executed. Not so here.

We are looking forward to next week's column where we will highlight some of our favorite previews for films that have already been selected for this year's Cape May Film Festival (November 20-22). Round two of selection process in the works. Stay tuned!