

Amber: Hello, I'm Amber and this is bbclearningenglish.com.

In Entertainment today, we listen to a review of a new film called 'The Hoax'. (A hoax is a deception – a trick to make people believe something is true when it is not.)

'The Hoax' is based on a true story – how, in 1971, a struggling writer called Clifford Irving persuaded a leading American publishing house that he had obtained a series of unprecedented interviews with the ultra-reclusive, immensely powerful, superstar billionaire Howard Hughes and that he was sitting on the book of the century – Howard Hughes's memoirs. There was a huge amount of interest in the book because Howard Hughes was also a Hollywood producer, aviator, industrialist and playboy and he had been a recluse for 15 years. A million-dollar deal was struck and the book printing began. But then, Howard Hughes broke his silence to reveal that he'd never even heard of Clifford Irving, and that the book was not genuine – it was 'a fake'!

Clifford Irving is played by the actor Richard Gere, who has a star track record for playing attractive but extremely dishonest characters. Critics agree that Gere is great, and so is his co-star, Alfred Molina, but what about the rest of the movie?

Here's the film critic Nigel Andrews who says the film is fairly clever and convincing – he says 'this is the film that you almost think does the trick, but doesn't quite!' If something 'does the trick', it has the necessary or desired effect. He says there are some 'spurious' – some not genuine - things

happening in the film, 'to amp it up' – to amplify the story, to make it make it more exciting and meaningful than it really is.

As you listen, try to catch any of the ways the film links to – is 'plugged into' – the Zeitgeist, the ideas of a particular time and place – in this film – that's America in the 1970s.

Nigel Andrews

'This is the film that you almost think does the trick, but doesn't quite! There are a whole lot of specious and rather spurious attempts to amp it up into a kind of greater resonance than arguably the particular story has. I mean, for instance, it's plugged into the Watergate Zeitgeist in order to give an extra charge of kind of epochal paranoia because we're in the 70s. And there's a whole lot of stuff with sort of secret agents and so on, which doesn't quite add up. The strength is Richard Gere's performance.'

Amber: So Nigel Andrews says 'The Hoax' is plugged into 'Watergate', a huge political scandal, and to the fears and 'paranoia' of the time, of the 'epoch'. But he says that none of this makes the film believable or convincing - he says it 'doesn't quite add up', it doesn't quite make sense.
Listen again.

Nigel Andrews

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Amber: Nigel Andrews goes on to say that the film is almost too accurate when it comes to creating the 1970s – it's like watching 'a museum record' he says! Then he jokes about how someone – a very clever researcher using the internet – has noticed ... what?

Nigel Andrews

'I think he doesn't get it wrong – I think that's part of the problem! I think it's like watching a museum record of what someone thinks is the 1970s and you can't fault the individual details. Some absolutely ingenious burrower into the internet exposed the fact that every time Gere and Molina go into town, the same cars are parked in the same place! And it has that feel!'

Amber: So there are the same 1970s cars parked in the same place throughout different scenes – and this makes the film seem a little stiff, like a 'museum record'.

Nigel Andrews

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Amber: Now let's recap the language we focussed on.

a hoax – a deception

if something 'does the trick', it has the necessary or desired effect

'to amp it up' – to amplify something, to make something more exciting and meaningful than it really is

the Zeitgeist - the ideas of a particular time and place

to add up – to make sense

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