

ATMOSPHERE!!!

by Mari Lu McGinnis

The three epic films I've seen this fall were meticulously orchestrated and very successful. Although the outcome of "Lincoln" and "Argo" were well known, I was tense and anxious, on the edge of my seat so to speak, because every scene projected an air, an atmosphere, of suspense. When watching "Lincoln" I questioned whether the thirteenth amendment would pass. Of course it would. It did.

In 1865, Stephen Spielberg created such a perfect atmosphere of suspense that the facts disappeared, my intellect was suspended and I was in thrall to their problems, vote getting, hopes, personal foibles. I didn't care what they did to make the amendment pass. The atmosphere in 1865 in Washington DC was spring-like, raucous, dirty, noisy, muddy and hateful. The film partly caught that, but I didn't care. I was completely caught up in the story I was watching.

Another suspense film, "Argo", also a true, if almost unbelievable story, a one of a kind suspense thriller. I, the viewer, knew how the story ended, I knew the five escapees plus their helpers were going to make it back to the USA, but not for a moment in that theater was I sure that they would. They all deserve an Oscar.

Although I've never been to Iran, I now feel like I know it intimately. Every nuanced mannerism, street scene, sign, conversation, engulfed me in their predicament. Elated at the grand finale of a true story I hated to leave and go get a Coke. Banal old life again.

The third great film, "Django Unchained", I was warned against seeing by my son. Directed by Quentin Tarrantino, it was going to be too bloody and have lots of killing. He was indeed quite correct. However something told me that the setting – two years before the Civil War, as well as the four-star rating might mean the film would intrigue me. Actually it did more in a way. It was a bit of a catharsis for my emotions around slavery. So two people survived. It was indeed lethal – for all the bad guys anyway – and there were many! After all we were in southern Mississippi. I was bloodily rooting for the good guy and his love until the very end. So finally these two married black former slaves are torching the plantation and they are all dressed up in beautiful clothes they probably stole from the big house and they have beautiful horses and they are chortling at the flames as they ride off into the evening.

It did ruin the atmosphere. Quentin must have run out of ideas ...