

What They're Saying about *Promised Land*

January 4, 2013

FACT: This film is purely a work of fiction and is not reflective of the work our industry undertakes, all done within an aggressive and effective regulatory framework. Our focus remains on creating even more American jobs, safely producing our abundant, clean-burning, domestic natural gas resources, revitalizing rural communities and our nation's manufacturing base, and most importantly, doing it in a way that is safe. We live and raise our families in these communities, and have an unmatched commitment to protecting our air, water and environment.

- **Associated Press**. The Marcellus Shale Coalition, an industry trade group, plans to run ads in 75 percent of Pennsylvania's movie theaters, encouraging "Promised Land" audiences to visit a website [LearnAboutShale.org] that it set up earlier this year to answer questions about shale gas. "It's difficult to fact-check a work of fiction, so I don't know if we're going to be able to do that anymore than we can fact-check 'Batman,' said spokesman Steve Forde. "But certainly shale gas development is generating discussion around dinner tables, it's an important discussion to have, and that's the angle we are looking at." ([1/2/13](#))

EXPERTS, CRITICS WIDELY PAN MOVIE

Wall Street Journal's Holman W. Jenkins, Jr. *Good Will Fracking*. In the real world, water-pollution fears put forward by fracking's opponents have proved largely hokum. The movie deals with this inconvenient fact by turning its eco-activist protagonist into an agent provocateur of the oil company, whose job is to discredit the environmental opposition from within. Which is very much like what ideological critics are saying about Mr. Damon's "Promised Land"—that the film's backers are an unholy alliance of green money and oil sheiks out to abort America's fracking windfall. **Bad art is bad art**. It seeks to compensate for its own lack of confidence by inflating the stakes. What makes fracking fascinating is precisely the quotidian fact that, in every way, we are inclined to celebrate economic progress except when it disturbs our own familiar scenery and routines. **Fracking, for this reason, is proving to be the most carefully observed, policed and debated industrial revolution in the history of industrial revolutions. And a movie that had the courage to be interesting about all this might actually be worth watching.** ([12/11/12](#))

New York Times' A. O. Scott. Those seeking scientific information [about natural gas] will need to look elsewhere. ([12/27/12](#))

Las Vegas Weekly's Josh Bell. 'Promised Land' delivers a manipulative political message. Watching Promised Land, it's hard to imagine it as anything other than a machine designed to deliver the anti-fracking message. ... There's never a question of where the filmmakers' sympathies lie, nor is there ever a point at which the perfunctory character arcs go beyond window dressing for the political message. ([1/2/13](#))

William Bennett on CNN. Damon's film 'Promised Land' overlooks fracking's boon to U.S. I won't give away the film's ending, except to say that its anti-fracking message relies

predominantly on scare tactics. ... **"Promised Land" offers little credible, scientific evidence to illustrate the alleged dangers of hydraulic fracturing.** It's worth noting -- because "Promised Land" does not -- the head of the EPA, Lisa Jackson, is on record as saying, "In no case have we made a definitive determination that the fracking process has caused chemicals to enter ground water." ... A monumental energy revolution is under way in this country. And while industry leaders and politicians are debating the best way to effectively and safely bring the benefits of this revolution to millions of Americans, **Damon and his colleagues instead aim to frighten the potential benefactors of this revolution.** ([1/2/13](#))

John Hanger. Promised Land blows it. This movie sends the **horribly unfair, false message that those who sign drilling leases typically are greedy, stupid, and waste their gains on conspicuous consumption like sports cars.** And so Promised Land becomes **grating, arrogant, elitist** especially since this bad sermon is coming from the fabulously wealthy Matt Damon and his Persian Gulf investors. ... Damon disingenuously insists that the film is even handed and that the film not showing the result of the community vote on gas drilling proves it is so. Really? **Damon must think that his viewers are fools** and perhaps making movies is "just a job," the dismissive phrase employed more than a few times to deride or excuse earning a living in the gas industry. ... **Those who hate natural gas production will find Promised Land safe, comfortable but not deep.** Also, the movie's Abu Dhabi financiers will be pleased, as the movie contains a vignette dismissing the idea that US gas could decrease oil imports and generally assails fracking. ... Though the Abu Dhabi investors get their money's worth, **Promised Land insults the many millions who work in or with the US gas industry, lease their land, or receive royalty checks.** ... In Promised Land, ignorance is bliss. ([1/2/13](#))

Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity fellow in National Review. Fracking Fiction. On the pros and cons of fracking, **Promised Land is pitiful.** The plot rests on the assumption that fracking contaminates water. But Lisa Jackson, who just resigned as head of the Environmental Protection Agency, has reluctantly told Congress that there are no "proven cases where the fracking process itself has affected water." ... Environmental groups have been caught repeatedly using shoddy science to further their cause. ([1/1/13](#))

Los Angeles Times' Oliver Gettell. 'Promised Land': Drilling drama lacks depth, critics say. The Times' Kenneth Turan writes that "Promised Land" has "a strong cast and an intriguing premise that has the added bonus of real-world relevance," but **"the film flounders** before it reaches its conclusion" and is ultimately "too gimmicky for its evident earnestness." ... Michael Phillips of the Chicago Tribune describes... "the script as unconvincing; two key narrative twists, one related to the other, are **deeply hokey.**"

New York Post's Kyle Smith. A groaner of an agenda movie. Damon wants to put you in Very Serious mode and have you think of "issue movies" like "The China Syndrome," but all I could do was laugh and think of "Lolita." ... Much has been made of the fact that "Promised Land" was partly funded by the enemies of our domestic gas industry — the foreign oil nabobs in the United Arab Emirates. But the film gets **so cheesy that I suspect it was also secretly funded by Velveeta.** ([12/28/12](#))

Star-Ledger's Stephen Whitty. Matt Damon drama runs out of gas. The script suddenly throws in a twist that's so clever it's idiotic, making nonsense of much of what's gone on before. ... **A dramatically inert misfire,** and transforms what might have been an interesting study of motives into a mere bumper sticker. ([12/28/12](#))



MTV. Film “doesn't really have critics universally impressed.” Despite the appeal of the film's packaging, **the critical masses were not universally impressed** with the whole of the finished product, which **resulted in a "rotten" rating over at Rotten Tomatoes.** ([12/28/12](#))

Big Hollywood's Christian Toto. Anti-Fracking Propaganda Gussied Up as Oscar Bait. "Promised Land," an anti-fracking propaganda film dressed up as Oscar-season fare, re-teams "Good Will Hunting" star Matt Damon with director Gus Van Sant. Neither can salvage a story that **exists solely to demonize natural gas companies and the process of fracking.** ... The film's script, written by Damon and Krasinsky, **lacks courage, brains and logic.** ... "Promised Land" leaves us with a twist so hackneyed it should have been laughed out of the first table read. Instead, it arrives to make sure we don't forget the messages the film has been screaming at us from the opening sequence. Fracking bad. Big business very bad. And movies **based on pure ideology, not sturdy storytelling,** are even worse. ([12/28/12](#))

Time Magazine's Richard Corliss. Left-wingers in the mainstream media — by which I mean me — are supposed to lap up a movie that plays to our farm-loving, tree-hugging prejudices. But even we know that **well-meaning does not automatically equal good movie.** ([12/21/12](#))

Raymond Leary on Huffington Post. Yoko Ono, Matt Damon and OPEC Versus American Energy Independence. **Promised Land is meant to frighten Americans,** and whomever, to resist the development of shale gas in their communities. No mention here of the long suffering communities of Pennsylvania who have celebrated an economic renaissance through the development and extraction of natural gas from the vast Marcellus Gas Formation. Abu Dhabi will be applauding heartily if their and Damon's Promised Land film, due for distribution shortly, permits them and their OPEC brethren to continue to fleece the world with their cartel manipulated price of oil and gas. Yoko Ono and Matt Damon, as Americans of singular standing what a significant service you could perform by making your fellow Americans fully cognizant of the full dimensions of this issue. It is a gift to be nurtured. ([12/27/12](#))

OPINION PAGES SLAM FICTIONAL FILM

Washington Times editorial. Fracking flick channels science fiction; **Left Coast liberals would explode natural gas revolution. If you don't have the facts on your side, make some up.** That's Hollywood's typical scheme for pushing its left-wing views on American audiences. Tinseltown's "Promised Land" puts a heavy thumb on the scale in favor of Big Green in its battle to vanquish the natural-gas industry in the debate over hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." The film is **thinly disguised propaganda designed to turn public opinion against an affordable energy source** that could prove the undoing of hopelessly inefficient windmills and solar panels. ([1/1/13](#))

Investor's Business Daily editorial. **A healthy dose of junk science.** States like the United Arab Emirates, an OPEC member, are threatened by the oil and natural gas boom in shale formations like the Bakken in North Dakota and the Marcellus in, yes, Pennsylvania. The film's **nothing more than an anti-fracking infomercial paid for by an Arab oil state.** ... **The film depends on junk science** for its story line. ... Fracking was invented in 1947 and has been safely used ever since. In extracting natural gas from shale it stands to vastly increase the supply of natural gas and could generate \$332 billion in additional GDP and create 2.4 million jobs by 2035, according to estimates from IHS Global Insight. ([12/21/12](#))

