

Meet Bob Mazur: The Man Behind

The Infiltrator

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*Art Malik stars as Akbar Bilgrami and Bryan Cranston as undercover U.S. Customs agent Robert Mazur in *The Infiltrator*.*

Opening in the theaters today: *The Infiltrator* is based on the true story of **Robert 'Bob' Mazur**, a federal agent who goes deep undercover to infiltrate **Pablo Escobar's** drug trafficking scene. It was the late-1980s when Mazur spent five years posing as slick money-laundering businessman **Bob Musella**. Sounds like the stuff of Hollywood, but as Mazur navigated a vicious criminal network in which the slightest slip-up could cost him his life, Mazur risked it all by building a case—including staging a fake wedding where federal agents arrested over 40 high-ranking criminals. All told, the work of Mazur and his team led to the indictments of 85 drug lords and corrupt bankers along with the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, one of the largest money-laundering banks in the world. It also led to a \$500,000 bounty on Mazur's head, which prompted Mazur to adopt another identity for several years. To this day, Mazur, whose memoir, *The Infiltrator: My Secret Life Inside the Dirty Banks*

Behind Pablo Escobar's Medellin Cartel, was published in 2009, won't pose in photos. Here, Mazur shares more about his incredible story and the film that brought his life to the big screen.

How true to your life is the film?

My book was meant to tell my truth. The film is entertainment. Clearly there are certainly things in there that actually happened and some are dramatized to tell a story in a much more succinct way. After all, how do you take a 380-page book and make it into a two-hour film? It's such a different medium.

When you heard that Bryan Cranston would be playing you, what was your reaction?

Bryan's become more of a friend than a guy who happened to play me. The amazing thing about him is that if you talked to him 25 years ago he's the same guy he is today. He has not allowed this to have an impact on this person he is. The guy is extraordinarily talented. He wasn't just an actor who did a performance. He interfaced with all aspects of the creative team.

How much did you weigh in on the film?

The director, **Brad Furman**, was open-minded and willing to hear ideas but he's ultimately the captain of the ship and it was Brad and a few other key people who made the ultimate decision about the film. For me, it was a different experience. This isn't fiction for me. It's reality, but I got involved because I feel strongly that it's important to share with the public what I as a public servant, the eyes and ears of the underworld, got to see. I think it's important especially in today's day for people to see that there are people who are willing to make tremendous sacrifices for the greater good.

There's a whole cadre of people working under cover.

Exactly. I think people don't recognize that even though my story may be somewhat unique, at the time, I was doing long-term undercover work and was completely immersed in crime, there were dozens of others who were doing the same thing on behalf of their agencies. I worked for three agencies and I didn't care about the color or size of my badge. I worked for the people. This is what law enforcement officers do. These people are willing to put their lives on the line everyday.

How much do you think about the time in your life that's depicted in the film?

In a sense it's a different lifetime, but this problem continues to exist. It's more dramatic and threatening today as these same criminal organizations are now working with terrorist organizations and using this as a means to finance terror. You only need to study this superficially and you can see the role of Hezbollah, Hamas and Al Qaeda who are working closely in the movement of huge amounts of illegal drugs and weapons. The threat level has increased.

And to this day, you still won't appear in photos.

Yes—I think there's one from back in the day standing in front of a jet. I don't see where it serves any purpose. I happen to be the guy who was the eyes and ears of the public. Right now my goal is to share that story.