

Is it a cold or the flu? *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three* (1974)

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Summary

A disgruntled former subway motorman, a mercenary soldier, an ex-mafia thug, and a fourth criminal decide to hijack a New York subway train and threaten to kill a passenger per minute if they are not given a ransom of a million dollars. Garber, head of the New York City Transit Police, is given the case; he will find out how a simple cold will play a key role in the film's denouement.

Keywords: Cold, Influenza, Flu, Hijacking, Subway, New York.

Technical Details

Title: *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*

Country: USA

Year: 1974

Director: Joseph Sargent

Music: David Shire

Screenwriter: Peter Stone and John Godey (novel)

Cast: Walter Matthau, Robert Shaw, Martin Balsam, Hector Elizondo, Earl Hindman, James Broderick, Dick O'Neill, Lee Wallace, Tom Pedi, Beatrice Winde, Jerry Stiller, Natha George, Rudy Bond, Kenneth McMillan and Doris Roberts.

Color: Color

Runtime: 104 minutes

Genre: Crime, Drama, Thriller

Production Companies: Palomar Pictures Corporation and Palladium Productions

Synopsis: New York City faces an extraordinary criminal threat: four armed men who go by the names of Mr. Blue, Mr. Green, Mr. Grey and Mr. Brown hijack a subway train and threaten to kill one hostage per minute until they receive a million dollars in ransom. Mr. Blue, the leader of the group, has planned the attack down to the last detail, but he comes face to face with Lieutenant Garber, the bright-minded and tenacious transit authority police officer who is given the case. Walter Matthau and a

line-up of stars are featured in this Joseph Sargent film based on the best-selling novel by John Godey. This master thriller blends equal doses of intrigue, suspense and action.

The cold and the flu are indeed portrayed in many films^{1,2}. Both of these clinical conditions, in real life as well as in the cinema, share certain symptoms, though they are commonly confused in the public eye. Today, all medical practitioners can rapidly determine whether acute respiratory distress is caused by flu virus A and B, or whether these symptoms are due to the common cold. Veteran director Joseph Sargent's *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three* (1974) portrays and compares both of these viral infections, as does Félix Enríquez Alcalá's new made-for-television version from 1998.

The Film

The film takes place in New York City, during winter, in the 1970s. As usual in the Big Apple, hundreds of people ride the subway to get around town (figure 1). As the Pelham One Two Three train makes its various stops along Line 6, four men carrying briefcases or parcels climb aboard. They are all dressed the same: they are wearing black leather gloves, a long coat, a hat, and moustaches. More important than what they are wearing is what they plan to do: hijack the lead car.

Acting according to a perfectly orchestrated plan, each member of the colour-coded team does what he sets out to do: Mr Blue (Robert Shaw) threatens the motorman until he gains access to the driver's cabin; Mr. Green (Harold Longman) walks into the driver's cabin and takes over the controls; Mr. Brown (Earl Hindman) threatens the train's conductor; and Mr. Grey (Hector Elizondo) prevents the passengers from leaving the first train car. The train comes to a stop between the 28th Street and 23rd Street stations, after which the hijackers disconnect the front car from the rest of the train, take out their machine guns from their briefcases and parcels, and face the hostages. Mr. Blue explains their predicament quite simply: a group of heavily armed men have hijacked the train and are holding them prisoner.



Figure 1: The passengers aboard Pelham One Two Three

Oblivious to all of this, Lieutenant Garber (Walter Matthau) of the Transit Authority police force is giving a tour of the facilities to a group of directors from the Tokyo subway system (figure 2). While in the command centre with the group of visitors, Mr. Blue makes his first contact with the subway authorities. He tells Frank Correll (Dick O'Neill), chief of the Metropolitan Network, that he has hijacked a train and is holding 17 passengers and the conductor hostage. He tells Correll to inform the Mayor (Lee Wallace) of his demand for a million dollars in cash for their release before a one-hour deadline. After that time has passed, he will kill one hostage per minute until his demands are met.



Figure 2: Lieutenant Garber and the directors of the Tokyo Metropolitan Subway System

The New York subway system is paralyzed all the way to the Bronx and chaos reigns everywhere. Caz Dolowicz (Tom Pedi), the supervisor of the Grand Central Station tower, decides to investigate on his own. He walks down the track and approaches the train determined to board it, but Mr. Grey does not hesitate to shoot the supervisor when he refuses to heed his order to stop.

Meanwhile, the Mayor, who has the flu, is briefed on the hijacking by his deputy (Tony Roberts). He later meets with the Police Commissioner (Rudy Bond), the City Comptroller (Marvin Silbersher) and the Chairman of the transit authority (Thomas Barbour) to decide on whether or not the ransom should be paid. In a vote on the issue, the commissioner abstains, the comptroller votes against paying the ransom, and the chairman of the transit authority votes in favour. The Mayor, whose only concern is how people will react to his decision, finally asks his wife (Doris Roberts) for her opinion. She is also in favour of paying the ransom because she says that he will get *eighteen sure votes* in return.

Despite agreeing to pay, the countdown continues; only 26 minutes remain to count the money, prepare the bundles, and deliver the ransom. The action at the Federal Reserve Bank in Manhattan is frenetic.

Meanwhile, Garber asks for a list of all motormen fired from the transit authority over the last ten years. He realizes that one of the hijackers knows how to operate the train, and that is something that not just anyone knows.

With only eight minutes remaining until time runs out, the police try to rush the money to the hijackers at the 28th Street station. This is the most action-packed scene in the film: it is a race against the clock in which the police patrol car is escorted through the city streets at breakneck speed. However, the car swerves to avoid a collision with a cyclist and crashes.

Garber skilfully negotiates a new agreement with Mr. Blue: when the money arrives at the station, rather than at the subway train, the countdown will stop. This way, the time taken in delivering the money from the station entrance to the subway train does not count.

At the end of the countdown the money has still not arrived, but Garber decides to lie to the hijack-

ers and tell them that their million dollar ransom is at the station entrance. Mr. Blue then gives instructions for the delivery (two unarmed police officers are to walk down the tracks, one carrying the money and the other flashing a torch from side to side, and they are to set the money on the back platform of the train and return to the 28th Street station, all of this in just five minutes); while speaking into the microphone Mr. Green sneezes in the background, to which Garber reacts by saying “gesundheit.”

The million dollars arrives at the station and the delivery is going as planned until one of the police sharpshooters opens fire, injuring Mr. Brown, who returns fire. This is the only scene in the film where blood appears.

Mr. Blue tells the conductor to go out and meet the two officers who were bringing the money, but he shoots him in the back after walking just a few metres down the track. Then Mr. Blue tells them they have 30 seconds to deliver the money, which the officers comply with. In possession of the money, Mr. Blue issues a new set of instructions for their escape: he is to be notified when all power has been restored in the sector, the track has been cleared (meaning that all switches must be properly set and the signal lights must all be green) from 28th Street to South Ferry, and all police personnel have been removed from the subway. Mr. Blue threatens to kill a hostage if the police do not comply.

After having restored power, and with no prior warning, the hijackers set the train into motion. The train slowly enters the 23rd Street station and stops just before reaching the 18th Street station. The hijackers then rig up the train so that it can operate without the need for the driver’s hand to be pressing the “dead man’s switch,” a device that if not pressed down constantly will automatically stop the train. After rigging up the switch, the train moves on without the hijackers and without a driver.

For the first time in this film, a plain clothes police officer who is inside the subway car decides to act. He jumps off the moving train and goes after the hijackers.

With Pelham One Two Three in motion, the passengers start to panic when they realize that no one is driving and that the train is going faster and faster. The “stoppers” should automatically stop any train which goes through a red light, but the mechanism

cannot be activated when all the lights are green. This is when the passengers become hysterical, saying *we’re going to crash!*

The hijackers leave their hats, glasses and moustaches in a plastic bag, they remove their reversible overcoats and put them on the opposite way, and they put on new hats. In the process of getting rid of all incriminating evidence, they must leave their machine guns as well, but Mr. Grey refuses and Mr. Blue shoots him. Meanwhile the police officer shoots Mr. Brown, leaving only two of the four hijackers. Mr. Blue instructs Mr. Green to leave, saying *we’ll meet where we planned, right?* Mr. Green escapes from one of the emergency exits (figure 3), while the plainclothes police officer and Mr. Blue engage in a shootout in which the police officer is injured.



Figure 3: Mr. Green leaving the subway

Above the subway, in a police car trying to follow the train’s movement, Garber suspects that the hijackers have somehow been able to circumvent the dead man’s switch, and he starts to believe that they are no longer on the train. Garber reaches the emergency exit just after Mr. Green and descends just in time to save the plainclothes policeman’s life. Instead of finishing off the police officer, Mr. Blue turns to find himself face to face with Garber for the first time. Blue tries to buy off Graber by offering him a quarter of a million dollars. But Garber refuses, saying *No thanks, my accountant says I’ve accepted enough for this quarter.* After hearing that the death penalty does not exist in New York, Mr. Blue commits suicide by stepping on a high tension electrical cable.

As this is happening, the subway train is careening down the tracks, about to derail, when finally a red light appears and stops the train. The passengers inside are safe and sound.

But the film goes on. After identifying the three fallen hijackers, the transit police start inquiring: What became of the fourth hijacker? Realizing that

none of the fallen hijackers was the motorman, the police know that the fourth suspect must be the driver. This is when Garber takes the list of fired subway motormen he had commissioned before. There are 78 names on the list, though eight of them died, 22 were re-hired, 26 were out of the country, 11 were in jail, 1 was in an insane asylum, and 1 had been hired by the New York Police Department and had already been interrogated. That left 9 names of people who Garber and Lieutenant Rico Patrone (Jerry Stiller) have to interrogate one by one. The third person on the list, Harold Longman, seems nervous during the interview and demands a search warrant for them to look at his place. He stands his ground, saying *I've got my rights. This is my home. I want a little peace. Just do me a favour and get the hell out of here.* But just when the lieutenants are leaving, Mr. Longman (a.k.a Mr. Green) sneezes, and Garber responds by saying “gesundheit!” (figure 4).



Figure 4: The give-away sneeze

The Main Characters

Mr. Green: He is the first of the hijackers to appear in the film. Waiting for the subway in the 59th Street station, he quite obviously has a cold, which will last throughout the film. He openly acknowledges both the fact that he has a cold and the fact that he feels insecure and nervous. In an attempt to calm his nerves, he starts up a friendly conversation with the motorman of the train they have just taken, momentarily forgetting that he is hijacking the train. It seems as if Mr. Green were relishing his fond memories of his days as a motorman for one brief instant, when Mr. Blue snaps him out of his trance and brings him back to the present. Later on in the film, Mr. Blue tells Mr. Green to relax.

Mr. Grey (figure 5): He is the second of the hijackers to appear in the film when he is seen boarding the subway at the 51st Street station. He is the most violent of the gang; he refuses to take orders, as evidenced by several scenes and culminating with his last, and fatal, argument with Mr. Blue. Mr. Blue believes

that he is slightly imbalanced and says that this must have been the reason for his expulsion from the mafia. He is also racially prejudiced against black people, shouting out in one scene *Shut your mouth, nigger, and keep it shut!* as he hits a black hostage with his gun.

Mr. Brown: He is the third hijacker to appear when we see him boarding the subway at Grand Central Station. He is a relatively minor character, described by Mr. Grey as submissive.



Figure 5: Mr. Grey

Mr. Blue (figure 6): He is the last of the four hijackers to be seen in the film as he boards the subway at the 33rd Street Station. He is the mastermind behind the entire hijacking; he has everything planned down to the last detail. He is cold and calculating; in fact he is so hard-hearted that he is able to do a crossword puzzle while waiting for the ransom money to arrive. He is a totally inflexible negotiator, as he refuses to allow even a ten-minute deadline extension for the police to deliver the money. When he does not get exactly what he wants, he does not hesitate to kill, and it does not matter if they are innocent hostages, such as the conductor, or members of his own team, such as Mr. Grey. Perhaps his experience as a mercenary taught him that suicide was a better option than letting himself get “caught by the enemy,” which is why he chooses to end his own life.

Lieutenant Garber (figure 7): This is a police officer whose sharp mind and intelligence enable him



Figure 6: Mr. Blue waiting for the subway to arrive

to save many lives. An example of this is when Garber realizes that the hijackers are unaware of what is happening on the streets and he takes advantage of this by telling Mr. Blue that the money has arrived when in actual fact it has not. Even though he lies to the hijackers, he prevents the hijackers from starting their executions and he gains just enough time to deliver the money. He is also able to save the plainclothes police officer's life because he is the only law enforcement officer to anticipate the hijackers' plans. He is an honest man who cannot be swayed by bribes. In spite of all this, he is not perfect, because he makes at least two awkward remarks. The first comes at the beginning of the film when he asks Charlie to *take these monkeys up to the 13th floor*, but the Japanese visitors respond by bowing and making respectful comments like *thank you for a most instructive visit, Lieutenant. A most exciting tour, Lieutenant*. The other blunder comes when he suggests that the plain clothes police officer inside the train might not be able to do anything, especially if she is a woman. Walter Mathau does a good job in giving his character a fine sense of humor.

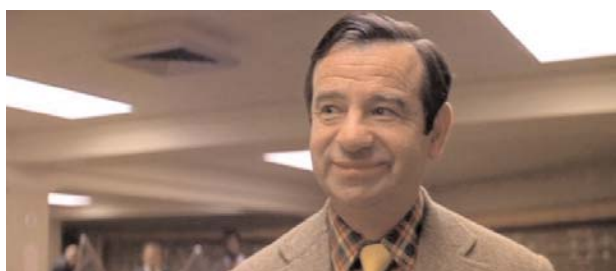


Figure 7: Lieutenant Garber

The Mayor of New York: His first appearance in the film is when he is lying in bed and being treated for the flu (figure 8). He seems to be an unpopular figure in the city he governs, perhaps because he is corrupt. The Deputy Mayor tells him to pay the ransom Money from some of his Swiss bank accounts. He seems to shy away from taking important decisions alone; he gathers the police commissioner, the chairman of the New York transit authority, and the city comptroller to make the decision jointly. In the end, it is his wife who advises him to pay the ransom. He seems more worried about the reaction of the voters than the well-being of the hostages. He also is reluctant to make an appearance in case the hijackers are New Yorkers and he jokingly suggests that if they are they may want to shoot him. When he finally gets to the 28th Street station, public disapproval becomes patent and he is booed away.

The hostages: There are 17 passengers and a conductor on the train, among them a mother and her two children, a plainclothes police officer, a prostitute and a drunken woman. The make-up of the group of passengers in the tight confines of the subway train is quite diverse.



Figure 8: The Mayor of New York suffering from flu

The Flu

The flu' is an acute respiratory tract infection caused by several influenza viruses. The flu' can easily spread from one infected person to another, and it tends to reach epidemic proportions in winter months, particularly from November to March in the northern hemisphere.

There are three types of influenza virus, designated A, B, and C. The first two, and in particular influenza virus A, are the most remarkable because they are the most common; they cause the most serious clinical cases, and are responsible for most outbreaks.

Type A influenza viruses can easily mutate, which implies that every new flu' season new strains of the virus crop up. Since humans have no defences against these new strains, new vaccines must also be developed every year. Each type of virus has several subtypes, depending on the differences between the combinations of proteins on their surfaces. There proteins are called haemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N). The appearance of a new major subtype which can be transmitted from human to human can lead to a pandemic, which happened last century on three different occasions: in 1918 (Spanish flu'); in 1957 (Asian flu'); and 1968 (Hong Kong flu'). On all three occasions, a new subtype was produced through a recombination of human viruses and avian viruses. There is a certain amount of fear in the medical community that the avian flu virus (H5N1), which so far humans have only contracted from birds, may soon develop the ability to pass from human to human.

Transmission of the flu' generally takes place when an infected person spreads the virus to a healthy person, mostly through the tiny droplets we expel when speaking, coughing or sneezing. The flu' virus can also be contracted by coming into contact with recently-infected surfaces, such as when a healthy person touches an infected person's skin and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or another body surface. Flu' viruses that affect animals, such as avian viruses, can also infect humans.

Flu' sufferers are able to spread the virus from one day prior to the onset of symptoms up to three to seven days after symptoms have started. The length of time during which children can infect other people is even longer.

The first symptoms of the flu' tend to be a sharp change in temperature (fever) and chills, often associated with head-aches, myalgia, and joint pain all over the body, asthenia, nasal congestion, a sore throat, a dry cough and a general feeling of discomfort ("under the weather").

Most people who catch the flu' recover in less than a week without needing treatment or hospitalization, though sometimes complications may arise. The most frequent complications associated with the flu' are bronchitis and bacterial pneumonia, which can in particular prey on high-risk patients such as the elderly, diabetics, and people with chronic cardiac or respiratory conditions.

In order to diagnose the flu' during an epidemic, medical practitioners can use the clinical manifestations as a basis. Etiological diagnosis can turn out to be useful because there are several other viruses which cause a similar set of symptoms. A variety of virological procedures are another diagnostic option. Today's medical professionals have a wide array of diagnostic tests at their disposal, which are rapid and easy to perform.

Patients infected with the flu' virus can prevent the spread of the disease by covering up their mouth and nose with a facial tissue or with the upper arm rather than the hands when coughing or sneezing (figure 9); after using a tissue to stifle a cough or sneeze, patients should throw the tissue away and wash their hands.

Physicians tend to recommend that flu' sufferers rest, drink plenty of liquids, avoid smoking and

drinking alcohol, and take medication, such as fever reducers (analgesics, antipyretics) to treat the symptoms. Antibiotics, however, should not be administered, as they do not alleviate the symptoms and nor do they speed up the healing process, the reason being that antibiotics do not act on viruses. Children and teenagers should not be administered aspirin, since this can cause Reye's syndrome.

There is a whole array of pharmaceuticals that can be taken to ward off the symptoms of the flu virus which, if administered within the first 48 hours of the onset of the first symptoms, can shorten the duration of the flu. Because these antiviral agents can have serious side effects, they must be prescribed by a doctor.

The only truly efficient way of preventing flu contagion is vaccination. Flu' vaccinations, however, can only ward off the viruses that cause the flu' which are circulating in a given year, and never those that cause the common cold.

Antiviral pharmaceuticals can also be used to prevent the flu, but they are not as effective as vaccination and they should only be used in certain cases³.



Figure 9: One of the things you should not do if you want to prevent the spread of flu'

The Common Cold

The common cold is a viral infection that affects the upper respiratory tract, and its cause may be due to over 200 different viruses. The most common viral causes of colds are rhinovirus, corona virus, influenza virus and adenovirus.

Each year in the United States alone, there are more than a billion cases of the common cold per year. Over the course of a lifetime, the average person will have contracted more colds than any other disease. Children suffer from an average of between 3 and 8 colds per year throughout their childhood. Since many infected children spread the disease to their parents,

the common cold is the number one cause of school and workplace absenteeism.

The common cold mainly appears during the winter, although it can crop up at any time during other seasons of the year.

The viruses that cause the common cold can be contracted by inhaling them (should you be sitting close enough to a person who has just sneezed), or by touching your nose, eyes, or mouth after touching a surface contaminated with the virus. The truth is that nasal secretions are steeped in viruses, which are propagated through sneezing, through blowing your nose, or applying nasal spray.

Cold sufferers are contagious during the first 2 or 3 days after the onset of symptoms.

The three most common symptoms of the common cold are a runny nose, nasal congestion (figure 10) and sneezing. Adults and older children generally do not run a temperature, and if they do it is low grade, while younger children tend to have a temperature of between 37.7 and 38.8° C.

Symptoms generally appear 2 or 3 days after having contracted the virus, although it can take up to a week for patients to show signs of infection. The symptom which typically appears first is an itchy nose, followed a few hours later by sneezing and nasal secretions.

One or two days after the first symptoms appear, nasal secretions become thicker and yellow or greenish in colour. This is the normal progression of a common cold and should give doctors no reason to prescribe antibiotics, unless it drags on for longer than 10 to 14 days, possibly meaning a case of sinusitis.

Depending on which virus is the root cause of the cold, other symptoms such as a sore throat, myalgia, head-ache, post-nasal drip or a weak appetite may also appear. In any case, the most typical symptoms of the common cold involve the nose.

The common cold most often goes away on its own in approximately 7 to 10 days, while some symptoms, such as a cough, may linger for as much as a week more.

Doctors tend to recommend that patients rest and drink liquids. Antibiotics should not be prescribed for the common cold, as they may make the symptoms worse rather than better.

Antivirus medicine can fully relieve nasal drip one day sooner than usual (and they can also act on other symptoms in a day), but it is not clear whether the benefits of these pharmaceuticals outweigh the risks.

Complications arising from the common cold include bronchitis, pneumonia, otitis, sinusitis and a worsening of the symptoms of asthma.

Cold sufferers should seek medical attention if after 7 to 10 days the symptoms have not subsided or have got worse, or if respiratory distress ensues.



Figure 10: Mr. Green suffering from a cold (symptoms: nasal congestion and a runny nose)

The common cold can be prevented or avoided in several ways:

- Change day care centres: children who attend day care groups with 6 or fewer children have a significantly lower risk of being infected by the virus that causes colds.
- Wash your hands: wash your hands after blowing your nose, after changing a baby's nappies or using the bathroom, before eating, before preparing food, and other key activities in which the virus can be spread.
- Use hand sanitizing liquids: as these non-rinse liquids contain alcohol they neutralize these virus on contact: just a small dab of sanitizer does away with 99.99% of these virus without the need to wash your hands. They are an antiseptic, not an antibiotic, so resistance can't develop.
- Disinfect all surfaces: clean all surfaces that come in contact with your hands such as faucets, door handles, and so on, with a proven disinfectant.
- Use moist wipes to clean instead of cloth rags or towels (recommendation based on 4).

Table 1 below illustrates the common characteristics of both clinical manifestations⁵.

The Portrayal of a Cold Compared with the Flu' in *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*

As mentioned above, two of the secondary characters in this film, Mr. Green and the Mayor of

Table 1: Features which distinguish the common cold from the flu

Feature	Colds	Flu
Etiological agent	>100 viral strains; rhinovirus most common	3 species of influenza virus: influenza A, B, and C viruses
Site of Infection	Upper respiratory tract	Entire respiratory system
Symptom Onset	Gradual: 1-3 days	Sudden: within a few hours
Fever, chills	Occasional, low grade (<38°C/ 101° F)	Characteristic, higher (>38° C/ 101° F), lasting 2-4 days
Headache	Frequent, usually mild	Characteristic, more severe
General aches, pains	Mild, if any	Characteristic, often severe and affecting the entire body
Cough, chest congestion	Mild-to-moderate, with hacking cough	Common, may become severe
Sore throat	Common, usually mild	Sometimes present
Runny, stuffy nose	Very common, accompanied by bouts of sneezing	Sometimes present
Fatigue, weakness	Mild, if any	Usual, may be severe and last 2-3 weeks
Extreme exhaustion	Never	Frequent, usually in early stages of illness
Season	Year around, peaks in winter months	Most cases between November and February
Complications	Sinusitis, otitis, worsening of asthma symptoms	Pneumonia, bronchitis
Prevention	None. Good health habits	Good health habits. Annual vaccination, zanamavir or oseltamivir
Treatment	Symptoms can be treated	Oseltamivir, zanamavir or within the 24 hours alter the symptoms debut
Antibiotics helpful?	No, unless secondary bacterial infection develops	No, unless secondary bacterial infection develops

(Based on 5)

New York, are suffering from acute viral respiratory tract infections.

Mr. Green quite obviously has the symptoms and typical signs of a common cold. Very shortly after the film's action begins, Mr. Green sneezes while waiting for the train, which causes his moustache to fall off (figure 11). After he puts this part of his disguise back in place, his sneezing becomes constant and he is forced to cover up his nose with a handkerchief. Though Mr. Green seems to be in good general health throughout the film, there are several occasions when he seems to have an itchy nose and nasal drip, and even when not sneezing he uses his handkerchief to cover up his irritated nose. One several of the occasions on which he sneezes, he appears to be suffering from facial and nasal congestion, evidenced by the fact that he uses a nasal inhaler. His sickly state does not go unnoticed by himself or by those around him. Mr. Blue tells him to stop sneezing. Lieutenant Garber says "gesundheit" to Mr. Green three different times after sneezing: the first when Garber asks Mr. Blue for more time to get the ransom money; the second while Mr. Blue is giving him instructions for handing over the money, and the third and last time when Garer and Rico Patrone visit Mr. Green at the end of the film just after interrogating him. This third sneeze, as we have already seen, betrays Mr. Green. There is one moment in the film when he coughing, and says: *I think I'm gonna die today*. But Mr. Green, like most people, cannot differentiate between a cold and the flu', and on another occasion he says that he must have the flu'.



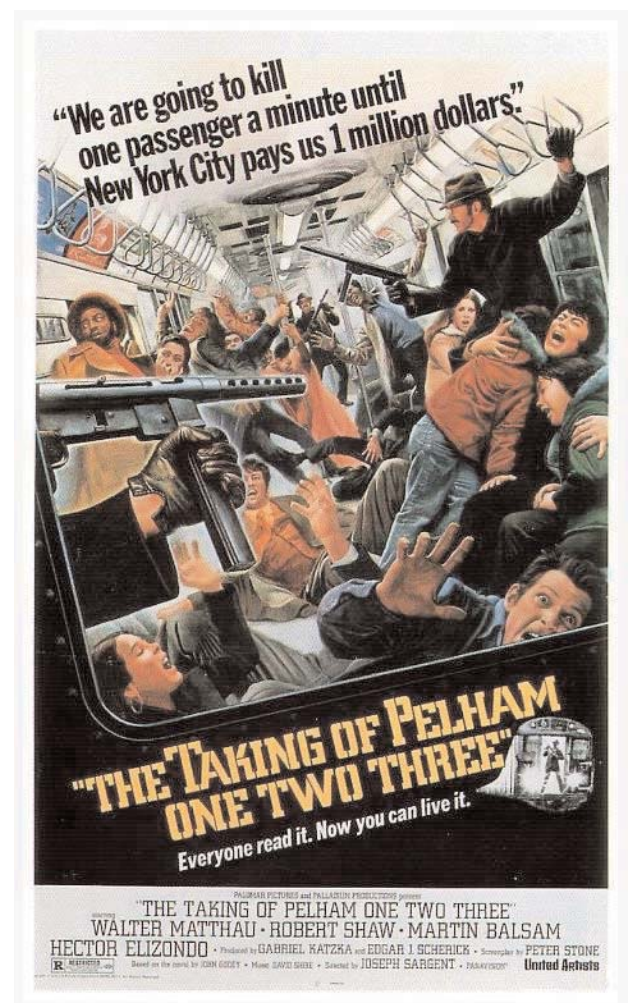
Figure 11: Mr. Green reattaches his moustache after sneezing

Joseph Sargent depicts the Mayor's flu' in four different film sequences. The first scene shows the Mayor receiving the news of the hijacked subway train; in this scene he is bedridden and under the care of a nurse who gives him some sort of medicine orally. He has a dry cough. In the next scene, where he talks to the Deputy Mayor, he has a runny nose, or rhinorrhea; he blows his nose into a tissue



Figure 12: The flu cannot be treated with antibiotics

which contrary to better judgement he throws on the floor (figure 9). In the third scene, the Mayor is seen descending a staircase in order to meet with members of the city council. He is again seen coughing and blowing his nose; he sneezes once, and he seems to be in poor general health. He is weak, and judging from the posture he takes when seated in an armchair, he more than likely has a fever and a headache. In the fourth sequence, which begins with the images of the floor covered with dirty tissues, the nurse is seen giving him an intra-



USA movie poster showing a scene of the highjacking of the Pelham one two three subway train

muscular injection in the gluteus and he says he feels terrible.

Apparently the medicine used in the intramuscular injection is an antibiotic (figure 12), which as we have seen above should never be administered for the flu' unless some other infectious bacterial complication arises. However, the Mayor does not show any signs of that. The nurse administering an oral dosage of a symptomatic drug, as we have seen above, is a proper medical procedure for the Mayor's case, though.

Neither the Mayor nor Mr. Green mentions that they have a fever. Nor do they mention that they have muscular pain, a sore throat or a headache, which can definitely arise in cases of the flu'. In the Mayor's case of the flu', as we have already seen, myalgia and headache are two symptoms that he appears to have based on the images.

This film clearly reflects the more serious nature of the flu' with respect to the common cold, as the Mayor needs bed rest and his nurse tell him that he should stay in bed while Mr. Green endures his cold while standing.

Conclusion

The Taking of Pelham One Two Three is a solid cinematographic portrayal within the police thriller genre of the differences between the common cold and the flu'. It shows both clinical conditions as acute respiratory infections, and it shows that the symptoms they present are similar but of a different degree of seriousness.

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