

Two letters in response to "A comment on *Boogie Nights*"

9 July 1998

WSWS : Correspondence : Art & Culture

To the Editor:

I wonder if there are two versions of *Boogie Nights* going around--the one the critics (including Andrew Sarris and the reviewer for the World Socialist Web Site) saw; and the one I saw, which ranked as the most disappointing movie of the season.

The movie I saw had no dimension to the characters, let alone development. The threadbare story line seemed little more than an excuse to titillate the audience by showing a number of porn scenes being filmed.

As with a real porn film, the script wasted little time setting the stage. The opening minutes have the future porn star leaving home abruptly after his mother unleashes an unexplained tirade of abuse at him. Rather than showing a range of emotions, or putting him through a difficult period living on the streets, the filmmakers in no time have him connecting with his new career as Dirk Diggler.

The parents never reenter the film looking for their son, but that's because there's no attempt to create real people with feelings and contradictions--they are just a weak plot device to get the show going. I would have walked out after the first 20 minutes of the film, but my companion insisted on staying. Alas, it didn't get any better.

I wish I had seen the film with depth and power in its commentary on bourgeois society. Unfortunately, I saw the 'narrow, voyeuristic peek' at the porn industry, another 'glitzy and useless work to which the audiences are sadly becoming accustomed.'

Sincerely,

JB

Brooklyn, NY

To the WSWS :

I feel you have given this film far more credit than it

deserves. Two scenes from the film in particular I found to be quite pathetic.

The doughnut store scene. I read an interview with the director about how he was shocked by the audience laughing when three people got killed here. The audience laughed when I saw the film too, and I believe the reason for this is that you don't believe the scene to be true. All three people die straight away, the black guy is wearing a funny suit which is ruined by someone's brains, but, hey, he walks away with a bag of money and he doesn't have to worry about helping anyone because each shot fired hit a target. How fortunate for him, how unbelievable for the audience. I wonder if the audience would have laughed if one character had survived. But this was a film full of convenient events. The scene, I believe, was directed to be odd and funny.

The drug rip-off scene is your basic Hollywood shoot-out. At the start of the scene we find out that one of Dirk's friends who is high on drugs has brought along a gun. The second they enter the house we are shown that the bodyguard has a gun, so for five minutes the audience suffers, listening to some drugged-out-of-his-head character ramble on, because we know there is going to be a shoot-out. Quentin Tarantino does it all the time: characters make speeches, while everyone holds guns, and the audience is expected to become tense with excitement because once the speech ends, they know the shooting starts.

Give me a break.

It's just not that good a film. It certainly isn't about pornography, it uses that as a backdrop. The film conveniently ends before the impact of AIDS on the porn industry can be dealt with. And all the characters do amazing amounts of drugs but in the end, they are all O.K. Why, one of them even goes back to High School! In a way I felt no one suffered any

consequences for their actions. All very convenient.

T

Sydney, Australia

See Also:

A comment on *Boogie Nights*

[4 July 1998]



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