

Letters from our readers

8 April 2005

The following is a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “Ghost town: Melinda and Melinda, written and directed by Woody Allen”

I can't comment on Allen's latest film, because I don't watch movies much anymore (I live out of my camper on public lands and don't bother with a computer and DVD, but I use computers at public libraries).

When I was a teenager in the late '60s and early '70s, I always felt compelled to see the latest movie by Woody Allen. Strangely, I found most of his stuff silly and downright embarrassing to watch. His humor seemed so contrived, even though I understood he was using “sight gags” and other well-established burlesque techniques. Was he as cynical as I remember him? By chance, I saw a portion of *Annie Hall* when I was at a motel a few years ago, and indeed it seemed so to me. Even that scene, where he directs a motorist in his effort to park, which got such a big laugh at the time, seems puerile in retrospect. And his character's behavior towards Annie (Diane Keaton) was often crude and mean-spirited. The bedroom scenes were disturbing and memorable, more tragedy than comedy.

Certainly, Allen is not Chaplin, and perhaps it's not fair to compare them. But it's not just an era that separates them. Around 1971, when Allen was very popular, I went to a screening of Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* and *The Pawn Shop* (I think that's the title). The audience was roaring with laughter throughout the films. It got to a point where I began to feel a connection with all the people in the theatre, as if we were enjoying it together and understood it together. A remarkable moment I never will forget.

Comparisons are odious, as the saying goes, but I never could develop a feeling of empathy towards Allen as a comedian or a person. I'm not really convinced he was a significant talent.

RR

Medford, Oregon

6 April 2005

I have been a fan of Woody Allen since my early teens, when I ran across his books. Thank you for putting your finger on why I have found his works of the last decade or so to be so unwatchable.

Though I am not adverse to fantasy, a flat-out denial of reality is something else. It is a pity that that is what he is engaging his brilliant mind in these days. A good deal of his more recent essays have betrayed a certain (different from his older) desperation as well. I wonder what he would do if he were to “film it as it is”?

CMS

Portland, Oregon

6 April 2005

On “Fox's 24: propaganda thinly disguised as television programming”

I don't watch FOX but I rented *24* because of all of the hype. It is innovative, exciting, well produced and is an example of television that contributes to a climate of fear. I watched three episodes and sent the rest back. *24* is a world where the paranoids are right, you can't trust anyone, violence lurks at every corner and there is no law: Bush world.

MS

Boulder, Colorado

6 April 2005

First, let me say that I totally disagree with the policies of George Bush and his administration. Second, I love the show *24*. I watch it every week. Third, I really disagree with your article saying that *24* is a “propagandist” show. Sure, it's on FOX, and yes, some stereotypes are exposed. But for anyone still watching this season, Arabs aren't the only terrorists—there's an American military and corporate element that has been involved so far. And if you watched season two, a similar situation occurred: the Arab terrorists were just pawns in a larger scheme by American power-players trying to force a coup d'état.

Also, the terrorists in seasons one and three were Europeans.

Finally, this season had an episode that showed non-terrorist Arabs who disagreed with the beginning of the terrorist plot. I just think the article was off-base about the propagandist aspect.

KD

5 April 2005

I think you're correct to write about "ubiquitous cop shows that now regularly top the ratings on network television." They have been around for a long time. But on the other hand, I wonder about how much people are taken in by this propaganda.

In Anglo-American folk music, there are many examples of outlaws being made into heroes. I'm thinking of the many ballads about Robin Hood, Jesse James, Pretty Boy Floyd, etc. But I am not aware of a single folk song that glorifies the police. (There are country songs that attempt to do this, but none, to my knowledge, has made it into the more enduring category of Folk Song.)

There seems to be something about The Law and its enforcers that turns people off, no matter how hard the publicists work, while those who function outside of the law are often glorified by the folk. This speaks, I think, to the innate wisdom of the unlettered.

EG

Brooklyn, New York

5 April 2005

Comrades: reading the article on FOX's *24* reminds me of the time when I was a teenager in the early 1940s. On Saturday afternoons at the movies while watching westerns, we could easily tell who were the "good" and who the "bad" Indians. Continued success in raising our awareness.

JPW

Chino, California

5 April 2005

Thank you for your article on FOX's television series, *24*. It appears that this excrement is now being exported to other countries. This show is due to appear on a South African television station shortly. I shall avoid it.

EG

South Africa

5 April 2005

On "March jobs report shows US 'recovery' offers

no relief for workers"

It's worse than that! Not only are there few jobs out there, but also even when you get hired or have a job, people keep getting screwed one way or another, on pay, hours, you name it. It's really gotten bad out there. Trust me, I am one of those people that know. It doesn't matter what anyone does anymore—the job market is terrible, employers are terrible, pay is terrible, and so on. This country has gone to hell, and it's only going to get worse; by the end of a couple of years there are going to be a record high of homeless people and their families. I know tons of people that can't pay their bills because of the job market. It's sad, and this country is going to become very poor.

SW

6 April 2005

On American students and military recruitment

Yesterday, April 5, some 300 students at the University of California, Santa Cruz, protested against the presence of military recruiters on their campus. After an occupation of the job fair to which recruiters had been invited, UCSC students successfully forced the military to leave under a police guard. In so doing, UCSC became just the latest of many schools to symbolize resistance to the war and its social implications through direct mass action. Your web site should start to cover this growing movement.

JI

California

6 April 2005



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