

Letters on *Inglourious Basterds*

3 September 2009

On "Inglourious Basterds: Quentin Tarantino goes to war"

Oh God! (Pardon me for mentioning God.) The accolades heaped on this latest amnesiac offering from Tarantino are symptomatic of the cultural, historical and moral memory loss that have overtaken critics, if there are any left, of cinema. The art of film is barely one hundred years old, yet its potential seems to have been buried, along with the memory of the truly great works it has produced, under the rubbish heaped on it by corporate control and propaganda.

KV

British Columbia, Canada

1 September 2009

Excellent review by Hiram Lee of Tarantino's truly excremental *Inglourious Basterds*. Reviewers help to generate the social effective "truth" of films, and thus far the Australian reviews I have seen have been akin to those that Lee quotes—i.e., universally morally moronic, unable to recognise psychopathology when they see it, and eager to plunge into the phantasmatic bath of sadistic righteousness Tarantino, with shlock culture alibis, prepares for them.

This film does well as a cinematic accompaniment to Dick Cheney's apologetics for torture. Despite its ersatz anti-Nazi theme, it logs in as evidence that Nazism is far from dead in the contemporary western psyche.

Sebastian J

1 September 2009

Really excellent review. Thank you for telling the truth about this repugnant film genre. If there is one thing that sets the WSWWS apart from the other leading Trotskyist website "In Defense of Maxism" it is the really excellent and first class film reviews that are essential elements for properly critiquing and understanding contemporary mass culture.

Since mass popular culture is used by Hollywood and others to "manufacture" mass consciousness and/or what some have referred to as the "collective consciousness" of our era it is important that this attempt to mold the mass mind in the direction that is convenient and useful for the ruling class is fully critiqued.

Charles K

1 September 2009

Many thanks. The author seems to have hit his stride with this excellent review.

As to the movie itself, it's as if Tarantino is providing a fantasy

for a layer of the public who don't know how to process the knowledge that their own government is engaged in a program of assassination, torture and murder of mostly innocents. Viewing this film allows them to see the same atrocities perpetrated against a "deserving" enemy and experience a cheap catharsis in order to spare them of an emotionally costly moral revulsion.

RJC

New Jersey, USA

1 September 2009

The review of *Inglourious Basterds* by Hiram Lee was an absolutely perfect assessment not only of the film, but of Hollywood in general.

Lee states:

"...that so many critics despised *Munich* and are now praising Tarantino's latest film is a testament to the crisis in intellectual and cultural life at present."

Truer words have never been spoken.

I seem to remember in the book *1984* that the audience in a movie theater were laughing at innocent people being killed for no reason at all.

For years, it's been my opinion that Hollywood has been using violence as part of the propaganda campaign. The population is being "desensitized" to ever more violence. Is there really that much difference between films like this one and gladiatorial games in Roman times?

I doubt that this has anything to do with the personal whims of directors like Tarantino. This is organized and planned "from the top."

Bruce

1 September 2009

Guess what work of art is getting the following praise?

* *Chicago Sun-Times* Roger Ebert: "4 stars!"

* *NY Post* Lou Lumenick: "The most fun you'll have at the movies this summer."

* *LA Times* Patrick Goldstein: "A pure delight."

* *Rolling Stone* Peter Travers: "What's better than a machine-gun spray of killer dialogue?"

* CNN Larry King: "The most entertaining movie of the year."

* *Village Voice* J Hoberman: "Swaggering fun!"

* CBS-TV Jake Hamilton: "Viciously fun!"

What film is being praised here? Is it *Merry Wives of Windsor*? *Little Women*? *Don Quixote*? Nope. I'm quoting from <http://www.inglouriousbasterds-movie.com/>

The movie *Inglourious Basterds* consists mainly of smirking good-old-boy southern-accented Brad Pitt playing a degenerate

version of Sergeant York, leading a squad of Jewish soldiers on a mission that consists of massacring, torturing and scalping prisoners of war, beating them to death—on screen—with a baseball bat—not to mention machine gunning Nazis to death in a suicide mission. Wow, that's a hoot! Take the kids!! What fun! A regular laugh riot! Note here the praise of suicide missions—dying for your country is made into a positive good.

There is no attempt whatsoever to justify imperialist World War II war aims in this movie. The people who made this film are not stupid. To do so would invite comparison to the present day role of American imperialism today especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. Instead we have the glorification of reactionary violence and death. Instead of the US Army, we have a squad of killers. Rather than the fascist massacres and extermination camps, we have a few bad-guy Nazis. The whole film is on the level of the enraged individual and is designed to obfuscate the political issues involved in World War II and today, and to substitute and glorify for the actual politics, the behavior of members of a death squad.

“Artistic” minded cretins will no doubt twist themselves up in knots with endless commentary about director Quentin Tarantino's irony (none of which I see), about his quoting of other films, his brilliant portrayal of violence, Brad Pitt's fake southern accent, etc., etc. Liberals driven mad by the social crisis they face will no doubt rave and rant that after all the victims of this death squad are Nazis. So what. No amount of justification can change the political message of this film.

The number of well-paid media reactionaries who offer effusive praise for this drivel is truly remarkable. This is a recruiting poster for participation in what the imperialists—desperate and degenerate, convulsive and malignant—have in mind, and are now carrying out, against the working class, the handicapped, the sick, the elderly and the poverty stricken world wide. Not only is the movie utterly devoid of character development, not only does it assume that being Jewish makes it fine—just peachy keen, actually—to murder prisoners of war, the movie is an enthusiastic endorsement of torture and murder and hence of the enhanced interrogation torture being used not only by the US government but also by the governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Israel, Iraq and every other defender of capitalism and of imperialist predations. For the perpetrators, well worth indictment under the Nuremberg Trial statutes.

Violence in defense of reaction is completely unjustifiable. That of the working class in defense of their existence is completely necessary, progressive, and revolutionary. This movie glorifies the Allied violence of World War II while—surprise!—totally omitting the heroic resistance of the workers and peoples of Europe, including those of Germany, against not only fascism but also imperialism. The German resistance is reduced to one actress of dubious loyalty, and the French Resistance is reduced to one futile farmer. Not a word of course about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the heroic resistance of the Soviet working class, the Trotskyists in France who did revolutionary socialist political work amongst the German soldiers, and others.

It's time to label death squad recruiting movies by their real name.

One additional comment: That the enemy in the film is the Nazis

should be seen in light of the current enthusiasm amongst the ruling class for labeling as Nazis, socialists—or both!—the opponents, of any stripe, of the most right wing imperialism. The Nazi label has been applied to feminists, Muslims, jihadists, and so on. For the politically disoriented today, the equation—Nazis in the film = the peoples of Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan—is easily made.

Tom M

Minnesota, USA

31 August 2009

A very good article Hiram. As for this movie, *Inglourious Basterds*, excuse my straight up language, it is a barbaric and reactionary load of shit.

Surely the Nazi SS orchestrated terrible bloodbaths, yet Tarantino's “answer” is to destroy and falsify history, “fighting fascism with fascism” history revised as pointless, reactionary violence typical of psychopathic serial killers; and the reactionary liberals call this “entertainment” for the nullification of audiences.

You write, “To produce a film in this context in which American soldiers torture and execute their enemies on the battlefield, in which the audience is invited to laugh at such atrocities and, in fact, to cheer them on, is utterly reprehensible.” This is certainly true when those very same reactionary liberals, given the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, are anything but “good guys,” but imperialist militarist neo-colonists, using the pretext of 9/11 for barbarism.

This isn't entertainment; it's barbaric ideology masquerading as “entertainment.” I remember waiting to see *District 9* in Reading Cinema, Wellington, and three audience members were complaining of their alienation from these “films”... Social revolution is on the agenda.

Chris F

Wellington, New Zealand

1 September 2009



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