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Why I read the WSWS

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The World Socialist Web Site has every right to be proud of its fifteenth anniversary. As what at times seems the lone voice of humanity and reason in the English language it has remarkably managed to get across urgent messages despite a climate of pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist, and neoconservative corporate media agendas and viewpoints.

As an historian and former newspaper cultural critic I have found the WSWS to be an invaluable resource for preserving and maintaining radical intellectual discourse on world culture despite prevailing anti-intellectual and ahistorical forces.

It was through the film essays of David Walsh that I first discovered the WSWS, particularly his impressive overview of Elia Kazan's troubled political past. Here, at last, I encountered a website analyzing cinema through a radical left perspective—and in the late 20th century no less! I was delighted to encounter writers approaching the cinema from a serious, jargon-free perspective who, unlike their alleged “left” counterparts in the “alternative” press, felt no need to maintain street credentials through quips, sarcasm, and trendy viewpoints on popular culture. Furthermore, in a society prone to cultural amnesia, the WSWS was keeping alive the memories and artistic accomplishments of myriad artists of previous centuries.

Throughout my years of avidly reading WSWS I have been grateful for the focus given to cinema artists of the past century: Charles Bogle's riveting reviews of film noir DVD releases; Joanne Laurier's appreciation of Max Ophuls and Edgar G. Ulmer; Kevin Kearney's festival report on revivals of Fritz Lang and Carol Reed films; Tony Williams' review of Michael Curtiz's forgotten *British Agent*, not to mention these and other writers' definitive film festival reports. I have also deeply appreciated Walsh placing the Roman Polanski

extradition case in political perspective and his recent analyses of both the Academy Awards and propagandist Kathryn Bigelow. The superb interview he and Laurier conducted with Joseph McBride on Orson Welles and the Hollywood blacklist was also of tremendous historical value.

Other WSWS reviewers are to be praised for dissecting the reactionary ideologies of such “mainstream” attractions as *The Dark Knight Rises* and “independent” hits as *The Iron Lady*. Hiram Lee's review of the original *Iron Man* was especially useful to me in preparing to discuss film propaganda with Texas high school students.

As the WSWS bravely moves forward, I respectfully offer a few heartfelt recommendations as a cineaste. I would, for example, like to see an official ceasefire declared against the two bravest radical English-language filmmakers of the twentieth century: Ken Loach and Peter Watkins. Whatever disagreements the site has with how these directors approach world political events or the extent to which they deviate from elements of Trotskyism, Loach and Watkins are worthy of serious editorial support. I take issue, for example, with the harshness of Watkins' overall achievements in the *Punishment Park* review as well as those of Loach in the *Route Irish* review. Contrast these extensive dissections of the filmmakers' shortcomings with the website's general enthusiasm for Hollywood's reigning capitalist movie director, Steven Spielberg. The progressive messages extracted from elements of *Munich* and *Lincoln* are not, in my mind, enough to overshadow Spielberg's conservative corporate and cinematic legacy. This billionaire entertainment industry player is not “one of us,” yet for the most part he has received more respectful treatment from the WSWS than either Loach or Watkins, who really are on our side. On the other hand, bravo to Walsh for

ruthlessly exposing the dangerous political hypocrisies of Michael Moore !

If I seem all fired up on these issues it is because the World Socialist Web Site mobilizes and ignites my cultural passions and emotions as no other English language media source. The WSWS is a website inspiring analysis and debate, regardless of whether the subjects are U.S. foreign policy or world cinema. There is nothing like it anywhere.

Bravo to the website's dedicated staff and congratulations to WSWS on turning fifteen! Keep fighting the good fight—cultural and otherwise.



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