



Michael Giltz | BIO | I'M A FAN OF THIS BLOGGER

Is 300 a Vile, Racist Diatribe ... or Harmless Fun?

Posted July 31, 2007 | 06:50 PM (EST)

Read More: Warner Bros., Zack Snyder, United States, Iraq, Finland, Breaking Entertainment News



The movie 300 -- a tale of Spartans dying gloriously in battle -- comes to DVD (\$34.98; Warner Bros.) as the most surprising and polarizing movie of the year. It grossed an astonishing \$70 million on its opening weekend in March thanks to a cool look that rivals The Matrix. Everyone was caught off guard, but it steamrolled on to more than \$200 million in the US and \$450 million worldwide.

Email Print Be the First to Submit This Story to Digg

Is it a vile, racist diatribe? Is it a veiled look at the world from Bush's eyes, with Iraq as the last stand of freedom and goodness against tyranny? Is it just a homoerotic video game come to life? Or is it all of them combined, indicated by one critic who said the movie was "what a Nazi propaganda film would look like

if it had been drawn by Tom of Finland."

Watch the film again on DVD and it's hard to burden the story with any of the weight critics have placed on it. Director Zack Snyder chats away on the commentary track in full geek mode -- detailing moment by moment what shots were CGI or on a real set, whether a sword was plastic or metal, which arrows were real and which inserted later, how they got the capes to billow out and on and on. If a political or social or military thought ever entered his mind, he disguises it well. All Snyder wanted to do was make the coolest, goriest, awesomest adaptation possible of the Frank Miller graphic novel it's based on.

It doesn't mean those subtle prejudices aren't there. All the bad guys are dark-skinned. And it's pretty outrageous to insinuate that the Persians are "deviant" when the Spartans likely celebrated pederasty and men taking young male lovers as much as any other society of Greece. But leaning on tired clichés isn't quite the same as celebrating them. And Bush was surely the farthest thing from Snyder's mind.

Mostly, it's just a mindless, kind of cool looking action film. Perhaps in the future the buried

Popular Stories on HuffPost

- Fashion Face-Off! Michelle Obama And Carla Bruni-Sarkozy Finally Meet In France (VIDEO, PHOTOS, POLL)
Levi Johnston Talks Safe Sex With Tyra Banks (VIDEO)
Oscar de la Renta Slams Michelle Obama's Buckingham Outfit As Major Designers Feel Ignored
Verena von Pfetten 7 Lessons To Be Learned From Carla Bruni
Huff TV Arianna Discusses Michelle Obama's "Fantastic"

prejudices of 300 will seem embarrassing. That's the case with *Popeye The Sailor: 1933-1938* (\$64.98; Warner Bros.). This lovingly packaged collection of the 60 theatrical shorts made by the Max Fleischer Cartoon Studio begins with a warning.

"The animated shorts you are about to see are a product of their time," says the disclaimer. "They may depict some of the ethnic, sexist and racist prejudices that were commonplace in American society. These depictions were wrong then and are wrong today. While the following shorts do not represent the Warner Bros. view of today's society, these animated shorts are being presented as they were originally created, because to do otherwise would be the same as claiming these prejudices never existed."

Now if only Disney would copy this reasonable stance, they could finally release "Song of the South" without fear of being accused of racism. (Adding on commentary tracks from historians and the like would help, too.)

The worst sins of these Popeye cartoons include vile stereotypes of Japanese as World War II approached and the sight of two men fighting over a helpless woman. Among the extras are many commentary tracks, quite a number of bonus cartoons and two substantial documentaries, including "I Yam What I Yam: The Story Of Popeye the Sailor, which is relatively frank about the decline of the cartoons after the era covered in this set. (By the Seventies, Popeye wasn't even allowed to hit anyone. What's the point, wondered one animator?)

Some DVD releases this week actually battled stereotypes instead of reinforcing them. The TV show "Hawaii Five-O" was manna from heaven for Hawaiians who saw the beauty of their state celebrated on TV every week and Kam Fong playing the most distinguished Hawaiian in TV history as Detective Chin Ho Kelly. "Hawaii Five-O Second Season" (\$49.99; Paramount) as it barreled into the top 20, where it would remain for most of its 12 year run.

So here's the question: are you offended by the inclusion of racist stereotypes in a collection of old cartoons? Or do you think presenting them with some historical context takes care of it? And were the critics right who lambasted 300 for trafficking in tired, ugly clichés? Or did they make too much out of a fanboy fantasy that had nothing on its mind but gore and super-cool violence?

Comments for this post are now closed

Email Print

More in Entertainment...

SNL: Madonna And Angelina In Weekend Update...

Reality Star Jade Goody Buried In Lavish...

Robert De Niro Nanny Sues For \$40,000

Alex Da Silva, Celebrity Choreographer Accused Of...

digg HuffPost Stories Surging Right Now

Michelle Obama's Clothing Has Sean Hannity All Out Of Sorts

Cenk Uygur: Have We Reached The Tipping Point on Guns?

RICHARD POPLAWSKI, Pittsburgh Gunman, Kills 3 Police Officers

Dr. Rachel Ehrenfeld: Does Iran Harbor Osama bin Laden?

Ads by Google

The Other End Of The Line A Pretty Indian Girl And Dashing American Boy Fall In Love! Buy DVD.

Style On CBS' "Washington Unplugged"

Arianna was on CBS' "Washington..."

Huff TV Arianna Appears on ABC's "This Week" Roundtable With George Stephanopoulos (VIDEO)

Arianna was a guest this morning on...

"BRUNO" TRAILER! Calamity, African Babies, Chase Scenes And More (NSFW VIDEO)

IT'S HERE! The trailer for this July's Sacha Baron Cohen...

NATO Leaders Focus On Afghanistan, But Most Reject Obama's Plea For Troops (SLIDESHOW)

STRASBOURG, France — On the eve of the NATO...

First Lady Fashion At Friday's NATO Concert (PHOTOS)

Another night, another fashion opportunity for NATO leaders and their spouses! See...

Diana Palin, Sarah Palin's Sister-In-Law, Arrested For Breaking Into Home

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Police say Alaska Gov...

John Oliver Explains The Real Reason You Never Touch The Queen (VIDEO)

Jim Cramer Declares The Depression "Over" (VIDEO)

On Thursday's episode of "Mad Money" host Jim Cramer declared that the depression...

New Jay Leno Show Rejected By NBC Affiliate In Boston

BOSTON — Boston's NBC affiliate says it will air a local newscast instead of...

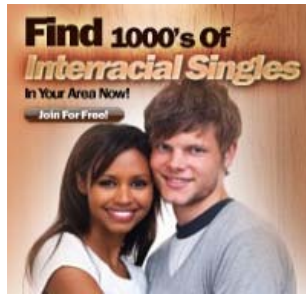
Ice Bridge Ruptures In Antarctica (VIDEO)

An ice bridge linking a shelf of ice the size of Jamaica to two islands in Antarctica has

Scientists Find Rocket Fuel Chemical In Infant Formula

ATLANTA — Traces of a

TheOtherEndOfTheLineDVD.com



Comments for this entry are currently under maintenance but will be restored soon.

chemical used in rocket fuel were found in samples of...

HUFFPOST'S BIG NEWS PAGES

Sports	AIG	Computers
India	Barack Obama	Michelle Obama
Olympics	Housing Crisis	Fox News

[MORE BIG NEWS PAGES](#)

Books by this author

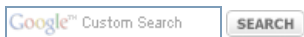
This Blogger's Books from **amazon.com.**

A cabin of one's own: New England's MacDowell Colony celebrates 100 years of artistic utopia. And the gay and lesbian artists who prospered there celebrate ... (The national gay & lesbian newsmagazine)
by Michael Giltz

Affairs to remember: Farley Granger bedded Ava Gardner, Shelley Winters, and Leonard Bernstein. In his autobiography, Include Me Out, Hitchcock's muse ... (The national gay & lesbian newsmagazine)
by Michael Giltz

[Bloggers Index ▶](#)

[Read All Posts by Michael Giltz ▶](#)



[HOME](#) [POLITICS](#) [MEDIA](#) [BUSINESS](#) [ENTERTAINMENT](#) [LIVING](#) [GREEN](#) [STYLE](#) [WORLD](#) [CHICAGO](#) [COMEDY](#) [FUNDRACE](#)

[Advertise](#) | [Login](#) | [Make HuffPost your Home Page](#) | [RSS](#) | [Jobs](#) | [FAQ: Comments & Moderation](#) | [FAQ: Huffpost Accounts](#) | [Contact Us](#)
Copyright © 2009 HuffingtonPost.com, Inc. | [Archive](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Comment Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [Powered by Movable Type](#)