

THE ACCUSED

HOW ARE THEY DEALING WITH RAPE IN HOLLYWOOD THESE DAYS? UNCLE STEVIE HAS ANOTHER RANT.

The opening scene - a small roadhouse bar shrouded by the imposing architecture of a large concrete bridge. Everyone in the audience screams 'My God! It's the Arms!'. Inside, a motley collection of redneck neanderthal throwbacks and horrible prep-py student types pour beer over each others heads, burp and fart, and live in a world cocooned in sexist epithets and macho braggadocio. Everyone in the audience screams 'My God! It IS the Arms!'

No, it is not. It is the Mill pub and, for Sadie (Jodie Foster), the scene of a terrible gang-rape by aforementioned turds for whom the concept of being peeled alive and dipped in hydrochloric acid is far too kind.

In a nut-shell then, Sadie has a fight with her boyfriend and decides to go and slug back a few with her drippy barmaid friend to 'smooth away the edges'. Flirting with one of the bestial clientele, things get decidedly out of hand and, with an audience cheering and clapping, becomes the recipient of violent physical attention. Kate (Kelly McGillis) is the Assistant DA and, realizing that the victim is too much of a tear away to be assured of a winning case, lets the offenders get away with a charge of 'reckless endangerment' ('Rape' looks a little dodgy on the C.V. of the A-grade college students). The rapists get nine months, but it means that Sadie does not even get the chance to go to court to tell her side of the story. Sadie is pretty damned pissed about this seeing as everyone thinks that she is nothing more than a trollop and the real culprit of the whole shenanigans. The D.A. begins to realize that she has in fact given the plaintiff a pretty raw deal and thus sets

out to nab the onlookers on the grounds of being responsible for the inducement of the crime.

One thing that is immediately apparent is the incredible bipartisan portrayal of the male and female characters. All the men in the picture are either superficial insensitive bastards or responsible in some way for the rape in the first place. Kate's colleagues are far more interested in the thump and bash of an ice hockey game than offering good advice and encouragement; Sadie's boyfriend doesn't understand why she doesn't want to have sex with him within days of the rape and stalks off; the detective just does his job for about three minutes and then leaves. Only three female characters receive any exposure and all of them have already been mentioned. Shallowness begins to rear its pin-like little head.

The aspect of violent sport is an interesting inclusion in the film which the makers dwell on in no uncertain terms. Special emphasis and attention is given to body checks at the ice hockey game and the other clients of the Mill pub are engrossed in a boxing match on the television while the rape is taking place. It is this all round condemnation and symbolic explanation of male aggression that threw the picture for me. Where are the insensitive professional women in this picture and, given the rather unrespectable character given to Sadie, the alienating feminine influence? There are none ("It is very unlikely that there were any other women in the D.A.'s office at that level" explains my girlfriend placing a stiff knee squarely in my groin, and I must admit I have to agree).

The most important aspect of 'the Accused' though is the

acknowledgement of the fact that women are not allowed to be single and look really sexy in this sort of environment without being in extreme danger. Sadie drinks, smokes, talks in bawdy language and wears clothes that accentuate her limesome beauty and, what's more, she flirts. This is the crunch point for the legal issue. If she comes onto the men then, well jeez wasn't she out for the treatment in the first place? Aaaargh NO you ignorant shit! Why shouldn't she go out and have a good time without being molested by scum with squirming slime in their underpants for brains? The answer, no reason.

Jodie Foster is a vastly underestimated talent. Here is an actress that is so damn convincing that one is actually making comparisons to personal acquaintances (or maybe I'm just a little weird). She has an exuberant vitality and the sort of sparkling presence that is pretty rare these days. She certainly upstages McGillis who puts out a pretty mediocre performance as the initially wimpy, lately crusading attorney whose only fait accompli was to discover the identity of the frat-boy that witnessed and reported the crime to the police. Foster's character is the hero right to the end. She has the resilience and fortitude to demand to be heard. She has the courage to persuade Ken (for it is he) to spill the beans. And she has the determination to fight through the emotional hailstorm and insurmountable bullshit that is thrown in her face in the aftermath.

Halfway through the movie one appears to be in for a rather tame account of the special legal circumstances surrounding the acquittal of

the rape audience as accomplices. However, during the final courtroom drama we are all treated to a really nasty flash back of the actual event step by disgusting step. One question that I'm left with is, was it really necessary? There we are with closeup after closeup of the victim's terrified face and, in the closing stages, the director resorts to slow motion for crying out loud. It seemed to go on forever. Protagonists will cry "well of course, it was necessary Griffiths you flippant dick-head!" well that maybe so but I will cry 'j'accuse!' and cite overkill as being a little too strong in taste here. Furthermore, the way in which the scene was shot, namely in ironic imper-

sonation of a pornographic movie was inappropriate to the appraisal of the overall situation. Of course, I don't mean it spoils my enjoyment of the story, what I do mean is that this was not the correct forum for such subliminal criticism.

Once again this very, very important issue has been dealt a rather ineffectual hand that doesn't attempt to educate anyone except in the light of lateral connection and allusion. Yes, the brutality stands up on its own as a shocking condemnation of masculine attitudes and values. But this is not enough for a film that should leave everyone traumatized for a long, long time.

STEVE GRIFFITHS

A DARK WORLD OF VICE, UNCERTAINTY AND DEATH

D.O.A.

from middle America, who wakes one morning to the knowledge that he has been poisoned and has three days to find out why and who. The 1987 re-make, Mate's film "Normal" life is henceforth relies on film noir techniques displaced while flash-backs, where sound and shadow odd angles and irregular cutting rather than dialogue, are ting signal the nightmare responsible for the tension world now inhabited by both which occurs when ordinary Frank and the film spectator. people become enmeshed in a D.O.A., as well as being a good chain of events beyond their thriller, provides a link in the genre chain that began with

The dark world of vice, Laura and Citizen Kane and uncertainty and death that is culminated in Blue Velvet or, the realm of film noir closes in to be Canadian specific, Un on Everyman Frank Bigelow Zoo La Nuit.

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