

# The Seige delivers with action and a message

## Hypothetical situation exposes the ignorance of racism

BY PATRICK BLACKIE

What is it about gratuitous destruction that sells movies? Not that I'm complaining, but these days it's almost as if when you go to see four or five Hollywood action productions, they're just made of the same things getting blown up, with the only difference being the angles from which you see the explosion.

I feared *The Seige*, featuring big stars like Bruce Willis and Denzel Washington, would follow the same tired Hollywood action movie formula — you know, based in an American city, the hero is either an American policeman or a member of a government law-

enforcement agency, and the bad guy is either a foreigner or a deranged American.

It was a distinctly 'Hollywood' movie, fitting the formula, but it had a subtle twist which I found set it apart from any movie I had seen.

The premise is that a variety of terrorist groups, joined together by a mutual cause, begin bombing various parts of New York City — making demands that cannot be met by the government.

In order to track down every group behind the bombings, the President of the US declares martial law in New York.

This is an interesting idea, but

there is only so much you can do with it. One aspect that I believe makes this a great movie, and which has also spurred considerable controversy, is the reaction of Americans when the origin of the terrorists is known to be Arabic. In response to this knowledge, the military seizes the city, collecting every male of any Arabic descent, imprisoning them in a stadium which had been converted to a prison camp.

There were racist sentiments expressed in this movie, but they were used to make a very important point. New Yorkers ignorantly blamed anyone they thought to be Arabic for the bombings, not recognizing the fact that it was a select group of terrorists who were responsible. When their attackers' race was identified, the ignorant,

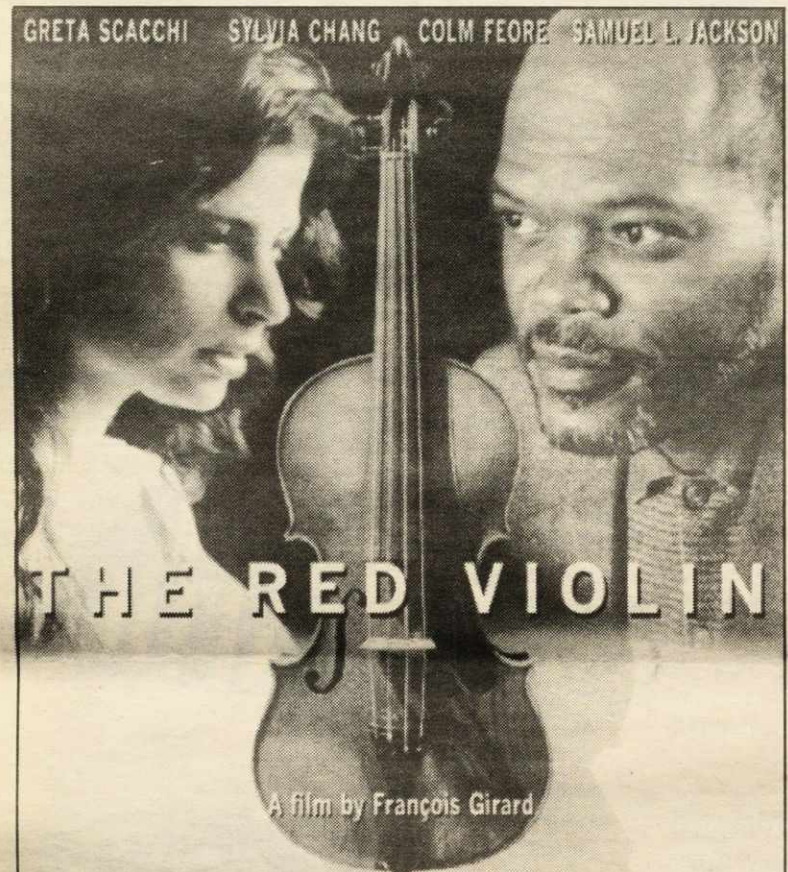
senseless and blatantly racist sentiments of Americans were expressed very powerfully.

*The Seige* was not, however, a racist movie. The purpose of the film was to take something that is happening now in the world and exaggerate it. There is a neolithic generalization out there that people from the Middle East, living anywhere in the world, are terrorists. This movie took this fact and composed a not far-fetched hypothetical situation to show that this is not the case, and to show the effects of those generalizations on both people of Middle Eastern descent and westerners. The filmmaker used strong images and exceedingly disturbing racist situations in the hope that people watching the film would be emotionally stimulated — in the

hope that they would re-evaluate the real life problem of racism in general. It is distinctly anti-racist, trying to expose a little bit of the ignorant, subtly racist ways of North Americans in general — using the city of New York as the test case.

*The Seige* is an exceptional action movie, having the very rare aspect of good dialogue and the virtually unheard of concept of a deep plot, followed by numerous well-developed subplots.

It does contain the minimal portion of cheesy lines, but it wouldn't be a Hollywood movie without a certain amount of superficial commercialism. If you want to digress from the traditional Hollywood recipe for action movies, I strongly suggest *The Seige*.



## Funky throb shakes that thang

BY DAISY KIDSTON

You know the band is good when you ignore the bartender and instead get your kicks by drinking shot after pure shot of beautiful, intoxicating music.

This type of musical exhilaration was the vibe at the Marquee last Friday night, when three bands — Dr. Yellowfever and the Jive, Knifey Moloko and the Freedom Jazz Band — performed in the Nova Scotia Music Week Urban Groove showcase, organized by Jazz East.

Dr. Yellowfever and the Jive, a large funk ensemble complete with flute and bongo drums, started the evening off with their superbly cool and, as clichéd as it sounds, "trippy" music which funkified the boots and souls of many a Marquee patron. Their set was teasingly short, but appropriate considering two other bands were patiently waiting their turn.

Next up was Knifey Moloko, a big jazz band full of big music. Like Yellowfever this

band was great to dance to and had an equally exciting flavour. I think what I liked most about them was the bongo drummer who added a primal beat to their unique sound.

Two down, three to go: last up was the Freedom Jazz Band, also a large group which changed both musical style and band members as their set continued. At the beginning, a drummer and one rhythm and lead guitarist played with the crowd, with some members of Knifey Moloko adding some background beats. Soon after two more vocalists joined the band, transporting the band's sound from jazz to rap and hip hop. There were also some Bob Marley covers

which were good, and this band encouraged a lot of audience participation.

Though I enjoyed Freedom Jazz, I found their sound a little too scattered to get into, and I got tired of chanting "Freedom Jazz" and other sounds at their request. I would have rather listened to their singing than the bleating of my own untalented voice. The audience was into them though, and the dance floor was packed. This band also gets credit as they were the last to perform. Regardless, they were still able to keep the crowd entertained.

Overall, it was a fabulous evening at the Marquee, full of rich, musical soul food.



The Freedom Jazz Band serve up shots of intoxicating music at the Marquee.

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