

Opinion

'Amerika' reflects ignorance of patriotic public

The book *First Blood* ended with the death of the main character, John Rambo. Those who saw the movie version weren't so lucky. Rambo lived to make another movie, this one about killing Communists in Vietnam. And in the fall, Rambo will return yet again to kill Communists in Afghanistan. Lucky us.



Loren Steffy

As with any profitable film, imitations have sprung up along the way. To measure dime-store culture against itself, 1986 saw more Ramboesque movies than it did Steven King novels. With all the money in red-bashing movies, it isn't surprising that television is getting in on a piece of the action.

Next week, ABC will air the much-talked-about and much-criticized mini-series "Amerika." The series deals with futuristic American society under the control of the Soviet Union. As you might guess, it's not flattering from the Soviet perspective.

While Americans may view such entertainment as good, clean, patriotic

fun, Rambo and his ilk have done more damage to U.S.-Soviet relations than Strategic Defense Initiative, MX missiles and the B-1B bomber combined.

It was only a matter of time before the Soviets fought back. The only difference is that while the anti-Communist propaganda in the United States is based on fiction, the anti-American propaganda in the Soviet Union is based on painful facts — specifically, the American occupation of Soviet territory after World War I.

Allied troops intervened on the side of the White Russian Army during the last few months of World War I and stayed until 1920 to stop Germany from obtaining military supplies in Russian ports, and, historians speculate, to revitalize the Eastern Front and thereby divert Germany's attention from the west. After the war, Americans deployed in Russia supported anti-Bolshevik forces during the Russian civil war.

It's a part of our history that most Americans have forgotten, or at least would like to. The Soviets only drag it out of the propaganda closet when superpower relations are poor.

Most historians agree that the Allied intervention served little purpose and has little historical significance. But the

Soviets have made an art out of uncovering skeletons, no matter how minute the closet may seem.

Not-so-gratifying photos and memorabilia of the American occupation are going to be exhibited on the 70th anni-

versary of the Russian Revolution. The state archives from Khabarovsk also are part of the exhibit and include an account of the capture and rape of a group of girls by American troops. Apparently, the victims were to be executed, but instead were rescued the next morning by a partisan detachment. The Americans were so mad that they tortured and killed some miners instead, or so the story goes.

No matter how many grains of salt you take this with, the Soviets have made their point. Our horror stories come from our imagination, but the Kremlin can flip open a history book and find a basis, however flimsy, for some substantial America-bashing.

But so far, outrage has come only in

the form of threats to the ABC News bureau in Moscow and direct "Amerika"-bashing. Perhaps the Soviets are getting all flustered over nothing. After all, as any American will tell you, it's only a movie.

"It's only a movie" doesn't quell Soviet fears. Film as art is seen as an expression of opinion, philosophy or, especially in the Soviet Union, dogma. When seen through Soviet eyes, Rambo becomes a statement of American attitude. The immense popularity of not only the film but spin-off merchandise backs up the Kremlin's perceptions about how the United States views the Soviet Union. Leonid Kravchenko, deputy chairman of the Soviets' radio and TV agency, told Time magazine that he is in favor of showing "Amerika" in the Soviet Union.

"It would be useful if Soviet TV viewers were shown how public opinion in the U.S.A. is formed," Kravchenko said in the Feb. 9 issue.

But this glimpse of social trends through film is not reciprocated. Few Soviet films are viewed in the United States. We are unfamiliar with most of their folk heroes and legends. We should be watching their version of "Amerika" as intensely as they will be watching ours.

U.S.-Soviet tensions can't be resolved with the gritting of teeth and the pulling of triggers. It takes the kind of dialogue Sylvester Stallone could never memorize — diplomacy.

I'm not advocating a ban on anti-So-

viet movies. Censorship of ideas — no matter how ridiculous and propagandist-oriented — may be a part of "Amerika" but not America. The right to be stupid is protected by the First Amendment.

Discriminating viewers, however, should see these films for what they are and impose the ultimate form of censorship — lack of approval. Instead, commie-bashing on the silver screen has become big business.

ABC undoubtedly is counting on the public's curiosity, piqued by the controversy "Amerika" has spawned. The mini-series is being shown during the rating-sensitive weeks of the February sweeps because the network could use a boost. But before ABC executives start singing "God Bless 'Amerika,'" they should realize that America's infatuation with anti-Communist fantasies must end sooner or later.

What we try to tell the Soviets we must understand ourselves. However popular and profitable Ramboisms may be, they are still only movies. As long as the money keeps pouring through office windows, the curtains will close on Rambo and his commie-killing copycats. The best we can hope for is a long intermission.

To truly solve our differences with the Soviets — to ensure there never is an Amerika, a U.S.-occupied Russia — worse, a nuclear wasteland uncontrollable by either side — we must confront reality and not wallow in celluloid fantasy.

Loren Steffy is a journalism graduate and editor for The Battalion.

He was no angel

I saw the movie, "Peggy Sue Got Married," recently. Good movie. Peggy Sue (Kathleen Turner) goes back in time to her senior year in high school (1960) and tries to do things differently, such as not getting married to her dolt of a husband, played by Nicolas Cage.



Lewis Grizzard

There's just this one thing. During a scene where Peggy Sue and her high school chums are at an unchaperoned party, somebody suggests, "Let's turn off the lights and put on some makeout music."

The record selected was some uptempo ditty by Jimmy Clanton. Absolutely wrong.

I also was in high school in 1960 and when my generation wanted makeout music, it always selected the same artist. Johnny Mathis.

You stayed with Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs, you twisted with Chubby Checker, you went to the hop with Danny and the Juniors, but you made out with Johnny Mathis.

I suppose I should define the term "making out," which now is referred to as "sucking face," I am told.

How disgusting. When couples made out back in the 60s they held it — with comparatively few instances of going further — to a fondle here and a fondle there and maybe a little hickey-giving on the neck.

Lights are low, she's gorgeous and you casually stroll over to the record player and slip on Johnny Mathis doing "Chances Are," or "Until the Twelfth of Never," and then you dive on each other.

The only couple I knew who "got into trouble" back then was Sandra Dee and Troy Donahue in a movie here or there and I still don't believe Sandra Dee knew exactly what she was doing. Troy Donahue, I could never trust.

Kathy Sue Loudermilk was the one who taught me the ropes of making out to Johnny Mathis.

I was at her house one night for what I thought was going to be another game of Monopoly and staring at Kathy Sue's sweater, the one they retired when she graduated from high school.

After Kathy Sue's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Loudermilk, went to bed, however, Kathy Sue, whose Evening in Paris perfume had intoxicated me with passion (my nose hairs were aflame, I later would recall), she put on her Johnny Mathis album and took me to heaven's gate.

I would awaken the next morning with severely bruised lips, four hickeys on my neck, and a great deal more knowledge of the intimate workings of certain fasteners such as straps and buckles.

Somehow, after that, I lost much of the previous interest I had held in building model airplanes and achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

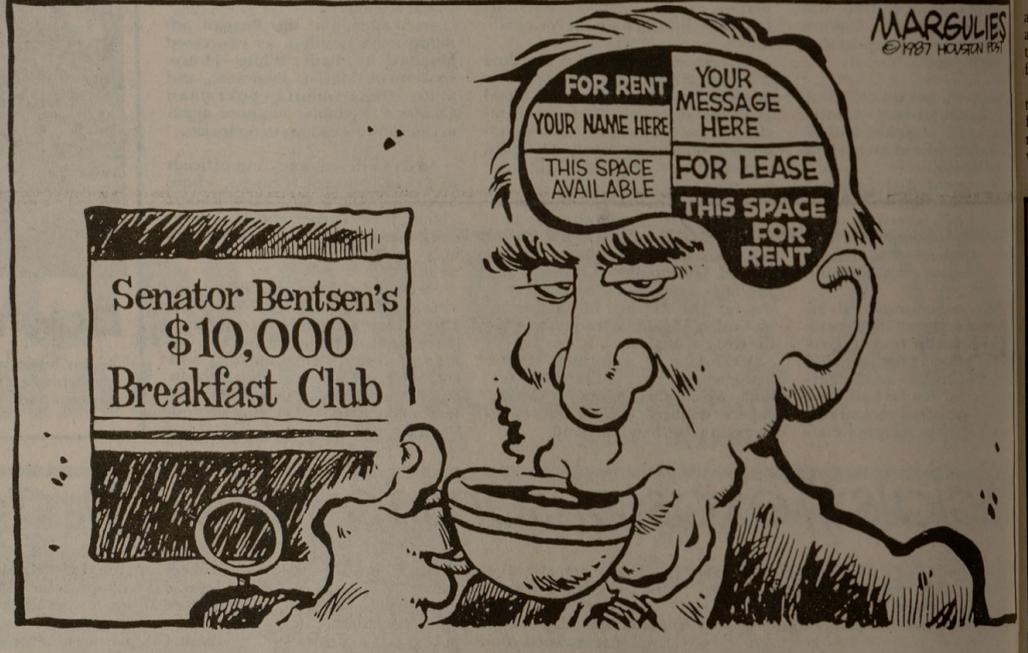
Or, as my boyhood friend and idol, Weyman C. Wannamaker, Jr., a great American, said, "Once you've been got hold of by Kathy Sue, baseball seems like a terrible waste of time."

Kids today don't stop at simple making out as much as we did, and that's a serious problem in this country.

But you can't blame it on Johnny Mathis. He stopped singing background for youthful lovers a long time ago, when young love was still at least somewhat synonymous with innocence.

Chances are we may never see the likes of either again.

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Mail Call

Dateless

EDITOR:

After reading "Attention" column in the Jan. 29 edition of *At Ease*, I could not restrain myself from responding to a few remarks in Melanie Perkins' column. She stated that she is bothered at not being asked for dates. Then she states that occasionally she must swallow her pride and lower herself to ask out a guy only when she needs to have a date to keep up appearances in front of her friends. It is pretty sickening to me to read Perkins' female chauvinistic opinions.

She expects guys to have to swallow their pride and make all the moves. Does she think that guys don't get nervous when they ask out a girl? She "hates" to ask out guys, but she expects to be asked out regardless. Perkins also states that most of her dates are freshmen and occasionally sophomores. She says, "they don't matter." Well, I am a freshman and so are many of my friends, and we all agree that we matter. After reading Perkins' opinions, it's obvious to me why she doesn't have a boyfriend.

Greg Buford '90

Knot good

EDITOR:

After reading Paula Vogrin's amusing Feb. 2 column on the ingredients of chicken nuggets, we were prompted to share what we discovered in a late-night rap session in our dorm suite. Upon examining a package of Mrs. Baird's Less reduced calorie wheat bread, we saw that it "contains no wood fiber." This seems to imply that some bread does. If other brands do contain wood fibers, we would like to know about it. Besides not wanting to eat wood, we are also concerned with another thing: if they put too much wood

in bread, will there be enough left for us to build the hell outta bonfire?

Lara Pelham '89 accompanied by three signatures

Have a heart

EDITOR:

Yes, Richard Fox, life does go on after death. But for those people who have experienced the loss of a loved one, that is the one thing that is most difficult to accept. To think that life will go on after a loved one has died is an almost unbearable fact. Yes, planes still fly and trains still roll and people die all the time, but can't we hold a memorial service for our fellow Aggies without low flying jets and trains disrupting the service? Can't we have enough compassion to allow people to remember their loved ones in silence in hopes that someone will see to it that we are not disturbed when it's our turn to grieve? Maybe stopping air traffic altogether is not the answer. Air traffic could be diverted to keep planes from flying directly over the campus while the ceremony is in progress. Life goes on, but do we have to shove this reality down the throats of those people who are trying to hold on to whatever they have left by allowing planes and trains to disrupt the Silver Taps ceremony? Can't we be kind and compassionate enough to be silent while a memorial service is going on? I'm sure you would want that if it were your loved one being remembered.

Jan Jentsch '89

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