

New Spanish movie promotes abuse, degradation of women

If you're planning to see the new film by Pedro Almodovar, "Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down," don't read this column. I'm going to give away the plot.

I walked into the theater excited to see this comedy, though I knew only four things about it:

- That it was the work of Almodovar, whose last movie, "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown," was highly acclaimed and, I thought, hysterically funny (I've seen it three times);
 - That it was in Spanish with subtitles;
 - That it is being marketed heavily in the United States;
 - And that it was sexually explicit.
- (There were signs up saying no one under 18 could view the film, but a 17-year-old walked in with us without showing an I.D.).

But when the movie started, here's what I saw:

Ricky, a 23-year-old man, is released from a mental hospital and he begins a search for Marina, a former junkie and porn star who is currently making a bad horror movie.

Ricky had escaped from the mental hospital several times before he was released. On one of these occasions he met Marina and had sex with her.

Ricky follows her, finds her address, forces his way into her apartment and hits her when she screams, knocking her unconscious.

When she comes to, he tells her he's 23 and all alone in the world, and that he loves her and he will be a good husband to her and a good father to her children.

He just plans to hold her hostage



Ellen Hobbs
Columnist

until she falls in love with him.

She is, and rightly so, skeptical of his good intentions. She tells him if he plans to have sex with her (i.e., rape her) to go ahead and get it over with.

He does not, however, and holds her prisoner, tying her up, gagging her and locking her in the apartment every time he leaves.

The one time they go somewhere together, he handcuffs her to him. He tells her repeatedly that if she tries to escape, he'll slit her throat first and then his own.

She eventually tells him she has fallen for him, trying to buy some time before he forces her to leave the country, hoping that maybe someone in her family will find her.

Then they have sex, and that's where the explicit sex scenes come in.

This goes on for a while, until she finally does manage to escape.

And then here comes the wacky, comic part of this film: She returns to him because, yes, she has fallen in love with him.

I was appalled. The film makers lead the audience to believe that women who are terrorized and brutalized by men are able to be

won over by cute dialogue, devotion and good sex.

That philosophy is probably just good comedy in the film makers' minds, an ironic twist calculated to get a laugh. But as amusing as the dialogue makes it seem, it perpetuates some beliefs about women that are not true.

The film says that women can be violated, and they won't mind. They don't mind being robbed, or held hostage, or beaten. Maybe they won't even care if they are raped. Maybe, in fact, they'll like it.

Sure, "Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down" is a foreign film, and sometimes foreign films deal with subjects U.S. film makers won't touch, and sometimes they deal with the subjects in a different way than they would be dealt with in the United States.

But violence against women is a world-wide problem, and a problem educated people like the people who made "Tie Me Up," should be working to end, not to perpetuate.

Women do not like rape. Women do not appreciate abuse. It is not something to be tittered about by moviegoers. It is a serious problem and not something to be laughed at.

I hope that the men and women who see "Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down" don't just relax and enjoy the movie.

I hope you who see the film look beyond its "comedy" and realize what it's really saying. Write its makers a letter and tell them what the film said to you.

And, most of all, don't believe a word it says.

Ellen Hobbs is a junior journalism major.

Mail Call

Foreign students not respected at A&M

EDITOR:

My name is Wong Bao Kim and I am a graduate of engineering at Texas A&M University.

On a recent visit to the Texas A&M campus, my fiance Shim and I were walking to our car and apparently some drunk students threw a red shoe at their moving car and hit Shim. No one was injured, but this incident represents the disrespect that foreign students are given on your campus.

Wong Bao Kim '88

Two Live Crew album 'twisted, perverted'

EDITOR:

I am writing in regards to Art Del Barrio's letter of June 15. It is a shame that there are people like Del Barrio out there who attempt to confuse the right to freedom of speech with the act of producing filth and smut. Del Barrio described Two Live Crew's album, "Nasty As We Wanna Be," as a "symbol of the depletion of our First Amendment right to free speech."

Bull! The album is more of a symbol of twisted and perverted values, the product of a sick mind. There is no excuse for this sort of trash. The values and morals behind the First Amendment are far above the values of Two Live Crew.

I am getting sick of people who push the limits of the First Amendment. Flag burners and other slime are going way too far these days with their personal freedoms. Mr. Del Barrio, you can only push decent people so far. One day too bad that we may actually have to abridge people's rights with another amendment.

It is shameful that there are people who feel it necessary to challenge decency with lewdness and perversion. I'm glad we're in America though. "The people" are the government; if there are enough decent people left over there, we will clean up this country. It is possible to have substantial personal freedoms and to still fit into an orderly, moral society.

Wilhelm Liebmann '91

Supreme Court justified in flag decision

EDITOR:

This letter is written in response to Damon Arhos' article concerning flag desecration.

Frankly, I disagree with my opinion in opposition to the recent decision of the Supreme Court which overturned the federal law prohibiting the burning of the U.S. flag. The highest court clearly made the correct judgement stating that a federal flag protection law is unconstitutional.

First, two important issues pertain to the matter at hand; one is the emotional aspect and the other is the rational perspective. I too am not thrilled about people who do burn the American flag.

In fact, it makes me sick. This emotional conviction is a common nationalistic response arising out of love for one's country. This is precisely the problem; the proponents of the flag protection statute allow their emotions to override the rational issue at hand.

Like it or not, flag desecration is one of the many examples of freedom of speech. Therefore, the federal law clearly violated article one of the U.S. Constitution which states that "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech."

I think it is ludicrous that so many people push so vehemently for this type of amendment while disregarding other pertinent proposals. At this time, our nation needs much more important statues such as the Equal Rights Amendment and a balanced budget amendment.

Michael N. Wilkin '92

Flag burning a question of 'radical freedom'

EDITOR:

I'm sorry but I can't let Damon Arhos have the last word on the trivial but crucial issue of flag burning. Allow me to come out of the closet: On July 1989, I melted a small plastic flag before a rather inarticulate crowd near Duddley's Draw.

I am not, as a rule, interested in politics. I subscribe to the perhaps nihilistic belief that no one intelligent enough to really help other people would be stupid enough to run for office; who would listen to such an unusual voice? (Need I mention Jesus for those who need examples?)

To get back to my point, my only interest in flag burning is the question of radical freedom that it raises. Some people don't seem to need to question freedom, and they certainly don't have to. Perhaps I can give an example that most Aggies can probably relate to: Would you respect your father if he demanded that you respect him? And if you would, could you then respect your self?

I don't expect most people to understand these ideas. But if any of you good Ags feel compelled to express your contempt for my high fallutin' ideas please try to get beyond the fundamental duality of Highway 6.

Jeff Newberry '91

Have an opinion? Express it!

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'Obscene' music like Two Live Crew's should be disregarded, not censored

Will rap die a much needed death along the lines of disco and punk?

There are a lot of conservative minded adults, parents and clergymen alike that hope so. However, the controversy surrounding rap, spawned by the porn-like, raucous lyrics from the highly publicized rap artists (and I use that term loosely) like Two Live Crew, is only generating more interest in the music itself. The whole music form of rap will be taking a beating just because of few nasty rap rhymes.

The spontaneous and socially uplifting shows like Oprah, Geraldo and Donahue have addressed the subject, as have the network newscasts and entertainment-like news magazine programs. They all drone on about censorship, about consenting adults being able to buy such poetic work and about lack of talent and lack of intelligence.

I will try not to bring those debates up — at least, not specifically. I would like to take this opportunity to point out a few things that people are ignoring. In fact, that is something we should all do with this music (if you can call it that) — ignore it.

It is not ours to ask whether or not Two Live Crew is obscene. It is ours to ask why such material should be banned from sales while comedian Andrew Dice Clay is still allowed to think, much less make comedy albums. It is not ours to ask whether rap artists (again loosely used) like Public Enemy or Ice-T incite violence and social unrest with their lyrics. It is ours to ask why movies and books are allowed to portray such

Randy Lemmon

Reader's Opinion

violence, while bands can't put it to lyrics.

They are all forms of art — some questionable, others lacking moral fiber. But if you censor one, you must censor them all. So, enough with the censorship angle (the one I said I wouldn't talk about).

There could be another controversy brewing beneath the guise of rap, and about to blow up in our faces. Rap is a form of entertainment dominated by black entertainers and could become rocked by racial tension (especially if people who are all-conference white, like Tipper Gore, are still allowed to speak out on the subject). Racial tension could also occur if it turns out that white judges are the ones handing down the censorship laws.

I also would bet money that most teens listen to rap not just because of the funky, driving, sex-craved dance beat inherent in the music, but because it is one thing in life that helps alienate them from their parents. If the moms and pops don't like the music, the child feels a sense of accomplishment. It is no social phenomenon; just look at heavy metal has accomplished that for years. The difference here is that heavy metal could make you honor the devil. Rap just might make you horny as the devil. (Same thing you say?)

Rap isn't going away anytime soon.

Parents, conservatives, clergy and Tipper should accept that. Rap, to me, is an attitude and our teens and young adults are very good at attitudes. Banning certain groups for being obscene only helps generate more interest and attitude.

Rap should go the way of disco and punk. It may take a few more years. Remember how long we had to endure disco? Patience is a much sought after virtue. But if enough of us ignore it maybe it will get out of mainstream entertainment.

Those older teens who listen to rap will, in a few years, be able to laugh about what they once listened to. The same thing happens to all of us eventually. For instance, I laugh with great embarrassment when I admit that I listened to Barry Manilow (Barely Man-Enough) and Air Supply in my youth.

And maybe their parents could get a bigger laugh if they would take some of these rap tapes and put them away in a safe place until their children begin having children. Then, at a family gathering, the grandkids could get an earful of what mommy and daddy listened to as teens. What great fun and embarrassment!

Randy Lemmon is a communications specialist at the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

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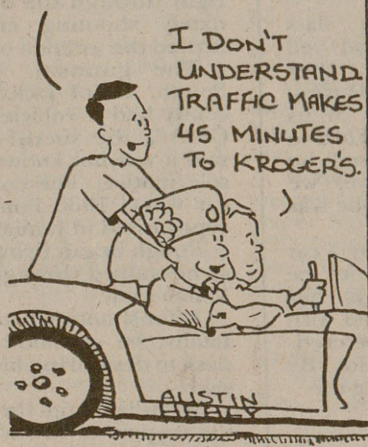
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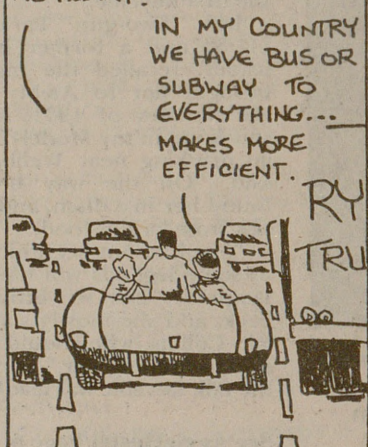
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