

'Inglourious Basterds' not history but OK entertainment

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Quentin Tarantino's World War II picture "Inglourious Basterds" is a propaganda film.

It is a film where the good guys are good simply because they have been labeled so. They are not judged by their deeds, which are cruel and brutal. The villains are Nazis.

We are given a single opening scene to establish the evil of the Nazis. In the film, World War II is not a part of history, but a part of cinema. At one point in the film, a German audience is watching a German propaganda film in which a German sharpshooter is killing the allied forces. The crowd is cheering.

However, Tarantino has us rooting for the Basterds, who perform the same acts upon Nazi soldiers.

The story is about Lt. Aldo Raine (Brad Pitt). He has gathered a group of Jewish-American sol-

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diers to infiltrate Nazi occupied France. Their mission is simple: they will kill every Nazi they meet.

Meanwhile, Col. Hans Landa (Christoph Waltz) is a Ger-

man commander who hunts down and kills Jews that are hiding in France. Melanie Laurent plays Shosanna, a young Jewish woman who escapes from Landa. She hides as a gentele Frenchwoman, operating a movie theater. Eventually the agendas of these three collide during the film's finale.

The acting is excellent, except for a short appearance by Mike Myers. Myers is perilously close to parody in his part. Pitt's Aldo is a fun character and Pitt uses his charm and sense of humor to make the character larger than life, but not over the top.

The real star of this film, however, is Waltz. Occasionally in film, an actor manages to create a character the audience has never seen before. Waltz does this with great skill in this film. His Col. Landa is equally funny, charming, and frightening.

While Tarantino's style is on display in the film, he keeps the story reasonably linear. There are still the occasional asides (one to explain why one of the Basterds is a German soldier and another is a brief documentary on the dangers of early 20th century film are two prime examples).

There are also signs of maturity in Tarantino's direction. The opening scene, set at a French farm, is truly intense. Tarantino's gift for film dialogue serves the film well

and provides a great deal of the film's tension and humor.

"Inglourious Basterds" owes a great deal to the American western. The opening of the film uses Ennio

Morricone's western score to set the scene. There is even a shot that pays homage to John Ford's "The Searchers." Westerns were never about history, or giving the viewer a look into the way people lived in



Pitt

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the Old West.

Westerns were about myth. Tarantino's "Inglourious Basterds" creates a myth out of World War II. Unlike most war movies, it feels no need to stick to the facts or to educate. It is about cheering for the good guys and gloating over the demise of the bad guys. It is a worthwhile film. History majors, however, please take a deep breath before you see "Inglourious Basterds" and remember: it's just a movie.