

# Natural Born Killers

**Directed by:** Oliver Stone  
**Starring :** Woody Harrelson, Juliette Lewis  
 Robert Downey Jr., Tommy Lee Jones  
**Review by:** David Ramsay

If only one thing could be said about Oliver Stone's new *Natural Born Killers* it would be "different". *Natural Born Killers* is Stone's new critical message to the media, and is sparking controversy all across the country for its violent content. For those who need to be warned, 'Killers' is a very violent movie, however for those who are looking for a bloodfest you may have better luck at the horror section at your local video store. What makes this violence so disturbing is the fact that it seems so real you don't know if you're watching a movie or the 6 o'clock news.

The movie opens with Mickey and Mallory Knox (Harrelson and Lewis) stopping for some burgers and fries; then before you know it the bodies begin to fall. We find out later that these two lovebirds have been leaving a trail of carnage across the countryside; and are in fact serial killers. They have taken the nation by storm. Mickey's wily sneer and his punk wife can be found on just about every magazine cover and TV station in the land. Never mind that these people will kill anything that breathes, they have become the idols of young people and the focus of great debates.

The primary focus of the movie revolves on this point, an obsessed public. "It's about America's schizophrenic fascination with violence," says Stone, "how we hate it and are drawn to it at the same time."

What separates 'Killers' from another slaughter film is not the story; it's the way it's presented on screen. This seems to have exploded from Stone's own thought process. He uses snapshots, Polaroids, Super-8, 16mm, and 35mm footage. The film goes from colour to black and white repeatedly. There are super quick close-ups of demons and of a decapitated man. Coloured lights are used to represent rage and delusion as a result of snakebites. Slide projections across the actors are used to convey messages (my favourite one is "too much t.v.'). The action is changed by using slow and strobed motion, and animated characters of Mickey and Mallory. My favourite of Stone's little bag of tricks is the unrealistic rear projection he uses when Mickey and Mallory take off in their car. While they're driving, images of cheering passers-by, newspaper headlines, flashbacks, and fireworks are shown on a flat, fake-looking screen. All these techniques give the viewer the sense that they're inside the killers' heads.

Stone's entertainer instincts shine through in certain parts of the movie. On the

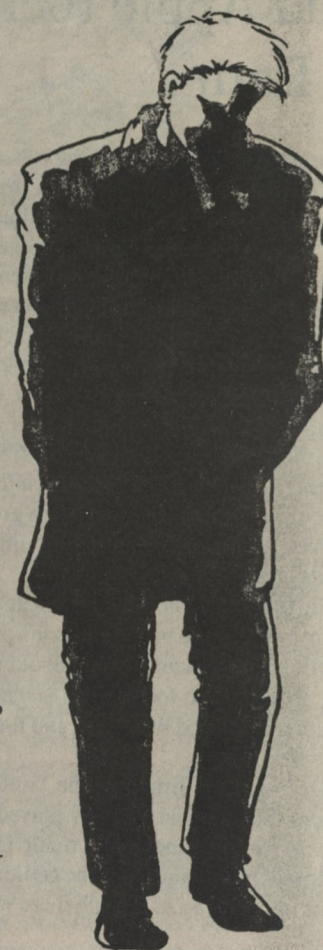
comedy side there is a flashback to Mallory's childhood in the form of a sitcom, with her incestuous father played by Rodney Dangerfield, which shocks you twice. Once because of its troubling content, and twice because you can't believe you're laughing at this scum.

On the action side there is a shoot-out in which Mickey and Mallory are captured by the police. This is when the movie turns to the media aspect; with Robert Downey Jr. playing Wayne Gale, the host of *American Maniacs*. Mickey grants a live TV interview with Gale; allowing the stage to be set for the big escape. This is the section of the film which is the most powerful and disturbing. The escapees start a prison riot in which they kill people in every conceivable way.

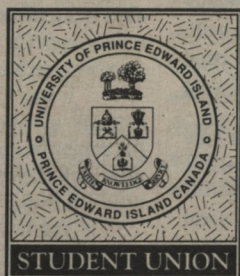
Oliver Stone has always fed off people's outrage, but with *Natural Born Killers* he may have pushed the limit. It could be the biggest 'love it or hate it' movie of the year.

In the end the movie is actually saying that there are no natural born killers, they're made and fueled by our society.

However, Stone is not lecturing us on how evil our society is. In fact, he somewhat blames himself, he tells us in the message that he falls into the obsession too; by making such a movie. Grade: (A)



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