

'Betrayed' doesn't live up to pre-show hype

By Jim Hanna
Staff Reviewer

The hype was magnificent. Two hugely famous Hollywood actors starring in a highly controversial and disturbing film. Extremely favorable reviews and enticing ads urged people to see "Betrayed," the new movie by Costa Gravas, who directed the critically acclaimed "Missing".

To say that I felt "betrayed" by the pre-show hype is entirely too trite. So I'll just say I felt ripped-off. Absolutely, irretrievably, terribly ripped-off.

movie REVIEW

"Betrayed" stars Debra Winger as an FBI agent who goes undercover in the farmbelt of America to find the people who murdered a prominent and vocal Jewish talk show host. Authorities suspect the murder is the doing of an extremist white supremacist group made up of farmers, so Winger pretends to be a free-lance combine driver.

One of the prime suspects is a farmer played by Tom Berenger. Unfortunately, Winger falls in love with Berenger. Just when she's about to conclude that he's innocent, she learns that he and his friends participate in "hunts" where a black man is released in a forest to be hunted and killed.

Although Winger immediately wants to be removed from the case, her FBI boss (played by John Heard) insists she stay undercover until she gets firm evidence that Berenger was responsible for the talk show host's



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death (never mind about the man they killed in the hunt).

At this point, a rather good movie becomes rather bad.

Winger learns Berenger and his

group of racist friends are united by computer with an entire network of white supremacist groups who intend to overthrow the government.

It is true that several white hate-groups flourish in the Midwest. Many of these groups are highly organized, heavily armed and very serious in their quest to overthrow the U.S. government. "Betrayed," however, becomes muddled and uninteresting once it begins to deal with this issue.

The relationship between Winger and Berenger is about the only saving grace in this movie. Both actors are remarkably talented and from their twisted relationship spring the most rewarding moments in the movie.

The only other redeemable aspect of the movie is also the most disturb-

ing. The "hunt" scene is one of the most harrowing sequences imaginable. The audience was shocked into an uncomfortable and lasting silence, a testament to the power and effectiveness of the scene.

But even the power of this moment in the film is diminished by the implausibilities the scene presents. Where did they find this anonymous black man to hunt? Doesn't anybody miss him? Doesn't anyone hear the noise created when 10 people shooting automatic machine guns run screaming across the countryside?

Many Nebraskans may feel somewhat offended as the state gets shafted by yet another negative portrayal. Although it is never specifically

mentioned, the movie takes place in Nebraska.

License plates, Big Red beer can holders and huge FBI maps of the state indicate that the Cornhusker state is where these crazed racists in the movie are doing their dirty work. Nebraska is presented as an exclusively farm state where brain-dead men with Uzi submachine guns roam the countryside murdering blacks.

We should not be too sensitive, however. It is only a movie and there is some truth to the images presented. Nebraskans should not backlash and hate the movie for the minor injustice done to the state.

Besides, there are plenty of other reasons to dislike "Betrayed".

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