

"The Patriot" and "Enemy of the State" meet Dick Cheney on the grassy glacier

Screenplay by Jonathan Lemkin

Directed by Antoine Fuqua

Mark Wahlberg ... Bob Lee Swagger
Michael Peña ... Nick Memphis
Danny Glover ... Colonel Isaac Johnson
Kate Mara ... Sarah Fenn
Rhona Mitra ... Alourdes Galindo
Ned Beatty ... Senator Charles F. Meachum

Shooter is the ultimate thrilling and inspiring movie for people seeking an end to the depredations of "the Cartel." It's V for Vendetta applied to the real-life criminal cabal in the White House today. Instead of VP Dick Cheney, "the Conglomerate's" operational point man for murder and mayhem is a US Senator from Montana (played with a pure dictatorial sliminess by Ned Beatty).

Great timing now that the Blackwater corporate army has been running amok in Iraq massacring civilians and generally showing the real purpose of that conflagration. As Alan Greenspan states in his recent tome, *The Age of Turbulence*, it is all about oil, silly! More precisely, it's about power: seizing revenue from oil and other natural resources for one's crony-capitalist scumbags... all the while chillingly wrapping oneself in the Flag (and/or the Cross).

In *Shooter*, the Conglomerate's (C's) farflung contractor army—as well as coopted US military forces—inflict horrific damage on local populations in their worldwide rape and pillage operations. In particular, C's merchants of death have wiped out a village (400 people) in Africa that hesitated to make way for an oil facility. In the opening scene Marine sniper Bob Lee Swagger (Mark Wahlberg) and his spotter shoot several "bad guys" from a mountain nearly a mile away. Swagger does not know these targets are villager soldiers pursuing the C's forces after the C's massacre. Whoops!

To make matters worse, the C abandons Swagger in hostile country. He manages to escape, then promptly retires and retreats to a mountaintop cabin in the Rockies. Swagger does have electricity and Internet hookup: one of my favorite early sequences is when Swagger—after his dog grabs him a beer from the refrigerator—fires up his browser to the Google news page and utters, "Let's see what lies they're trying to sell us today." The book conspicuously lying (pun intended) next to his computer is the 9/11 Commission Report!

You guessed it: Swagger is a true patriot who has become disillusioned with his government and basically doesn't believe the official story about anything. Still, when Colonel Isaac Johnson (Danny Glover in his most sinister role) comes calling to enlist Swagger in a special mission to protect the president, Swagger falls into the 'love of country' trap.

I'm not going to say much more about the plot, except that the C—under direction of Meachum and Johnson—sets up Swagger as the patsy in a convenient assassination in Philadelphia. Swagger uses his Marine sniper training to elude everyone at the scene, then finds his former spotter's widow Sarah (Kate Mara, hubba hubba and several more hubbas) in Kentucky. She helps him, as does a rookie FBI agent Nick Memphis (really cool performance by Michael Peña) who doesn't believe the official assassination story—both are initially reluctant, then enthusiastic.

This film is "more fun than when the pigs ate grandpa." It has more action frame for frame than most movies in the genre, at the same time including deep character realizations.

Moreover, director Antoine Fuqua does a fabulous job making the action sequences believable. The motivations of the principals are similarly believable, as we proceed to the climax of a confrontation as morally stark as the graphic-novel movie *Sin City*. I can't remember an action movie, perhaps *Last of the Mohicans*, in which I so deeply identify with the good guys and wish to see them succeed.

Why is that?

Probably because what is most compelling is you have a hero dealing with bad guys who are so damned real, so entrenched in all aspects of the current imperial American State. As I mention to a fellow watcher, "This isn't like the James Bond movies where there was always some legitimate law enforcement agency

you turned the bad guys over to. Here, everyone elevated in the government is either criminal, weak, or bought off."

What's a retired sniper to do?

The ending is thoroughly satisfying, providing enough emotional fuel to get us through the next 15 months of the Bushovik lunacy (or hopefully sooner when the whole mess of 'em is hauled before The Hague for war crimes). We can thank the screenwriter Jonathan Lemkin for serving up a 2007 version of Dick Cheney and his sleazy butchers on a silver platter (the novel on which the movie is based was published back in 1993).

On a critical level, I especially want to compliment all the actors for delivering such a taut, entertaining masterpiece. This is an uplifting movie for radical libertarians! It certainly won't appeal to corporate-statist Republicans. Interestingly, Rotten Tomatoes' critics are less than 50% favorable toward the film, which to my mind suggests most of the critics are as clueless, not to mention gutless, as your average Democrat.

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