September 11 in Popular Culture

A Guide

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: that despite enduring numerous never seems to stop for a few days the Bourne world, U.S. bureaucrats in the course of three films, Bourne moving violation to crime against f The Bourne Supremacy, Bourne Killings, he never shows remorse for or injured individuals left on the eerily appeared in the wrong place


SUM, is the most fully developed cri-establishment since 9/11. Reflecting bourne Ultimatum has everything it in American: waterboarding, data-nil killings, in addition to a creative time, the feeds from all of the sur-in the film, U.S. counterterrorism J.S. citizen Jason Bourne killed, on due process of law. Some might of the U.S. Constitution, but Vosen idea of America, without concern-the Constitution. Likewise, a jour-rts is assassinated by an agent of official has taken similar action, all in shiavellian means. The film's hero is/ho eventually releases evidence of daniel Ellsberg, the man who leak-ero of the Vietnam Era will be quite

influences, the Bourne films are at the lms, however, for a reasoned, cogent films depict visually a current of dig-nments of U.S. society. For a more e United States, and for reasoned

—Mitchell McNaylor


Film


SPOTLIGHT ESSAY/FILM: CONSPIRACY FILMS: LOOSE CI AND ZEITGEIST

About 20 minutes into the October 19, 2007, show of the popular HBO program, Real Time with Bill Maher, some audience members began shouting, “What happened to Building 7, Bill?” and “We are being lied to in this country!” Maher then angrily ran into the audience and helped security remove the individuals who caused the disturbance (Maher, Carter, & Griffiths, 2007). A number of fringe beliefs have arisen in recent years. Some insist that what happened on 9/11 was a false flag operation (defined as a covert operation by government designed to appear as if it was carried out by others) and urge the public to search for the “truth behind 9/11.”

These arguments have largely been made by members of the 9/11 Truth movement, a loosely organized group that exists to challenge the official account of what occurred on September 11. Two widely viewed documentaries, Loose Change (2007) and Zeitgeist (2007), both available for free on Google Video and YouTube, provide concise overviews of the major arguments put forth by those challenging the official position. Brian Keeley’s (1999) fourfold framework for understanding what he has termed “unwarranted conspiracy theories” (UCTs) can be used to shed light on the views put forth by the films. A UCT is, according to Keeley (1999), a “class of explanations to which we should not asent, by definition” (Emphasis is in the original, p. 111). In other words, these conspiracies are too "out there" to even be worthy of serious debate (Bale, 2007; Clarke, 2002).

The first characteristic of UCTs, according to Keeley is that they run "counter to some received, official, or 'obvious' account" (pp. 116–117). Loose Change was made on a home computer by Dylan Avery and Korey Row and begins with the question, "was September 11th a surprise attack on America by 19 Islamic terrorists or something else entirely?" (Avery, 2007). Zeitgeist, divided into three parts, the first dealing with Christianity, the second with September 11, and the third with the Federal Reserve Bank, also purports to be challenging the official position.

Second, UCTs tend to argue that "the true intentions behind the conspiracy are invariably nefarious" (Keeley, 1999, p. 117). Loose Change, for example, states that the wing of the Pentagon that was hit contained "important budget information" (Avery, 2007). More nefarious intentions are thought to exist behind the collapse of Building 7, which evidently housed offices for agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Internal Revenue Service. With so many governmental offices losing their records, the film states that "numerous cases would be closed" (Avery, 2007). Thus, elements within the Bush administration destroyed the building
so that evidence of any corrupt activities would collectively disappear. Presumably, Building 7 did not have any paper shredders. The orchestration of 9/11 would additionally help to "authorize the doctrines and funds needed for a new level of imperial mobilization" such as the invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and, possibly, Iran (Avery, 2007).

Third, UCTs "typically seek to tie together seemingly unrelated events" (Keeley 1999, p. 117). When discussing why, on 9/11, fighter jets were nowhere near New York or Washington, D.C., Loose Change points out a slew of occurrences: A simulation exercise known as Vigilant Guardian was in its second day on September 11. Another drill, known as Northern Vigilance, moved fighter jets to Canada and Alaska. Three F16s from Andrews Airforce Base, located close to the Pentagon, were moved to North Carolina for a training operation. Both films argue that by initiating a handful of drills (that were eerily similar to what actually occurred) on the same day that the government was planning its attack on the World Trade Center, NORAD could be delayed, and the danger of fighter jets interfering in their plans would be eliminated.

Fourth, proponents of UCTs argue that the real truth of the matter is a well-guarded secret (Keeley 1999, p. 117). The largest section of Loose Change provides numerous eyewitness testimonies from disoriented individuals after the attack stating that the noises they heard were "like a bomb going off." A firefighter states, for example, that the elevator shaft exploded and he could not understand why since the "plane is up there." When discussing Flight 93, which crashed into the ground in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, Loose Change again shows interviews with witnesses and cleanup crews stating that no large debris had been found. One individual states that "there is nothing that you could distinguish that a plane had crashed there" (Avery, 2007). Most members of the 9/11 Truth movement will argue that the plane was shot down by a fighter jet and that the Bush government is keeping this a secret.

Another secret exists regarding the plane that crashed into the Pentagon. Both films note that, according to his instructors, Hani Hanjour, the lead hijacker of Flight 77, was a horrible pilot. If he wanted to injure as many people as possible, he should have simply maintained his trajectory and crashed into the roof of the Pentagon. Instead, this unskilled pilot performed an expert 330-degree turn and managed "to hit the only section that was reinforced to withstand a terrorist attack" (Avery 2007). Both films question whether the Pentagon was hit by a plane or a government cruise missile.

A mixture of cunningly placed eyewitness testimony, crafty editing, and well-timed sarcastic and rhetorical questions make the viewer feel as if he or she is bearing witness to some secret being revealed. As one stops to think, however, it becomes clear that very few answers are provided—only well-placed questions and testimonies from disoriented individuals leaving the scene of the tragedy. If no plane hit the Pentagon, for example, where is Flight 77 and its occupants? Were they, to be facetious, taken underground to see the flying saucer that crashed at Roswell? It is simple questions like these that vast conspiracy theories tend to ignore.

—Amaranth Amarasingam

References


Spotlight E

The Kingdom (2007), directed by modern Arabic life through the c bombing. Most Hollywood films i their portrayal of Arabs; The King expert on representations of Arab f and articles that Arabs in film ar Hollywood’s distorted lenses, Ari racial and religious lines, the ster (p. 2). He also notes, “The Kinga (Shaheen, 2008, p. 127).

Initially, the director offers the two United States and S: seriously his responsibility to fa scrutiny since 9/11. However, th first scenes are devoted to Arab families are gathered. The first A the first Americans are victims. l agent portrayed by Jamie Foxxx, in a loving and positive way.

Fox’s character provides the len He leads an FBI team to investigate “kodemn.” The most striking elen that the local Saudi government is seems that the only way to ensure j of the United States. This leads S “[Saudi Arabia]’s citizens are preset by American know-how. Since me movie could be called Hollywood