

MEN BEHIND THE SUN/MAN BEHIND THE SUN/HEI TAI YANG 731/SQUADRON 731 (T.F.MOUS / TUN FEI MOU / HE CHI CHIANG 1987)

Definitely one of the most unpleasant movies of all time, difficult to defend, yet hard to dismiss, *Man behind the Sun* deals with atrocities committed by Japanese scientist during WW II in China - a subject matter easily as gruesome as the Nazi war crimes. It's all based on fact - actually, director Mous had originally intended to shoot a documentary after being assistant director on a Chinese propaganda film called *Give Back My Country*.

In a way, *Man behind the Sun* is beneath criticism. There is almost no plot - we are shown the experiences of a group of boys undergoing training as soldiers, the character of Cornel Ishii, the camp's leader, is demonstrated (but hardly explained) to us, and occasional gore scenes are thrown in when things get too uninteresting. There is no stylistic finesse, and several scenes border on the intolerable - the infamous cat/rat scene adds nothing but nausea to the movie (Mous himself doesn't like to discuss it), and an autopsy using a real corpse inspires comparisons with exploitation flicks of little merit. Mous' efforts at cruel realism put the film firmly into exploitation territory, even though the parents of the dead boy used in the autopsy scene told him "that although their son was dead, they were happy to have him cut apart in the film as it was their way of doing something positive for the Chinese people".

No, this is no fun picture, and despite rumors to the contrary, T.F.Mous is *not* a pseudonym for hack Godfrey Ho who helmed part 2. Clearly, Mous wants to say something, his problem being that we don't really want to hear it, so his movie finds itself being located between *Schindler's List*, *Cannibal Holocaust* and *Ilsa - She Wolf of SS*.

When Steven Spielberg shot *Schindler's List*, he took great care not to offend his mainstream audience - the Third Reich never looked as good as in his glossy B/W photography, and, as some critic noted, only Spielberg would shoot a movie about the Holocaust in which none of the main characters died. However, it is undeniable that it was just this "softcore" approach which allowed him to reach the public.

Man behind the Sun, on the other hand, is usually regarded as another weird Far East gore movie, which is more than unfair, even given the animal cruelty. Mous avoids falling into most traps - he doesn't try to make all Japanese look like villains, he doesn't sanitize the movie with love stories or a conventional happy ending (the end credits tell us that the historical Cornel Ishii worked for the US after WW II - possibly introducing poison gas to the Korea war), the acting is good ("The majority of the cast were non-actors with a few amateurs and a select stage actors who took the lead roles... The producer pleaded with me to have a big Hong Kong actor such as Chow-Yun Fat and give the film an identity.") and though he shows little visual style, he keeps the camera on focus and makes things look *real*.

Which is surely an odd claim for a movie taglined as "This film will provoke, anger and sicken." Why should you watch it? Well... why are you reading this review?

Harald Gruenberger – www.Metamovie.de

Consumer review

Men Behind the Sun Movie - Buy DVD

Movie Name: Men Behind the Sun
Catalog: DVD
Star(s):
Director(s):
ReleaseDate: 05 August, 2003
Mpa Rating NR (Not Rated)
Our Price: \$17.96
List Price: \$19.95
Your saving: **\$1.99**
Availability: Special Order
Average customer rating: 5 (scale of 1-5)

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Users Reviews

Review #1:

Rating : 5 (scale of 1-5)

Summary : Am I Dreaming???????????

Review : I can't believe I'm seeing this.....Men Behind the Sun on sale from amazon!?

For anybody unfamiliar with this infamous Chinese films reputation all I can say is that this could very well be the nastiest film ever made! I am in a position to say that I've seen nearly everything 'shocking' out there, ie 'Cannibal Holocaust', 'I Spit on Your Grave', 'Emanuelle in America', 'Baise Moi', the 'Guinea Pig' series, ect and anything on the 'video nasties' list and most films that have a reputation (btw I will admit as I write this I have not yet seen 'Aftermath') and after all this I still feel that this film is the most unsettling for a number of reasons: it depicts a TRUE story, the film has an unblinking realism that is nowhere present in any other film to tackle a similar subject matter, the cruelty of the men conducting these experients illustrates the darkest side of humanity which did and I guess still does exist and lastly, this film contains the most sickening animal cruelty ever caught on film.

During WW2 Japan occupied parts of mainland China and along with the many enormous massacres and genicides the Japanese army carried out for their emporer in the true 'samurai spirit', they also conducted cruel human experiments in germ warfare research camps using Chinese and Russian civilians and POWs. If the details of these Japanese atrocities are unfamiliar to you it is not your fault, while the Japanese gouvourment have humbly apologised for their treatment of US and Australian POWs, they certainly lose their memory fast when it comes to the subject of war crimes against the Chinese, the Nanking massacre and germ warfare camps such as these. Futhermore at the end of WW2 the same red army of 'fighting Chinese allies' quickly became a 'communist threat' and a defeated Japan with a new found passion for car manufactor and baseball became the friend in Asia thus Western history books and school classes ignore these events aswell.

Men Behind the Sun is a film made to tell this forgotten and ignored histrocial facts and is therefore one of the most important war films out there. The director has chosen to not spare the viewer any gruesome detail and even goes so far as to secure an actual cadaver of a young boy (the boys parents where glad to release his body as they felt the film was important for China) for a inhuman surgurey scene in the film. The director even went too far in the opions of many with a scene in which a cat is thrown into a pit with hundreds of starving rats. While I felt this scene adds nothing to the film besides extra nastyness and am myself a vegetarian and oposed to animal cruelty, I find it hard to boycott or dismiss a film solely on the basis of it containing animal cruelty as thousands of cows die each day for mere hamburgers that serve little more purpose than to put fat into comsumers butts.

Due to the graphic nature of this film it has being long associated with the gore film genre and occasionally called 'the Cannibal Holocaust of the 80s' and most viewers watch it simply due to its gorey reputation (I know I heard of it this way) which is good in a sense that it will live in infamy forever in horror buffs discussions and lists but not so good that most will not take it seriously. However this unbeleivably horrific film already has huge cult status and I have no doubt that future generations will appreciate it for its brutal honesty.