

# Sin City (2005)

Rated R. Our ratings: V-9 ; L-4 ; S/N-6

*Then the LORD said, 'How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know.'* So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD.

*Genesis 18:20-22*

Unless you watch Pulp Fiction SIN CITY and Kill Bill back to back, you will not encounter such blood and gore in any other film. What kept me from leaving the theater early was the film's stylishness—as appropriate for a film noir, it was shot in a sleek black and white. Just in a few spots is color used—the ruby lips of “a dame” (this is Mickey Spillane meets Pulp Fiction), the bright red of a sports car, and of course the crimson blood that gushes from wounds and severed limbs. Joining live actors with computer generated backgrounds and effects, the filmmakers have created an exciting film that never fails to hold the viewer's attention. And, the longer I watched, setting aside for the moment my distaste of the blood and gore, the more impressed I became with

evidences of grace even in the unsavory environs of Sin City.

Director Robert Rodriguez succeeded with comic author Frank Miller where many other Hollywood would-be producers failed. He invited Miller to co-direct with him, thus overcoming the author's fears that his material would be mangled when transposed to the screen. Indeed, some critics who are fans of Miller's comic book series—"graphic novels" as these are becoming known, a good p.r. move for the genre—report that the comic book served as a story board for the filmmakers. To add spice to the brew, Rodriguez even invited the king of blood and gore to direct one sequence—Quentin Tarantino!

Three of Miller's stories are used in the film—The Hard Goodbye, The Big Fat Kill, and That Yellow Bastard. Mickey Rourke, his face transformed into that of a hulking bruiser, is Marv, a tough-talking street fighter who finds the one woman—Goldie—who gives him a night of happiness, only to wake up beside her dead body. Bruce Willis is Hartigan, a cop who on his last night on the job wants to rescue Nancy, an 11-year-old girl kidnapped by a serial killer/rapist. The third story involves Dwight, a private eye with an ex-girl friend and many other friends who run Old Town, the territory where an alliance of prostitutes have been able to keep out the Mob by means of a delicate balancing act with corrupt cops.

Marv sets forth on a bloody campaign to find the killers of Goldie, the trail eventually leading to a real grab bag of corrupt characters—high ranking clergymen, a power-mad U.S. Senator, and his perverted son. Dwight, who sets out to protect his prostitute friends, after they kill a lecherous cop named Jackie Boy, says, "You gotta stand up for your friends. Sometimes that means dying. Sometimes it means killing a whole lotta people." The last part proves to be very prophetic.

My favorite of the three stories is that of Hartigan, so

dedicated to saving Nancy that he is willing to die: his heart acting up as he forces his body to keep moving toward the lair where Nancy is being held, he says, "An old man dies, a little girl lives. Fair trade." As it turns out, he will sacrifice far more than just his physical life in this tale of love and redemption.

This film is not for everyone, but judging by the laughter and enthusiastic remarks from the young adult members of the screening audience, I suspect this will be a big hit with those under thirty. I prefer my films to be far less violent, and yet as with *Pulp Fiction*, I was surprised and delighted to find themes of loyalty, grace, and redemption amidst such a brutal and corrupt world as *Sin City*. Author Frank Miller might have quite a streak of cynicism in his work, but he apparently has not given up entirely on humanity. Quoted above is the introduction in *Genesis* in which the patriarch Abraham argues with God in order to save Sodom and Gomorrah from destruction. Even he might have thought twice about bargaining with God over *Sin City*, but our three heroes, or better, anti-heroes, would form the basis of his argument