

***Bowling For Columbine* Michael Moore, 2000**

If there is one thing that Michael Moore's T.V. show *The Awful truth* has shown us, by giving him a wide, unbounded range of targets to hit on, it is that he is a messy, polemic bully. And the more restrained subject of gun possession in the U.S. isn't enough to make him change on that particular regard. In *Bowling for Columbine*, Moore makes a satirical documentary about the use of guns in the American society, complete with far-fetched theories, amazing examples, and comic situations.

From Charlton Heston to South Park-like montages of American history, from the Ku Klux Klan to heart-wrenching pictures of the Oklahoma City bombings, militias and K-mart sales policy, everything for him is a tool to protest, ridicule his contradictors, and pity those he recognizes as victims. And who cares if some statistics are a bit phony, if some scenes are staged, or if some interviewees protest the use that has been made of their picture? Michael Moore is not one to play by the book. And most probably, neither is it what he is looking for.

The indignation he manifests is that there is something very wrong with the use of guns in America, and that trouble is palpable, unbridled and without real structure in its message, if very complex in its rhetorics : Moore switches quickly from genre to genre, from humor to compassion, never letting the spectator absorb and digest his arguments. He uses montages, closely edited interviews, nearly-

surreal scenes (when he enters in an unlocked house in Canada, or walks out of a bank holding a gun over his head) that are all tuned and tweaked to the maximum. In the end, the impression of being manipulated becomes apparent to every attentive viewer.

But does that disserve his goal? Had he a perfectly clear line of thought, it may very well do, but the one very clear direction of Michael Moore's work has always been provocation, and raising awareness about a given problem. For example, if many argument that his pamphlet about 9/11, *Fahrenheit 911*, was very aggressive about the Bush administration, other evidences that Moore harbors an equal resent against Clinton exist in his earlier filmography. This element may be an explanation that, unlike someone like Chomsky, Moore is but trying to contest every point he finds unjust in his society. And to do that well, he points at scapegoats that, while sometimes ridiculously far-fetched, like a welfare law that required a child shooter's mother to travel eighty miles a day, serve a purpose. And it is maybe only for this sheer recklessness, and this ability to make us consider an overlooked issue, that Moore's movies have to be considered.

On the whole, *Bowling for Columbine* makes a very interesting, funny documentary about guns in America and the possible influence of American media on some climate of fear in the country. But perhaps not one to dissect or watch several times.