



The Bunkhouse Chronicle
Craig Rullman
Columnist

Hollywood Squares

I'm a movie buff, all-in, but while I love the experience of a good film — in a theater, particularly one as comfortable and inviting as our own Sisters Movie House — I confess that I have become increasingly tired of the people making them. The yearly, over-anticipated, under-compelling pomp of the Oscars, where Hollywood celebrates itself and chides the rest of us, is enough to make an old cowboy belly sick.

Here's the rub:

I have a difficult time taking life lectures — and the Oscars ceremony now revolves around acceptance speech lectures on various topics, to varying degrees — from people who fly around in private jets, and whose after-parties cost more than the GDP of the African nations from whence they adopt their children.

I don't want to be lectured by anyone, particularly someone who makes a living pretending to be

somebody else, that I am a racist, or a sexist, or that my Ford truck is destroying the world. Especially as they are whisked away in chauffeured limousines, clutching their \$200,000 swag bags, to private clubs where minorities aren't always invited, with a paycheck in their wallet roughly double that of their female colleagues.

And there is one more bit difficult to digest, given the righteous self-indulgence we are treated to on every conceivable topic: the entire event takes place in a city that exists principally because of the environmental rape of the Owens Valley, the utter destruction of a once vast and rich wetland, and a critical stop on the Pacific Flyway.

It's fodder for the masses, I suppose, this circus, chewing up ad hours and steam-rolling on its own hype, but I'm over it, and I don't watch. It isn't even interesting, unless one gets a strange thrill from watching an endless parade of celebrity narcissists with political chips on their shoulders.

The Hollywood awards season now lasts as long as a presidential campaign, and the combined spectacles seem to be in competition for the Best Absurdity Award.

In this presidential season, it seems, the roles have actually been reversed: the actors all think they are politicians, and the politicians are all behaving like actors, berating menials, comparing make-up habits, or cavorting with dictators.

Isn't this all just very weird?

And even more weird is that the spectacle exists inversely proportional to the quality of movies they are making. I'm deeply afraid they are mostly out of ideas, given that the movies themselves, with rare and celebrated exceptions, now resemble those horrendous housing developments that have swallowed Southern California, an endless and repetitive grid where every third house enjoys the same floorplan, mile after mile of Vista Verdes and Ocean Vistas and Seabreeze Estates.

Fast and Furious 10, anyone?

What we have created, over the years, is a cult of celebrity worship, where actors and actresses have, it appears, and by virtue of celebrity alone, increasingly succumbed to the notion that they are actually better people than the rest of us.

I'm reminded of the old saw alleged to have occurred between Fitzgerald and Hemingway, when Fitzgerald tells Hem, "You know, the rich are very different from you and I." And Papa, ever the egalitarian ambulance driver, says, "Yeah, they have

more money."

I don't begrudge these celebs their professions, their fame, or their money. I'm actually very happy for them. It's America, make money whatever legal way you can, and if you are good at it, I hope you get paid a lot for it. But please don't mistake celebrity for expertise in foreign policy, warfighting strategy, or moral and ethical righteousness, or use that platform to deride or cajole the rest of us into some position.

That's my job. I do that. I do the work, and I decide what I think.

My celebrity heroes are one. Pat Tillman. He was passionate, driven, some say brilliant, and very, very good at his profession. And then one day, quietly, without fanfare, he walked into a recruiter's office, enlisted, and became an Army Ranger.

And he died as an Army Ranger, an enlisted man, a grunt, in Afghanistan.

He had his beliefs and might have used his celebrity

to sing from the rooftops, enjoying the attention and the perks along the way. The Army tried to do that, for spurious reasons, but he didn't. Pat Tillman, the man, never asked you to agree with him, or even to support his cause. But he believed in it enough himself to walk away from fame and fortune, and what would likely have been a long and successful career.

Right, wrong, or indifferent, that's precisely my kind of hero.

I'm glad we have these celebrities running around, doing their thing. The world takes all kinds. But I wish they were making better movies, and some days I wish they would spend the next 10 years or so in their trailers, reading scripts, eating star-shaped sandwiches, and quietly staring at themselves in the mirror.

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