



COURTESY PHOTO

On Planet Klendathu, Mobile Infantry troopers launch an attack on the hordes of giant alien insects.

## Movie: 'Troopers' makes social commentary

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citizens are willing to "jump and die" for the sake of a nation — in this case the Federal Alliance.

The film opens with the Federal Alliance's would-you-like-to-know-more campaign, featuring propaganda sound bites designed to lure patriots into military service.

Children gaily stomp out roaches in an attempt to "do their part" in the war against the insect-like enemy, known as "Bugs." Federal soldiers distribute automatic weapons to youngsters eager to blast anything with more than two legs.

"Troopers" spends a great deal of time establishing the imperialistic uberculture, whose morals and beliefs trickle down through the government into the classrooms, and finally into the minds of the impressionable youth.

The story revolves around three young adults: Johnny Rico (Casper Van Dien), Dizzy Flores (Dina Meyer) and Carmen Ibanez (Denise Richards), who decide to enter military service.

Van Dien makes the perfect poster-boy trooper, plausibly transforming from a fresh-faced kid into a haggard, combat-weary soldier. Meyer turns in the best performance of the film, and her character Dizzy is self-assured and ultra-competent. Richards' character is shallow, and when she is finally brutally assaulted by the Bugs, cheers ripple through the audience.

These young men and women enter their respective branches of service, growing and changing through their experiences and the horrors to

which they are exposed.

When Rico and the mobile infantry finally descend upon Klendathu, the Bug homeland, the situation quickly deteriorates into a frightening bloodbath. The Bugs are eight-legged monsters the size of Hummers whose razor-sharp limbs rip through any trooper who can't fill it with 500 hundred bullets first.

The combat is always frantic, innovative and, most of all, gory. Many may write off "Troopers" as a splatter flick, but the obvious social commentary makes the film's violence more palatable.

Critics have assailed "Troopers" for altering Heinlein's work, but negative reaction is inevitable when any film adapts a well-respected novel. "Troopers" did take some liberties with the original text — turning the novel's gravity-defying powersuits into standard body armor in the movie version.

Such inconsistencies, however, are not the kind that infringe upon the point of the book or the film.

The chief difference between the book and film is the ethnicity of the film's central character, Johnny Rico. Heinlein's Rico is Brazilian, whereas actor Casper Van Dien apparently rents his genes from

Luke Skywalker. This racial relocation is key, considering that the film does not change Rico's hometown: Buenos Aires.

As a matter of fact, this heavily Americanized setting further supports the presence of a global capitalist regime, without having to hit the audience over the head.

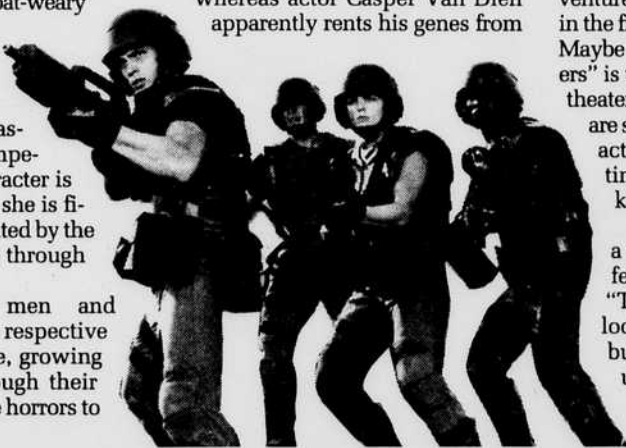
Other changes, such as the soap-opera escapades between main characters, are especially unnecessary. Still, "Troopers" succeeds because it maintains the author's underlying theme.

Heinlein's novel was borne out of the Cold War-McCarthy era, making it more than coincidental that the adapted film is filled with subversive jabs at the pseudo-Aryan empire that fosters unquestioning, homicidal nationalism.

When the Klendathu campaign results in a body count of 100,000, no one holds the overly militant government accountable for rushing blindly into a situation about which they knew nothing. The Alliance uses the event to intensify hatred of the species.

"The only good bug is a dead bug!" It's an amazingly successful venture, rallying both the characters in the film and audience members. Maybe the true strength of "Troopers" is the air of genuine fear in the theater. This isn't because the bugs are scary but because these characters the viewer has invested time and interest in may be killed off indiscriminately.

Verhoeven has constructed a powerful, two-pronged offensive. Not only does "Troopers" offer a satirical look at modern sociopolitics, but it's also overloaded with unrelenting, full-tilt, shout-at-the-screen action.



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