



By Joel Bleifuss

Michael Moore Stars at Academy Awards

On day five of the war, it was supremely ironic that network television viewers had to tune into the 75th Annual Academy Awards ceremony to hear voices that questioned the wisdom of the Bush administration.

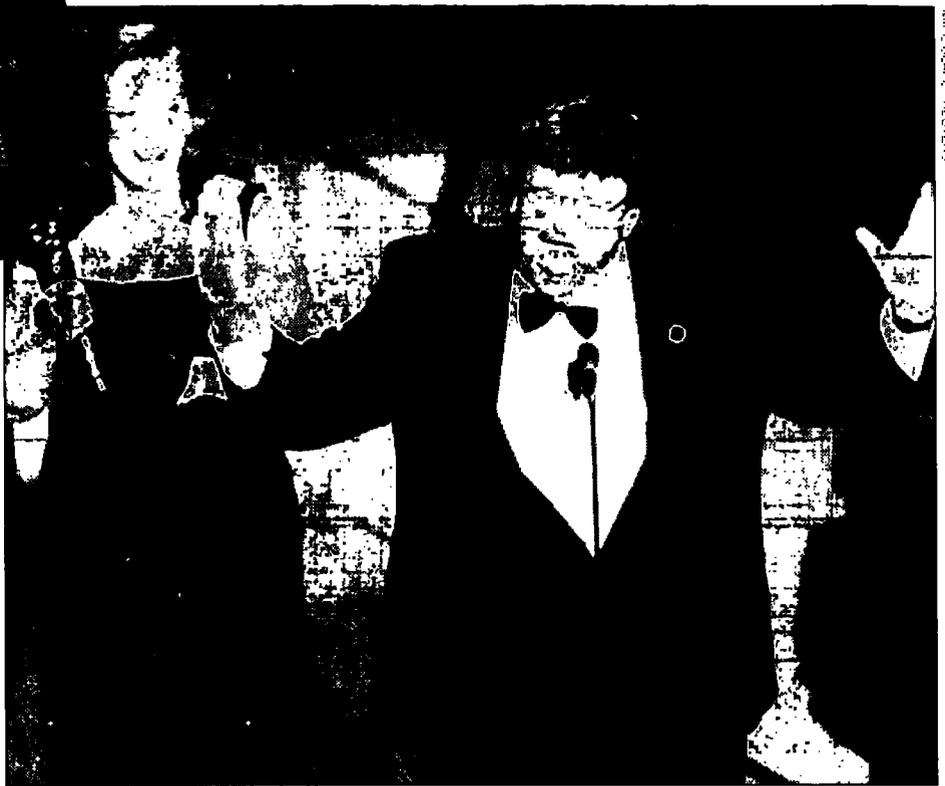
Rumblings of protest began on Saturday, March 22, at the Independent Spirit Awards (the award ceremony for independent films) in Santa Monica, California. Maggie Gyllenhaal, the star of *Secretary*, said the country was "in the middle of a war about oil and imperialism, and I hope for peace as soon as we can possibly find it."

That same afternoon at the Miramax party, crooner Michael Feinstein couldn't rouse the guests to sing "God Bless America" no matter how hard he tried.

Then there was ABC's presentation of the Academy Awards on March 23. Steve Martin got the ball rolling: "I am really glad they cut back on the red carpet, that'll send them a message." Minutes later, he followed up with, "A movie star is many things: they can be tall, short, thin ... or skinny. They can be Democrats ... or skinny."

The political statements ranged from the subdued to the outraged. Susan Sarandon, like many others wearing the Dove of Peace pins designed by Henry Dunay for Global Vision for Peace, flashed a peace sign. Chris Cooper, winner of the best supporting actor for his role in *Adaptation*, quietly said, "In light of all the troubles in this world, I wish us peace."

Gael García Bernal, the hunky star of *Tu Mamá También*, introducing the nominated best song from *Frida*, said to loud applause: "The necessity for peace in the



"Anytime you have the Pope and the Dixie Chicks against you, your time is up," said Michael Moore as he accepted the Oscar for *Bowling for Columbine*.

world is not a dream, it is a reality. And we are not alone. If Frida was alive, she would be on our side, against war."

Pedro Almodovar, accepting the Oscar for best original screenplay for *Talk to Her*, read a statement: "I also want to dedicate this award to all the people who are raising their voices in favor of peace, respect of human rights, democracy and international legality, all of which are essential qualities to live."

And the audience cheered as Adrien Brody, who won best actor for *The Pianist*, admonished the orchestra to stop so he could say, "Whether you believe in Allah or God, may he watch over you, and pray for a peaceful and swift resolution to this war."

In a veiled protest against the war, which went unreported, Bono, lead singer of U2, sang "The Hands that Built America" from *Gangs of New York*, changing two lines of the song. Instead of:

It's early fall, there is a cloud on the
New York skyline,
Innocents across a yellow line.

Bono sang,

Late in the spring, yellow cloud on a
desert skyline,
Some father's son, is it his or is it mine?

And then there was Michael Moore. He received a standing ovation when *Bowling for Columbine* was announced the winner of best documentary. The *Chicago Tribune's* Mark Caro reported that the pressroom also erupted in applause when it was announced that Moore had won.

Taking the stage, flanked by documentary filmmakers, Moore said:

I've invited my fellow documentary nominees on the stage with us. They are here in solidarity with me because we like nonfiction. We like nonfiction and we live in fictitious times. We live in a time when we have fictitious election results that elect a fictitious president. We live in a time where we have a man sending us to war for fictitious reasons, whether it is the fiction of duct tape or the fiction of orange alerts. We are against this war, Mr. Bush. Shame on you, Mr. Bush. Shame on you. And any time that you have the Pope and the Dixie Chicks against you, your time is up.

John Horn of the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "as Moore's speech reached its crescendo" Academy Award producer Gil Cates and director Louis Horvitz, who were in the production truck, decided "to cut him off. 'Music! Music!' Horvitz yelled. The orchestra quickly drowned out the rest of Moore's speech." And his microphone receded into the floor.

Some of the Hollywood audience smiled and applauded, some appeared stunned, and a contingent in an upper balcony booed, but stagehands, who were close to the microphones, booed loudly, making it appear to a television listener that Moore's criticism of President Bush was not well received.

Speaking to reporters, Moore kept up his criticism. These remarks were well reported by the *Tribune's* Mark Caro and the *Chicago Sun-Times* Bill Zwecker, but most of the national media ignored them.

Reporter: Why did you do what you did?

Moore: I'm an American.

Reporter: That's it?

Moore: Well, that's a lot. I'm an American, and you don't leave your citizenship when you enter the doors of the Kodak Theatre. ... I don't stop being who I am when I come to this ceremony, and I'm extremely grateful for this response.

Moore wanted it made clear that despite the loud boos from the stagehands, most in the Hollywood audience were behind him: "Don't report that there was a split decision in the hall because five people booed," he said. "I did not hear that. I saw the entire place stand up and applaud, applaud a film that talks about how we are manipulated by the fear that's put forth by the White House and put forth by corporate America to create a culture of violence at home and abroad."

Noting that his book *Stupid White Men* is on the nonfiction bestseller list, Moore said, "My finger's on the pulse of where I think the majority of Americans are at, and I think it would be irresponsible of me not to say what I felt. I don't think anyone who voted for me for this award thought they'd get a speech about agents and lawyers or the lawyers of agents." America, he said, is "not divided ... the majority of Americans do not want to see their boys or girls killed in this war. The majority of people do not want to see our

democracy hijacked by the squatter on federal land at 1600 Pennsylvania. I just happen to believe in one person, one vote, and you count all the votes."

Most of the national media, in their role as wartime cheerleaders, reported that Moore was roundly booed. Kurt Loder of MTV, reporting on Michael Moore's "witless flip-out," wrote: "Moore's spittle-flecked undulations were so over-the-top, that even the Oscar crowd—his natural constituency, you might think—erupted in a storm of boos. This was *totally* unexpected."

Are Loder et al. softening us up for another Hollywood blacklist? The group Boycott Hollywood, www.boycott-hollywood.us, already wants to dim the lights of 94 outspoken stars.

A statement released earlier in the month by the Screen Actors Guild put it this way: "Some have recently suggested that well-known individuals who express 'unacceptable' views should be punished by losing their right to work. This shocking development suggests that the lessons of history have, for some, fallen on deaf ears."

Men of Principle?

Ever wondered what Elliot Abrams, Jeb Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Frank Gaffney were all doing back on June 3, 1997? They were publishing the *New American Century's* "Statement of Principles," which reads in part:

Conservatives have not confidently advanced a strategic vision of America's role in the world. ... We aim to change this. ... Does the United States have the resolve to shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests? ... If we shirk our responsibilities, we invite challenges to our fundamental interests. The history of the 20th century should have taught us that it is important to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire. The history of this century should have taught us to embrace the cause of American leadership. ... We need to accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity and our principles. Such a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity may not be fashionable today. But it is necessary if

the United States is to build on the success of this past century and to ensure our security and our greatness in the next.

General Advice

Retired Marine Gen. Joseph P. Hoar, who skewered the Pentagon's Iraqi war plans on the op-ed page of the April 2 *New York Times*, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee last September. His advice to the Senate, which went unreported at the time, bears repeating. He said in part:

War on terrorism is perhaps a useful slogan, but terrorism is not an ideology or a political movement or a sovereign country; it is a technique used to achieve either a political or military result, not unlike strategic bombing. While I am in no way condoning the activities of al-Qaeda and the terrorist attacks ... it is still important to look beyond this activity to find what are the causative factors. ... What is at stake are the minds and hearts of the 1 billion Muslims throughout the world. ... Their quarrel with the United States is that they do not trust our government. The reason for this is a pattern of behavior perpetrated by the U.S. government in South Asia and the Middle East over the last 20 years. They believe the U.S. government has acted unilaterally, sometimes as a bully, and has sometimes used other nations for its own interests and abandoned them when the objective has been achieved. Most importantly, they believe the U.S. has unjustly supported Israel over the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Prescient

During the first Gulf War, David Rubenstein wrote in the February 27, 1991 issue of *In These Times*:

Anyone who has talked to religious Muslims from the region must be concerned that no matter how decisively George Bush can knock out Iraq, in fact he has started a bloody conflict with a much larger and more diffuse opponent, a conflict that will not be resolved for many years, perhaps decades or longer ... think of it as an entitlement program: Every kid born in America gets a share of a trillion-dollar debt and a free ticket to a holy war. ■



The Road from Baghdad

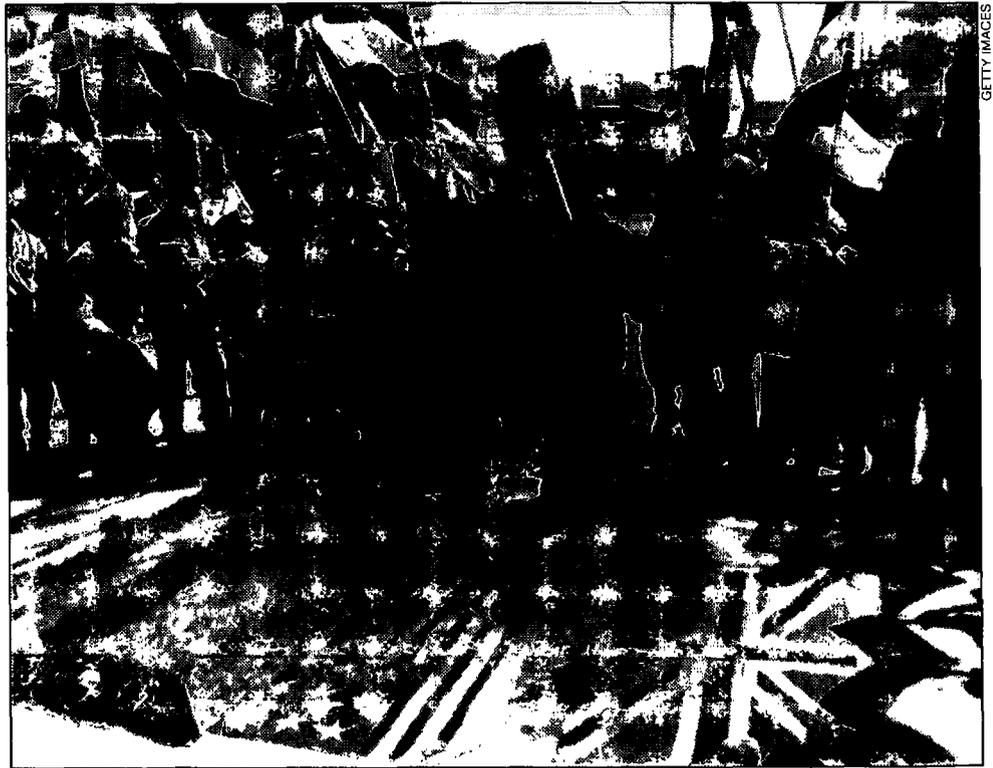
*The Bush team has big plans for the 21st century.
Can the rest of the world stop them?*

By David Moberg

Contrary to the smug pronouncements from the Bush administration, it is foolhardy to predict how the war in Iraq will end, let alone when. Considering how unpopular Saddam Hussein is among both Iraqis and their neighbors, it is stunning how quickly the American invasion increased support in and outside of the country for Saddam—or at least resentment of Americans.

Iraqis may still rebel against a faltering regime, but the blustering predictions from Bush's top officials that the war would be a speedy "cakewalk," punctuated by cheering crowds, against a government that was "a house of cards" proved wrong. They were soon followed by recriminations about flaws in the invasion strategy, including the number of troops permitted by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, over the advice of some generals. It is equally possible that the war will drag on for many months with bloody urban warfare in the streets of Baghdad while irregular forces harass the long U.S. supply lines from Kuwait.

No matter how the war eventually ends, the long-term consequences are likely to be damaging. First, there are the immediate victims of this war, and those of future wars that its strategists already anticipate. But the fallout looks bad for both the world as a whole and the majority of people in the United States. A quick end to the war, with Saddam largely forced out by a popular uprising, would be the least damaging outcome, but even that might embolden the United States to act more unilaterally and aggressively in the future. Even a short war will leave the world with new fault lines and wreck global institutions, like the United Nations, leaving only remote prospects for a progressive



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alternative to dominance by a rogue superpower. The triumph of democracy in the Middle East, despite White House rhetoric, is neither the real objective nor a probable result.

But truth was not simply the first casualty of war: Lies and misinformation were the very foundations of the public buildup to war. They ranged from forged documents to a media campaign that convinced more than half of Americans, without a shred of evidence, that Iraq was behind the 9/11 attacks. The rosy scenarios of victory, besides encouraging the self-delusion of the administration's war ideologues, were essential parts of the disinformation campaign to persuade an American public that was, all things considered, fairly skeptical. The invented rationales were flimsy and shifting at best because the truth would not have sold well anywhere, even in the United States.