

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/4142/gran-torino-clint-eastward-dvd>

Gran Torino - DVD

Tough as old boots?

by Neil Queen published on 3 July 2009

Is there any kind of entry procedure for Mount Rushmore, or is it a closed shop and you have to be a long-dead president or summat? I'm just wondering, 'cos it's clear there's an argument that Clint Eastwood should be up there, something that Gran Torino backs-up in abundance.

Drawing upon that legendary Eastwood persona, here we find him playing Walt Kowalski, Korean war veteran and bang-up traditionalist, who just happens to look like he's been hewn straight from the Easter Islands. Staunch advocate of moral values and respect he may be, but Walt's also a racist curmudgeon from the top drawer.

Following the death of his wife, octogenarian Walt retreats into his shell, stopping merely to mow his lawn, tear strips off the local whippersnapper vicar, clean his beloved Ford Gran Torino and bemoan the influx of foreigners into his neighbourhood, in particular his new neighbours.

After the neighbours' son Thao has a run-in with a local gang, Walt becomes an inadvertent hero when he gets all medieval on the punks for breaking his gnome. Lauded by the immigrant community and charmed by Thao's forthright sister Sue, Walt's bigotry thaws as he's showered with more adoration than his own family can muster and display a respect for tradition and honour.

But sadly not everyone shares this, as the gang target Thao, evoking painful memories of Walt's time in Korea, and causing him to take Thao under his wing and teach him how to "man up".

As the film progresses, Walt's ill-temper is given shade, with his racial abuse serving not only as a tribal expression, but as a male bonding technique, a kind of industrial grounding he passes on. Walt is an arse, but one forged of experience rather than hatred.



...cont.

Eastwood's performance allows this to resonate so convincingly, showing a man who has the strength of his conviction, but also as a prisoner of his own beliefs. His physical on-screen presence is mighty, carrying the weight of both his heritage and his generation, with his withering disdain for what the world has turned out seeping from his every pore.

As director and producer, Clint shows a vision that makes his advancing years an irrelevance - Walt and Clint's generation may be down on the modern world, but neither is afraid to admit they have exclusive ownership of the right way to live their life.

VERDICT

Powerful and resonant, Gran Torino is a compelling tale of respect and manliness. Eastwood handles it perfectly, keeping it entertaining at all times, never over-moralising or wishing life was more like Last of the Summer Wine.

Rating: 15

Starring: Clint Eastwood

Directed by: Clint Eastwood

Extras: Featurettes

At a glance

What is it?

Drama

Good

Clint Eastwood makes the most astounding grumpy old man

Bad

The big man's singing over the closing credits. Kermit-esque

Verdict

Powerful and resonant, Gran Torino is a compelling tale of respect and manliness

Price £19.99

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10