



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: The Year's Best

Gran Torino

"Ever notice how you come across somebody once in a while you shouldn't have *messed* with? That's me." - Walt Kowalski

**Director**

Clint Eastwood

Producers

Clint Eastwood

Bill Gerber

Robert Lorenz

Writer

Nick Schenk

Starring

Clint Eastwood

Bee Vang

Music

Kyle Eastwood

Michael Stevens

Cinematography

Tom Stern

Editing

Joel Cox

Gary D. Roach

Distributors

Village Roadshow Pictures

Malpaso Productions

Media Magik

Release date

January 9, 2009

Running time

116 minutes

Budget

\$33,000,000

Box Office gross

\$269,451,625

Gran Torino was one of 2009's most unlikely box-office successes. The credit for this has to go to 78-year-old Clint Eastwood. Eastwood carries the film with an action-hero performance, echoing his most famous work as 'Dirty Harry' and 'The Man with No Name' and giving an unexpected gravitas and grit to the script. Eastwood's Walt Kowalski character is deliberately offensive and often provocative -- shaped by experiences as a Korean war veteran and Michigan auto worker and challenged by the changing cultural patchwork of his neighborhood.

In what he claims will be his last performance as an actor, Eastwood sets his face into a rigid glare of anger at the modern world's values, and his voice at a permanent low growl as he spits out words of menace and disgust, including racial insults that are rooted in a different era. Even Eastwood's iconic strong, silent anti-heroes were rarely this unlikeable. And yet, the audience is encouraged to not only empathize with Walt Kowalski's frustration, but to also relish the film's occasional black humor and cynical sarcasm.

Unwittingly thrown into a culture clash with the Hmong community in his own neighborhood, Walt gradually finds he has more in common with them than with his own relatives. In these moments, the film is often surprisingly funny and charming as it shows the essential decency and humanity hidden inside Walt's gruff, tough exterior.

While *Gran Torino* is not very subtle, it effectively builds plenty of charged moments and ultimately contains some unexpected pathos. And one of the biggest surprises comes at the end, as Eastwood, not content with producing, directing and starring, croons over the end credits!

Did you know?

- Of the Hmong actors, only Doug Moua ('Spider'), had ever acted in a film before.
- Screenwriter Nick Schenk knew the Hmong community from working with them at a still mill. He wrote *Gran Torino* during his breaks between shifts.
- The film was originally to be set in Minnesota, but was filmed entirely in Michigan due to production tax breaks. Both states have large Hmong communities.



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"The thing that haunts a man the most is what he isn't ordered to do." – Walt Kowalski

Things to Explore

- How do Walt's experiences as a war veteran shape his mentality and actions?
- Does the film condemn or celebrate Walt's racism? What is the significance of his lack of political correctness?
- What is the significance of Michigan as a setting?
- What does Walt's Ford Gran Torino mean to him? What does it tell us about his overall worldview?
- Why does Walt get involved in the violent situations around his neighborhood?
- What similarities are there between Tao and Walt? Why is Walt so hard on him initially?
- Why does Walt have such disdain for religion as espoused by Father Janovich? How does this differ to his reaction to the Hmong Shaman?
- What does Walt know about life and death that Father Janovich doesn't?
- Is the film's humor intentional? Do you find it offensive?
- What factors make Walt begin to accept his Hmong neighbors?
- What does Walt mean when he says, "I am at peace," towards the film's end? Why does he do what he does?

Themes

- Racism
- Immigration
- Poverty and economic depression
- Urban violence
- Aging
- Families and community
- Masculinity
- Prejudice



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"There's nothing anyone can do that won't disappoint that old man. It's inevitable." - Mitch Kowalski

Library Resources

1) *American rebel : the life of Clint Eastwood*, Marc Eliot

The most up-to-date biography of the multi-talented actor and director, charting his transformation from a 24 year old gas-station attendant to a venerated Oscar-winning icon.

Copy	Material	Location
791.43028 EASTWOOD	New Nonfiction	Biography

2) *Clint : the life and legend*, Patrick McGilligan. An acclaimed 2002 biography of Eastwood that delves into the reasons behind his portrayals of cold, hard and morally ambiguous characters.

Copy	Material	Location
B EASTWOOD,C. MCG	Book	Biography

3) *The latehomecomer : a Hmong family memoir*, Kao Kalia Yang.

A memoir of one Hmong families journey from Laos to Thailand, and then to St. Paul, Minnesota (where *Gran Torino* was originally going to be set), that provides more background to the families portrayed in the film.

Copy	Material	Location
973.924 PER	Book	Nonfiction

4) *Roger & me [videorecording (DVD)]*.

Michael Moore's classic 1989 documentary about the economic depression in Flint, Michigan after the closing of a General Motors plant shows the many problems that still affect parts of the state twenty years later.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD ROG	DVD, Fiction	Audio-Visual - Movies

5) *Gran Torino [videorecording (DVD)]*

The DVD contains features on the 1972 Gran Torino car featured in this film, and a feature in which Eastwood describes his fond memories of owning his first car.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD GRA	DVD, Fiction	Audiovisual



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"You got your whole life ahead of you, but for me, I finish things." - Walt Kowalski

Online Resources

<http://www.thegrantorino.com>

The film's official website, containing video clips and photos from the film, biographies and interviews with the main cast and crew, and downloadable wallpapers and posters.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1205489/>

The film's page at the Internet Movie Database, where it currently has a rating of 8.4 out of 10 from over 95,000 users, and is currently ranked at #81 in the all time top 250.

<http://www.ias.umn.edu/media/GranTorino.php>

An interesting video of a panel discussion by the Hmong actors in the film/

<http://video.about.com/movies/Clint-Eastwood-Gran-Torino.htm>

Video of red carpet interviews from the film's premiere, in which Eastwood states his disdain for "boring... politically correct" films, and the film's other stars talk of his iconic presence.

<http://www.carmelmagazine.com/archive/09wi/clint-eastwood.shtml>

An excellent interview with Clint Eastwood where he reveals his interpretation of the motivations behind Walt Kowalski's anger and racism, and of the film's message that it's never too late to learn.

<http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2009/02/02/clint-eastwoods-million-revenge/>

An article that comments on the film's snubbing by the Academy Awards, despite it's breakaway box-office success.

http://www.filmspotting.net/labels/Frost_Nixon.html

Chicago Public Radio's *Filmspotting* podcast discusses *Gran Torino* with a mix of humor and insightful appreciation.

<http://www.moviehole.net/200917466-exclusive-on-the-set-of-gran-torino>

On-set dispatches from the film's production in Highland Park, Michigan.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Torino

Background information on the iconic car featured in the film.