

# Movie Review: Natural Born Killers

## *Social depravity in the modern age*



Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis sporting Oliver Stone's modern pose.

**Nathan Davis**  
Staff Writer

Oliver Stone's latest movie, "Natural Born Killers," is a virtual collage of violence, psychological neurosis, and human exploitation. It functions as an accurate representation of the excesses of modern pop culture. The entire film plays like a bad acid trip.

Images are distorted, hallucinations are portrayed frequently, and there is only a very tentative sense of time manifest in the movie. Though this method of filming makes the movie much more engrossing, as well as disturbing, it also obscures any concrete message to its audience.

In most films this would be a negative value. However, given that "Natural Born Killers" muses on the mysteriousness of our fascination with images of destruction as conveyed through the media, it actually helps the film. It forces those who wish to understand why there is presently such a voyeuristic attraction towards violence to examine themselves and society at large, not just the movie.

"Natural Born Killers" tells the story of two lovers, Mickey and Malory Knox, who also happen to be mass murderers. As the two travel across the American West, leaving extreme amounts of carnage in their wake, the history of their respective psychosis is told through flashback.

Both of them were abused as children, which is a standard trend in explaining why some are motivated to kill for pleasure. Other than this explanation, which left me rather unsatisfied, no motive was offered to explain why Mickey and Malory became mass murderers.

Indeed, the first half of the movie immerses the audience so

deeply in images of violence that any perspective is almost impossible. However, once Mickey and Malory are incarcerated, the film's tone shifts drastically. More time is spent analyzing the psyches of the other characters involved in the film.

Though I had hoped to find at least one of them as a bearer of some moral principle, this was not to be. All of the other characters were portrayed in a manner so they seemed just as disturbed, if not more so, than Mickey and Malory. Saying the view of the existence offered in "Natural Born Killers" is bleak is like saying that John Candy had a slight weight problem. It is an extreme understatement.

In a world without morals, all that remains is the quest for individual pleasure. The world of "Natural Born Killers" is definitely without any real morals and, disturbingly enough, Mickey and Malory seem to be the happiest of all of the movie's characters.

They are more content than the other characters for two primary reasons. First, every character in the movie suffers from destructive impulses. In fact, they all, in one way or another, contribute to others' suffering.

What makes Mickey and Malory different is that they do not fight their impulses. They celebrate their violence. To kill with passion makes murder pure. At least that is what Mickey and Malory claim.

Second, Mickey and Malory have each other. All the other characters are alienated from one another, while our mass-murdering couple finds happiness in their mutual affection. As Mickey says, "Love kills the demon." Strangely enough, Mickey and Malory seem to be portrayed as the most heroic characters in "Natural Born Killers." This is probably the singularly most disturbing aspect of the movie.

In his book "The End of the Modern World," Romano Guardini states an eerie agreement, an apt footnote to the disoriented themes of NBK:

*We know now that the modern world is coming to an end... Love will disappear from the face of the public world, but the more precious will be that love which flows from one lonely person to another... the world to come will be filled with animosity and danger, but it will be a world open and clean.*

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