

Why Do Some People Hate the Movie 'Sound of Freedom'?

If the new hit movie "Sound of Freedom" had been released a few years ago, the mainstream media would have praised it—and Hollywood probably would have given it a few Oscars.

But times have changed. Something has shifted in our culture. In today's up-is-down, right-is-wrong world, a movie that exposes the evils of child sex trafficking is being attacked by movie critics even though cheering audiences have made it one of the most successful films of the year.

The movie isn't easy to watch. It deals with the most despicable crime of our times. It's based on the life of Tim Ballard, a former government agent who arrests many child predators but can't ever seem to rescue their victims. After freeing a Honduran boy who was trafficked, Ballard rescues 54 children in a sting operation in Cartagena, Colombia; then he risks his life to save the boy's sister, who was sold to rebels and taken to their camp in a remote jungle where children are exploited to manufacture cocaine.

While the movie doesn't follow Ballard's story exactly (he didn't actually go into the rebel camp alone, nor did he kill the rebel leader depicted in the film), "Sound of Freedom" is one of the most accurate portrayals of the horrors of child trafficking ever made. It forces us to face an ugly reality that we feel powerless to fight—and it inspires us by showing that one person can make a difference in exposing this crime.

Why do audiences love the movie so much? I suspect it has most to do with the solid moral conviction of actor Jim Caviezel, who plays Ballard, and that of producer Eduardo Verástegui, who plays the role of the Colombian businessman who funds the sting operation. In real life both men are conservative

Catholics; they were not just acting in this movie. Their moral courage saturates the entire film.

In one scene when Ballard is trying to convince the businessman to help with the arrest of the traffickers, Ballard says: "Over two million children a year are being sucked into the deepest recesses of hell. Trust me, man, if we do nothing, their pain is going to spread and spread until someday it's going to reach the likes of you."

It's rare to see that kind of righteous conviction portrayed on a movie screen these days. That probably explains why "Sound of Freedom" has already made \$85 million. Because the film was crowdfunded with a budget of only \$14.5 million, it's already one of the most financially successful films of the year, thanks in part to faith-based audiences who are starved for wholesome entertainment.

Not everyone in Hollywood is rejoicing over the success of the film, however. As soon as the movie hit theaters, Rolling Stone magazine cried foul, with writer Miles Klee claiming that "Sound of Freedom" exaggerates the crime of child sex trafficking. Klee also mockingly describes Caviezel as the actor "best known for being tortured to death in Mel Gibson's 'Passion of the Christ.'"

Klee goes so far as to say the film is guilty of "fomenting moral panic ... over this grossly exaggerated 'epidemic' of child sex-trafficking." The magazine also tries to link the film with the QAnon conspiracy—which claims that the whole world is controlled by an elite group of pedophiles.

I'm not a follower of QAnon, and I don't know anyone who is. Ballard himself has gone on record saying that his work to stop sex trafficking has nothing to do with the QAnon conspiracy. But let me ask this honest question: Why in the world would so many people in the media and the entertainment industry be upset that a film is exposing the evil of sex

trafficking? Isn't this something that liberals, conservatives, Democrats and Republicans could agree on?

Estimates vary, but approximately 4 million children are trafficked every year. Child trafficking is a \$150 billion a year industry. Why would anyone be upset that a film is raising awareness of this travesty?

There's a scene in "Sound of Freedom" in which Ballard interviews a jailed pedophile who has trafficked children. He reminds the man of Luke 17:2, in which Jesus warns that it would be better for a man to have a millstone tied to his neck and be thrown into the sea than to harm a child. It's a sobering reminder that every one of us should have a healthy reverence for God when it comes to crimes against children.

I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but I'm suspicious of anyone who wants to downplay this crime or mock those who are fighting it. I hope those who are trash-talking "Sound of Freedom" realize how guilty they sound.

Please see this movie and tell your friends about it. Let's send the same message to politicians, media leaders and Hollywood elites that Tim Ballard says in the film to his colleague when they are planning a way to rescue kids from traffickers: "God's children are not for sale."

"Sound of Freedom" is in theaters now. Released by Angel Studios, it is rated PG-13 for "thematic content involving sex trafficking, violence, language, sexual references and smoking throughout."

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!

J. Lee Grady was editor of Charisma for 11 years and now serves as senior contributing editor. He directs the Mordecai Project (), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest books are Follow

Me *and* Let's Go Deeper (*Charisma House*).