

FED UP

Director: Stephanie

Soechtig

Writers: Mark Monroe, Stephanie Soechtig

Stars: Michele Simon, Bill Clinton, Katie Couric, Dr. Robert Lustig

Strength: Humanized, graphical presentation of facts in documentary

Weakness: Demonizes sugar and oversimplifies the problem of obesity

Runtime: 92 minutes

Rating: 4.5/5

PLOT: Upending the conventional wisdom of why we gain weight and how to lose it, Fed Up unearths a dirty secret of the American food industry—far more of us get sick from what we eat than anyone has previously realized.

REVIEW: If you pay attention to nutrition labels on the food products you buy, you may notice that next to the number of grams of sugar, there is no percentage shown. The sugar industry made sure of that. What they don't want consumers to know is that the sugar content of many of their products is 100% or more of the average daily requirement. Stephanie Soechtig excoriates the sugar industry for valuing profits over health in her hard-hitting documentary Fed Up. Though individual choice does play a part, Fed Up says that the main problem is not the lack of will power of the individual but the fact that people

have unknowingly become addicted to sugar.

According to Soechtig, collusion between the food industry, Congress and the U.S.

Department of Agriculture has led to fierce opposition to regulation, government subsidies to farmers for their corn (which has been turned into high fructose corn syrup), unhealthy school lunch programs (80% have contracts with Coke or Pepsi), and relentless advertising campaigns directed towards children. Bolstered by interviews with former President Bill Clinton, author Michael Pollan, and Senator Tom Harkin together with a bevy of medical researchers, the film cites statistics showing that 80% of the approximately 600,000 products sold in the supermarkets and convenience stores have added sugar. Since the late 1970s, Americans have doubled their daily consumption of sugar so that now, one in every five people face obesity. Using charts and graphs, Soechtig also shows that the amount of sugar the industry has added to food to compensate for the unappealing taste of low-fat products has contributed to the increase in Type II diabetes such that by the year 2050, it is predicted that one out of three Americans will be diabetic. The weakness of legislation is brought to light with simple statements like "Congress considers Pizza to be a vegetable," and seems almost too nonsensical to believe. But facts are facts. The film makes the problem even more real by focusing on several teenagers who have struggled with their weight for many years, emphatically pointing out that the

conventional wisdom which says that eating less and exercising more (striking a balance between calories in and calories out), is not the solution by itself without considering where the calories are coming from. While Fed Up is definitely an advocacy documentary and is typically one-sided, it is an important film that doesn't try to "sugar coat" the problem but asks us to become involved by seeking an alternative to sugar-laden products, putting pressure on government and industry representatives, and demanding that the food industry begin caring about the health of our children.

Reviewed by **Zakir Mushtaque**

GABBAR IS BACK

Director: Radha Krishna Jagarlamudi

Writers: A.R. Murugadoss, Rajat Arora

Stars: Akshay Kumar, Kareena Kapoor, Shruti K. Haasan

Strength: Akshay's performance

Weakness: Lacklustre performances from supporting artists

Runtime: 128 minutes

Rating: 2/5

PLOT: A grief-stricken man takes the law into his own hands when he begins to kidnap and murder corrupt public servants.

REVIEW: The film has five principal characters - the crusading protagonist Aditya/Gabbar (Akshay Kumar), a lawyer's assistant and the hero's romantic interest Shruti (Shruti Haasan), a lowly but ambitious constable Sadharam (Sunil Grover), a swaggering CBI officer Kuldeep Pahwa (Jaideep Ahlawat) and a villainous real estate tycoon Digvijay Patil (Suman Talwar).

The hero's disillusionment with the system stems from a tragic personal experience revealed in a flashback featuring Kareena Kapoor Khan in a special appearance. It is, however, difficult to fathom whether Gabbar's subsequent actions are a result of all-consuming anger or overpowering grief, so stoical and stone-faced is the protagonist.

Gabbar Is Back is crammed from end to end with crushing clichés about corruption and its ugly ramifications. So he goes about fixing the leaks by kidnapping dishonest bureaucrats and summarily executing them. The film reminds the audience repeatedly that the protagonist is a villain only by name. By disposition, he is a hero committed to ridding the nation of corruption. His means may be questionable, his mission isn't. So the audience is supposed to egg him on.

Unfortunately, quite apart from the disturbing fact that the film glorifies a dangerous brand of mobocracy.

The only saving grace of this film is Akshay Kumar, who not only looks great with a beard, but does try giving a convincing performance in this not at all convincing film. But then he should have chosen better. Don't be fooled by the premise, as this movie doesn't live much live up to the hype it generated.

Reviewed by **S.M. Intisab Shahriyar**

CLASSIC REVIEW

PULP FICTION (1994)

Director: Quentin Tarantino

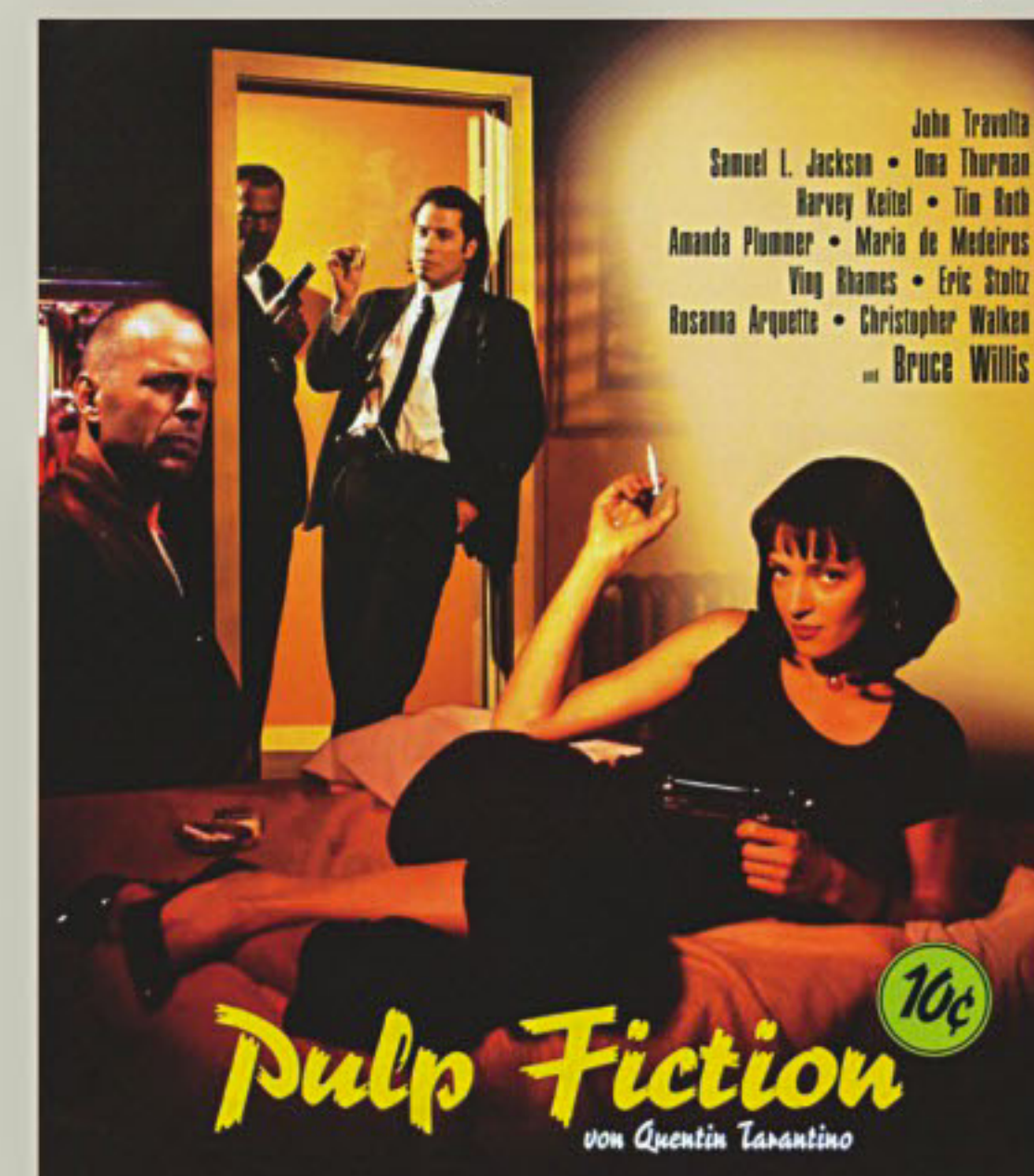
Writers: Quentin Tarantino, Roger Avari

Stars: John Travolta, Uma Thurman, Samuel L. Jackson

Runtime: 154 minutes

PLOT: The lives of two mob hit men, a boxer, a gangster's wife, and a pair of diner bandits intertwine in four tales of violence and redemption.

REVIEW: The movie is an amalgam of three stories, but the characters are overlapped in the ingenious, lapidary style of Robert Altman. It's really one big story — a pulp symphony in three movements. (Tarantino even goes Altman one better: He overlaps the time frame.) The first section, which centers on Vincent and Mia's night out, also features Vincent's partner, Jules (Samuel L. Jackson). The two thugs entertain themselves by engaging in rapid-fire combative exchanges on every subject from McDonald's restaurants in Paris to the relative cleanliness of pigs and dogs. Watching Pulp Fiction, you don't just get engrossed in what's happening on screen. You get intoxicated by it — high on the rediscovery of how pleasurable a movie can be. For 2 hours and 35 minutes, you



are drawn into the lives of violently impassioned underworld characters — hit men, drug dealers, lethal vamps — who become figments of fury and grace and desire.

Pulp Fiction's greatness comes from its marriage of vividly original characters with a series of vivid and half-fanciful events and from the dialogue, which makes this a must watch for all.

Reviewed by **S.M. Intisab**

