

Bastard Out of Carolina

US TV : 1996 : dir. Anjelica Huston : Turner Network TV : 101 min
 prod: : scr: Anne Meredith : dir.ph.:
[Jena Malone](#)
 Jennifer Jason Leigh; Ron Eldard; Glenn Headly; Dermot Mulroney; Diana Scarwid;
 Lyle Lovett; Michael Rooker; Grace Zabriskie; Pat Hingle

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	≠	M	⌘	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 2001 review:

"Compelling drama set in the '50s South about a pre-teen (Malone) who suffers emotional, physical and sexual abuse [sic] at the hands of her stepfather as white-trash mom Leigh looks the other way, afraid of losing her brutal, no-good husband (Eldard). Huston made her directorial debut with this quite violent film of Dorothy Allison's autobiographical bestseller (adapted by Anne Meredith). Made for cable. The video version is 4 minutes longer [ie: 101 min]. *Above Average*"

Arild's Movie Spanking List website notes:

"Made-for-cable TV movie. Distributed by BMG Video on the BMG Independents label, a unit of BMG Entertainment, 1540 Broadway NYC, NY 10076.

An adaptation of the critically-acclaimed 1992 novel by Dorothy Allison, this white trash story of child abuse [sic] was produced by Turner Network Television. Ted Turner is alleged to have refused to air it because of the content, which includes a graphic scene depicting the rape of a young girl. Pay-cable movie channel Showtime aired it instead, and it's now called a "Showtime Original Production".

In the 1950's South, a single woman gives birth to a child while comatose from a drunk driving accident. The mother recovers, and the family starts over with a violent tempered labourer, played by James Eldard. After the mother miscarries and cannot become pregnant again, the man turns his frustrations to her

older daughter, played by 12-year old Jena Malone.

In two scenes, he whips her with a belt (buckle end - ouch!) in a bathroom. The first scene is mostly shot from outside, but you get to see her mother holding her sobbing daughter on the floor afterwards and pulling her dress up to look at her red thighs. The second scene is shot from the inside though. Shots include Eldard pushing her against a sink while he wraps the belt, her raising her dress completely exposing her panties, a shot of her waist leaning against the sink while she grabs on, sandwiched by two creative shots, reflected in the dirty mirror, of Eldard swinging the belt in the background while Malone grits her teeth in the foreground. The second shot shows her really in agony. There are several other scenes of Malone walking around painfully, her inspecting the belts, and one scene where the abuse is discovered in a bathroom by her aunt who, while pulling Malone's panties up, reveals bruised and welted buttocks.

WARNING: Watch the whole movie and you'll understand why someone might object to the graphic nature."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Relevant material on the internet is not confined to movie sites of impeccable probity. There are also numerous websites, of variable merit, dealing specifically with child actors of the cinema and TV, fan sites for current adolescent celebrities, and others such as this one which contain handy (albeit prurient) listings of the incidence of corporal punishment from the earliest days of the cinema. Since the archive holds – at the date of writing – in excess of 250 film books and hundreds of film magazines, not one of which list this title, no apology is made for quoting the one source which does.

Given that synopsis however, it appears Anjelica Houston issued one of the first salvoes in a barrage that has continued unabated since the mid-1980s. Not only is a young girl the victim – and here the word is appropriate for once – of arbitrary male violence from a thuggish stepfather, the film also contains the graphic rape, presumably of the same girl. In a sane climate one could address the horrors of this tale on their own merit – and discuss for example whether children *should* be obliged to live with the ill-chosen new bedmates of their self-centred parents. We do not live in a sane climate however, and this crescendo of tirades against males and male sexuality, which has streamed out of the US for decades, detract from any unguarded acceptance of such torrid tales of cruelty and violence.

The propagandist tone of it all, enhanced by saturation tabloid coverage of the same *ishooz*, subverts our natural genuine concern for authentically abused and maltreated children, of which the girl in this story would be a prime example. Is there any soap or cop show in the English language that has not, time and time again, recapitulated this same plotline? Have there not been twenty, fifty, TV movies since 1986 about battered children (but only by men)? Evil Stepdads? Incest? The selfish sexual exploitation (but only by men) of girls *and* boys?

The agenda at work here, quite apart from the obvious one, seems to be a promotion of the state's right, through social service and "child protection" agencies, to intrude and police the affairs of the family. What is certainly *not* on the agenda of those same agencies is any real enhancement of the legal independence of the child. All children *must*, in a sense, become wards of the state, to "protect" them against the evils of the home. And against the "evils" outside the home, for good measure. Children must be "protected" against the whole of adult society (but especially males) including their own families, and in so doing we must infantilise them all, equating the 16-year old with the 6-year old. This is the agenda. I for one do not accept it, and nor should you.

See subject index under [AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TITLES](#), [CORPORAL PUNISHMENT](#) (although this instance more properly belongs under) [CRUELTY / NEGLECT / MALTREATMENT](#), [SOURCES ~ WEBSITES](#) and [STEPMOTHERS / STEPFATHERS](#). While rape, clearly, is distinct from other sub-categories of [SEX & SEXUALITY](#), instances of the rape of adolescent girls (thankfully few) are included for convenience under that heading. Current wisdom has it that rape is not a genuine sexual act. In reality it is the *only* true sex crime, in a world obsessed with sex crimes.