

Gun glorification

By BRIAN LOCKHART

?Well sir, you are a cowardly S.O.B. You just shot an unarmed man.?

?He should have armed himself if he's going to decorate his saloon with my friend.?

It is the famous line spoken by Clint Eastwood's character William Munny, the cold blooded killer, in the 1992 Academy Award winning movie Unforgiven, right after Munny kills saloon owner Skinny Dubois with a blast from his double barreled shotgun.

It is the story of a former outlaw and killer who returns to take one final job to hunt down and kill a pair of cowboys who have a bounty on their heads.

The movie makes no excuses for its violent story. The violence is the story.

?I've killed woman and children. I've killed just about everything that walks or crawled at one time or another,? Munny admits before unleashing another volley of hot lead in the saloon.

Of course in the Hollywood version of the Wild West shoot-out, Munny manages to out-gun a dozen or so other armed men with one six-shooter while no one else in the saloon can manage to shoot back with any degree of accuracy.

I like a good western as much as anybody, but when a movie ends, it's over, although there is no doubt that the film industry has had a direct impact on influencing society.

At least with a western, the viewer gets the sense that it is happening a long time ago in a totally different period of history.

I gave up watching most television years ago.

I've never seen an episode of Breaking Bad or Game of Thrones, although I did like The Big Bang Theory for some reason and occasionally catch late night re-runs of Seinfeld.

A couple of years ago I turned on the television during the daytime and flipped through the channels.

All the major networks were filled with inane type talk shows or game shows. I couldn't understand why anyone would be entertained at 11 a.m. watching a panel of talk show hosts who are outraged one moment, then gleefully happy the next, in front of an audience that applauds wildly and yells ?wooo!!? every time a new guest is introduced.

If anyone still thinks we aren't influenced by television, just do an international survey of hairdressers who had the request for the ?Rachel Green hairdo? when the Friends TV show first debuted in 1994 and Jennifer Aniston rocked her unique 'do in the first year of the series.

Big companies don't spend millions of dollars on a 15-second Super Bowl commercial because they like to entertain. They know they have just influenced millions of people.

In fact, in recent years the TV commercials have become the most talked-about aspect of the event ,placing the actual game in third place behind the commercials and the half-time performance.

A few nights ago I sat down to practise my guitar and decided to turn on the television while I played.

After getting through a few channels of non-descript local talk shows and a shopping channel selling costume jewelry for a 'fabulous price', I hit the major network channels.

As I flipped through the shows broadcast during prime time, there was one feature that stood out on every channel.

Every show I turned to had someone pointing a gun, holding a gun, shooting a gun, or brandishing a gun.

The scenes took place in a parking lot, an apartment building hallway, a crime scene, and in a jungle of some sort.

There were cops, federal agents, criminals, and the jungle guys all itching to pull the trigger. Got a problem? Pull your gun and set everyone straight.

If there's no one getting shot, you can at least see the aftermath in the morgue, hospital, or other institution where the bullet ridden person is taken, followed by more cops and guns and forensic people now discussing bullet wounds and lawyers discussing the details of some kind of evidence of what happens when a bullet hits your body at 1200 feet per second.

The display of weapons and the aftermath is so casual it's like carrying a gun is no different than having a handkerchief in your pocket.

You've got to wonder how such a casual approach to using a lethal weapon influences our society. Those shows, many long-running, aren't still on the air because no one watches them.

TV shows need viewers to stay relevant and attract the advertisers who pay the big bucks of the cost of production.

If Jennifer Aniston can influence thousands of women to get a hairstyle, what influence do these gun glorification shows have on society?