New Review by Adrian Bonenberger: Fury, The Tank, and Forgiveness

One of the first things I published on Wrath-Bearing Tree was [a negative review](#) of the movie *Fury*, based entirely on its two minute preview. How early in the publication's history was the review published? I refer to WBT as a blog.

The negative review I can say with the benefit hindsight is average as negative reviews go; not as witty as I thought I was being at the time, insightful but only on a superficial level (there being different levels of insight). I wasn't being edgy for clicks, I wasn't trying to do something noble, I just figured out based on the sort of war movie I'd seen before that *Fury* was going to be a particular type of film, and it ended up being that film, about exactly as I'd called it. So what! Big deal.

A lot of people who like the sort of movie *Fury* was supposed to be seem to have enjoyed *Fury*. No surprise there. Few of them probably appreciated my too-clever-by-half review. Nevertheless it remains one of the most-read pieces on the site, year in and year out, because — and this is key — as I based the review on a two minute preview, it was one of the *first* reviews published about the movie, and therefore established itself via SEO (and lord knows what else goes on deep in the caverns of Alphabet/Google) as one of the foremost reviews on the subject. It's also probably one of the few negative reviews about the movie extant, so viewers who are not inclined to watch the movie or have a bad reaction to it likely end up gravitating to what I wrote.

Should you read this negative review of *Fury*? No, I don't recommend it. Not my finest work. Not bad, but not funny or

clever enough to spend a few minutes of your precious time on earth with it. If you're in the market for a funny negative review of a movie, check out Christopher Orr's [review of *The Happening*](#) instead.

What a tiresome prelude! What could this possibly be building up to. Well, folks, I saw another tank movie set in WWII recently. I enjoyed it. I want to recommend it. It confirms what I wrote at the end of my mediocre review of *Fury*, which was that to produce a truly original, extraordinary, and truly anti-war movie about WWII, one would need to make a film about the Wehrmacht and from their perspective. Ladies and gentlemen, I present *The Tank,* available online. In the end, Hollywood didn't have the guts to make it. The Germans (emerging for better or for worse from their decades long pacifist slumber) did.

Characteristically haunting shot of the titular Tiger in "The Tank" passing a ruined building on the Eastern Front. Photo via Amazon Prime website.

In the opening minutes, you take the perspective of a Tiger tank crew on the eastern front during the Wehrmacht's retreat from Stalingrad. This scene is remarkable and unpleasant and will probably deceive war movie aficionados into drawing conclusions about the rest of the film. This Tiger crew is precisely what you'd expect — disciplined, skilled, and ruthless. They mow down Soviet troops by the dozen. They are fired upon by antitank guns and T-34s, and they knock out each of their adversaries with yells of "fire!" and "Jawhoel!" You *root* for them. You want to see them valiantly and bravely defending the retreat of their comrades, while dispatching the wicked enemy. This is the camera's perspective, the film's perspective, and one adopts it with little trouble — trouble offered by the fact that it is, in fact, not an American tank with American soldiers inside, but a Nazi Tiger tank, the apex predator in the WWII tank world.

Based on this opening most sensible viewers will be tempted to give up on the movie immediately. No point watching Nazi propaganda. Especially now, in this fraught age. I was curious so I continued — not because I enjoy Nazi propaganda, but because I wanted to know if the Germans, who had made their own Band of Brothers (it's called [Generation War](#) in English) and made Babylon Berlin and generally appeared to be moving into a kind of renaissance of viewing WWII in rosier terms than we're used to had actually just gone for it and made their own version of *Fury*.

No spoilers here: they didn't. They made their own tank movie all right, but it's also not a tank movie at all; it has more in common with *Dead Man* than *Das Boot*. It's really quite good; evocative, melodramatic (do I need to write melodramatic? This is a German film). It's surreal, it's horrific, it manages to give Ukrainians agency in a way no movie outside Ukraine has even attempted, as far as I'm aware. It's an eastern and central European *ghost* story, a story about the witching hour — and a story about a tank; the folks who crew it, and (most

importantly) its commander.

More than anything else, *The Tank* is about the total and complete ruin of Germany; its destruction, its defeat, its moral collapse. It is also about the impossibility of forgiveness for certain crimes — the impossibility of redemption. The tank commander reminds his troops about what they're fighting for — their families, their homes. Throughout the movie, the audience learns that the crewmembers have nothing left to fight for — their own families and homes have been destroyed in Allied bombing raids. They themselves are nothing, they stand for nothing, and they have nothing. Imagine such a film. Only the Germans could have made it, because they were Nazis, and they lost WWII in spectacular fashion.

This is the sort of movie I think *Fury* (a perfectly decent war film. I'll shut up about it after this review) probably thought it was going to be. Where or how it got lost along the way, who knows. Nazis make such contemptible and attractive foes. You can't kill too many of them. I think that's likely where *Fury* went wrong — it became so intent on killing Nazis that it had trouble coming right out and declaring its protagonists villains — that these men were not different from the Nazis save by chance. It stars Brad Pitt. There was too much at stake, *Fury* could never take the kind of risks it needed to be the kind of tank movie or war movie I would have wanted it to be — the movie it could have been. A war movie with protagonists who were going to hell.

The Tank on the other hand delivers. The sort of person who enjoyed watching *Fury* will I feel confident enjoy *The Tank* as well, especially veterans who have experience with tanks. The sort of person who didn't enjoy *Fury* will also probably enjoy (or at least appreciate) *The Tank* — this is the measure of a good movie, one that's enjoyed by different sorts of viewers.

I did end up watching *Fury* in the theaters in late 2014. After

the review I'd written it felt like the right thing to do. It was a rainy night, and the movie was part of a dinner and movie date with a woman I'd met online, a nurse at the VA. The date went well, and we made plans to see each other again. I realized, when I returned to my car, that I'd lost my cell phone and had to drive 20 minutes back to the theater. The cinema's employees were cleaning the theaters and preparing to close, and let me look around. I was in luck. My phone was there, beneath my seat. It had fallen out of my pocket. The next day I had a fever, and ended up developing pneumonia that had me bedridden for weeks. I never saw the VA nurse again. *Fury* had taken its revenge. Probably, I deserved it.