

# Movies

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## 'Assaulted: Civil Rights Under Fire' movie review

By Mark Jenkins, June 21, 2013

### Correction:

An earlier version of this review stated that Ted Nugent "switched his hobby from psychedelic drugs to guns and ammo." Nugent has worked on behalf of several anti-drug abuse organizations, including Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE). This version has been changed.

Politics, as "[Assaulted: Civil Rights Under Fire](#)" demonstrates, makes strange gunfellows.

That's been evident ever since guitarist Ted Nugent, who appears briefly in writer-director Kris Koenig's polemical documentary, switched his hobby to guns and ammo. But the fire-breathing Nuge looks mellow next to "Assaulted's" narrator, rapper-turned-actor Ice-T. You may remember him as the singer of [Body Count's](#) "Cop Killer," a 1992 song [denounced by police departments](#) from coast to coast.

Ice-T's declamatory style is a bit wearying, but he's a logical choice to narrate the movie. True to its subtitle, "Assaulted" argues that citizens have an inherent right to defend themselves with guns, and not just from common criminals. Koenig takes the oft-invoked but controversial position that the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment guarantees "the right of the people to keep and bear arms" so that citizens can combat their own leaders' tyranny.

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It's an claim that, like much of the movie, is not particularly persuasive. Koenig hits the expected pro-gun-rights notes, but never arranges them into a coherent tune. The documentary is predictable, stylistically stolid and about as focused as a pellet-gun blast.

Periodically returning to the "civil rights" theme, Koenig argues that African Americans and other minorities have suffered from gun restrictions. He advances the interesting claim that the early-1960s civil rights movement — that would be the one led by the Gandhi-inspired Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. — backed its moral agenda with firepower.

Some of the other historical lessons include an armed showdown with corrupt deputies in 1945 Tennessee and the [1992 Los Angeles riots](#) during which Korean-American businessmen [defended their livelihoods with guns](#). There's also a section on the aftermath of [Hurricane Katrina](#), when police used dubious legal authority to seize weapons from local residents who had ample reason to think they might need them.

The movie spends nearly as much time, however, interviewing lawyers. Much is made of *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the 2008 case in which the [Supreme Court loosened D.C.'s gun restrictions](#). There's even a quick tour of pre-1776 English common law.

At times, "Assaulted" seems a movie only an Uzi owner could love. One reason for the title is that the director mounts a sincere defense of assault rifles. They are, he insists, quite popular and not all that deadlly.

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Yet the movie also endeavors, intermittently, to make what might be called liberal arguments in favor of firearms. Carrying a concealed weapon, we're told, is "empowering" for women and others who fear macho brutality. (Enter, briefly, San Francisco's Pink Pistols.) And one of the principal talking heads is UCLA law professor Adam Winkler, who's considered a "moderate" pro-gun voice.

But little moderation comes from Ice-T, who proclaims that "guns are synonymous with America." Viewers may agree, but "Assaulted" is unlikely to change anyone's opinion of whether that's a good or a bad thing.

Jenkins is a freelance writer.

★<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

PG-13. At AMC Hoffman Center 22. Contains images of violence and one carefully timed profanity. 79 minutes.

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