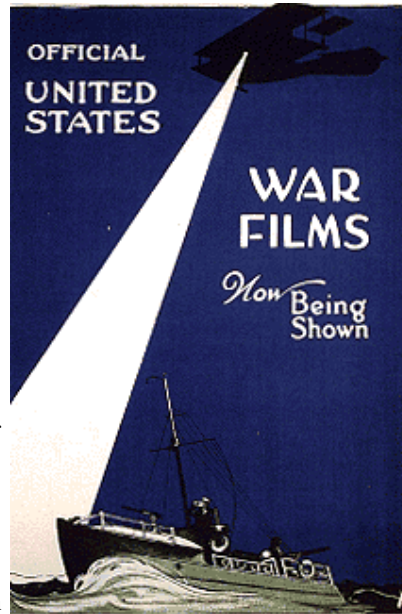

WAR and ANTI-WAR FILMS

● **War and Anti-War Films** often acknowledge the horror and heartbreak of war, letting the actual combat fighting or conflict (against nations or humankind) provide the primary plot or background for the action of the film. Typical elements in the action-oriented war plots include POW camp experiences and escapes, submarine warfare, espionage, personal heroism, "war is hell" brutalities, air dogfights, tough trench/infantry experiences, or male-bonding buddy adventures during wartime. Themes explored in war films include combat, survivor and escape stories, tales of gallant sacrifice and struggle, studies of the futility and inhumanity of battle, the effects of war on society, and intelligent and profound explorations of the moral and human issues.

Some war films do balance the soul-searching, tragic consequences and inner turmoil of combatants or characters with action-packed, dramatic spectacles, enthusiastically illustrating the excitement and turmoil of warfare. And some 'war' films concentrate on the homefront rather than on the conflict at the military war-front. But many of them provide decisive criticism of senseless warfare.

War films have often been used as 'flag-waving' propaganda to inspire national pride and morale, and to display the nobility of one's own forces while harshly displaying and criticizing the villainy of the enemy, especially during war or in post-war periods. Jingoistic-type war films usually do not represent war realistically in their support of nationalistic interests, while avoiding the reality of the horrors of war. The good guys are portrayed as clashing against the bad guys (often with stereotyped labels such as 'krauts,' 'commies,' 'Huns,' or 'nips'). These revisionistic, politically-correct and historically inaccurate films, in such diverse examples as **Sands of Iwo Jima (1949)** and **The Alamo (1960)**, would often redefine the facts.



War films can also make political statements - unpopular wars (such as the Vietnam War and the Iraq War), have generated both supportive and critical films about the conflict (i.e., Robert Altman's **M*A*S*H (1970)**, Kenneth Branagh's **Henry V (1989)**, and Michael Moore's documentary **Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004)**).

War films are often paired with other genres, such as [romance](#), [comedy](#) (black), and [suspense-thrillers](#). A number of war films are actually [historical epics](#), authentic attempts to recreate the experience of war on screen, rather than pure war films. Some are actually [westerns](#) masquerading as war films.

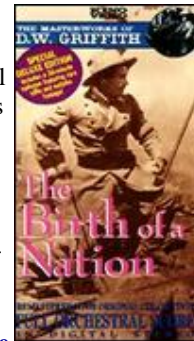
This genre has existed since the earliest years of cinematic production in the silent era. Film-makers have been provided ample opportunities for material from American history, stretching from the French and Indian Wars to the Vietnam War. In particular, the many wars

of the 20th century (primarily the First and Second World Wars, but also subsequent wars) have provided rich material for film makers. War films as a major film genre emerged after the outbreak of World War I.

Earliest War Films:

The first war film to be documented was a one-reel, 90-second propagandist effort - the Vitagraph Company's fictitious **Tearing Down the Spanish Flag (1898)**, produced in the year of the Spanish-American War. It portrayed a faked, reconstructed version of the seizure of a Spanish government installation in Havana by U.S. Army troops, the removal of the foreign flag, and its replacement by the Stars and Stripes. One of the first to show the necessity for preparedness during the Great War's European conflict, thereby demonstrating the propagandistic power of the new medium, was Vitagraph's silent film drama **The Battle Cry of Peace (1915)** with Norma Talmadge.

Early filmmakers steered away from making war pictures because of their enormous cost for extras - uniformed and equipped in massive battle sequences. Hollywood producers did not recognize the box-office potential of propagandist war and anti-war films until the success of D. W. Griffith's influential Civil War epic adapted from Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman*, ★**The Birth Of A Nation (1915)**, focusing on the effects of the war on two families - the Southern Camerons and the Northern Stonemans. The film included semi-documentary, panoramic battle scenes and other historical events during the Civil War era. The following year, Griffith's 4-strand epic ★**Intolerance (1916)** argued for pacifism.



[Although American Civil War war films are scarce, they include: ★**Gone with the Wind (1939)**, the westerns **Shenandoah (1965)** and **The Outlaw Josey Wales (1976)**, **Glory (1989)**, **Gettysburg (1993)** and its prequel **Gods and Generals (2003)**.]

The outbreak of World War I provided Hollywood with one of its greatest sources of plots - and profits. D. W. Griffith's **Hearts of the World (1918)** was a sentimental, propagandistic film to encourage US entry into the European conflict of the first world war - it included actual battle footage filmed on location in 1917 on the outskirts of the war itself (with the cooperation of the British War Office and the French Government). Griffith's film expressed the effects of the war on a recruit, and displayed the viciousness of the Germans in the person of actor/director Erich von Stroheim, who played the part of a ruthless, cold-blooded, hateful officer - a "beastly Hun." The propagandistic films served mostly as recruitment tools, and as emotional tirades against the enemy, distastefully suggesting that heroic American involvement would bring about victory. The anti-war film that made Rudolf Valentino a star was Rex Ingram's very successful **The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (1921)** - it used WWI as a backdrop for its story of illicit love.

Appearing around the same era, to express the freedoms of American democracy was Griffith's epic **America (1924)**, a melodramatic account of the American Revolution with innumerable set-pieces (the ride of Paul Revere, Wintering at Valley Forge, etc.).

World War I (The Great War) Era Films:



After the Armistice ending World War I, war films ceased. They were revived in the mid-1920s during peace-time. MGM's and King Vidor's ★**The Big Parade (1925)** was a new kind of war film, and the first to realistically portray the horrors of battle and the struggle for survival by three soldier-comrades (a bartender, a riveter, and a millionaire's son) in the trenches. It also told of a love affair between an American doughboy (John Gilbert) and a French peasant girl (Renee Adoree). Director Raoul Walsh's pacifistic **What Price Glory? (1926)**, Fox's answer to Vidor's film, told of Marines (Victor McLaglen and Edmund Lowe) fighting in WWI in France

against the enemy in authentic-looking trench warfare and as rivals among themselves vying for the affection of a French village girl named Charmaine (Dolores Del Rio). [John Ford remade the film in 1952 with James Cagney and Dan Dailey.]

Soon after, director William Wellman's silent and early anti-war film **Wings (1927)** appeared, the greatest of the early aviation epics with spectacular dog-fight combat sequences, and the first film (and only silent film) to be awarded Best Picture. Starring both Clara Bow and Gary Cooper (in an early role), it told the twisting romantic story of two aviators (Charles "Buddy" Rogers and Richard Arlen) both in love with the same girl (Jobyna Ralston). Both the first and third Best Picture winners were war films!



War Films at the Start of the Talkies:



The start of the talkie era meant that war films would now be supplemented with the realistic sounds of war - aerial dogfights, explosions, gunfire, etc. Millionaire director/producer Howard Hughes' expensive **Hell's Angels (1930)** featured more impressive WWI aerial battle sequences - and the debut of platinum blonde sex symbol Jean Harlow (speaking the famous saucy line: "Would you be shocked if I put on something more comfortable?") in love with two English brothers who were British Royal Flying Corps pilots (Ben Lyon and James Hall).

One of the earliest anti-war films to effectively denounce the horrors of war was the stirring, impassionate ★**All Quiet on the Western Front (1930)**. Possibly the greatest anti-war film ever made, it was based upon the novel by Erich Maria Remarque that viewed the Great War from the German point of view. All of the young German youths who have gone to the front to voluntarily serve the Fatherland become disillusioned and end up victims of the struggle. Both films portrayed soldiers as human beings who were ravaged by their experiences. A similar, accurate account of the war was German film-maker/director G. W. Pabst's first talkie **Westfront 1918 (1930)** (aka **Comrades of 1918**), an anti-war film about the futility of trench warfare for German and French soldiers on the Western Front in WWI. Howard Hawks' melodramatic anti-war film **The Road to Glory (1936)** portrayed the futility of WWI trench warfare of the French, starring Fredric March and Warner Baxter as officers of a weary regiment of French soldiers.

Because WWI was a decidedly difficult subject to look back upon, moviegoers preferred to see exciting action/adventure war films rather than condemnations of war, such as **The Dawn Patrol (1930)**, starring Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and Richard Barthelmess as pilots, which told the stirring, more glamorous story of the British Royal Flying Corps at a remote outpost in France during World War I. [The film was remade eight years later, director Edmund Goulding's **The Dawn Patrol (1938)**, with Errol Flynn in the lead role as a flight commander and Basil Rathbone as the commander officer forced to send amateur pilots into the air against ace German fliers. Flynn also starred in director Michael Curtiz' historically-inaccurate **The Charge of the Light Brigade (1936)**, about the memorable military engagement during the mid-19th century Crimean War, that also included a romantic pairing with 19 year old Olivia de Havilland.] Director Frank Borzage's **A Farewell to Arms (1932)**, adapted from Ernest Hemingway's novel, told a tale of WWI romance between a wounded American officer (Gary Cooper) in the Italian ambulance corps and an English Red Cross nurse (Helen Hayes).



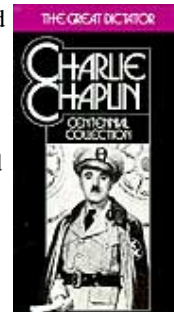
Pre-WWII War Films:

For most of the decade of the 1930s, war films went into decline due to increasing US isolationism, and Hollywood made fewer and fewer of them.

Then, in the late 1930s, French filmmaker Jean Renoir attempted to signal a warning about warfare's 'grand illusions' with the classic anti-war film **La Grand Illusion (1937)**, set in a WWI German prison camp in 1916 where an aristocratic French officer faced a dilemma regarding his escape with other POWs. Likewise, Renoir's comedy/farce **The Rules of the Game (1939)** was an indictment of decadent, morally-bankrupt, self-indulgent French upper-class aristocrats.

When the war in Europe commenced in 1939, British film directors tried to alert Americans about the looming German and Italian Fascist threat. Alfred Hitchcock's political/war-time thriller **Foreign Correspondent (1940)**, his second American film, concluded with a plea to the American public to enter the war ("It's as if the lights were all out everywhere, except in America. Keep those lights burning there! Cover them with steel! Ring them with guns! Build a canopy of battleships and bombing planes around them! Hello, America! Hang on to your lights. They're the only lights left in the world..")

Charlie Chaplin lampooned Adolf Hitler (in the role of Adenoid Hynkel) and The Third Reich in **The Great Dictator (1940)**, the director/actor's first all-talking picture - it was Chaplin's last film with the Little Tramp character. Hitler banned German audiences from viewing the picture due to its offensive characterization and even some American audiences believed that Chaplin had become self-indulgent. In the late 30s and early 40s, Hollywood began to increase its own number of war-related films, such as director Anatole Litvak's bold **Confessions of a Nazi Spy (1939)** with Edward G. Robinson and Paul Lukas, about a Nazi espionage/spy ring operating in the US. The beautiful romantic tragedy and tearjerker **Waterloo Bridge (1940)** told the tale of a ballerina (Vivien Leigh) whose love affair with a British officer (Robert Taylor) was shattered by the events of World War II. **For Whom the Bell Tolls (1943)**, based on the novel by Ernest Hemingway, told the story of Robert Jordan (Gary Cooper), an American demolition expert who gave his abilities to the Anti-Fascist freedom fighters of Spain in the 1930s.



A realistic portrayal of the demands of career military life just before US involvement in WWII was examined in Fred Zinnemann's multi-awarded, Best Picture-winning **From Here to Eternity (1953)**, based on James Jones' novel. It starred Burt Lancaster as a tough sergeant, Montgomery Clift as a bugler/private, Deborah Kerr as a commander's unfulfilled wife, and Donna Reed as a local prostitute.



During the war years before the American entrance into the conflict, many Hollywood films were action-adventure features, with caricatures of fearsome Germans and Japanese and clean-living, all-American soldiers. One of the most effective films to promote heroic US patriotism was **Sergeant York (1941)** starring Gary Cooper (who won a Best Actor Academy Award for his role as a real-life, backwoods, conscientious-objecting Tennessee farmer). The film was a biography of the most decorated and famous American hero of World War I during the Battle of Argonne - pacifist Sergeant Alvin C. York. And in the flag-waving **The Fighting 69th (1940)**, James Cagney starred as one member of a famed Irish-American regiment in the Rainbow Division's 165th Infantry of New York, that fought during WWI.

Now on the brink of war in late 1941, director Henry King's romantic drama **A Yank in the R.A.F. (1941)** was designed by producer Darryl F. Zanuck to encourage support for American entry into WWII to aid Britain and France. The film starred Tyrone Power as a brash, playboyish American pilot who enlisted in the British RAF, fought in exciting air battles, and wooed London-based showgirl/dancer and ex-girlfriend Betty Grable. Director Michael Curtiz' **Dive Bomber (1941)** with exciting aerial footage was released by Warner Bros. only a few months before the Pearl Harbor attack - it cast Errol Flynn as a military aviator/doctor conducting



experiments to prevent pilot-blackouts. For lighter fare, audiences watched Abbott and Costello's breakthrough comedy **Buck Privates (1941)** with the famous pair accidentally enlisting in the Army.

British War Films After the US Entrance into WW II:



The British cinema continued to produce many propagandist, flag-waving war films glorifying their "finest hour" of battle against Germany and Japan, including the inspiring **In Which We Serve (1942)**. The story, about a valiant crew of Lord Mountbatten's British destroyer (*HMS Torrin*) during the Battle of Crete in WWII was told in a non-linear fashion with vignettes/flashbacks. The film was the directorial debut of David Lean with Noel Coward as producer, writer, co-director, and star. Director Carol Reed's semi-documentary **Immortal Battalion (1944)** (aka **The Way Ahead**) followed the training of army recruits by David Niven as they became a hardened combat team.

A British version of the homefront struggle illustrating UK resolve against Nazi aggression was told in a sentimental story of an English middle-class family during the early years of WW II (including the Dunkirk evacuation and the blitz) in William Wyler's multi-award-winning **Mrs. Miniver (1942)**, the Best Picture of its year. The film ended with a memorable speech by the Vicar (Henry Wilcoxon) preaching in a bombed out church: "This is the people's war. It is our war. We are the fighters. Fight it, then. Fight it with all that is in us, and may God defend the right." President FDR had the speech printed and air-dropped over the war-torn European continent. Another UK war/thriller, **Went the Day Well? (1942)** expressed characteristic British reserve and strength among villagers who thwarted a take-over by Nazi paratroopers posing as British soldiers.



Hollywood's War Films of WWII At the Time of the Conflict:



After the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese in late 1941, the mood of Hollywood changed dramatically. Once the war began, the US film industry bolstered American support by churning out many war-themed movies. Most of the films were propaganda depicting the U.S. entry into the war as a noble cause, but some displayed the human side as well. The all-time film classic of pre-World War II intrigue, patriotism and romance, **Casablanca (1942)** was released just weeks after the liberation of the city itself. The popular film emphasized the atmospheric intrigue and tension surrounding Humphrey Bogart's decision to assist the war effort and get involved by securing transit visas - and give up the one-time love of his life, the often tragic consequences for lovers caught up in wartime experiences. Director Vincente Minnelli's **The Clock (1945)** another war-time film with a romantic sub-plot, was about a NYC office worker Judy Garland (Minnelli's wife) who fell in love with Robert Walker, a soldier on two-day leave.



Other films that portrayed the WWII homefront included **The Human Comedy (1943)** with Mickey Rooney as a telegram delivery boy in a small town, and John Cromwell's and producer David O. Selznick's black and white **Since You Went Away (1944)**, with Claudette Colbert as the mother of two daughters while her husband was away at war: Jennifer Jones (in a doomed romance with departing serviceman Robert Walker) and teenaged Shirley Temple. Wyler's **The Best Years of Our Lives (1946)** depicted the difficulties of demobilization and the problems of three veterans (Dana Andrews, Fredric March, and Harold Russell) adjusting and returning to American civilian life. Fred Zinnemann's gritty **The Men (1950)**, Marlon Brando's first film, examined the problems of



WWII veteran paraplegics.

One of the most rousing, propagandist musicals was ★**Yankee Doodle Dandy (1942)**, with Best Actor-winning James Cagney as vaudevillian George M. Cohan - the film included such patriotic hits as "You're a Grand Old Flag," "Over There," and the title song itself. Flag-waving Hollywood films in the mid-1940s that boosted morale also included other technicolor musicals, most notably Rita Hayworth in **Cover Girl (1944)**, Betty Grable in **Pin-Up Girl (1944)** with the leggy star as a USO entertainer, and Gene Kelly as a dancing sailor (on leave), accompanied by Frank Sinatra, in MGM's extravagant **Anchors Aweigh (1945)** - the first of their three musicals. (This was the film in which Kelly danced with cartoon mouse Jerry (of *Tom and Jerry* fame).

WWII War Films of the Actual Fighting:

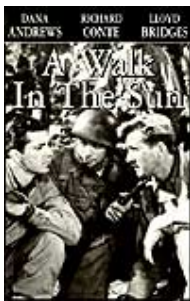
World War II is easily the most popular war choice for Hollywood film-makers, due in large part to its clear-cut political struggle against the Nazi regime. During the early to mid-war years, as the United States struggled and suffered setbacks, many films provided a genuine depiction of the fighting and the human effects of WWII. Most of Hollywood's films were concerned with combat in the Pacific Theatre of the war. Director John Farrow's flag-waving **Wake Island (1942)**, one of the most realistic and factually-based films made about the war, told of gallant US Marines (including Brian Donlevy, William Bendix and Robert Preston) fighting against the Japanese with uneven odds to hold onto a tiny base on the remote S. Pacific island shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Lewis Seiler's exciting, flag-waving, documentary-style adventure film **Guadalcanal Diary (1943)**, with stars Anthony Quinn, William Bendix and Preston Foster, bolstered homefront morale as it portrayed the courageous and bloody battle of the US Marines for the Solomon Islands during the opening stages of the war in the South Pacific.



Both Paramount's and Mark Sandrich's **So Proudly We Hail! (1943)**, and Richard Thorpe's and MGM's **Cry Havoc (1943)** attempted to realistically depict the role of women during wartime; the first depicted deglamorized, Red Cross combat nurses in WWII Pacific with Claudette Colbert, Paulette Goddard and Veronica Lake, the second with Margaret Sullavan, Ann Sothorn, and Joan Blondell as nurses and other courageous volunteers in the Bataan-Corregidor-Philippines conflicts.



Tay Garnett's documentary-style **Bataan (1943)**, loosely based on John Ford's earlier film **The Lost Patrol (1934)**, chronicled the rugged exploits of a small US Army platoon in the Philippines (led by Robert Taylor) in 1942 left for rear-guard action in the jungle to fight against the Japanese and blow up a strategic bridge. Ray Enright's ultra-patriotic film **Gung Ho! (1943)** showcased Robert Mitchum and Randolph Scott as members of Carlson's Marine Raider Battalion fighting a death-defying mission in the Pacific island jungles to retake Makin Island in the Pacific in August, 1942. William A. Wellman's poignant but unsentimental **The Story of G.I. Joe (1945)**, released just after the German surrender, was one of the best of all WWII combat films - the story of Company C, 18th Infantry foot-soldiers chronicled by war correspondent Ernie Pyle (portrayed by Burgess Meredith). [Robert Mitchum earned his only Oscar nomination for this film.] Errol Flynn starred in Raoul Walsh's realistic combat film **Objective, Burma! (1945)**, as Major Nelson - a gung-ho paratrooper captain leading a platoon in an attack against a Japanese radar station jungle outpost in Burma. Their return trip to their own lines, a harrowing, arduous 150-mile foot trek through the jungle, portrayed their sacrifice, pain, and heroism.



Warner Bros.' action picture **Action in the North Atlantic (1943)** featured Humphrey Bogart as a commander in the unheralded Merchant Marines, protecting a convoy (carrying valuable cargo to the Soviet allies) against U-boat attacks. Lewis Milestone's modest **A Walk in the Sun (1946)** followed an American infantry unit (with Dana Andrews as their sergeant) struggling to survive while fighting to take a farmhouse from the Germans in Italy. Zoltan Korda's dramatic action picture **Sahara (1943)** was centered in the N. African Libyan desert, with Humphrey Bogart as the head of a British-American unit fighting the Germans. Another war film geographically located in N. Africa was John Stahl's **The Immortal Sergeant (1943)**, with Henry Fonda as an inexperienced Canadian Army Corporal forced to take command of the British 8th Army troops in the desert following the battle death of the squad's sergeant (Thomas Mitchell).

Lloyd Bacon's **The Sullivans** - re-released as **The Fighting Sullivans (1944)** told the patriotic true story of five Irish-American brothers who died together in WWII, when their ship was sunk in the South Pacific. [Years later, the film inspired director Steven Spielberg to rework the story into his film **Saving Private Ryan (1998)**.]



The first significant post-WWII film in the US was MGM's **Battleground (1949)** - it followed a group of raw American recruits of the 101st Airborne Infantry Division fighting in the Battle of the Bulge. [Later, Robert Aldrich's **Attack! (1956)**, also set during the 1944 Battle of the Bulge, featured Jack Palance in a lead role as a desperate fighting man.] **Home of the Brave (1949)**, notable for being Hollywood's earliest protestation against racial bigotry in the military, depicted a black soldier sent on a S. Pacific island mission who faced prejudicial treatment by white comrades.

The screen duo of Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake were paired in their fourth (and final) film together in **Saigon (1948)**, a romantic adventure set mostly in a SE Asian jungle near Saigon. In Jean Negulesco's non-fictional, agonizing **Three Came Home (1950)**, Claudette Colbert starred as American authoress Agnes Newton Keith, penned-up with her young son in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in Borneo (headed by Sessue Hayakawa). Decorated military hero and Medal of Honor winner, Audie Murphy starred in the autobiographical **To Hell and Back (1955)** about his war-time experiences in the 3rd Infantry Division in S. France and Italy. And Philip Dunne's **In Love and War (1958)** told the story of three Marine leathernecks (Jeffrey Hunter, Robert Wagner, and Bradford Dillman) from N. California who served in the South Pacific.

Submarine and Naval-Related Pictures:



Another propagandistic film, Delmer Daves' quintessential submarine feature film **Destination Tokyo (1943)**, starred Cary Grant as the captain of a submarine crew on a dangerous mission to Tokyo Bay. Archie Mayo's hard-hitting **Crash Dive (1943)** starred Tyrone Power as an ace PT boat skipper whose assignment to a submarine (commanded by Dana Andrews) led to victories against the Nazis in the North Atlantic, with a romantic adventure subplot (with love interest Anne Baxter). Hitchcock depicted eight survivors from a torpedoed boat adrift in **Lifeboat (1944)**. Director Dick Powell's **The Enemy Below (1957)** dealt with submarine warfare in the Atlantic between two dueling commanders (Robert Mitchum as the captain of an American destroyer, and Curt Jurgens as the captain of a German U-boat). Another seminal submarine film was Robert Wise's **Run Silent, Run Deep (1958)** with Burt Lancaster and Clark Gable as two clashing submarine officers. In the same year, **Torpedo Run (1958)** starred Glenn Ford as an obsessed and merciless WWII submarine commander. John Ford's comedy/drama **Mister Roberts (1955)** examined the crew of a Navy cargo freighter outside the battle zone in the S. Pacific during WW II.

Aircraft-Related Pictures:

Victor Fleming's morale-boosting **A Guy Named Joe (1943)** told a fanciful war tale of the death of a WWII pilot (Spencer Tracy) who was sent back to Earth (by a Godly Lionel Barrymore) to become a guardian angel to a group of new pilots being trained for missions. [It was later remade by director Steven Spielberg, as the romantic fantasy **Always (1989)** with Richard Dreyfuss as a fire-fighting pilot - unrelated to the military context.] Director Howard Hawks' **Air Force (1943)** from Warner Bros.' studios, and with James Wong Howe's cinematographic genius, was a strong propagandistic film about the crew of a B-17 Flying Fortress plane - with believable aerial battles. Mervyn LeRoy's **Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo (1944)** with Oscar-winning Special Effects, starred Spencer Tracy as Lieut. Colonel James H. Doolittle, famous for leading the first bombing attack on Tokyo during WWII. Director Henry Hathaway's **A Wing and a Prayer (1944)** told of brave pilots on an aircraft carrier led by a tough flight officer (Don Ameche). In Sam Wood's **Command Decision (1948)**, Clark Gable portrayed a British air force base commander who agonized over sending dangerous bombing squadrons over Germany. Director Henry King's **Twelve O'Clock High (1949)** featured Gregory Peck (in one of his finest career roles) as a ruthless flight commander straining to lead an England-based American bomber squadron (the 8th Air Force). The film with an all-male cast portrayed the mental and psychological pressures of warfare.

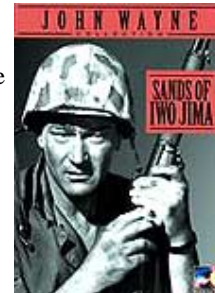


John Wayne's WWII Films:



John Wayne starred in the fictionalized **The Flying Tigers (1942)** as the leader of a squadron of American pilots stationed in early-WWII China that were for-hire to battle the Japanese. In **The Fighting Seabees (1944)**, Wayne also starred as the leader of a crew of civilians in a construction company that eventually formed a tough fighting force in WWII. **Back to Bataan (1945)** found John Wayne leading US forces in a recreation of the Bataan Death March. Toward the close of the war, John Ford based his realistic, under-rated and bleak film **They Were Expendable (1945)** upon the true, inspiring story of the Navy's PT boat squadrons and crews based in the Philippines during the early years of the war that faced the advance of Japanese forces, with John Wayne and Robert Montgomery in starring roles.

In director Allan Dwan's blatantly-patriotic wartime action drama **Sands of Iwo Jima (1949)** made after the war by Republic Studios, Wayne again starred as a tough and harsh but compassionate Marine sergeant (acquiring his first Academy Award nomination for the role) who trained rebellious recruit-troops in New Zealand in 1943 that were eventually responsible for the strategic re-taking of Iwo Jima (on top of Mount Suribachi) from the Japanese in February, 1945. And in **Operation Pacific (1951)**, Wayne starred as an American submarine captain of the *USS Growler* - a story adapted from the life of sub-commander Howard W. Gilmore. In director Nicholas Ray's **Flying Leathernecks (1951)**, Wayne played a disciplined, unpopular and macho-tough Marine squadron commander of the Flying Corps in the South Pacific, leading a group to hold Guadalcanal in WWII. Director Otto Preminger's star-studded epic **In Harm's Way (1965)**, another WWII naval adventure, re-teamed Wayne (as a veteran cruiser commander) with co-star Patricia Neal. It appeared two decades after the war's end to present an overlong story of naval life during wartime and a depiction of the attack on Pearl Harbor.



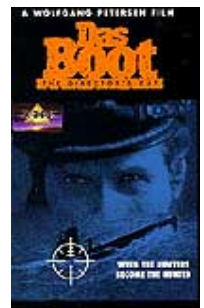
More WWII-Related Films:

Emeric Pressburger's and Michael Powell's propaganda film **...One of Our Aircraft is Missing (1941, UK)** told about a night-time RAF bomber crew shot down and aided by the Dutch in German-occupied territory. **We Dive at Dawn (1943)** told of the encounter between a British submarine and a German warship in the Baltic Sea, with John Mills starring as the submarine commander. Director Guy Hamilton's compelling British drama **The Colditz Story (1955)** revealed the determination of Allied POWs in an escape from Colditz - an escape-proof castle/prison within Germany's Third Reich. Raoul Walsh's **Battle Cry (1955)**, adapted from Leon Uris' best-seller, examined a group of WWII Marine recruits (including Aldo Ray, James Whitmore, Tab Hunter and others) led by their major (Van Heflin) in conflict in the South Pacific.



Japan's (director Kon Ichikawa) anti-war film **The Burmese Harp (1956)** portrayed the horror of war and Japanese post-war sentiment in its story of a Japanese soldier (a lute player) separated from his battalion at the close of the Pacific War in Burma, who is overwhelmed by the sight of dead Japanese soldiers in Burma (at the end of the war). The devastating effects of the Hiroshima bombing (and its radioactive fallout and radiation sickness), based on the prize-winning novel by Masuji Ibuse, were chronicled in director Shohei Imamura's award-winning **Black Rain (1989)**. Director Robert Pirosh's **Go For Broke! (1951)** was one of the few films to show the heroic courage of Japanese-Americans of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team as they battled against the Nazis.

German director Wolfgang Petersen's sympathetic and realistic **Das Boot (1981)**, adapted from the autobiographical book by Lothar-Guenther Buchheim, followed the heroic efforts of a German U-boat captain and its crew during WWII to patrol the Atlantic and Mediterranean within the claustrophobic, cramped confines of their undersea vessel (U-96). And the German anti-war battle drama **Stalingrad (1993)**, from director Joseph Vilsmaier, was released to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the crucial defeat of the Nazi forces in Stalingrad/Russia. The German/Polish film, **Europa, Europa (1990)** (aka **Hitlerjunge Salomon**), by director Agnieszka Holland, was based on the true story of a young, circumcised German Jew (Solomon Perel) who survived the Holocaust by posing as an ethnic Aryan German and joining the Hitler Youth, but continually feared being discovered by anti-Semitic Nazis.



Clint Eastwood directed two films (released in a 3-month period) based on the pivotal WWII battle over the island of Iwo Jima: his 26th directed film titled **Flags of Our Fathers (2006)**, adapted from the co-authored James Bradley and Ron Powers' non-fictional book *Flags of Our Fathers: Heroes of Iwo Jima* that detailed the

story surrounding the iconic and familiar Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph by Joe Rosenthal on Mount Suribachi called *Raising the Flag at Iwo Jima*. The film told of the bloody engagement to take control of the Pacific island from the Japanese, with at least 6,000 Americans dying in the month-long conflict. The second film was **Letters From Iwo Jima (2006)** which examined the same nihilistic battle from the Japanese perspective. This bookend film, with Japanese dialogue (requiring subtitles) starred Ken Watanabe as Japanese commander Lt. Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi, who sent letters to his family - the basis for the film.

Korean War Films:



In the 1950s, the Korean War in Northeast Asia served as inspiring content for only a few Hollywood films, including two anti-war films by Samuel Fuller about the madness of war: **Fixed Bayonets (1951)** and **The Steel Helmet (1951)**. One of the best films about the Korean War was director Joseph H. Lewis' **Retreat, Hell (1952)**, portraying the US Marine Corps' valiant withdrawal from the Changjin Reservoir, with Frank Lovejoy as the Marine Battalion Commander. In Mark Robson's **The Bridges at Toko-Ri (1954)**, based on James Michener's novel, William Holden played the role of a war-weary Lieutenant - a family man recalled from the Naval Reserve to fly a possibly-fateful bombing mission over Communist-protected bridges in Korea. Lewis Milestone's anti-war masterpiece **Pork Chop Hill (1959)** starred Gregory Peck as an Army Lieutenant of a platoon (King Company) in a no-win situation - commanded to assault a tactically-unimportant, but well-guarded hill held by the N. Koreans and Chinese Communists in the final days of the war. [Milestone had two previous anti-war films for each of the World Wars, ★**All Quiet on the Western Front (1930)** and **A Walk in the Sun (1946)**.] Peck also starred as the rebel general in Joseph Sargent's war drama **MacArthur (1977)**, told in flashback, including his promise at Corregidor in 1942 ("I shall return"), and his firing by President Truman for defying orders during the Korean conflict. John Frankenheimer's chilling **The Manchurian Candidate (1962)** brilliantly examined the fearful, sinister consequences of Korean War brainwashing, with Laurence Harvey as Raymond Shaw - a military hero programmed to assassinate, and his power-hungry, manipulative mother Angela Lansbury.

Years later, iconoclastic Robert Altman's anti-Korean war, off-beat dark-comedy **M*A*S*H (1970)**, with its ballad 'Suicide is Painless,' was an outrageous satirization about a group of surgeons and nurses stationed at a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) along the Korean 38th parallel. The army surgeons retained their sanity by joking, anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic sentiment, and pranks. Although the film was set in Korea, its real focus of attention was the frustrating Vietnam conflict. Only Burghoff of the superb cast (Elliott Gould, Donald Sutherland, Oscar-nominated Sally Kellerman, Robert Duvall and Gary Burghoff) went on to reprise his role as Radar in the popular, long-running TV series.



Other 50s and 60s War Films:

Most war films in the 1950s ignored the Korean conflict, however, and instead looked back at both earlier world wars with films mixing entertainment, history, and drama. Top stars Humphrey Bogart (in an Oscar-winning performance as a cynical, alcoholic boat owner) and Katharine Hepburn (as a stubborn, indomitable spinster missionary) starred together in John Huston's exciting World War I adventure film ★**The African Queen (1951)**, shot on location in Africa. Together, as representatives of the American and British positions, they confronted the Germans on the geographical margins of the major conflict. Graham Greene's 1955 novel was twice adapted for the screen: first by director/writer Joseph L. Mankiewicz as **The Quiet American (1958)** starring Audie Murphy, featuring a love triangle set amidst political turmoil in 1952 Saigon around the time of the end of the First Indochina War, and second by Phillip Noyce as a more faithful remake - **The Quiet American (2002)**, with Oscar-nominated Michael Caine.

Director Edward Dmytryk's **The Caine Mutiny (1954)**, another film with Bogart and an adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Herman Wouk novel, told the story of shipboard conflict and a mutiny aboard a WWII naval vessel (*USS Caine*), and the subsequent court-martial trial of the paranoid ship's captain. Billy Wilder's **Stalag 17 (1952)** examined a group of G.I.s (including Best Actor-winning William Holden) who were thrown together in the notorious German WWII prison camp, *Stalag 17*. Guy Hamilton's **The Battle of Britain (1969)**,

with Michael Caine, Christopher Plummer and Robert Shaw as RAF pilots, accurately captured how valiant the British were 'under fire' during the many air battles and bombing raids of the German Luftwaffe in the summer and autumn of 1940. The true, gripping espionage tale **The Man Who Never Was (1955)** told of how British intelligence agents fooled the Nazis with fake invasion plans planted on an Allied corpse. Stanley Kramer's chilling **On the Beach (1959)** dramatized the results of global nuclear war for the last survivors in Australia.

Another very effective anti-war film of WW I was Stanley Kubrick's ★**Paths Of Glory (1957)**, a tale of the fate confronting scapegoated, innocent French soldiers wrongfully brought before a court-martial trial before their execution. The insanity and absurdity of war was never better told in its story of corruption in the French High Command, with Kirk Douglas as the commander of the French regiment stationed along the Western Front. Its WWI warfare scenes, with technically-brilliant tracking shots in the trenches, are some of the most realistic ever filmed. [Australian director Bruce Beresford's courtroom drama **Breaker Morant (1980)**, with English actor Edward Woodward, told a similar story of three British soldiers in the Boer War at the turn of the century, as members of the Bushveldt Carboniers, who were scapegoated and placed on trial for court-martial for shooting POW's.] The UK's historical epic **Zulu (1964)** recreated the 1879 Zulu warrior siege of Rorke's Drift, a South African outpost held by outnumbered British-Welsh soldiers in Natal, Africa.



There were two Civil War era war films in the 50s. The confusion and fear of the wartime experience for a young, recruited Civil War Union soldier was presented in John Huston's **The Red Badge of Courage (1951)**, an adaptation of Stephen Crane's 1894 novel, with real-life war hero Audie Murphy in the anti-heroic lead role. Another Civil War film, John's Ford's **The Horse Soldiers (1959)** (Ford's only Civil War film), starred John Wayne as the tough leader of a contingent of Union soldiers, sent on a mission into Confederate territory in Louisiana to destroy a railroad line and cut off supplies.

Director David Lean's only pure war film was Columbia's ★**The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957)**, a powerful, award-winning, widescreen action/drama and perceptive character study. Its main focus was the 'madness' of war - exemplified by the clash of wills between two fanatical military leaders: Japanese Col. Saito (Sessue Hayakawa) and British Col. Nicholson (Alec Guinness), during the 1943 construction by British POWs of a bridge for the Burma-Siam railway. Robert Wise's **The Sand Pebbles (1966)**, starred Steve McQueen as a naval machinist's mate on board a US naval gunboat (captained by Richard Crenna) on the Yangtze River on the eve of the 1926 Chinese revolution. Its story of tragic warfare and a failed mission (a veiled and subtle comment upon the Vietnam War) was expressed by McQueen's final words: "What the hell happened?"



Black Comedies/War Films:

War films that satirized the insanity of war, known as black comedies, included:

- the Marx Brothers' classic ★**Duck Soup (1933)**
- Billy Wilder's black comedy/drama **Stalag 17 (1953)** with Best Actor-winning William Holden, perfectly captured the situation of U.S. POW soldiers in a Nazi prison camp during WWII [The setting of the film was later adapted for the TV series *Hogan's Heroes*]
- Stanley Kubrick's masterful anti-war film of the nuclear age, ★**Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)**, similar to Sidney Lumet's **Fail-Safe (1964)** about a computer malfunction that triggers a nuclear war, with Peter Sellers playing three roles
- Mike Nichols' anti-war satire about the absurdities of war, **Catch-22 (1970)**, told about a defiant WWII bomber pilot (Alan Arkin), one of many fliers stationed in the Mediterranean trying to escape the conflict
- Robert Altman's **M*A*S*H (1970)**, already mentioned
- Ivan Reitman's irreverent military comedy **Stripes (1981)** focused on the misadventures of unemployed loser Bill Murray as a misfit volunteer in the Armed Forces



- Robin Williams starred as an irreverent and antagonistic Air Forces Radio disk jockey who boosted GI morale in Barry Levinson's **Good Morning, Vietnam (1987)** with manic commentary and straight-forward news, but alienated other superior officers

Epic War Films:

During the 1960s and 70s, a number of war films returned to WWII as their well-documented backdrop. They were often fact-based, historical or biographical epics, such as the following:

- producer Darryl F. Zanuck's authentic-looking, 3-hour black and white war epic **The Longest Day (1962)** (dubbed "Z-Day" when the producer bailed out the film with his own finances) was about the Normandy landing on D-Day (June 6, 1944) (restaged in Corsica); this landmark film was told from four points of view, with four directors (American, English, French, and German) and in three languages; it required 43 major roles and 23,000 extras
- Ken Annakin's **The Battle of the Bulge (1965)** portrayed the Cinerama spectacle of the German's last major stand, with Henry Fonda and Robert Shaw
- Franklin J. Schaffner's complex biopic **Patton (1970)** starred Oscar-winning George C. Scott (who refused the award) as the legendary, heroically-crazed, and controversial "Old Blood and Guts" military genius, and Karl Malden as the balanced Gen. Omar Bradley
- the Japanese-American co-produced film **Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970)** was about the Pearl Harbor attack told from the perspective of both sides
- Jack Smight's **Midway (1976)**, told of the surprise American victory over the Japanese fleet in 1942, with a cast including Charlton Heston, Henry Fonda, Glenn Ford, and Robert Mitchum
- Roland Joffe's **Fat Man and Little Boy (1989)** was about The Manhattan Project which tested and manufactured the devastating atomic bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki



Most of the other war films at this time were all-star World War II buddy films, typically with large groups of stars bonded together in exciting, old-fashioned wartime situations. Films in this category included:

- J. Lee Thompson's thrilling adventure film **The Guns of Navarone (1961)** starred Gregory Peck heading a guerrilla mission to destroy a German cave fortress with giant, long-range guns atop a 400 foot cliff on an island in the Aegean Sea
- John Sturges' star-studded POW prison break film **The Great Escape (1963)**, based on a true story of Allied servicemen during World War II, with Steve McQueen as the "Cooler King"
- Mark Robson's **Von Ryan's Express (1965)**, with Frank Sinatra as the head of a group of escaped POWs in Italy
- **The Blue Max (1966)**, with George Peppard in the starring role as Bruno Stachel, a WWI German bi-plane bomber flier
- Robert Aldrich's **The Dirty Dozen (1967)**, about a group of a dozen death-row military convicts (including Telly Savalas, Donald Sutherland, Jim Brown, John Cassavetes, Charles Bronson, Robert Ryan, George Kennedy and more) sent on a suicide mission (headed by a tough Lee Marvin) behind Nazi enemy lines to destroy a French chateau
- Brian G. Hutton's **Where Eagles Dare (1969)**, with Richard Burton as a secret agent leading a team on a mission to prevent D-Day
- Hutton's **Kelly's Heroes (1970)** - an offbeat variation on *The Dirty Dozen*, in which Clint Eastwood (as 'Kelly') and a group of American soldiers decide to steal \$16 million of plundered gold bullion behind Nazi enemy lines during WWII
- Richard Attenborough's big-budget **A Bridge Too Far (1977)** with an all-star cast, adapted from Cornelius Ryan's epic book, told of a daring and failed 1944 WWII mission behind enemy lines in Holland to capture a series of bridges
- Guy Hamilton's **Force 10 From Navarone (1978)**, the 'sequel' to the earlier *The Guns of Navarone*, with another group of Allied commandos (including Robert Shaw and Harrison Ford) attempting to blow up a Nazi bridge in war-torn Yugoslavia



Vietnam-War Related Films:

The Vietnam-War experience produced *only* one film during the actual era of conflict and it was one of the worst films ever made about Vietnam: the propagandistic, inaccurate, pro-war **The Green Berets (1968)**, a shamelessly jingoistic, heavy-handed, gung-ho action film starring John Wayne as ultra-patriotic, anti-Communist Colonel Mike Kirby - the leader of elite, hand-picked Special Forces troops fighting against the Vietcong. This war film flopped, probably because it echoed Wayne's earlier westerns and cowboys-vs-Indians mentality, with the star apparently engaging the enemy singlehandedly, and walking off into the sunset at film's end.

It took Hollywood a number of years lasting into the 1970s, after the end of the war in mid-1975 with the fall of Saigon, until it could no longer ignore the subject of the unpopular Vietnam War that had been bloodily splashed on TV screens across the heartland's living rooms. In the interim, there were a few allegorical attempts to reflect the underlying anxieties about the dreaded conflict and its unseen or relentless enemies, in various other action/horror/thriller films:

- George Romero's **The Night of the Living Dead (1968)**, with zombie ghouls substituting for 'gooks', bloody cadavers, etc.
- Sam Peckinpah's **The Wild Bunch (1969)**, an allegorical western about the unwinnable struggle, illustrated by the opening image of a scorpion (symbolically the US and its military might) being attacked by swarming red fire ants (enemy foes of the US in Vietnam), and then set on fire by local village kids
- Tom Laughlin's action-drama **Billy Jack (1971)**, similar to the earlier film **Born Losers (1967)**, featured an ex-Green Beret karate expert, half-Indian and superhero-vigilante who violently took the law into his own hands to enforce justice
- John Boorman's **Deliverance (1972)**, a struggle of macho Southerners against mostly unseen backwoodsmen (the Vietcong) when the suburbanites (symbolically the US) trespassed on their 'land', highlighted by a graphic, humiliating sodomy of one of the victims
- John Carpenter's low-budget, 'battleground' action-film drama **Assault on Precinct 13 (1976)** about a disparate group of individuals trapped in an LA police station and under siege by an attacking group of gang members called Street Thunder
- Martin Scorsese's **Taxi Driver (1976)**, with Robert DeNiro as Travis Bickle, an archetypal, 26 year-old, ex-Marine - and definitely a battle-scarred war combatant with a psychotic psychological profile and intentions to assault political authority; although the film doesn't clearly state that he was a Vietnam Vet - his Marine battle jacket has "King Kong Brigade" patches on it
- Wes Craven's **The Hills Have Eyes (1977)**, about a suburban extended family stranded in the desert and forced to combat a marauding and barbaric inbred family of cannibals
- and later, James Cameron's **Aliens (1986)**, about a 'Vietnamese-style' heroic conflict on a distant colony between heavily-armed Marines and a unbeatable enemy alien

The film industry finally released films of greater substance and violence on the subject of Vietnam, and realistically examined the disturbing effects of the war. [Interesting to note was that almost all of the films about Vietnam didn't include the word 'Vietnam' in the film's title.] There were four films in 1978 that confronted the subject of Vietnam directly:

- Sidney Furie's character study and anti-war 'sleeper' film **The Boys in Company C (1978)** was one of the first realistic Vietnam war films, about five young and green Marine recruits sent over to fight in SE Asia in 1968 after boot camp training; it was a precursor of Stanley Kubrick's **Full Metal Jacket (1987)** - and featured the same character of R. Lee Ermey, an actual former US Marines Drill Instructor
- Ted Post's under-rated and mostly ignored, low-budget **Go Tell the Spartans (1978)** examined the 1964 pre-Vietnam War situation in S. Vietnam, and was based on the book *Incident at Muc Wa* by Daniel Ford; with Burt Lancaster as a burned-out, hard-boiled Major in an 'advisory' role in the Military Assistance Advisory Group at Penang. The film commented on American innocence and naivete just before massive American involvement
- the classic but controversial Vietnam film, Michael Cimino's compelling Best Picture-winning character study **The Deer Hunter (1978)**, told about three young patriotic steelworkers (Robert De Niro, Christopher Walken, and John Savage) from a Pennsylvania town who found only horror and



death in Vietnam; the film was skewered for its depiction of fictional 'Russian Roulette' - although notable for the defining moment in which De Niro (as Sergeant Michael Vronsky) turned the roulette pistol in his hand on his Vietcong captors during an escape

- the thought-provoking film, triple-Oscar winning **Coming Home (1978)**, set in 1968, dramatized the difficulties of post-Vietnam war adjustment experienced within a romantic triangle of characters on the homefront. While her gung-ho Marine captain husband (Bruce Dern) was away at war, a housewife (Jane Fonda after her controversial visit to Hanoi in 1972, and her being dubbed 'Hanoi Jane') volunteered at an understaffed San Diego VA Hospital and became unfaithful and intimately involved with one of the paraplegic, wheelchair-bound patients (Jon Voight) - setting up inevitable conflict and issues upon his return home



Francis Ford Coppola's harrowing epic vision of the madness of the war in Vietnam, ★ **Apocalypse Now (1979)** was an exceptionally spectacular war movie loosely based on Joseph Conrad's 1911 novel *Heart of Darkness*. An American military assassin, a socially-dysfunctional loner named Captain Benjamin Willard (Martin Sheen), was commissioned to journey upriver into Cambodia to 'terminate without prejudice' an insane, renegade colonel named Kurtz (Marlon Brando). The film featured Robert Duvall as megalomaniac bad-ass Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore, noted for loving the smell of napalm, tossing playing cards on

each dead enemy body to serve as calling cards, and surfing and hosting steak BBQs amidst war. [The film was later re-released in a new version, **Apocalypse Now Redux (2001)** with expanded and re-edited footage.] Coppola also directed the grim and somber military drama **Gardens of Stone (1987)** about the decorated veterans of the Third Infantry (the elite Old Guard) who patrolled, guarded, and served at ceremonial funerals at Arlington National Cemetery. In the realistic drama **The Hanoi Hilton (1987)**, the focus was on the sufferings, torture and brutal treatment American POWs experienced while in North Vietnam's Hoa Lo Prison, the most infamous prisoner of war camp in Hanoi.

Critically-acclaimed films in the 1980s also examined the Vietnam experience, portraying war as a living hell. **The Killing Fields (1984)** was an emotionally-moving drama based upon the events surrounding the fall of Cambodia and the American evacuation from the novel *The Death and Life of Dith Pran* by Sydney Schanberg. It was an account of the friendship between a NY Times reporter and his Cambodian interpreter. Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Gustav Hasford's *The Short Timers* was **Full Metal Jacket (1987)**. In two parts, the film presented the exploits of a recruited young Marine Corps soldier known as Private Joker (Matthew Modine) with his realistic, dehumanizing South Carolina boot-camp training experience on Parris Island (under unrelenting, foul-mouthed drill instructor Lee Erme as Gunnery Sergeant Hartman), his work as a photojournalist for a military magazine, and his combat soldiering in the 1968 Tet offensive - with his helmet labeled "Born to Kill".



Oliver Stone's Vietnam Trilogy:

Writer/director film-maker Oliver Stone, an actual veteran of the Vietnam War himself, presented a Vietnam 'trilogy':

1. the ultra-realistic, gutsy and insightful Best Picture-winning film **Platoon (1986)** - one of the finest, most-acclaimed combat films ever produced regarding the Vietnam War, about the testing of a young infantryman (a star-making role for Charlie Sheen) in the 25th Infantry (Bravo Company) by his two superiors as they conduct a search-and-destroy mission - contrasting Sergeants (one good and one evil) - tough/compassionate Willem Dafoe (as Sergeant Elias Grodin) and hard/callous, sociopathic Tom Berenger (as Staff Sergeant Bob Barnes); the popular film won five Oscars, including Best Picture, and indelibly portrayed Elias' death in a crucifixion pose on his knees as he was mortally wounded by Vietcong soldiers when he emerged from the jungle
2. **Born on the Fourth of July (1989)** (for which Stone won his second Best Director award) - a screen biography of Ron Kovic (Tom Cruise), a Vietnam War recruit and an embittered, disenchanted anti-war activist/paraplegic after rehabilitation



3. **Heaven and Earth (1993)**, about the aftermath of the war reflected in the relationship between a Vietnamese woman and the American soldier (Tommy Lee Jones) she married

Revisionistic Vietnam-related War Films:

In the 1980s, there was also a reflexive response to the late 70s Vietnam films that were seen as uncompromising and difficult to watch. Pro-military action films disguised as war films featured big stars and dazzling special effects during war sequences, to illustrate how the US *should* have fought the war. Sylvester Stallone appeared in the 'feel-good' action/war Rambo 'trilogy' as a misfit, cartoonish, and self-righteous super-hero - a revenge-seeking, buffed up, brooding ex-Green Beret Vietnam veteran (of Special Operations Command) named John Rambo. He 'refought' the Vietnam War, using VC bushwhacking techniques, during his battle against a variety of enemies in the Pacific Northwest, including a small-town sheriff, a posse, and hundreds of National Guardsmen. These entertainment-based, mainstream films provided a shallow commentary on the real US conflict in Vietnam, and altered the facts of the complex conflict to portray America as heroic:



- **First Blood (1982)** - with the tagline: "A one man war"
- **Rambo: First Blood Part II (1985)** - this was the first film to appear in over 2,000 theatres; the documentary **We Get to Win This Time (2002)** examined the making of the film by the cast and crew
- **Rambo III (1988)**

Actor Chuck Norris' Vietnam-based box-office smash **Missing in Action (1984)**, a fantasy action film, followed the exploits of an ex-Vietnam POW attempting to rescue other MIA-POWs in the Vietnamese jungle.

Comedies Related to the Vietnam War:

In a lighter vein, Barry Levinson's **Good Morning, Vietnam (1987)** was centered on the irreverent, non-conformist, early morning disc-jockey Adrian Cronauer (Robin Williams) with his fast-talking mouth, heard on Armed Services Radio during the Vietnam conflict. An *Airplane!*-type satire on the cliches of Vietnam War films (notably *Rambo*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, and *The Deer Hunter*) was found in Jim Abrahams' political spoof sequel **Hot Shots! Part Deux (1993)**, although it was set in Iraq and featured a mustached Mid-East dictator. Robert Zemeckis' Best Picture-winning sly comedy **Forrest Gump (1994)** followed its dumbed-down title character (Tom Hanks) through 1960s-1970s US history, including a tour to Vietnam and subsequent hero status, his meetings with Presidents, his romance with countercultural Jenny (Robin Wright), and his contact with Bubba (killed in Vietnam) and angry, legless platoon leader Lieutenant Dan (Gary Sinese).

Further Vietnam War-related Films:



John Irvin's realistic and disturbing view of the Vietnam struggle in **Hamburger Hill (1987)** marked a return to the conventional kind of WWII combat film (transposed to 1969 Vietnam) - it traced the brutal experiences of a group of GI infantrymen of the 101st Airborne Division from their initial training to their pointless deaths during a fierce, 10-day bloody battle for Ap Bia Mountain (Hamburger Hill). Patrick Sheane Duncan's documentary style film **84 Charlie Mopic (1989)** provided a devastating, nightmarish tour of the horrors of Vietnam around 1969 in a filming mission by an army motion picture (MOPIC) cameraman on the front lines. Brian De Palma's thought-provoking **Casualties of War (1989)** told the true story (from a *New Yorker* article by Daniel Lang) of a decent Army private (Michael J. Fox) who refused to overlook his squadron's moral responsibility for the kidnap, sexual assault/gang rape, and murder of a native Vietnamese female.

Haunted Vietnam Vet Jacob Singer (Tim Robbins) saw visions of demons and monsters as reality slipped away from him in the transcendental **Jacob's Ladder (1990)**. Joel Schumacher's **Falling Down (1993)** portrayed Michael Douglas as William Foster (with personalized license plate D-FENS) - a rattled, confrontational,

unemployed defense worker in the jungles of Los Angeles' Establishment society who snapped during a difficult morning commute, and while trying to order breakfast after 11:30 am in a Whammyburger fast food restaurant; and later, the director's gritty **Tigerland (2000)** depicted Advanced Infantry Training in 1971 at a boot camp in Louisiana for Vietnam-bound recruits called Fort Polk, infamously known as Tigerland since it simulated a SE Asian jungle - it portrayed the brutalization of the young trainees, including a stubborn, rebellious Texan named Bozz (Colin Farrell).

Randall Wallace's factual tribute film **We Were Soldiers (2002)**, starring Mel Gibson (and the makers of *Braveheart*), chronicled the US' first major bloody, heroic engagement (part of the Pleiku Campaign) between the First Battalion, Seventh Cavalry and the N. Vietnamese in late 1965. (Gibson also starred in Roland Emmerich's melodramatic **The Patriot (2000)**, a tale of Revolutionary War revenge.) Phillip Noyce's remake of Joseph L. Mankiewicz's earlier 1952 effort was a faithful adaptation of Graham Greene's novel **The Quiet American (2002)**, set in Saigon in the early 50s - it criticized US involvement in Vietnam by depicting a montage of images of the decades-long war at its conclusion.

Heroic War Films:

There has been the tendency to modify the war-historical events in order to fit the story into the Hollywood mold of war films to tell a story of heroic courage, or to praise Americanism under fire, etc., and make a commercially-viable film. Two such examples included Sidney Furie's hostage-rescue action thriller **Iron Eagle (1985)**, and Tony Scott's slick blockbuster about Navy fighter pilots **Top Gun (1986)**, starring Tom Cruise. The three-handkerchief 'soap opera' **An Officer and a Gentleman (1982)** told a touching story of romance in a military setting. Michael Bay's **Pearl Harbor (2001)** highlighted a love triangle amidst the backdrop of a realistic, special effects-heavy attack on the Hawaiian Pearl Harbor base.

More realistically, director-writer Samuel Fuller's **The Big Red One (1980)** captured the terror of ill-advised combat in a semi-autobiographical account of a foot-soldier's squadron in the US Army's First Infantry Division (its insignia was dubbed 'The Big Red One') and its intrepid sergeant (played by Lee Marvin) during WWII. It followed their progress from North Africa through Sicily, Omaha Beach and Belgium to the ultimate horror of the concentration camp at Falkenau, Czechoslovakia. Director Peter Weir's heart-wrenching Australian film **Gallipoli (1981)** was set during WWI - a rich character study of two idealistic best friends in the Australian army (one of whom was a young Mel Gibson in a star-making role) who would vainly fight the German-allied Turks at Gallipoli in 1915.

The lost battle in Vietnam was refought in various Hollywood films, such as the adventure film **Uncommon Valor (1983)** which featured Gene Hackman as a retired Marine Colonel and frustrated father who took matters into his own hands to find his MIA son - he brought together the remaining members of his son's Vietnam platoon for an attempted, daring POW rescue - and re-enactment of the war. Actor-producer-director Clint Eastwood's **Heartbreak Ridge (1986)** depicted an aging, grizzled Marine gunnery sergeant named Tom Highway (Eastwood himself) whose days in the military were numbered, but redeemed with one final chance to train a green, rag-tag platoon with old-fashioned discipline in order to invade and be victorious over the tiny island of Grenada in 1983. And John Milius' **Red Dawn (1984)** depicted the invasion of the United States by Russian and Cuban paratroopers, and the country's defense provided guerrilla warfare-style by Midwestern, teenaged high school students (Charlie Sheen, Jennifer Grey, Lea Thompson, and Patrick Swayze).

Three War Film Best Picture Nominees in 1998:

In 1998 alone, there were three highly popular WWII films, all nominated for Best Picture (but **Shakespeare in Love (1998)** took the top prize). Writer/director Terrence Malick demonstrated his film-making talent (after an absence of 25 years) with an ethereal re-make of the 1964 film of James Jones' novel about the WWII attack on the strategic island of Guadalcanal - **The Thin Red Line (1998)**. [The film was actually a remake of director Andrew Marton's under-rated **The Thin Red Line (1964)** with Keir Dullea.] And Steven Spielberg won as Best Director for his monumental recreation of the gory D-Day assault that opened **Saving Private Ryan (1998)** - a realistic drama about eight WWII soldiers sent into enemy territory to rescue the sole surviving son of a family. The third film was Italian filmmaker Roberto Benigni's bittersweet Holocaust fable **Life is Beautiful (1998)**, the Best



Foreign Language film of the year.

American Civil War Films:

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, two realistic Civil War films were released:

- Edward Zwick's true-account **Glory (1989)**, one of the best historical war stories about the first unit of black soldiers (including Best Supporting Actor-winner Denzel Washington and Morgan Freeman) - the 54th Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry led by Robert Gould Shaw (Matthew Broderick)
- writer-director Ronald F. Maxwell's outstanding epic **Gettysburg (1993)**, based on Michael Shaara's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Killer Angels*, about the famous Civil War battle of July, 1863; Maxwell's four-hour historical-dramatic sequel (actually prequel) was **Gods and Generals (2003)**, based on Jeff Shaara's novel of the same name, with Jeff Daniels reprising his role as Union Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, and the battles that led up to Gettysburg (at Manassas, Antietam, Frederickburg, and Chancellorsville); these two films were part of a promised trilogy

Later in the decade, director Ang Lee's war drama **Ride With the Devil (1999)** told about two Southern friends fighting guerrilla-style and side-by-side on the Kansas-Missouri border (with singer Jewel in her acting debut).

Spy/Espionage War-Related Films:

Most of the secret agent James Bond action films, beginning with **Dr. No (1962)**, owe their origins to world-dominating tyrants, the Cold War and the Red Menace. Even after the Cold War ended and the agonizing post-Vietnam War period was over, Hollywood produced a number of high-tech, spectacular action-hero films with war-time suspense and superpower conflicts and thrills. These suspenseful spy and espionage films were filled with situations of military and political strife, CIA intrigue, terrorism, submarines, and nuclear warfare, etc. The following were representative examples of these political thrillers:

- **No Way Out (1987)**
- **The Hunt for Red October (1990)** - the first of films starring the character of Jack Ryan (adapted from Tom Clancy's novels), with Alec Baldwin
- **Patriot Games (1992)**, with Harrison Ford as Jack Ryan
- **Clear and Present Danger (1994)**, again with Harrison Ford
- **Crimson Tide (1995)**
- **The Sum of All Fears (2002)**, with Ben Affleck reprising the role of Jack Ryan

Holocaust Films:

Steven Spielberg's award-winning epic ★ **Schindler's List (1993)** presented the devastating story of the Holocaust through the actions of womanizing German industrialist/war profiteer Oscar Schindler (Liam Neeson) who saved a thousand Jewish lives. Spielberg also explored the Holocaust in his documentary project **The Last Days (1999)** that brought together the stories of five survivors. And exiled Best Director Roman Polanski's **The Pianist (2002)**, with a Best Actor Oscar for lead actor Adrien Brody, was the harrowing story of survival for Jewish musician Wladyslaw Szpilman during the Holocaust.



War - The Ultimate 'Reality TV':

1991's Gulf War military action as Operation Desert Storm was first examined in **Courage Under Fire (1996)**, and then in director David O. Russell's absurdist **Three Kings (1999)** with George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg. Jean-Jacques Annaud's **Enemy at the Gates (2001)** went back in history to tell the factual account of the 1942-1943 battle of Stalingrad, a major turning point in WWII. But director John Moore's pro-military action adventure **Behind Enemy Lines (2001)** with Gene Hackman was set amidst the backdrop of the recent Balkan-Bosnian struggle. Ridley Scott's suspenseful **Black Hawk Down (2001)** recreated the bloody events surrounding the tragic October, 1993 American ground-force siege of the war-torn Somalian city of Mogadishu.

John Woo's **Windtalkers (2002)** dramatized how a battle-weary, WWII Marine (Nicolas Cage) guarded and befriended a Navajo soldier with code-talking secrets.

The 'Second' Gulf War (Operation Iraqi Freedom) may soon be the source of future Hollywood interpretations, but it appears that American audiences do not want realistic war dramas -- war is the ultimate 'reality TV' -- during actual wartime. **Collateral Damage (2002)**, an Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle, about a Los Angeles firefighter seeking revenge for a terrorist bombing (a drug-related, non-Middle Eastern attack), was postponed and delayed in release following the September 11th tragedy, and still did poorly at the box-office.

Selection of Greatest War and Anti-War Films:

Greatest War and Anti-War Films:

- ★[The Birth Of A Nation \(1915\)](#)
- ★[Intolerance \(1916\)](#)
- Hearts of the World (1918)
- The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (1921)
- America (1924)
- ★[The Big Parade \(1925\)](#)
- ★[The General \(1927\)](#)
- What Price Glory? (1926)
- Wings (1927)
- ★[All Quiet on the Western Front \(1930\)](#)
- The Dawn Patrol (1930)
- [Hell's Angels \(1930\)](#)
- The Lost Patrol (1934)
- The Charge of the Light Brigade (1936)
- La Grande Illusion/Grand Illusion (1937, Fr.)
- Alexander Nevsky (1938, USSR)
- The Dawn Patrol (1938)
- Confessions of a Nazi Spy (1939)
- Drums Along the Mohawk (1939)
- The Four Feathers (1939, UK)
- ★[Gone with the Wind \(1939\)](#)
- The Rules of the Game (1939)
- The Fighting 69th (1940)
- [Foreign Correspondent \(1940\)](#)
- The Great Dictator (1940)
- Northwest Passage (1940)
- Waterloo Bridge (1940)
- Buck Privates (1941)
- Dive Bomber (1941)
- ...One of Our Aircraft is Missing (1941, UK)
- Sergeant York (1941)
- A Yank in the R.A.F. (1941)
- Across the Pacific (1942)
- ★[Casablanca \(1942\)](#)
- The Flying Tigers (1942)
- In Which We Serve (1942)
- Mrs. Miniver (1942)
- Wake Island (1942)
- Went the Day Well? (1942)
- [Yankee Doodle Dandy \(1942\)](#)
- Action in the North Atlantic (1943)
- Air Force (1943)
- Bataan (1943)
- Crash Dive (1943)

Cry Havoc (1943)
Destination Tokyo (1943)
For Whom the Bell Tolls (1943)
Guadalcanal Diary (1943)
Gung Ho! (1943)
A Guy Named Joe (1943)
The Human Comedy (1943)
The Immortal Sergeant (1943)
The Lost Patrol (1943)
Sahara (1943)
So Proudly We Hail (1943)
We Dive at Dawn (1943)
Cover Girl (1944)
The Fighting Seabees (1944)
The Fighting Sullivans (1944)
Henry V (1944)
Immortal Battalion (1944)
Lifeboat (1944)
Passage to Marseilles (1944)
Pin-Up Girl (1944)
[Since You Went Away \(1944\)](#)
Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo (1944)
A Wing and a Prayer (1944)
Anchors Aweigh (1945)
Back to Bataan (1945)
The Clock (1945)
Objective, Burma! (1945)
The Story of G.I. Joe (1945)
They Were Expendable (1945)
★[The Best Years of Our Lives \(1946\)](#)
A Walk in the Sun (1946)
Command Decision (1948)
Battleground (1949)
Home of the Brave (1949)
Sands of Iwo Jima (1949)
Twelve O'Clock High (1949)
The Men (1950)
Three Came Home (1950)
★[The African Queen \(1951\)](#)
Fixed Bayonets (1951)
Flying Leathernecks (1951)
Go For Broke! (1951)
Operation Pacific (1951)
The Red Badge of Courage (1951)
The Steel Helmet (1951)
Retreat, Hell (1952)
[From Here to Eternity \(1953\)](#)
Stalag 17 (1953)
The Bridges at Toko-Ri (1954)
[The Caine Mutiny \(1954\)](#)
Battle Cry (1955)
The Colditz Story (1955)
Mister Roberts (1955)
The Man Who Never Was (1955)
To Hell and Back (1955)
Attack! (1956)
The Burmese Harp (1956) (Jp.)
★[The Bridge on the River Kwai \(1957\)](#)
The Enemy Below (1957)
★[Paths Of Glory \(1957\)](#)

In Love and War (1958)
The Naked and the Dead (1958)
Run Silent, Run Deep (1958)
Torpedo Run (1958)
The Horse Soldiers (1959)
Pork Chop Hill (1959)
The Alamo (1960)
The Guns of Navarone (1961)
The Longest Day (1962)
[The Manchurian Candidate \(1962\)](#)
The Great Escape (1963)
The Americanization of Emily (1964)
Fail-Safe (1964)
A Yank in Viet-Nam (1964)
The Battle of Algiers (1965) (It.)
The Battle of the Bulge (1965)
In Harm's Way (1965)
The Hill (1965)
The Ipcress File (1965)
Von Ryan's Express (1965)
The Blue Max (1966)
The Sand Pebbles (1966)
The Dirty Dozen (1967)
The Green Berets (1968)
Hell in the Pacific (1968)
The Battle of Britain (1969)
Where Eagles Dare (1969)
Kelly's Heroes (1970)
M*A*S*H (1970)
[Patton \(1970\)](#)
Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970)
Midway (1976)
The Boys in Company C (1977)
A Bridge Too Far (1977)
MacArthur (1977)
Coming Home (1978)
[The Deer Hunter \(1978\)](#)
Force 10 From Navarone (1978)
Go Tell The Spartans (1978)
★[Apocalypse Now \(1979\)](#)
The Big Red One (1980)
Breaker Morant (1980)
Das Boot (1981) (W. Ger.)
Gallipoli (1981)
First Blood (1982)
An Officer and a Gentleman (1982)
Uncommon Valor (1983)
[The Killing Fields \(1984\)](#)
Missing In Action (1984)
Rambo: First Blood, Part II (1985)
Heartbreak Ridge (1986)
Platoon (1986)
Top Gun (1986)
Full Metal Jacket (1987)
Gardens of Stone (1987)
Hamburger Hill (1987)
No Way Out (1987)
Bat 21 (1988)
Rambo III (1988)
Black Rain (1989) (Jp.)

84 Charlie Miopic (1989)
Born on the Fourth of July (1989)
Casualties of War (1989)
Fat Man and Little Boy (1989)
Glory (1989)
Henry V (1989)
Europa, Europa (1990) (Ger.)
The Hunt for Red October (1990)
Patriot Games (1992)
Gettysburg (1993)
Heaven and Earth (1993)
★[Schindler's List \(1993\)](#)
Stalingrad (1993) (Ger.)
Clear and Present Danger (1994)
Crimson Tide (1995)
Courage Under Fire (1996)
Life is Beautiful (1998)
Saving Private Ryan (1998)
The Thin Red Line (1998)
The Last Days (1999)
Three Kings (1999)
Behind Enemy Lines (2001)
Black Hawk Down (2001)
Enemy at the Gates (2001)
Pearl Harbor (2001)
Hart's War (2002)
The Sum of All Fears (2002)
We Were Soldiers (2002)
The Pianist (2002)

Greatest Anti-War Black Comedy Films:

★[Duck Soup \(1933\)](#)
Stalag 17 (1953)
★[Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb \(1964\)](#)
Catch-22 (1970)
M*A*S*H (1970)
Good Morning, Vietnam (1987)