

The Buffalo Film Seminars



Produced and Directed by Stanley Kubrick
Based on Gustav Hasford's novel, *The Short Timers*
Screenplay by Stanley Kubrick, Michael Herr & Gustav Hasford
Original Music by
Vivian Kubrick (as Abigail Mead)
Cinematography by Douglas Milsome
Film Editing by Martin Hunter

Matthew Modine..Pvt. Joker
Adam Baldwin..Animal Mother
Vincent D'Onofrio..Leonard 'Private Pyle' Pratt
R. Lee Ermey..Gny. Sgt.Hartman
Dorian Harewood..Eightball
Kevyn Major Howard..Rafterman
Arliss Howard..Pvt.Cowboy
Ed O'Ross..Lt.Touchdown
John Terry..Lt.Lockhart
Kieron Jecchinis..Crazy Earl
Kirk Taylor..Payback
Tim Colceri..Doorgunner
Jon Stafford..Doc Jay
Bruce Boa..Poge Colonel
Ian Tyler..Lt.Cleves
Sal Lopez..T.H.E. Rock
Gary Landon Mills..Donlon
Papillon Soo..Da Nang Hooker
Peter Edmund..Snowball
Ngoc Le..VC Sniper
Leanne Hong..Motorbike Hooker
Tan Hung Francione..ARVN Pimp
Marcus D'Amico..Hand Job
Costas Dino Chimona..Chili
Gil Kopel..Stork
Keith Hodiak..Daddy D.A.

STANLEY KUBRICK (26 July 1928, New York, New York—7 March 1999, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, England), generally regarded as one of the greatest directors, made only 13 feature films. He so loathed the first of these (*Fear and Desire* 1953) that he withdrew it from circulation. The others are: *Killer's Kiss* 1955, *The Killing* 1956, *Paths of Glory* 1957, *Spartacus* 1960, *Lolita* 1962, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* 1964, *2001: A Space Odyssey* 1968, *A Clockwork Orange* 1971, *Barry Lyndon* 1975, *The Shining* 1980, *Full Metal Jacket* 1987, and *Eyes Wide Shut* 1999. He produced and shared the screenwriting credit on most of his films. He also edited and photographed *Killer's Kiss*, *Fear and Desire*, and two of the three short documentaries he did before he turned to features. There's a story that Kubrick was so dissatisfied with the work cinematographer Russell Metty was doing on *Spartacus*, that he told Metty to just sit there while Kubrick did his job. Metty did as he was told—and won that year's Academy Award for cinematography. Kubrick also did much of the "documentary" footage in *Dr. Strangelove*. "A film," Kubrick said, "is—or should be—more like music than like fiction. It should be a progression of moods and feelings. The theme, what's behind the emotion, the meaning, all that comes

November 13, 2007 (XV:12)
Stanley Kubrick: *Full Metal Jacket* 1987 116 minutes

**IN VIETNAM
THE WIND
DOESN'T BLOW
IT SUCKS**



Stanley Kubrick's

FULL METAL JACKET

WARNER BROS PRESENTS STANLEY KUBRICK'S FULL METAL JACKET
STARRING
MATTHEW MODINE ADAM BALDWIN VINCENT D'ONOFRID LEE ERMEY DORIAN HAREWOOD ARLISS HOWARD
KEVYN MAJOR HOWARD ED O'ROSS SCREENPLAY BY STANLEY KUBRICK MICHAEL HERR GUSTAV HASFORD
BASED ON THE NOVEL THE SHORT-TIMERS BY GUSTAV HASFORD CO PRODUCER PHILIP HOBBS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JAN HARLAN PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY STANLEY KUBRICK
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Peter Merrill..TV Journalist
Herbert Norville..Daytona Dave
Nguyen Hue Phong..Camera Thief
Duc Hu Ta..Dead N.V.A.
Stanley Kubrick..Murphy (voice)
Vivian Kubrick..News Camera Operator at Mass Grave
David Palffy..Mass Grave Soldier
John Ward..TV Camera Operator

later." Kubrick was nominated for 12 Academy Awards for best screenplay, director, or picture, but the only one he ever got was for Special Visual Effects in 2001.

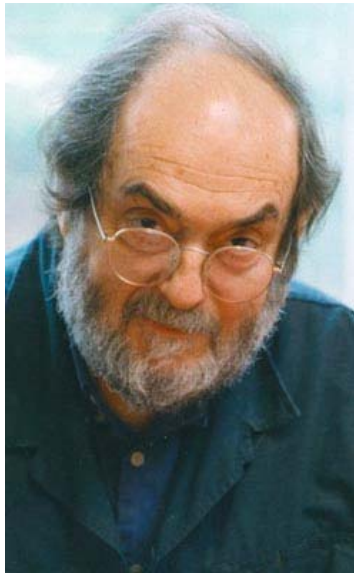
MATTHEW MODINE (22 March 1959, Loma Linda, California) has acted in 61 films and television series, among them "Weeds", *Have Dreams, Will Travel* (2007), *Hollywood North* (2003), *Nobody's Baby* (2001), *Bye Bye Love* (1995), "And the Band Played On" (1993), *Short Cuts* (1993), *Gross Anatomy* (1989), *Married to the Mob* (1988), *Vision Quest* (1985), *Birdy* (1984), *The Hotel New Hampshire* (1984), *Streamers* (1983) and *Baby It's You* (1983).

R. LEE ERMEY (24 March 1944, Emporia, Kansas), a retired marine instructor, has acted in 104 films and tv series, among them *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (2006), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003), *Willard* (2003), *Jericho* (2000), "Cracker" (1997-1999), *Toy Story 2* (1999), *Dead Men Can't Dance* (1997), *Dead Man Walking* (1995), *Toy Story* (1995), *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), *Sommersby* (1993), *Toy Soldiers* (1991), *Mississippi Burning* (1988), *Purple Hearts* (1984), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *The Boys in Company C* (1978). He was a technical adviser on *Apocalypse Now* and *Full Metal Jacket*. He is presently the official spokesman for Glock firearms, Tupperware and Hoover vacuum cleaners.

from *Conversations with Wilder*

"He [Kubrick] has never made a bad picture. Each picture he trumps the trump."

"The first half of *Full Metal Jacket* was the best picture I ever saw. Where the guy sits on the toilet and blows his head off? Terrific. Then he lost himself with the girl guerilla. The second half, down a little. It's still a wonderful picture. You know, if he does a thing, he really *does* it. But this is. . . this is a career to discuss. Every picture, he trumps the trump. These are all pictures any director would be proud to be associated with, much less make.



from *World Film Directors V*.
II. Ed. John Wakeman. The
H.H. Wilson Co. NY 1988
entry by Adrian Turner

American director, producer, and scenarist, was born in the Bronx, New York, the son of Jacques and Gertrude Kubrick. His father was a physician, the son of Polish and Romanian Jews....Kubrick was not a successful student but an ardent chess player and photographer. His father, also a photographer, had bought him a 35mm still camera, and Kubrick's first break came in April 1945 when a chance picture of a newsdealer on the day of Roosevelt's death

was bought by *Look* magazine. At the age of seventeen Kubrick was hired by *Look* as a staff photographer. During his four years there, Kubrick received the higher education he wanted by enrolling as a nonmatriculating student at Columbia University. As Alexander Walker noted, "Dropping out of school made him into a lifelong student." At the same time, Kubrick was attending screenings at the Museum of Modern Art: "I was aware that I didn't know anything about making films, but I believed I couldn't make them any worse than the majority of films I was seeing. Bad films gave me the courage to try making a movie."

Kubrick's first effort was *Day of the Fight* (1951), a documentary about the boxer Walter Cartier, whom Kubrick had



photographed for *Look*.

The 16-minute, 35mm film was sold to RKO for a tiny profit and an advance on another short, *Flying Padre* (1951), about a priest in New Mexico who tours his parish of 4,000 square miles by small plane....

After seeing his first films released, Kubrick resigned from *Look*....

Beginning his study of Kubrick, Alexander Walker wrote that "only a few directors possess a conceptual talent—that is, a talent to crystallize every film they make into a cinematic concept. It transcends the need to find a good story. An absorbing story. . . It is the talent to construct a form that will exhibit the maker's vision in an unexpected way. It is this conceptual talent that most distinguishes Stanley Kubrick."

Early signs of this talent in *Killer's Kiss* did not go unnoticed by contemporary reviewers. "The story is conventional," wrote Gavin Lambert, "but within this framework...[Kubrick] has done some interesting things."...

After this, Kubrick joined forces with James B. Harris to form Harris-Kubrick Productions. Their first film together was another genre movie, *The Killing* (1956), produced by Harris and distributed by United Artists. This time Kubrick had a viable budget of \$320,000, which allowed him to hire Lucien Ballard as his cinematographer and a good cast of Hollywood actors. Kubrick's wife served as art director, and the film was scored by Gerald Fried, who had supplied the music for Kubrick's two earlier features as well....

There was nothing unassuming about *Paths of Glory* (1957), adapted by Kubrick, Calder Willingham, and Jim Thompson from Humphrey Cobb's novel of World War I. As an indictment of war, it has been compared both with Lewis Milestone's *All's Quiet on the Western Front* and Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion*. It shows how a suicidal assault on an impregnable German position, the Ant Hill, is ordered by two ruthlessly ambitious French generals (Adolph Menjou and George Macready). The attack is a lethal fiasco, and three scapegoats are tried and executed to save the generals' careers. The film was only financed by United Artists after Kirk Douglas agreed to star as Colonel Dax, the humanitarian field commander appointed to defend the scapegoats at their rigged courtmartial. He cannot save his men but does manage to ruin one of the generals. ...

"In spite of the tremendous critical acclaim for *Paths of Glory*," wrote Alexander Walker, "Kubrick found his career

stalemated by nonevents.” In Hollywood, Kubrick and Harris developed several projects, none of them realized. Then Kubrick was hired by Marlon Brando to direct a Western, *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961). The script was by the then unknown Sam Peckinpah but Kubrick insisted on rewriting it with Calder Willingham, who had worked on *Paths of Glory*. After six months Kubrick left the project, leaving Brando to direct himself.

Shortly afterward Kubrick was contacted by Kirk Douglas, whose production of *Spartacus* (1960) had run into trouble. Accounts differ widely as to how much—and precisely which—footage was shot by the original director, Anthony Mann, who had been hired by Universal against the wishes of Douglas, the executive producer. Mann was fired from *Spartacus*, and at the age of thirty-one Kubrick found himself directing what was then the most expensive film ever made in America.

Spartacus, about the gladiator who led a slaves’ rebellion against Roman power in 73 B.C., fits uncomfortably into Kubrick’s oeuvre. His most committed admirers have little to say about the film, reflecting Kubrick’s own disavowals of it, such as the one he gave Michel Ciment: “I tried with limited success to make the film as real as possible but I was up against a pretty dumb script which was rarely faithful to what was known about Spartacus. If I ever needed convincing of the limits of persuasion a director can have on a film where someone else is the producer and he is merely the highest paid member of the crew, *Spartacus* provided proof to last a lifetime.”

Critics did praise the visual aspects of the film: Kubrick’s fluid handling of the Super-Technirama-70 format and his depiction of Roman cruelty. Thomas Allen Nelson writes “the epic panorama of battle and armies is well done and reflects Kubrick’s skill at showing what he has referred to as the ‘weird disparity’ between the aesthetics of warfare and its human consequences.” This “disparity” is a consistent theme of Kubrick’s.

Kubrick’s next three films [after *Lolita*], made with ever increasing deliberation and secrecy, comprise a trilogy on humanity in the technological age. It begins with *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1963), scripted by Kubrick, Terry Southern, and Peter George from the latter’s novel *Red Alert*. Originally conceived as a “serious treatment of the problem of accidental war,” like the novel, it modulated into satire when Kubrick found the theme too blackly absurd to be treated in any other way.

Nuclear catastrophe is unleashed by Air Force General Jack D. Ripper, who believes that his sexual impotence is due to a Communist conspiracy to pollute “his precious bodily fluids.” Despite the efforts of a decent but ineffectual President to placate the Russians, despite all the technical fail-safe procedures and mechanisms, lunacy triumphs and Major “King” Kong (Slim Pickens) gleefully rides his great phallic bomb to the apocalypse.

Slim Pickens, Sterling Hayden as the impotent Ripper, George C. Scott as the virile Pentagon hawk Turgidson: they are all mad, and the maddest of all is Dr. Strangelove himself, a former Nazi scientist now employed by the Pentagon, a paraplegic with dark glasses and a mechanical arm constantly snapping into uncontrollable *Sieg Heils*. He is marvelously realized by Peter Sellers, who also plays a clipped RAF group captain and the President of the United States....

[The other films in the trilogy about humanity in a technological age were *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Clockwork Orange* (1971).]

Barry Lyndon (1975), Kubrick’s only real commercial failure, was regarded by many critics as a deliberate retreat from controversy and as an alternative to his long-cherished Napoleon project.... Another three years elapsed before Kubrick announced his next project. It was *The Shining*, based on a modern horror novel by Stephen King. Kubrick had become so reclusive that he decided to recreate the novel’s setting, a Rocky Mountain resort hotel called the Overlook, at Elstree Studios near London. Shooting on his magnificent Xanadu-like set (and in America for the exteriors) took a year, editing another, and then *The Shining* opened in America to poor reviews and erratic business....

Kubrick’s latest film, being edited as this article was written, is *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), based on a ferociously violent Vietnam novel *The Short Timers* by Gustav Hasford. Seven years separate it from *The Shining*. Instead of filming in Southeast Asia, Kubrick chose to work in Britain, using as locations a derelict part of London’s dockland and, according to rumor, the grounds of his own country estate....

Kubrick lives very quietly and privately in rural England, avoiding personal publicity.... He directs his own advertising campaigns, coordinates release patterns, and personally checks every first-run print and foreign-language version of each of his films. Since he also writes or coauthors his scripts, and in recent years has been his own producer, he retains a degree of control over his work that is almost unequalled for a Hollywood director. As Philip French wrote, “there’s something about his pictures that has enabled him to combine the budgets of a DeMille with the quirky individuality of a Buñuel...”

Ciment called him “one of the most demanding, most original and most visionary filmmakers of our time.”



from Videohound’s WarMovies. Mike Mayo. Visible Ink. Detroit 1999.

The first third of Stanley Kubrick’s take on the Vietnam War is as powerful and shocking as any film ever made about the military. That’s the famous Parris Island section, which made Sgt. R. Lee Ermey a star. Though he had played an essentially identical role in *The Boys in Company C*, under Kubrick’s direction, the stereotypical drill instructor was raised to new heights. As Gunnery Sgt. Hartman, Ermey achieves cinematic immortality.

In the film’s opening shots, we see close-ups of new Marine recruits getting their heads shaved. The next shot follows Hartman as he strides through the barracks and completes the first stage of the young men’s intimidating indoctrination into the Marine Corps. The scene also establishes the measured pace that

Kubrick maintains throughout. Booming, gloriously profane, and imaginative, Sgt. Hartman is a force of nature that will mold these boys into killing machines. At that point, most war films would turn to the young men, sketch out their pasts and then show their transformation into a cohesive unit. Kubrick isn't interested. These kids are names and archetypes—Joker (Matthew Modine) the smart aleck; Cowboy (Arlliss Howard) from Texas; Leonard A.K.A. "Gomer Pyle" (Vincent D'Onofrio), the screwup—who will react differently to Hartman's approach.

Kubrick makes Ermev such a mesmerizing force that one key early element is easy to overlook. From the first moment we see him in the barber's chair, before we even know his name, it is abundantly clear that Leonard is mad. He has that familiar, vacant, smiling, dull-eyed expression of evil that Kubrick also uses to define Little Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* and Jack Torrance in *The Shining*. The other characters do not see it, and so the inevitable confrontation between Hartman and Leonard is all the more horrifying.

The middle section of the film establishes Joker's role as a dissatisfied writer for *Stars & Stripes*, working behind the lines during the Tet offensive of 1968, and his desire for "trigger time" with his old pals from basic. That's where Kubrick shapes his view of the war as a Strangelovian exercise in futility. A nameless Colonel could have been quoting Jack the Ripper when he states, "We are here to help the Vietnamese, because inside every gook there is an American trying to get out. It's a hardball world, son. We've got to keep our heads until this peace craze blows over." That part of the film stresses the sexual and moral corruption of the South Vietnamese, and distinguishes American and North Vietnamese reactions to it. As Kubrick and co-writers Gustav Hasford and Michael Herr put it, Americans indiscriminately kill civilians and cattle while the North Vietnamese specifically target important people.

In the third part, a new Kubrickian sociopath names Animal Mother (Alec Baldwin) is introduced, and the focus shifts to a patrol searching through the bombed out city of Hue to root out a sniper. That is where the filmmakers comment most pointedly on the war itself. They see it as a dead-end, winless enterprise where one strategy, based on flawed information, leads inevitably to escalation and deaths that serve no purpose. That's certainly a valid artistic interpretation of history. Many other films have made the same points, often more eloquently. But Kubrick isn't interested in eloquence, either.

The three sections are unmistakably separated from each other. The first stands on its own, though key elements are restated at the end. Given Kubrick's creative power and the artistic freedom from studio interference that he always enjoyed, he tells the story that he wants to tell, and the "broken" structure is intentional. For the viewer expecting a "traditional" war film, the result is disconcerting, frustrating, and somehow unfinished. Most Kubrick fans will admit that *Paths of Glory* and *Dr. Strangelove* are more enjoyable, but even if their man is not in top form, *Full Metal Jacket* is challenging, and repeated viewings reveal more details and connections

Kubrick on Full Metal Jacket from Kubrick The Definitive Edition. Michael Ciment. Faber & Faber Inc. NY 2001
The book

The film is based on Gustav Hasford's novel, *The Short-Timers*, which *Newsweek* called the best work of fiction about the Vietnam War. I was tremendously excited after reading it and I

remember thinking, 'My God, could this be made into a film?' I read it a couple more times and knew it could.

The book offered no easy moral or political answers; it was neither pro-war nor anti-war. It seemed only concerned with the way things are. It had a tremendous economy of statement, which I have tried to retain in the film. All of the 'mandatory' war story scenes explaining this guy had a drunken father and that guy's wife is unfaithful, are omitted. What you learn about the characters comes only from the main action of the story.



The book and the screenplay of the war

I don't see the characters in the film in terms of good or evil but in terms of good *and* evil. I understand the troops' cynical view of the war and their failure to communicate on any human level with the Vietnamese, seeing them primarily as whores, pimps, and Vietcong. They were culturally unprepared for the situation they were put into, and it didn't help to know that every man, woman, and child might be Vietcong. The troops knew the war was hopeless and that the people at home were being given a false picture of the situation. The war was evil. And the soldiers and civilians were its victims.

Beckton

While we were still trying to decide where to shoot the film, I made the miraculous discovery of a square mile of ruins, which had been an abandoned gas factory in Beckton, on the shores of the Thames. The architecture was perfect—thirties industrial functionalism, the kind I had seen in so many photographs of Vietnam. After explosive demolition teams came in and did their work and architectural details were added, the place looked exactly like photographs taken after the Tet offensive. I don't think anybody ever had an opportunity like this to destroy real buildings. The art director, Anton Furst, worked for six weeks with a wrecking ball and chain crew, knocking out huge chunks of buildings.

We also flew in two hundred large palm trees from Spain and shipped a hundred thousand artificial tropical plants from Hong Kong. Set into marshlands covered with chest-high yellow grass, amidst helicopters and pink smoke—everything looked absolutely authentic.

Intellectual hawks

One of the most notable things about the Vietnam War was that it was manipulated in Washington in a kind of Alice in Wonderland way by intellectual hawks who tried to fine-tune reality like an advertising agency, constantly inventing new jargon like ‘kill ratios’, ‘hamlets pacified’, and so forth. The light was always at the end of the tunnel.

*The toilets*

The only thing about the training camp sequence that is not based on what happens at Parris Island is the arrangement of the toilets facing each other. In reality they are only on one side of the wall on Parris Island. I suppose it was more like something in a Buñuel film.

The Tet offensive

The American public was shocked by the unexpected fighting power suddenly displayed by the Vietnamese, who, they had constantly been told, were all but defeated. This proved to be the turning point of the war.

Ironically, Tet was a defeat for the North Vietnamese, but it proved to be an unexpected political and psychological victory for them. It marked the end of America’s belief that it could win. After Tet there was to be no more ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ and the technocrats in Washington had lost all credibility.

The look of the film

I try to photograph things realistically. I try to light them as they really would be lit. On interiors I used natural light and windows and no supplemental lights. I was after a realistic documentary look in the film, especially in the combat footage. Even the Steadicam shots were deliberately made less steady to get a newsreel effect.

Anti-war films

There may be a fallacy in the belief that showing people that war is bad will make them less willing to fight a war. But *Full Metal Jacket*, I think, suggests that there is more to say about war than that it is bad. The Vietnam War was, of course, tragically wrong from the start, but I think it may have taught us something valuable. We would probably be fighting now in Nicaragua had it not been for Vietnam. I think the message has certainly gotten through that you don’t even begin to think about fighting a war unless your survival depends on it. The popular theories at the time about falling dominoes, etc. won’t do in the future.

FALL 2007 SCREENING SCHEDULE:

Nov 20 Woody Allen **Crimes and Misdemeanors** 1989
 Nov 27 Elia Suleiman **Divine Intervention/Yadon Ilaheyya** 2002
 Dec 4 Ang Lee **Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon** 2000

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