

Full Metal Jacket: a classic revisited

Kubrick's controversial war drama makes a return on Netflix
by Joe Borushek

The curse about having streaming platforms like Netflix and Hulu is that there's almost too many things to watch.

We've all had our own personal staring contest with the TV screen, searching for hours to find that one perfect movie, only to watch an episode of "The Office" for the fifth time.

But every once in a while you find that forgotten classic amongst a sea of anime and stand up specials. "Full Metal Jacket" is one of those films.

Legendary director Stanley Kubrick first came out with his spin on the Vietnam War, "Full Metal Jacket," in 1987. The movie was met with mixed reviews, critiquing the fact that the infamous "boot camp" portion was much more powerful than the second half of the movie.

However, his film is a cinematic masterpiece, with phenomenal performances from Vincent D'Onofrio and R. Lee Ermey, which makes it one of the most compelling Vietnam movies ever made.

"Full Metal Jacket" tells the story of James T. Davis (Modine), nicknamed "Private Joker" in the

first scene of the film. The movie is about his experience as a new recruit in the Marine Corps, with the first half taking place in basic training.

This is where most of the praise is given because of the relationship between Davis' basic training companion, Private Leonard "Gomer Pyle" Lawrence (D'Onofrio), and their drill sergeant, Sergeant Hartman (Ermey).

What makes the first half so compelling is the evolution of the new recruit class of which Davis and Pyle are a part. Over the course of the first half, we see this group of 50 or so men go from complete strangers to brothers in arms, bonding over their hatred of Pyle.

About halfway through the first half, Hartman grows tired of Pyle constantly messing up and decides that instead of punishing Pyle after every time he messes up, he is going to punish everyone but Pyle. Davis is appointed Pyle's personal helper.

He does his best to correct Pyle's bad habits and turns him into a competent soldier. However, this doesn't exactly go as planned as Pyle is still a goof and the group is still punished. This is where they start to bond due to the one person they all hate, Pyle.

This speaks on one of the major themes of the first half and of the military, which forms a mob mentality over a common enemy.

Following basic training is



Sargent Hartman (Ermey) yelling at one of his soldiers during the opening scene of "Full Metal Jacket" | Youtube

Davis' actual experience in the war. Critics of the film often point to this section of the film as the "Achilles heel," when it is in fact a compelling portion.

What "Full Metal Jacket" addresses in this part is overlooked in other Vietnam films. It addresses the whole "war is hell" angle that other famed Vietnam movies like "Apocalypse Now" and "Platoon" address, but it also shines light on civilian casualties, prostitution, and mortality - themes that other war films failed to fully contemplate.

The real stars of this film are Vincent D'Onofrio and R.

Lee Ermey. D'Onofrio plays the clumsy, dysfunctional recruit, Pyle, while Ermey plays a hardened drill instructor. Their character dynamics are a key staple in the first half of the film without it seeming overbearing, and their schtick never gets old.

Kubrick, who was known to be a perfectionist and often took hundreds of takes for each scene, never took more than three or four takes whenever these two were in a scene together.

It is a Kubrick film, so it is stylized, but it isn't hard to enjoy if you aren't familiar with his other films. The colors in this film are by

no means flashy or bright, but the help set the tone for the theme of the movie.

It is very hard to talk about the different plot points in this film without spoiling the entire picture. However, some of the scenes feel like they are only there to fill time, particularly in the latter half of the film.

While it isn't perfect, and is by no means Kubrick's best, "Full Metal Jacket" is still one of the best Vietnam films out there. Its pros outweigh the cons tenfold, and if you have a couple hours to kill and want to watch a great film, look no further.

Four movies on Netflix for when you are not sure what to watch

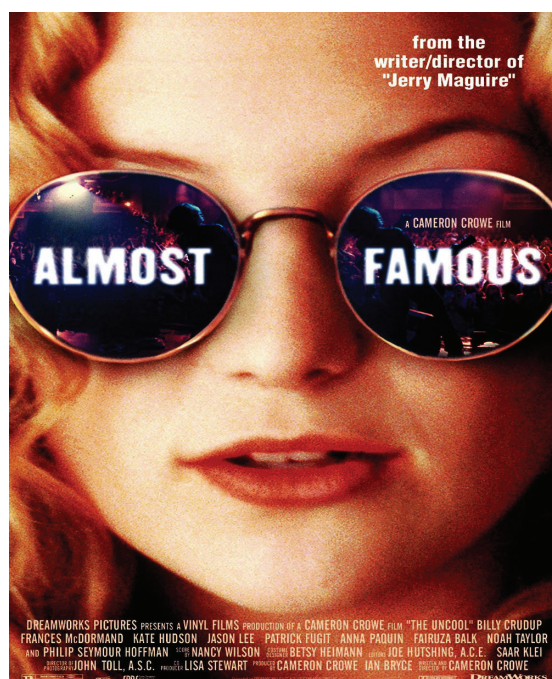
by Tia Rotolo and Joe Borushek



"Dear Zachary: A Letter to His Son about His Father" is a documentary about Andrew Bagby, a man whose life was tragically cut short when he was 28. This film follows lifelong friend of Andrew's, Kurt Kuenne, as he travels around the world to interview all of Andrew's friends and family and gather their memories of him. Without going into too much detail, this movie gets very sad very quickly. But, it is still a fantastic documentary and definitely worth a watch. Just make sure you have a box of tissues nearby.



"No Country for Old Men", is the Best Picture winner from the 2008 Academy Awards. Written and directed from all star directors, Joel and Ethan Coen, this movie is an adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's novel of the same name. It is about a man (Josh Brolin) who finds a briefcase filled with money. The briefcase's owner, Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem) and feared hitman subsequently hunts Brolin down to retrieve what is his. A thrilling cat and mouse game ensues as Bardem does whatever he can to get his money back. Superb acting and amazing writing, this film is a tense, action packed thriller that is a must see for a fan of the Coen brothers and/or movie fans in general.



"Almost Famous" is Cameron Crowe's homage to his brief time as a wannabe journalist for Rolling Stone in the 1970's. As a fifteen year old with ambition and an unhinged love for music, William (Patrick Fugit) is given the opportunity to interview rising band, Still Water. At their show, he befriends the legendary Penny Lane (Kate Hudson) who immediately takes him under her staple-shaggy-coat-laden wing. Slightly in love and taken with the world of 1973 rock music, he follows the band on the road, itching for a story that'll legitimize him as a writer. The adventure through "Midwest rock meccas," soundtracked to classic, psychedelic rock music of the 70's, is a heartwarming coming-of-age cult classic. by Tia Rotolo



Cult classic and childhood favorite, "Good Burger", stars Kenan Thompson and Kel Mitchell of "Kenan and Kel" fame. The movie is about Dexter Reed (Thompson) having to get a job at the local burger joint after he crashes into another car and has to pay for the damages. He then befriends fellow employee, Ed (Mitchell). Reed discovers that Ed was the reason he crashed his car in the first place. Because of this, Reed bamboozles Ed into signing a contract whereby 80% of Ed's pay is given to Reed. Reed's troubles worsen after a hugely successful burger chain opens up across the street. This movie is fun to throw on when you're feeling nostalgic and in the mood for a few laughs.