



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: The Reign of the Independents

The Hurt Locker

"And the older you get, the fewer things you really love. And by the time you get to my age, maybe it's only one or two things. With me, I think it's one." - Staff Sergeant William James



Director:

Kathryn Bigelow

Producers:

Kathryn Bigelow

Mark Boal

Nicolas Chartier

Greg Shapiro

Writer:

Mark Boal

Starring:

Jeremy Renner

Anthony Mackie

Brian Geraghty

Ralph Fiennes

Guy Pearce

Music:

Marco Beltrami

Cinematography:

Barry Ackroyd

Editing:

Chris Innis

Bob Murawski

Distributor:

Summit Entertainment

Release date:

June 26, 2009

Running time:

138 minutes

Budget:

\$15,000,000

Box Office gross:

\$40,016,144 (Worldwide)

The Hurt Locker opens with a quote from *New York Times* war correspondent Chris Hedges's book *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*: "The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug." For the next two hours, this blistering, visceral film proceeds to explain this thesis. By hooking the viewer into an adrenaline-infused investigation of the anguished mentality of the modern soldier, *The Hurt Locker* ranks alongside the most distinguished war films. Most remarkably, it pulls off the coup of giving the viewer a deeply felt, intelligent portrayal of the mindset of its characters and the politics of the situation through gripping emotional scenes of tense, explosive combat, thus completing subverting the stereotype of the "mindless action movie."

From the opening scene, director Kathryn Bigelow - the first female director to win an Academy Award for Achievement in Directing (Best Director) - embeds the viewer directly into the searing heat of the desert, and establishes a palpable sense of suspense and overwhelming dread. Following the dangerous work of a US army explosives disposal unit in Iraq, we witness a group of young men who are forced to adhere to a code of reckless, fatalistic machismo that is both thrilling and hugely damaging psychologically. The most complex figure who emerges - by staying alive the longest - is the highly skilled, volatile Staff Sergeant William James, brilliantly played by Jeremy Renner. In his dawning realization of what he has become through these repeated gambles between life and death, and how he can now never go back to a normal stateside life, James' story provides an unbearably tragic and quietly political edge to the explosive action.

Did you know?

- Director Kathryn Bigelow, who was initially unsure about the project, was encouraged to make the film by her ex-husband, *Avatar* director James Cameron. *The Hurt Locker* went on to beat *Avatar* in 6 out of 7 categories at the Oscars.
- Many of the film's sequences were filmed by four or more simultaneous cameras, resulting in over 200 hours of footage.
- The film was shot in Jordan, close to the Iraqi border, with many characters played by Iraqi refugee actors. The location put a huge strain on the crew, who struggled with the desert conditions and were shot at multiple times.
- *The Hurt Locker* is the lowest grossing film to ever win the Oscar for Best Picture.



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"But you realize every time you suit up, every time we go out, it's life or death. You roll the dice, and you deal with it. You recognize that don't you?" - Sergeant JT Sanborn
"Yea... Yea, I do. But I don't know why." - Staff Sergeant William James

Things to Explore

- Does *The Hurt Locker* endorse or condemn the adrenaline-seeking mentality of its characters? Is it pro-war or anti-war?
- How does *The Hurt Locker* subvert and/or embrace the clichés of the action/war movie? Why do you think these choices were made?
- Director Kathryn Bigelow used multiple cameras to create a "documentary feel" to the action. What is the importance of an authentic atmosphere in a film like *The Hurt Locker*?
- What, if any, is the political message of the film? Does a film about a current war have to have a political focus?
- What do we learn about Sergeant James in the scene in which they faceoff against the sniper in the desert?
- What do you make of the film's final scenes? What do they suggest about the mentality of Sergeant James?
- What do we learn about Iraq and its people from the film? Why do you think we don't learn more about them?
- A number of films have been made about the Iraq War in recent years, but very few have found audience favor. Even *The Hurt Locker*, despite its critical success, performed very poorly at theatres. Why do you think these Iraq War films have failed at the box office?

Themes

- The Iraq war
- Psychology of the modern soldier
- Adrenaline-addiction
- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Isolation



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"What's the best way to... go about disarming one of these things?" - Colonel Reed

"The way you don't die, sir." - Staff Sergeant William James:

"That's a good one. That's spoken like a wild man. That's good." - Colonel Reed

Library Resources

1) The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq, Francis J. West

The Iraq War from 2003-2008 from the perspective of the soldiers and generals on the ground, written by a Marine Vietnam War veteran and based on multiple embeds with US troops.

Copy	Material	Location
956.70443 WES	Book	Nonfiction

2) Kaboom: Embracing the Suck in a Savage Little War, Matt Gallagher An unsparing war memoir taken from Gallagher's controversial 2007 blog, written while a soldier on the frontlines in Iraq, that gives an insight into the opinions and mental state of many of the young US soldiers.

Copy	Material	Location
956.70443 GAL	Book	New Nonfiction

3) The Hurt Locker [videorecording (DVD)]

The DVD includes special features on the making of the film and an audio commentary with writer Mark Boal and director Kathryn Bigelow.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD HUR	DVD Fiction	Audio Visual

Online Resources

<http://www.thehurtlocker-movie.com/>

The official website for the film is filled with explosive videos and photography. It also contains links to a number of Veterans' charities supported by the film.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Er_OUD2D_NY

Director Kathryn Bigelow discusses how she used multiple cameras and real locations to create a "realistic documentary feel" to the film.

<http://creativescreenwritingmagazine.blogspot.com/2010/03/2nd-hurt-locker-q.html>

In this excellent podcast interview, *The Hurt Locker* screenwriter Mark Boal discusses how his own experiences being embedded with bomb disposal experts in Iraq help shaped the film.



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"There's enough bang in there to blow us all to Jesus. If I'm gonna die, I want to die comfortable." - Staff Sergeant William James

IF YOU LIKED THE HURT LOCKER...

***Messenger* (Oren Moverman/105 min/R/2009)**

--An ensemble cast anchors this Oscar nominated military drama as Will Montgomery (Ben Foster) struggles with his new position working for Casualty Notification Office and a return to civilian life. Also features Woody Harrelson, Jena Malone and Samantha Morton.

***In the Valley of Elah* (Paul Haggis/121 mins/R/2007)**

--When Mike Deerfield (Jonathan Tucker) disappears shortly after returning from a tour of duty in Iraq, his father, Hank (Tommy Lee Jones), a former military MP, recruits detective Emily Sanders (Charlize Theron) to help find the missing soldier. A web of intrigue and cover-ups unfold, all related to Iraq, as Hank tries to find his missing son. Also stars Susan Sarandon, James Franco, and Josh Brolin.

***War Tapes* (Debra Sranron/95 min/NR/2006)**

--Documentary filmmaker Debra Scranton provides digital cameras to three National Guard volunteers called to duty in Iraq and asks them to chronicle their experiences. The result is a deeply personal and moving first-hand account of the Iraq conflict from the perspective of these participants.

***Jarhead* (Sam Mendes/123 min/R/2005)**

--Based on the memoir of real-life Marine sniper Anthony Swofford this film chronicles both the rigors of boot camp and the terror of war with pathos and humor. Swofford (Jake Gyllenhall) joins the Marines and is shipped off to fight in the Gulf War of 1991 where he and friend Troy (Peter Sarsgaard) are lead by commanders Sykes (Jamie Foxx) and Kazinski (Cooper) against an enemy they can't see.

***Black Hawk Down* (Ridley Scott/144 min/R/2001)**

--Ridley Scott directs this war drama about a forgotten chapter of U.S. military history as an elite team of Delta Force soldiers and Army Rangers are deployed to worn-torn Somalia to kidnap a local crime lord. Starring Josh Hartnet, Tom Sizemore, and Ewan McGregor.

Also directed by Kathryn Bigelow:

Strange Days (145 min/R/1995); ***Point Break*** (117 min/R/1991)

Also starring Jeremy Renner:

The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (Andrew Dominik/160 min/R/2007); ***North Country*** (Niki Caro/126 min/R/2005)