

Great Directors: Kubrick

# Full Metal Jacket 1987 (R)

Friday, December 5 - Thursday, December 11, 2008



## Film Information

**Directed by**  
Stanley Kubrick

**Language**  
English

**Running Time**  
116 minutes

## Film Notes

If this series demonstrates any one single thing, it has to be the diversity of Stanley Kubrick's material. While staying true to his own stylistic vision, he successfully conquered almost every major genre, including film noir, comedy, thriller, science fiction, epic saga, period drama, and war movie. That being said, with the lone exception of *SPARTACUS*, for which he was brought on to replace a discharged director, the description for any film in this series could begin with the exact same five words: Stanley Kubrick read a story.

The popular image of Kubrick is that of an obsessive filmmaker constantly tinkering away in his editing suite, and while that's true to an extent, it ignores two of his other lifelong passions: chess and reading. When it came to books, Kubrick loved to be surprised, once claiming that he would buy titles at random and see which stories kept his interest. When he did come across something he loved, he stuck with it. It might take decades for an adaptation to come to fruition, if at all (see *A.I.* and *THE ARYAN PAPERS* as examples), but then Kubrick was never in much of a rush.

Seven years passed between *THE SHINING* and *FULL METAL JACKET*, based on the novel *The Short-Timers* by Gustav Hasford. In a 1987 interview with *Rolling Stone*, Kubrick praised the book for the directness of its language and Hasford's refusal to defer toward cliché. "It's a very short, very beautifully and economically written book, which, like the film, leaves out all the mandatory scenes of character development: the scene where the guy talks about his father,

who's an alcoholic, his girlfriend—all that stuff that bogs down and seems so arbitrarily inserted into every war story." Nonetheless, the process of adapting the book for the screen was long and arduous, as was typical for a Kubrick project, and perhaps unnecessarily so. The director later confirmed that much of the dialogue spewed by Gunnery Sergeant Hartman in the first part of the film was actually created by R. Lee Ermey (a former Gunnery Sergeant in the Marines) during auditions.

It's fitting that this series should begin with *2001* and end with *FULL METAL JACKET*, if only for this bizarre coincidence and final bit of trivia: There is a moment late in *FULL METAL JACKET* in which the Marines seek shelter from sniper fire, and if you watch closely, you'll see something in the background resembling the black monolith of *2001*. Aware of his reputation as a control freak and knowing that others would read even deeper into the monolith's symbolism, Kubrick insisted it was unintentional, calling the appearance "an extraordinary accident."

—Casey



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“If you ladies leave my island, if you survive recruit training, you will be a weapon. You will be a minister of death praying for war. But until that day you are pukes.”

### More Information

#### Screenplay by

Stanley Kubrick  
Michael Herr  
Gustav Hasford

#### Based on the book The Short-Timers by

Gustav Hasford

#### Featuring

Matthew Modine  
Adam Baldwin  
Vincent D'Onofrio  
R. Lee Ermey  
Dorian Harewood  
Kevyn Major Howard  
Arless Howard

#### Cinematography by

Douglas Milsome

#### Original Music by

Vivian Kubrick

#### Film Editing by

Martin Hunter

#### Country of Origin

UK

“What I like about not writing original material—which I’m not even certain I could do—is that you have this tremendous advantage of reading something for the first time. You never have this experience again with the story. You have a reaction to it: it’s a kind of falling-in-love reaction. That’s the first thing. Then it becomes almost a matter of code breaking, of breaking the work down into a structure that is truthful, that doesn’t lose the ideas or the content or the feeling of the book. And fitting it all into the much more limited time frame of a movie. As long as you possibly can, you retain your emotional attitude, whatever it was that made you fall in love in the first place. You judge a scene by asking yourself, ‘Am I still responding to what’s there?’ The process is both analytical and emotional. You’re trying to balance calculating analysis against feeling. And it’s almost never a question of, ‘What does this scene mean?’ It’s, ‘Is this truthful, or does something about it feel false?’ It’s ‘Is this scene interesting? Will it make me feel the way I felt when I first fell in love with the material?’ It’s an intuitive process, the way I imagine writing music is intuitive.”

—Stanley Kubrick

### Also Recommended

Paths of Glory 1957 (Dir. Stanley Kubrick)  
The Deer Hunter 1976 (Dir. Michael Cimino)  
Platoon 1986 (Dir. Oliver Stone)  
The Thin Red Line 1998 (Dir. Terrence Malick)