

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

SATURDAY
JANUARY 12, 2019
7:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

THE THIN RED LINE

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



“What’s this war in the heart of nature?” So begins *THE THIN RED LINE*, the third feature film by director Terrence Malick and his first since *DAYS OF HEAVEN* a full twenty years earlier. The Harvard and AFI graduate, Rhodes Scholar, former MIT philosophy instructor, and translator of Heidegger explores the question in a lyrical, elegiac epic that garnered seven Academy Award nominations and was praised by Gene Siskel '67 as “the greatest contemporary war film I’ve seen” and by Martin Scorsese as his favorite film produced in the '90s.

The production entailed 100 rigorous days of shooting in Australia’s Daintree Rainforest, 24 shooting days in the Solomon Islands, and three in the United States. Originally slated for Sony, it was dropped over fears of budget overruns shortly before filming began, but Malick went on to deliver the film on time and on budget to 20th Century Fox (and its box office returns later doubled the studio’s investment). In the process of editing the five-hour first cut to its ultimate 171-minute running time, actor Adrien Brody’s role was significantly reduced, and performers whose work was completely cut from the film included Billy Bob Thornton (who had recorded the film’s narration, later split among eight characters), Lukas Haas, Bill Pullman, and Mickey Rourke.

THE THIN RED LINE was adapted from army veteran James Jones’s 1962 novel of the same name, which was based on his combat experience on Guadalcanal and was regarded by figures including Paul Fussell and Sir John Keegan as the greatest American novel about World War II. It was first adapted as a 1964 black-and-white Cinemascope film directed by Andrew Marton—best known for directing the chariot race in *BEN HUR*—and starring Keir Dullea, Jack Warden, and James Philbrook. Jones’s novels *SOME CAME RUNNING* and *FROM HERE TO ETERNITY* were also adapted into films (watch for him in uncredited roles in both), and a thinly-veiled Jones was later portrayed by Kris Kristofferson in James Ivory’s *A SOLDIER’S DAUGHTER NEVER CRIES*, adapted from daughter Kaylie Jones’s work. Jones eschewed what he called the “infallible father” and “heroes can’t lose” tropes of most contemporary war films, and called for cinema to create realistic depictions of modern warfare and the arbitrary nature of deaths within it. He briefly wrote for film, doing rewrites for the 1962 D-Day epic *THE LONGEST DAY*, but soured on the experience when production code advisors sanitized the soldiers’ dialogue (“each *damn* and *hell* was carefully marked to be deleted”) and suggested the script was making the Invasion of Normandy look “too bloody.”

Though violence was as common to Malick’s early films as his magic-hour shooting, voiceovers, and repeated imagery of rivers and fire, he never sought to justify that violence, nor to celebrate what he called the “green poison” of war. “For Malick,” John Bleasdale wrote, “violence is a fact of the world. It is not glamorous or noteworthy. It is not an extraordinary moment which needs to be glorified, or slowed down, or frozen. It is something which is breathtakingly banal in its ordinariness and its ubiquity.” James Morrison and Thomas Schur observed of *THE THIN RED LINE*, “There is probably no other war film that so compellingly represents the horror of war, yet so thoroughly resists the dialectics of conflict. Its tone is mournful, not angry. Watching it, you may feel it showing you what is slipping inexorably away as you gaze. ‘Look,’ the film seems to say in shot after shot, ‘look: here is what will be lost.’”

No. 6
SEASON 5

DIRECTED BY **TERRENCE MALICK**
SCREENPLAY BY **TERRENCE MALICK**
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **JAMES JONES**
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **JOHN TOLL**
PRODUCED BY **20TH CENTURY FOX**
(1998) 171 MINS.

STARRING **ADRIEN BRODY, JIM CAVIEZEL, BEN CHAPLIN, GEORGE CLOONEY, JOHN CUSACK, WOODY HARRELSON, THOMAS JANE, ELIAS KOTEAS, JARED LETO, TIM BLAKE NELSON, NICK NOLTE, MIRANDA OTTO, SEAN PENN, JOHN C. REILLY, AND JOHN TRAVOLTA**

DID YOU KNOW: THE PHRASE “THE THIN RED LINE” ORIGINATED FROM THE CRIMEAN WAR’S 1854 BATTLE OF BALAKLAVA, DURING WHICH BRITAIN’S 93RD HIGHLAND REGIMENT HELD OFF A MUCH LARGER RUSSIAN FORCE. THE *TIMES* CORRESPONDENT COVERING THE BATTLE DESCRIBED THE REGIMENT’S FORMATION AS A “THIN RED STREAK TIPPED WITH A LINE OF STEEL.” THE PHRASE GAINED POPULARITY WITH RUDYARD KIPLING’S POEM “TOMMY.” “THEN IT’S TOMMY THIS, AN’ TOMMY THAT, AN’ ‘TOMMY, ‘OW’S YER SOUL?’ BUT IT’S ‘THIN RED LINE OF ‘EROES’ WHEN THE DRUMS BEGIN TO ROLL.”

NEXT UP: FRENCH DIRECTORS JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET AND MARC CARO FOLLOWED THEIR 1991 CULT HIT *DELICATESSEN* WITH *THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN* (1995), A SCIENCE FICTION FANTASY ABOUT A MAN UNABLE TO DREAM WHO RESORTS TO STEALING DREAMS FROM SLEEPING CHILDREN. WITH COSTUMES BY JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER AND MUSIC BY ANGELO BADALMENTI, THE FILM FEATURED GROUNDBREAKING EARLY DIGITAL SPECIAL EFFECTS, AND ADDED STAR RON PERLMAN TO JEUNET’S FAMILIAR CAST OF FRENCH ACTORS. SEE IT IN 35MM ON **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17 AT 2:00 PM.**