

Review: *Full Metal Jacket*

Kubrick's latest statement on war

by Lois Wadsworth

Genius filmmaker Stanley Kubrick follows a young recruit through the treacherous moral quagmire of Parris Island to the bloody combat zone of Vietnam to show us the final product of our civilization—a killer Marine.

Director Stanley Kubrick always knows what he's doing. So, when the sadistic drill sergeant names a green enlistee "Private Joker," it's a sort of, you know, private joke. The head-shaving scene is as funny as this film gets, but Kubrick lingers just long enough on the mounds of hair piled on the floor at the end to bring up the collective images of death camps and prisoners of war he wants us to think about.

Brain-washing techniques reinforced by group pressures, fear of ridicule, and physical punishment work equally well in prisons, forced labor camps, concentration camps, and military boot camps.

Gunnery Sgt. Hartman's job, as he sees it, is to turn these worthless obscenities into Marines. He's eager to strip away their former identities, glad to obliterate their personalities, overjoyed to turn individuals with souls into dehumanized killing machines. It's his job.

Kubrick explores the Marines' special twist of instilling a deep-seated enmity toward all that is soft, vulnerable, or, God forbid! feminine, in the male psyche. Trite to say, this hatred of the feminine within finds an easy outlet, as evidenced by their childish, vulgar sing-song chants and later, in country, by their crudity with the Vietnamese prostitutes they use. Sgt. Hartman assigns Pvt. Joker a big, soft, dumb guy to train, one "Private Pyle" (after Gomer of TV fame) who can't even make up his bed, much less climb hurdles. The verbal and physical abuse heaped on Pyle's weak ego is unrelenting

and builds toward an inevitably brutal and shocking climax.

Switch. We're in Nam with Joker, who's now got a cushy job as a journalist for *Stars and Stripes* dishing out euphemisms and outright lies, when the Tet offensive begins. He gets to Hue on a helicopter with a crazed gunner, connects with old Parris Island buddies, and meets a hardened killer called Animal Mother who challenges him, John Wayne style, to put up or shut up.

Joker's still trying to wisecrack his way through the war. His helmet announces BORN TO KILL, while the peace-button he wears over his heart makes a statement "about the duality of man, a Jungian idea." But, of course, Joker can't have it both ways. The battle scenes are brilliantly designed, death is graphically slow and painful, remorse and grief are absent, and only murderous revenge flowers in these killing

fields.

Kubrick's parallels between the cadenced chants shouted during training and the final scene as the battle-weary troops trudge past the wasted landscape of the city toward the river at sunset singing *The Mickey Mouse Club* theme song is his final irony. These American fighting men are the most deliberately unsympathetic ever brought to the screen by anyone in any war movie. Many will see *Full Metal Jacket* only as a great war movie—which it is—and not as a bitter, black essay on how easy it is to be born to kill.

Terrific performances from Matthew Modine as Joker, Vincent D'Onofrio as Gomer Pyle, and Lee Ermye as the drill sergeant enliven the boot camp half of the film. Adam Baldwin is the spectacular brute Animal Mother in the Nam sequences.

People will be talking about this movie for years. Critics will pick it apart and castigate Kubrick because he didn't make a different film. Lots of folks will see it and go home and run their "Ollie For President" banners up the flagpole. But some of us will think about what we've seen and will remain troubled by Kubrick's vision of the institutionalization of the killer instinct and what that means for our world.

now showing

NEW TO TOWN

From Beyond: An adaptation of an H.P. Lovecraft tale, this horror movie by Stuart Gordon has exceptionally bizarre special effects. It starts Friday as the late-night feature at the Bijou (686-2458).

Hour of the Star: With humor and a keen eye for its times, this film brings to the screen a novel by the famous Brazilian writer, Clarice Lispector. Starts Friday at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

The Living Daylights: Two firsts are in this new James Bond flick: Timothy Dalton now plays Agent 007, and he is involved with a new intrigue—monogamy. Fantasy/adventure. Starts Friday at Movieland (342-4142).

The Lost Boys: A new twist in the annals of vampire stories, it combines rock and roll with terror. With Jami Gertz, Dianne Wiest and Edward Herrmann, starts its regular run Friday at the National (344-3431).

Maid to Order: Ally Sheedy goes from riches to rags. Co-stars Beverly D'Angelo, Michael Ontkean and Valerie Perrine. Comedy. Starts Friday at Movieland (342-4142).

CONTINUING/RETURNING

Adventures in Babysitting: Elisabeth Shue finds more than a calm evening of childcare. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

La Bamba: Lou Diamond Phillips and Esai Morales star in this re-creation of the life of Richie Valens, a late-'50s rock star who died in a plane crash at the peak of his career. Los Lobos provides many of the musical numbers. Cinema World (342-6536).

Beverly Hills Cop II: As off-beat cop Axel Foley, Eddie Murphy laughs again. Brigitte Nielsen plays villainess. Movieland (342-4142).

Dragnet 1987: Dan Aykroyd portrays the nephew of "Just-the-Facts" Sergeant Friday, and Tom Hanks plays his side-kick, in a spoof of the TV series. Cinema World (342-6536).

Full Metal Jacket: The long-awaited Stanley (2001) Kubrick film, it never lets up revealing the mindlessness and brutality of war, climaxing at the 1968 Tet Offensive of the Vietnam War. McDonald (344-4343).

Innerspace: In this science fiction comedy about a secret government project, Dennis Quaid plays a macho brute reduced to miniature, then injected into grocery clerk Martin Short. Cinema World (726-9073).

Jaws, the Revenge: Michael Caine and Lorraine Gary appear in this fourth man vs. shark thriller. This time, it's a personal vendetta against the humans remaining from other *Jaws* adventures. Moves Friday to Springfield Quad (726-9073).

RoboCop: Sci-fi comedy about a cyborg employed to clean up on Detroit lowlife. With Peter Weller, it's graphically violent, satirizes TV news-casts, and is more than comix brought to life. Movieland (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Roxanne: Steve Martin, with the longest nose since Pinocchio, and Daryl Hannah star in a modern-day comedy based on the story of Cyrano de Bergerac. Cinema World (342-6536).

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: Heigh-ho! This re-release of the 1937 technicolor Disney classic is at Movieland (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

The Squeeze: Romantic comedy-thriller with Michael Keaton and Rae Dawn Chong. Double feature starting Friday with *Whitewater Summer* at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

Summer School: Mark Harmon, whom *People* dubbed "the sexiest man alive," plays a phys-ed teacher who has to spend his summer with remedial readers. Valley River Twin (686-8633) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Superman IV: The Quest for Peace: Christopher Reeve again plays the Man of Steel, up against Nuclear Man. Gene Hackman plays a villain, with Margot Kidder as Lois Lane, and Mariel Hemingway. Movieland (342-4142).

Swimming to Cambodia: By Jonathan Demme (*Stop Making Sense, Something Wild*), it brings to the screen the stage monologue by Spalding Gray, about his role in *The Killing Fields* and other topics. Music by Laurie Anderson. Bijou (686-2458).

The Untouchables: Robert De Niro, Kevin Costner and Sean Connery revisit the Al Capone era of Chicago in the 1930s. Brian De Palma directs. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

White Water Summer: Kevin Bacon and Sean Astin brave the rapids in this comedy adventure. Double feature starting Friday with *The Squeeze* at Springfield Fine Arts (747-2201).

Thursday, July 30 is the last showing for: *Opera Do Malandro* at Cinema 7. *Three Amigos* late-night feature at the Bijou. *Space Balls* and *Revenge of the Nerds 2* at Movieland. *Platoon* and *The Believers* double feature at Springfield Fine Arts. *Jaws at the National*.

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