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I grew up watching war movies. Some of my most frozen memories are of my father, who served two tours in Vietnam and took me to the base theatre at Subic Bay Naval Air Station in the Philippines to watch films such as The Great Escape, Dirty Dozen, and Patton. I wasn't more than eight or nine years old when I saw Patton, but this indelible George C. Scott scene, which was in front of the American flag, gave me a larger-than-life speech, to the point that one of the things that influenced me was to become an actor. Since then, I've watched more war movies than I can say, I've starred in war movies, and now I'm lucky enough to host Officer and the Military Channel movie that plays the war movie every Saturday night. So I hope I know what I'm talking about when I show here my most emotionally inspiring and thought scenes in war movies - better and worse- in honor of Veterans Day. (Don't miss the list of Bob Drury's best war film by Bob Drury.) We're going to start with Saving Private Ryan, the great movie that was my all-time favorite. But the cantetis of the moment Tom Hanks' character dies and turns to Ryan's private Matt Damon and says, He deserves it, he makes the hair on the back of my neck stand at the end every time I see it. This was the culmination of the ultimate sacrifice for private Ryan's rescue mission. And the responsibility that we, as civilians, benefit from their ultimate sacrifice, must be earned. The power of this scene is a testimony to Hanks's immense talent and the ability to live this role. It transcends fun and becomes a life experience for movie viewers. No matter how big the player is, it all starts with the seriousness of writing. All right, simple writing. You wouldn't believe this scene if Hanks was giving a speech instead of saying those two words. Which is not to say that every emotionally shaken scene must be Hemingway-esque in its brushing. I think Oliver Stone just nailed it with Tom Berenger's speech about death in the platoon. I was very young watching Platoon, and I still think it's one of the best monologues ever committed to the film. Berenger was great, and he should have won an Oscar. There was a platoon, smoking weed, drinking beer and relaxing during missions, with Charlie Sheen's newbie character still feeling around the group. And now comes Berenger with this body with a scar and face that is plopping down the middle of them wearing a bottle of Jack and about to say some hard truths about the fight. In the space of this monologue Berenger retails Sheen character deep and the true price of war. You think you know about death? Let me tell you about death, yes, he's cynical, yes, it's pressed. But it's also so sobering. So many war movies emphasize the positive, almost Pollyanna-ish aspects of being a warrior. But Stone lived the Vietnam War like a gringo. And this monologue is a distillation of fatigue and the terrible truth of struggle. It's something that many of us will never, ever understand, and Berenger's unsply delivery of this speech gave me cold then, and continues to do so today. I think it's good to talk about playing the villain, like Berenger's character in Platoon, and still connect emotionally with the audience. I'm thinking especially about Colonel Jessup's character in A Few Good Men. I played this character on stage, and while I may not agree with Colonel Jessup's politics and a twisted sense of honor and duty, I happen to agree with a few things in this incredible speech, you can't master the truth. We live in a world with walls, and there are people with guns standing on top of these walls. In order to play this role, you have to accept that persona, which is what made Jack Nicholson's scene so powerful in the film. And that applies to every role you play, but especially in war movies that twi keep up to illustrate the big issues in our lives. Morality. Character. Integrity. Courage. Or, in some cases, the opposite. Or even a mixture of the two. So if, like Berenger and Nicholson, you play a bad guy, you still have to take a look at the world of the character with your eyes open, your heart open and your mind open. You can't judge that character. If you keep Colonel Jessup on your arm, the audience won't believe you. They'll know you're playing. That's exactly what Nicholson did in that speech. He's accepted Colonel Jessup. That's why the scene is so touching. Of course, it helps that a script like Aaron Sorkin can capture those emotions in dialogue. On the other hand, one of the bright films is that sometimes no dialogue is needed to get over the confusion of emotions. Which brings me to an incredible, wordless scene - the latest accusation in Civil War, Glory. These soldiers, black men standing in the middle of the sand dunes preparing to attack the Confederacy, and you know it's not going to end well. When I fell in love with these characters, respected them, inspired them through the film, and now that they see that they know they're not going to live, but they're still brave to accuse me, she took my breath away. Their absolute courage- reflected as they walk past other white Union soldiers who know they are looking for the dead - is one of the most inspiring sequences in a war movie, as I recall. It hurt me so badly. I also think that this sacrifice for a greater cause reflects a very American position. The feeling that people have sacrificed for the greater good since the birth of this nation. . . . That's why this scene stays with me. What the director and the actors manage to achieve in this wordless moment in Slavi makes this moment even more of a moment, which leads me to the last scene, which is breathtaking - DeNiro That's It' speech to John Cazale in The Deer Hunter. This scene awakens the lightness of absolute truth, whether you understand it or not, as Cazale's character Stanley clearly does. Stanley forgot his boots and wants to borrow a pair. But DeNiro doesn't talk about boots. He uses this bullet in his hand as a metaphor for the life and death of a soldier. When he holds that bullet and give that threatening speech- Stanley, look at this. That's it. It's not something else. That's it. From now on, you're on your own. - says that no one who has ever been to war will ever understand what this means. Stanley doesn't understand that, but it's so powerful that we in the audience automatically understand that. It's a bullet. This could take your life. That's just one shot. That's it. It seems to me to be one of the most powerful parts of dialogue in the history of film. Everything he said before I finished, I'd like to take this in a different direction and look. . . . Well, let's call this the flip side of what I'm talking about. For me, there are a few moments in war movies that were just a solid blow in the gut in a negative way. It's not that these scenes weren't well done. In fact, they were incredibly well made. But... Allow me to return to platoon, for example. It's a similar sequence in a village where American soldiers rape teenager Kevin Dillon's character boasting in the head of a young mentally handicapped Vietnamese. She just upset me. It is likely that Oliver Stone felt some responsibility to show the absolute horror and de-igration of the human spirit that war can create. But that didn't make it any easier to see that scene. Down these lines (and if you leave me), a scene that still has a huge impact on me comes in the film Courage under fire when my character Monfriez turns to his commander and says about Meg Ryan's character, She's Dead. But Monfriez and Matt Damon knew Ilario was alive when they left her. At the moment - again, two words - you see Monfriez's despair, his absolute commitment to lies, selling his soul to save his ass. I look at that scene and I say, I don't recognize this guy. But what really completes the power of this moment is shock, fear and guilt. Damon's face is expressed without a word. You got an idea. Sometimes you don't have to like the scene to appreciate its influence. Another perfect example comes from the little-known World War II film Hell in the Pacific. There are only two actors in the entire film - Lee Marvin and Toshiro Mifune playing an American soldier and a Japanese soldier stranded on a deserted island. They spend a good portion of the film trying to kill each other until towards the end of the film they reach that understanding, where they are respected as warriors and as honorable and obliged men. And just as the audience identify with these two former enemies, just as you fell in love with these characters and you expect a good ending, the damn island is shelled out, and they're both blown up. That scene was so powerful, I couldn't wrap it around him for years. Now let me get a full circle, back to my childhood at Subic Bay Naval Station and the movie I mentioned above, Dirty Dozen. I think I was even younger when I saw that movie when I was watching Patton, and there were two scenes in that movie that showed me how emotionally powerful a movie can be. One was Jim Brown, who was dying. How do you kill Jim Brown? I remember they were in absolute tears so they could kill themselves in a movie to kill a hero like that. The second scene was when Telly Savales killed a German woman in a castle. I don't think I've watched a lot of movies with an adult theme, and I remember thinking, Oh my God, how can I show this? It was one of my first experiences with a movie psychopath. Suddenly, one of the heroes wasn't a hero. And it was the first in American war movies. At least for me. But it was a dynamic, memorable scene that I'll never forget. Plus, Telly Savales was a great psychopath. On November 16, Lou Diamond Phillips will receive the Millennium Momentum Foundation's 2012 Humanitarian Award for his work with American Veterans. This content is created and maintained by a third party and imported to this page to help users provide their email addresses. You can find more information about this and similar content on piano.io piano.io

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