

The Jaded Eye: Movie & Television Reviews

By C.W. Heiser

You are now in Boot Camp. Basic Training. This is how the movie, *Full Metal Jacket*, directed by Sydney Kubrick opens. It is hard to describe the bitter-funny pain I felt throughout the first third of this movie. I went through Navy Boot Camp and this is the rougher Marine Basic. But it rings true, if only because it is what all squids, and probably doggies, would extrapolate as to what it would take to make a Marine.

It is the pure hell of having your personality broken down--and brought back up to the program. Kubrick has captured this process. The basic/ground of this movie at first seems chaotic, jumping from marching formation to rows of recruits shining boots, and then back to the formation, never letting use get intimate with any of the characters. At the beginning we have to work to get close to the people in this company, and it is the Drill Instructor who picks out the main characters for us. With an uncanny ability, he names the character for us. (The D.I. is played by Lee Ermey, who was in real life a Marine Drill Instructor. Ermey's D.I. shows the endearing Lou Gossett's D.I. in *An Officer And A Gentleman* up for what it is--a lame construction of those who never did, or can't recall, Basic. Ermey is right on in his lack of humanity--I still hate my company commander.)

It is as Basic Training ends that we see how limiting that training is. The screw-up whom the D.I. has named Gomer Pyle, played brilliantly by Vincent D'Onofrio, shapes up into a Marine Killer. In a way, modeled after the D.I.'s pet sharpshooter Lee Harvey Oswald, he becomes a twistedly perfect rifleman.

As I watched this unfolding of Basic Training, I felt more than my own distant memories of humiliation and getting even. All around me, vets were

talking back to the screen. This wasn't a bunch of kids getting off on a car crash, or some "hip" line to a screen bimbo, we were grown men responding to a situation we had known too well. As Gomer Pyle screws up again and again, we were all ready to pull the "blanket-party" we watched on screen.

It is only when we reach Vietnam that we realize which character is to be our surrogate. The "Joker" the D.I. named in Basic, played by Matthew Modino, becomes the protagonist.

This is the genius, and the failure of *Full Metal Jacket*. Until late in the film, when Joker meets up again with the character "named" Cowboy, all other characters from Basic are sloughed off. Many viewers will have problems with this bifurcate construction, but it is a fact of military life. First you're in one place with one bunch of people, and then, almost suddenly, you are in another strange place with a different set of people. Unfortunately, Joker is not the best character to carry the rest of the

film. His wit is his protection and armor, but it is this intelligence which distances him, and us, from the war. There is no discovery for him, or us in Vietnam.

If anything, the Vietnam sequences are even more chaotic, though we now have Joker as an anchor. Here Kubrick shows us another facet of military life. While American fighting men are trained to hold the same basic values, they are American soldiers and will not lockstep, even in combat situations. This is what won the Second World War, but, as in Vietnam, without a consensus at home this leads to a fragmentation of the troops.

Kubrick's troops are disconnected from each other, and from the Vietnamese peasants. As with the character, Animal Mother, they define themselves by individual prowess. It is only at the end, as we follow one squad being sucked into ambush, that the Animal Mother, and then Joker connect with anyone. This connection is with the enemy, and it is by killing.

This final sequence is not for the squeamish. Filmed mostly at waist, or grunt, level we can feel the terror of these troops as they are decimated. (While this movie is bloody, unlike

most war movies, the deaths are not uncountable, and may therefore register.) It is here again that we see the failure of Basic as these fully trained and equipped Marines are outclassed by one lone V.C.

The failure of *Full Metal Jacket* is not in the structure, which captures the existential quality of military life, but in the lack of human center, which would illuminate that existence--Joker is just too hip. While it is powerful, and has the potential to be cathartic, finally, the war in *Full Metal Jacket* is still "out there."

**IN VIETNAM
THE WIND DOESN'T BLOW
IT SUCKS**



**Stanley Kubrick's
FULL METAL JACKET**

Artist Nadya Brown's Works on Display in Gallery Lounge

Six Gallery Lounge art exhibits have been selected for the 1987-88 school year. The opening show will feature prints and paintings by Nadya Brown, a California artist who has recently moved to Pennsylvania. Many of the pieces in this exhibit allude to Greek and Italian culture and myth—pillars, architectural details and fragments of statuary. A strong sense of drama pervades her striking compositions which feature eccentric light sources and viewpoints. The artist states that her aim is to create an atmosphere of metamorphosis, energy transference, time and history. She works from photos she takes and from found objects she arranges in her studio.

Before moving to Santa Barbara, CA, Brown taught in a variety of schools and colleges in the United States and England. Her work is autobiographical in that it draws from places she has been. In 1984 she researched Renaissance, Greek, and Roman architecture in Italy, Greece, and Spain.

Her most recent full time position was at Murray State University in Kentucky where she was assistant professor of painting. She holds a M.F.A. from Ohio State University and has exhibited her work throughout the U.S. and abroad, including shows in New York City, at the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institute and in the annual show of Royal Society of Painters, Etchers and Engravers, London.

This exhibit runs from August 20 through October 2. There will be a reception for the artist on Tuesday, September 1, from 4:00 to 6:00 in the Gallery Lounge. Everyone is welcome to attend.

1987-88 Art Exhibit Schedule

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| Aug. 20 - Oct. 2 | Nadya Brown Paintings & Prints |
| Oct. 5 - Nov. 13 | Allen B. Cox Paintings |
| Nov. 15 - Dec. 20 | Ken Kaplowitz & Henry Troup Photographs |
| Dec. 20 - Jan. 29 | Henry Troup Photographs |
| Feb. 1 - Feb. 28 | Richard Mayhew Paintings (Black History Month) |
| Mar. 1 - Apr. 10 | Graduate Student Show |
| Apr. 10 - May 6 | Student Art & Photos |