

# in PERPETUUM



## PARTIAL LIST OF FILMS SUPPORTED BY US GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

*Act of Valor*. Directed by Mike McCoy and Scott Waugh. West Hollywood, CA: Relativity Media, 2012.\*

*Air Force One*. Directed by Wolfgang Peterson. Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1997.\*

*Apollo 13*. Directed by Ron Howard. Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 1995.\*

*Armageddon*. Directed by Michael Bay. Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Pictures, 1998.\*

*Bot\*21*. Directed by Peter Markle. Culver City, CA: Tri-Star Pictures, 1988.\*

*Battle Cry*. Directed by Raoul Walsh. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 1955.\*

*Battle: Los Angeles*. Directed by Jonathan Liebesman. Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2011.\*

*Battleship*. Directed by Peter Berg. Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 2012.\*

*Behind Enemy Lines*. Directed by John Moore. Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2001.\*

*Black Hawk Down*. Directed by Ridley Scott. Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2001.\*

*The Bourne Identity*. Directed by Doug Liman. Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 2002.\*

*The Core*. Directed by Jon Amiel. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2003.\*

*Devil Dogs of the Air*. Directed by Lloyd Bacon. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 1935.\*

*The D.I.* Directed by Jack Webb. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers, 1957.\*

*Eagle Eye*. Directed by D. J. Cansu. Universal City, CA: DreamWorks Pictures, 2008.\*

*The Enemy Below*. Directed by Dick Powell. Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, 1957.\*

*Fighter Pilot: Operation Red Flag*. Directed by Stephen Low. Mississauga, Ontario: IMAX Corporation, 2004.\*

*The Final Countdown*. Directed by Dan Taylor. Beverly Hills, CA: United Artists, 1980.\*

*Firefox*. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 1982.\*

*Flags of Our Fathers*. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2006.\*

*Fly Away Home*. Directed by Carroll Ballard. Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1986.\*

*G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*. Directed by Stephen Sommers. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2009.\*

*The Great Santini*. Directed by Lewis John Carino. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 1979.\*

*The Green Berets*. Directed by John Wayne, Ray Kellogg and Mervyn LeRoy. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros.-Seven Arts, 1965.\*

*Green Dragon*. Directed by Timothy Linh Bu. Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2001.\*

*Heartbreak Ridge*. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 1986.\*

*Home Alone 3*. Directed by Raja Gosnell. Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, 1997.\*

*The Hunt for Red October*. Directed by John McTiernan. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1990.\*

*Iron Man*. Directed by Jon Favreau. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2008.\*

*Iron Man 2*. Directed by Jon Favreau. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2010.\*

*Larger Than Life*. Directed by Howard Franklin. Beverly Hills, CA: United Artists, 1996.\*

*The Longest Day*. Directed by Ken Annakin, Andrew Marton, Bernhard Wicki, Ger Oswald and Darryl F. Zanuck. Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, 1962.\*

*Man of Steel*. Directed by Zack Snyder. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2013.\*

*Pequi Harbor*. Directed by Michael Bay. Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Pictures, 2001.\*

*The Perfect Storm*. Directed by Wolfgang Peterson. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2000.\*

*Race to Space*. Directed by Sean McNamara. Manhattan Beach, CA: Brookwell McNamara Entertainment, 2001.\*

*The Right Stuff*. Directed by Philip Kaufman. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 1983.\*

*Rules of Engagement*. Directed by William Friedkin. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2001.\*

*Songs of Two Jims*. Directed by Allan Dwan. Hollywood, CA: Republic Pictures, 1949.\*

*Speed 2: Cruise Control*. Directed by Jan de Bont. Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, 1997.\*

*Star Trek II: The Voyage Home*. Directed by Leonard Nimoy. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1986.\*

I was standing towards the back of the crowd, stage right. There was an aisle down the middle of the audience and all of the girls were on the other side of the aisle, and all the boys were on my side of the aisle and we were all dressed up as nicely as we could and no one was happy to be there standing in the sun and mud. I was there when she volunteered — you were too, right? We were there when they called out Prim's name and there was this wave of sadness because she was so young, and then some flash of confusion and Katniss stepped out of the crowd and not many people knew her before, but afterwards everyone everywhere knew her.

I was there also when she won. I was there when the fighting started in the Districts, when we held our fingers up in salute, and when we flipped over the tables and spilled the grain into the dirt and started bashing in the policemen's masks with stones and broken lumber.

She gave us a figurehead: someone to look up to, to focus on. She became, somehow, a hero — a real hero, a popular hero, a folk hero — a hero for the people, of the people, who wouldn't compromise her idealism for anyone and who would fight for the people within a broken and oppressive system.

It's a story I feel like I've been told before, but it doesn't matter, because this time it's real. We, the oppressed, began to rise against our oppressors. The military police were already there, of course, waiting to squash whatever fight we could begin, but still —. We could feel it. Something was building and the fires were beginning to burn.

The class strata are clearer every day: we are on the bottom, and they are on the top, accumulating ever more wealth and power. Those that have have too much — anything they could possibly need or want right there within reach, so that they never have to leave their seat. Those that need, have almost nothing: not enough food, not enough medicine. We are dirty. We work hard and we sweat. We are taxed, heavily, and kept in debt to a vicious social machine. We are human and we manage to adapt, and get by.

We (I) identify.

We (I) are a part of this struggle.

We (I) are implicated.

We (I) cheer them on.

We (I) demand freedom!

We (I) demand just labor laws and just pay!

We (I) demand to have our basic human needs met, and we (I) demand that we not be ignored while the rich sit in their plush chairs and grow richer and more decadent.

We revolt. We smash things. We try to damage the infrastructure that has been slowly and steadily built up around us for hundreds or thousands of years. We scream, and bang our heads against the wall.

We get a sliver of hope, as cracks just barely start to show.

Then the lights come on and the credits roll and I stand up out of my seat and make my way back down the sticky-footed aisle and everyone files out of the theater and it smells like popcorn and outside it's probably raining and we go get in our car and drive home to the apartment and we feel pretty okay because we've watched the people rebel and so we've also rebelled with them and I sit down on the couch and take off my shoes and everything is good with the world.

But, of course, it's not good — not really. It just, for a moment, feels good: for a moment, it feels as if I were a part of something, something bigger than myself. It feels as if, for a moment, a people could rise and change could maybe happen, sometime. It feels as if, maybe, some bit of social justice could be achievable.

This is Hollywood. This is spectacle: a mass multi-media franchise backed by millions of dollars in order to sell a story to millions of people. We, as an audience, are given the chance — allowed — to view moving images of fictional popular uprisings — representations of revolution against a tyrannical force, a government out of control, a forced occupation. We are allowed, even encouraged, to sympathize with the oppressed and to vicariously experience the joy of overcoming the oppressors. We are not, however, allowed to act.

If I am to identify with the population of District 12 — the Appalachian-esque coal-mining populace from which Katniss blooms in *The Hunger Games*, I can find myself with equal ease in a range of popular films representing social uprisings, rebellion and chaos. I can find myself easily — though somewhat schizophrenically — in *The Dark Knight Rises*, there among the populace struggling to take back their city from a corrupted police force and political machine (though ultimately unknowingly perverted towards the will of another corrupt and violent

social order) and simultaneously there alongside the Gotham PD, counter to my own political and social views (this is the power of storytelling). And, maybe more tellingly, I can find myself there in *World War Z*: one of the mob of hungry flesh-eaters, stripped of humanity and surging over the walls of order in a flood of chaos.

This is the most accurate identification: I, an audience member, a viewer, am not to identify with the leading man, the ex-military man called in for one last job, or with the scientists struggling to find a cure or with the rag-tag groups of people who have somehow survived. I am a zombie: a mindless consumer, eating whatever I can find, surging forward, growing and threatening the falsely imposed order of the military-entertainment complex. Basically, I am a nobody: a face in a crowd of consumers with no agency or effect on the system other than annoyance.

When I say, in relation to *The Hunger Games*, that we, as an audience, are “allowed” to witness representations of social rebellion in the form of popular cinema, I mean just that: “allowed.” There is a long history of collusion between the United States Military, Pentagon and CIA and the entertainment industry, including film, television and videogame production. Each branch of the United States Armed Services, as well as the Central Intelligence Agency, has some form of “Entertainment Liaison” office, dedicated to working with entertainment producers on approved projects. These agencies offer their services and personnel, at the taxpayers’ expense, to, in the words of the U.S. Air Force Office of Public Affairs, “ensure that projects highlighting the missions and members of the Air Force are plausible and realistic,” and “to project and protect the image of the United States Air Force within the global entertainment environment.”<sup>1</sup>

For example, the creative team behind *Terminator: Salvation*, released in 2009, was provided with support from the U.S. Air Force including “technical assistance; Location filming at Kirtland AFB, NM; Utilized CV-22, A-10, C-130 aircraft and the HH-60 helicopter in scenes; Utilized the mobile “MASH” hospital unit; Air Force Personnel as extras.”<sup>2</sup>

*The Hunger Games* is not currently listed on any of the U.S. military film “portfolio” pages accessible to the public. This fact of omission is not, however, proof of un-involvement. It seems likely that the film did not receive production support from the U.S. military simply as it does not feature conventional military personnel, actions or vehicles. However, with the evidence of general involvement and interest by the United States military and government agencies in the production of entertainment, and an understanding and influence over how that entertainment might shape public perception of military action, it could be deduced that other factions of the U.S. government, and other government agencies around the globe, indeed do have a vested interest in the films and other multi-media franchise entertainments produced by the industry.

On its surface, *The Hunger Games* is not clearly a pro-military — or even a pro-government — film. It would seem that the film, and several of the people involved in its production, are striving to produce a work denouncing many of the structures defining contemporary society: the wealth gap; divisions of class and race; the glorification and spectacle of violence (of course, in criticizing violence, violence is depicted, though the horrors of witnessing children forced to kill children is muted by theatricality, special effects, and the ethics of friendly competition).

Regardless of any single person or group of persons’ best intentions, what we get in *The Hunger Games* and its sequels is, at best, a sedative. We identify with the ragged and hungry crowds mining coal in District 12. We want Katniss to win, but also to not win: to win by defying the system, to win by breaking the system. We don't want Katniss to shoot the apple out of the pig's mouth; we want her to shoot the man carrying a slice off of the pig.

We want her to win and then — HOLY FUCK — she does. And we fucking flip out! We throw tables over and fucking punch storm troopers in the face and have, like, thirty seconds of pure fucking freedom before the system locks itself down again. And the movie is over, and we remember that we are in fact each a real human being living in a real town, and Katniss is not real. Somehow, though, as the adrenaline eases out of our system and the dopamine rushes in, we have that feeling of satisfaction: we rebelled against something, and we didn't really win but we did for a second, and we can go home and sit on the couch and everything is ok — but wait — we're somehow right back where we started, right?

Because nothing ever changes. When we try to enact change from within the system, when we try to break the rules by following the rules, how can anything change? Katniss is caught within a structure of oppression in which everything is controlled: her own choices are barely choices at all, and all around her the game has been rigged. She is a tool, a mechanism put into action by forces outside of her and coached (coaxed) through her role.

“The genius of the system is that it never puts everyone at risk, it presents them with a lie: only these Tributes are at risk. If the Districts themselves don't want blowback, “we don't want trouble;” if they “want” to maintain the status quo, they have to send people to participate. You don't send a Theseus, “Intro,” *Air Force Entertainment Liaison Office*, last modified March 9, 2014, accessed March 9, 2014, <http://www.airforcehollywood.af.mil/intro/index.asp>

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