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'Full Metal Jacket' Transforms into Immersive App

Adam Leipzig · Wednesday, November 13th, 2013

Director Stanley Kubrick's films fall broadly into two kinds of experiences. Some, like *2001: a Space Odyssey* and *Dr. Strangelove*, feel cool and objective. The others—movies like *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Shining*—are immersive from the first frame.

Full Metal Jacket falls fully into the latter category; you don't so much watch *Full Metal Jacket* as live it. And no one lived it more or was more deeply immersed in its experience than the young actor Matthew Modine, whom Kubrick cast as Private Joker.

When Kubrick started filming *Full Metal Jacket* in 1985, he allowed Modine unfettered access to shoot photos on-set. The notoriously controlling Kubrick hadn't let anyone do that before, and Modine took full advantage of the opportunity.

Modine and his creative collaborator Adam Rackoff released *Full Metal Jacket Diary*, an iPad app that immerses users into the experience of making a landmark film with one of cinema's most iconic directors. We spoke recently about the genesis of the project, and its impact.

Adam Rackoff: When Matthew Modine's book, *Full Metal Jacket Diary*, was published in 2005, I was responsible for the "Made on a Mac" initiative in Apple's marketing division. I was fortunate to meet Matthew before the book came out. So we planned an event where Matthew presented his photographs at Apple store in Soho. The crowd spilled out of the seating area. It was so successful we repeated the event at our London and Chicago locations.

Matthew and I became friends, and stayed in touch. Five years later, the book, which was a laser-etched limited edition of 20,000, had sold out. It was heavily sought-after but not readily available. By 2010, when I decided to move on from Apple, the iPad had just come out. I started to think about it as a beautiful new medium with a high resolution screen, and Matthew's photographs, and how they could go together.

Adam Leipzig: Then you launched your Kickstarter campaign, which was highly successful. You proved your fans' interest and support. You raised more than your goal, and you had an average contribution of over \$90, which is double the average Kickstarter donation.

Matthew Modine: That was also 3x the cost of the book, which had retailed at \$29.95. The campaign was a tribute to Kubrick's fans, and we had some unique rewards—photos I had taken in 1985 and memorabilia I had saved from the film, and there were no duplicates of them.

AR: We also communicated that we wanted to maintain the collectible value of the book. The app would be something new and different that would stand next to it. We got the original negatives of the photos and rescanned them, plus original letters from Stanley, to include in the story, and really take the listener into Matthew's head.

MM: Our goal was to make something Stanley Kubrick would have been proud of, something an in-flight stewardess would carry in *2001: A Space Odyssey*.



Director Stanley Kubrick in 'Full Metal Jacket Diary'

AR: We set out to make an app version of a book, but realized we were really making a documentary, with all the photos, clippings, entries, plus materials we got from other cast members. Even though Matthew was the only one who had Stanley's permission to shoot, everyone was sneaking shots. [Entertainment Weekly](#) called it an "appumentary," which is a good word for it.

MM: Stanley Kubrick said we should be able to go back and experience films at different times in our lives, the same way we can go back and re-experience a Beethoven symphony.

AL: It is a striking experience. Sometimes, when I have seen a film after 30 years, I've said, "Hey, they re-cut the film!" And even as I'm saying that, I am realizing it that I am just seeing it differently, that is it I who has changed.

MM: Some films are so important when they come out, but are not masterpieces. *Ordinary People* beat *Raging Bull* as Best Picture. It was a very emotional film, but today we talk about *Raging Bull* and we don't really think about *Ordinary People*.

AR: I saw *Full Metal Jacket* and *Platoon* in the same year,. Everyone talked about *Platoon* then, but nobody does now. *Full Metal Jacket* is one of those films that stays with you; it's become part of the American zeitgeist, people quote it, create fan art, and the next generation is always discovering it.

MM: Any person who has to go through a training period or boot camp, in the Army, Navy, Coast Guard or anywhere, buys the film. I get tweets from those people: "I went thru boot camp, it was like *Full Metal Jacket*!" Its experience endures.

Next week: What Matthew Modine and Adam Rackoff learned about the future of narrative, and how creative people can advance their work. Listen to Matthew Modine on [Cultural Weekly Radio episode 5](#); and follow Full Metal Jacket Diary on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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Top image: Matthew Modine in 'Full Metal Jacket Diary'

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