

Hollywood Pentagon

Tape 33

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ITW Phillip NOYCE

TAPE # 33**ITW Phillip Noyce**

- 03:00:28 **ITW:** I wanted to start with a very general question, which is why are war movies so popular specially with Americans?
- 03:00:38 **Noyce:** Well, war movies are popular because it's a natural human instinct to wage conflict with other humans; to compete; to battle. But we don't like the consequences which are death and destruction. So watching a war movie is a vicarious way of going to war.
- 03:01:03 **ITW:** Do you think there's an extent to which it's violence that is somehow justified and justifiable and therefore that the audience gets out easier. They're able to watch violence and participate more actively because it's violence with a cause.
- 03:01:19 **Noyce:** Well, you know, mostly violence in the cinema is in serial killer and crime type movies where we see supposedly innocent people suffering. That can be unpalatable to a lot of the audience although in way because in those movies, inevitably there's retribution against the perpetrator of the crime, the ... the fact that audiences are turned off by the violence is counterbalanced by the fact that the perpetrator is ... is punished and that makes the audience feel better about their own lives where constantly they're under threat. So ... but in war ... in war movies, it's the enemy, a declared enemy of the State who suffers. Someone who, because they're the enemy, they deserve to be punished, they deserve to die.
- 03:02:24 **Noyce:** And there's only a few war movies that ... that really reveal the gray areas about that issue. The gray areas ... the increasingly gray areas in the modern era of war, where mostly there's no declared war. It's ... war is waged because of a notion that an Administration ... usually American Administration has ... and ... and mostly war in the modern era is illegal but war movies mostly allow us to ignore that fact.
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- 03:03:05 **ITW:** As an Australian you probably have a particular perspective on America and American culture. Do you find Americans are more or less interested in war than other cultures?

- 03:03:21 **Noyce:** I think that you know the American attitude to war is very complex. And other countries in the world can generally afford to have a more simplistic view of war in general and American wars in particular. For better or for worse, America is the reigning world champion superpower and for better or for worse as the representative of the rest of the world and as much as it is the United States of all human beings or races or / or tribes, America has developed this ... this sheriff-the-world, this policeman-to-the-world attitude. A sense of responsibility at it's ... at the best, it's best interpretation or a bullying approach to rest of the world at its worst interpretation.
- 03:04:29 **Noyce:** So America feels responsible. Americans feel that they have to intervene. That the future of the world depends on them maintaining a careful balance between good and evil. Now, other countries don't need to take that attitude, they can retreat into their tribal isolation. They can be cynical about America and America's attitudes as they [*will might be.???*] So, you know, different countries have different feelings about America's approach to war but you know they haven't got the same responsibilities / or sense of responsibility.
- [...]
- 03:05:26 **Noyce:** So, I'm an Australian and as an Australian, like many nations in the world, my country, my people feel a sense of gratitude towards America. During the 2nd World War, like many of the nations of Europe, the Americans came to our aid and in the Australians' case it was to defeat the Japanese who were on our doorstep and just about to invade when a million Americans came to Australia as the millions came to many other countries during the 2nd World War. So our foreign policy, in fact our whole economy is dependant on one concept and that is that if there's a war our nation cannot be defended by us. It's too big ... too big a land mass, it's too few of ... few Australians. The only thing we can do is continually align ourselves with America in conflicts such as Iraq, Afghanistan and so on and hope that if someone attacks Australia, Uncle Sam will come to our defense with her big missile, aircraft carriers and even nuclear arsenal.
- 03:06:49 **Noyce:** So ... but as an Australian I have a sense of gratitude towards America but at the same time as an Australian I'm able to be perhaps more cynical than the average American about the way in which the world's superpower uses the power that she has.

03:07:11 **ITW:** Do you find that Americans are more interested in watching war movies than other people? Are they more drawn to depictions of war?

03:07:24 **Noyce:** Well, you know, inevitably war movies made by Americans involve Americans and so naturally those movies tend to be more popular at home than they are abroad because it becomes a test of a people's patriotism as to whether they you know ... they buy into the story. Just the same as movies about the American presidency don't do as well overseas as they do at home. Or even films about basketball.

03:08:01 **ITW:** The script for Clear and Present Danger called for significant military assistance from the Department of Defense. Were you apprehensive about working with them or the people in the Pentagon or the people in the Armed Forces? How did you feel going into the project?

03:08:18 **Noyce:** Well, on Clear and Present Danger we approached first of all the CIA to cooperate with us as they had done on the previous Tom Clancy adaptation, Patriot Games. But because in the ... the movie, the CIA are shown to be corrupt and self-serving, they declined to assist us. And next we went to the Pentagon and perhaps expected that we'd get a similar response and it was rather interesting that the Pentagon bent over backwards to cooperate with us, gave us equipment, access to their facilities, use of aircraft carriers and so on. And the reason became pretty obvious very quickly. And that was that the movie deals with an illegal military operation in a foreign country, organized secretly by members of the White House administration on behalf, secretly, of the President.

03:09:26 **Noyce:** Now of course that introduces a very [---] point for the military which is that the military don't decide which battles it in general ... are to be fought ... well they do decide which battles but they don't decide which wars. The wars are decided in the Oval Office. They ... they're not military decisions, they're political decisions. And the soldiers then just have to do the politicians' bidding. And this film made that distinction very, very clear. So the Pentagon were very cooperative with us.

03:10:07 **ITW:** What exactly did you need? What kind of equipment and how did they help you get it?

03:10:12 **Noyce:** ...

03:53:45 Room tone.

03:54:15 **Cut**