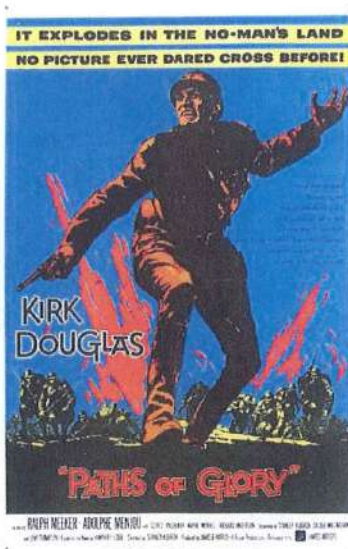


Mark Whelan's Movie Picks

Paths of Glory (1957) Director: Stanley Kubrick. 87m Rated: N/A



Twenty-seven years following Lewis Milestone's ageless World War I epic *All Quiet On The Western Front* (1930), Stanley Kubrick brought the hell of war and the harrowingly forsaken grounds of No-Man's Land back to theaters with *Paths of Glory*.

Based on a novel by Humphrey Cobb (roughly founded on an actual incident) Kirk Douglas plays Dax, a French colonel tasked by his superiors (lead by a ferocious George Macready) to undergo a suicide campaign against the Germans. When the mission fails, Douglas is ordered to recruit three of his own men--one from each company involved--to be executed for crimes of cowardice. Incensed by this political injustice Douglas rises to their defense in a powerhouse courtroom display.

Irradiated in gritty black and white, cinematographer George Krause elucidates in stark contrast the film's ill-fated proceedings while exhibiting the austerity of Kubrick's prominent de-humanistic signature. *Paths of Glory* does not cater to the predictably valiant facets of war rather it defends a different kind of heroism infrequently grasped in American war cinema: it is a contemptuous and confrontational inspection of war, its demoralizing consequences, and futility.

The three soldiers earmarked for execution are unforgettably portrayed by Ralph Meeker, Tim Carey and Joe Turkel. As time dwindles in the balance they proficiently elicit their wrath, confusion, and eventual acceptance. Though these characters are archetypes the actors' expertise renders them unmistakably real. Little can prepare you for Carey's weeping progression to meet his ultimate doom in the film's final moments.



Paths of Glory transcends the norm of Hollywood war films. It is a concoction of rousing action, courtroom drama, and a trenchant anti-war picture.

--Mark Whelan, October 16, 2014