



Firestorm: American Film in the Age of Terrorism

By Stephen Prince

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It was believed that September 11th would make certain kinds of films obsolete, such as action thrillers crackling with explosions or high-casualty blockbusters where the hero escapes unscathed. While the production of these films did ebb, the full impact of the attacks on Hollywood's creative output is still taking shape. Did 9/11 force filmmakers and screenwriters to find new methods of storytelling? What kinds of movies have been made in response to 9/11, and are they factual? Is it even possible to practice poetic license with such a devastating, broadly felt tragedy?

Stephen Prince is the first scholar to trace the effect of 9/11 on the making of American film. From documentaries like *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) to zombie flicks, and from fictional narratives such as *The Kingdom* (2007) to Mike Nichols's *Charlie Wilson's War* (2007), Prince evaluates the extent to which filmmakers have exploited, explained, understood, or interpreted the attacks and the Iraq War that followed, including incidents at Abu Ghraib. He begins with pre-9/11 depictions of terrorism, such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Sabotage* (1936), and follows with studio and independent films that directly respond to 9/11. He considers documentary portraits and conspiracy films, as well as serial television shows (most notably Fox's *24*) and made-for-TV movies that re-present the attacks in a broader, more intimate way. Ultimately Prince finds that in these triumphs and failures an exciting new era of American filmmaking has taken shape.

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Editorial Review

Review

[*Firestorm*] will be a popular resource for film students.

(James Clarke *Times Higher Education Supplement*)

Prince's impressively thorough and intelligently written book will serve as a guide for some years to this visually indelible episode in American history... Essential.

(*Choice*)

offers a detailed and insightful critical analysis while avoiding jargon...*Firestorm* is a remarkable achievement as a first look at the impact of 11 September on filmmaking, and lays the groundwork for any number of new approaches.

(Jeffrey Mazo *Survival*)

[A] thoughtful and thorough investigation of the celluloid response to that chilling September day.

(Luke Davies *The Australian*)

A rich record and accounting of the first decade of responses by both mainstream and marginal American filmmakers.

(Corey K. Creekmur *Cineaste*)

Review

Stephen Prince's penetrating analysis of the cinematic blowback from 9/11 and the 'War on Terror' is a pioneering volume blazing a trail for what will surely be a swathe of like-minded studies. This book is informative, well argued, awash in sparkling insights, and, not incidentally, quite moving.

(Thomas Doherty, Brandeis University, and author of *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*)

An accessibly written, wide-ranging introduction to a topic that no book in film studies has yet covered so comprehensively.

(Adam Lowenstein, University of Pittsburgh)

About the Author

Stephen Prince is a professor of cinema at Virginia Tech, teaching film history, criticism, and theory. He is the author of numerous books, including *Classical Film Violence*, *Movies and Meaning: An Introduction to Film*, *The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa*, and *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies*.

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