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Lights, camera, action! The definitive list of films for journalists

by Gec 19 Tweet

As journalists often be difficult to explain to other journalists what we do, how we do it and, crucially, why we do it.

It probably doesn't help that we talk in jargon, shout at Question Time, write in indecipherable shorthand and go on and on about retweets. We're like swearsy enigmas.

Nevertheless, it is somewhat fortunate that films about our industry are fairly common and have proved popular with the box office. If you're failing to explain why you do what you do, perhaps it'd just be easier to gather round some friends, watch a film like *All the President's Men* then point at the screen and say "that."

Films about journalism can also do great things for your motivation and inspire you when you've had one of those weeks: the one where the stories fall apart, your contact goes to ground or your camera breaks when you're out filming.

With help from our followers on Twitter, I've tried to compile a definitive list of journalism films. Enjoy!

All the President's Men (1976)

Arguably the best journalism film about one of the greatest scoops of all time. The film follows Carl Woodward (Robert Redford) and Bob Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman), new reporters for the Washington Post, as they work tirelessly to uncover the Watergate scandal which, as you'll know, led to the resignation of Richard Nixon. A brilliant film which reminds us of the power we wield – to know that two junior reporters brought down the most powerful man in the world is pretty inspiring!

Almost Famous (2000)

A wannabe music journalist gets a big break when he's asked to cover the tour of an emerging band for Rolling Stone magazine. A great example of 'Little fish/Big pond' syndrome.

Anchorman (2004)

Of course you've seen Anchorman. Of course you know all the words. If you haven't then pour yourself some delicious scotch for your belly and do so immediately. It's kind of a big deal. There's also a pretty hilarious drinking game if you watch it with friends.

Of course, Wannabe Hacks suggest that you drink semi-responsibly.

Balibo (2009)

Five journalists are captured and killed just prior to the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975. The film is a harrowing example of war reporting when it goes awry, but still shows the importance of the sacrifices made by those who risk their lives reporting in the most dangerous places in the world.



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picnarks We look forward to seeing

Buy the ticket, take the ride (2006)

A documentary chronicling the life, works and later years of Hunter S Thompson. A unique look into the creator of Gonzo journalism. The title describes Hunter's outlook on life and work as a whole. While a lot of Thompson's work was somewhat questionable when it came to fact, he nevertheless created an entirely new way of reporting that has left him with an impressive legacy.

Citizen Kane (1941)

Orson Welles stars in and directs one of the most famous films of all time. Welles plays Charles Foster Kane, a wealthy newspaper magnate based on William Randolph Hearst. It shows the lengths that a powerful newspaper proprietor will go to make a scoop and win the circulation war. Remind you of anyone?

Good night and Good luck (2005)

A brilliant film for both content and artistry. It chronicles the ongoing war between Senator McCarthy and Edward R Murrow at the height of the American war on communism. It looks at both media responsibility and the power that journalists have to hold those in power to account.

Veronica Guerin (2003)

Veronica Guerin is one of journalism's heroines. An Irish reporter who didn't let the fact that she was a woman working in what was seen as a man's job stop her from uncovering corruption in the police and the press. She was shot dead in 1996 after she refused to stop looking into the drug lords in Ireland. A brilliant look at an incredible reporter.

His Girl Friday (1940)

A hilarious film in which Cary Grant stars as a ruthless editor who does everything in his power to bring down the relationship between his ex wife and an ex employee. Consistently voted as one of the funniest films of all time... though whether it's better than Anchorman is up for debate.

Manufacturing Consent (1992)

A documentary about linguist and academic Noam Chomsky and his work on the subject of commercial media and how it tends to serve the powerful and wealthy elite. As relevant a subject now, 20 years on, as it was then.

Marley and Me (2008)

A surprisingly touching look at the lives of two journalists as they attempt to balance the pressures of work and the prospects of starting a family. In equal parts funny and tragic, but well worth a watch.

Network (1976)

A real classic in my eyes. A must watch for wannabe broadcasters. The film looks at a fictional television station as it struggles to stay alive due to poor ratings. Especially important now in an age where 1000 channels are all fighting for their lives. Wait for the 'Mad as Hell' speech and try not to laugh. £10 for anyone successful.*

*To be paid in 520 weekly installments.

On the Front Line – (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Alx7af4H-il>)

An incredible documentary by Jeremy Bowen on his life as a war reporter for the BBC. From Kosovo to Nicaragua, it shows the difficulties of living in the midst of human suffering and having to tell the story to the world in such a way that they sit up and pay attention.

Page One: Inside the New York Times (2011)

I loved this film when it came out. A superb documentary with all-access to the New York Times newsroom at a time when reporting methods are changing and a growing vanguard of tech-whiz kids are becoming the front line of reporters.

The Secret Rulers of the World (2001)

A five-part documentary film written by Jon Ronson. This brilliant piece of Gonzo journalism follows Ronson as he meets with numerous conspiracy theorists (most notably Alex Jones of recent Piers Morgan fame) who believe, among other things, that the rulers of the world are actually shape-shifting lizards.

No, really.

you there!

Posted May 07, 2013



picnarkes on **Wannabe Hacks**
meetup 2013

wannabehacks you have convinced me... :D

Posted May 07, 2013

Shadows of Liberty (2012)

A look at media distortion and ownership in the 21st century. It looks at the way that reporters are steered away from stories that would upset those who have a staked interest in the media companies.

Shattered Glass (2003)

A film about the life of Stephen Glass in the mid-1990s. Glass came to prominence after it emerged that he had fabricated a huge number of articles for The New Republic. A rise-then-fall story that tells the obvious message to all journalists: don't lie.

Shooting Robert King (2009)

I started watching this last night and I'm captivated. King is a photojournalist who has covered numerous wars, including Kosovo and Grozny. It shows the lengths gone to in order to get the right shots.

State of Play (2009)

A classic tale of political skulduggery when pitted against journalistic integrity. Russell Crowe stars as a journalist looking to track down the real story behind the death of a US Congressman's mistress. A great thriller with a strong message.

The Devil wears Prada (2006)

Anne Hathaway stars as a lowly assistant to the staggeringly nasty Miranda Priestly, editor of a high-end fashion magazine. Priestly is said to be based on Anna Wintour, editor of Vogue. The film, while being pretty charming, also serves as a reminder about the horrors of trying to work your way up the ladder in the world of journalism.

The Killing Fields (1984)

A film about two journalists as they cover the civil war in Cambodia. A hard film to watch in places as it doesn't spare much in the way of the horrors of the war. Worth the watch if you're an aspiring foreign correspondent, this film will certainly make you reconsider if you're really cut out for it.

The Soloist (2009)

Robert Downey, Jr. stars as a reporter for the LA Times who, after a bike accident, befriends a homeless, schizophrenic violinist. The story poses the interesting and always controversial question about how involved journalists should be in the lives of those they report on.

The Year of Living Dangerously (1982)

The film follows the lives of a group of foreign correspondents in Djakarta on the eve of the coup against by the 30 September Movement. A film that looks at, among other things, what happens when journalists from different backgrounds work together on the same story at a time of unease.

Wag the Dog (1997)

A comedy about the damage spin doctors can do and the lengths they will go to to protect their side.

Anyone who's ever come into contact with one of these creatures will be able to tell you similar, if not quite as extreme stories!

—

What do you think? Have we missed any films? What are your favourites? Let us know! Comment below or tweet us [@WannabeHacks](#)

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TRACKBACKS

that time of year to talk about film ... « *above the fold, above the scroll* says:

February 4, 2013 at 10:22 PM

[...] only a few of these films merited Oscar buzz, this list of 50 must-see journalism films includes many of my favorites (starting with No. 1, "All the [...])

Off The Wire: News for the Canadian media freelancer February 5-11 says:

February 11, 2013 at 5:09 PM

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MattieTK

Feb 15, 2013

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas?

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kerrhall

Feb 3, 2013

I'd also include: Reds (1981) - about the life and career of John Reed, the revolutionary communist, journalist, and writer who chronicled the Russian Revolution

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kerrhall

Feb 3, 2013

I think you've missed some films. For example:

Absence of Malice (1981)

The Shipping News (2001)

Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism (2004)

Also, I question the inclusion of The Secret Rulers of the World (2001), which isn't really about journalism -- rather, it's a piece of journalistic work. There are plenty of other documentaries that would make the list then too.

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nicki_

Feb 1, 2013

So glad State of Play is listed, it's such a great movie!

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ABOUT

Wannabe Hacks is a living, breathing journalism resource. All our content is produced by aspiring journalists. Our aim is to offer an insight into the different routes into journalism, provide in-depth commentary about the big issues and stimulate discussion around what matters to you.

Current Editors: George Berridge, Natasha Clark, Liam Corcoran, Jenni Graham and Caroline Mortimer.

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