



Best Broadcasting Movies of All Time

If you truly love broadcasting, these are the movies for you. Visualize the drama, the glamour, the conflict, and the big meaty stories. Of course this isn't all there is to broadcasting, but who wouldn't like to forget about the boring parts for two hours and watch broadcasting at its best, worst, most comical, and most cynical?

Under Fire (1983) This adventurous tale of a news crew in war-torn 1979 Nicaragua is an exploration of journalistic loyalties and ethics. The plot's premise is a love triangle among a photographer, a radio reporter and a print journalist, played by Nick Nolte, Joanna Cassidy, and Gene Hackman. Hackman, as a magazine reporter, bails on his coverage of the grizzly guerilla warfare to take a cushy news anchor job. This is the first ethical decision made, and sets off a series of others. Nolte and Cassidy, now a photography/radio team, continue to broadcast and cover the fighting until a climactic cover-up on the part of Nolte causes Hackman to return to the scene under false pretenses. Hackman is subsequently killed in a senseless act of violence, which Nolte covers on camera. The whole film is a brilliant testimony to the conflicting values of career advancement, personal relationships, and public morale versus journalistic truth, which has traditionally been a struggle for journalists in wartime. The best thing about the film is the way it portrays how the seemingly minor journalistic choices you make can have huge consequences.

Welcome to Sarajevo (1999) This ruthless expose of global inaction in Bosnia, as seen through the eyes of British journalist Michael Nicholson, is an unflinching documentary of Serbian oppression of Sarajevo and its surrounding towns. Reporter Michael Henderson embodies a key journalistic conflict, and that's what makes this movie one of the best broadcasting movies of all time. Whereas *Under Fire* documents what happens when you get too close to a co-worker, *Welcome to Sarajevo* shows what happens when you get too close to a source. How long can you watch violence and terrorism to children occur without wanting to step out of your objective capacity and step in and help? This is the journey of Michael Henderson, who goes against all journalistic objectivity to help the children of the town. The whole movie is a portrayal of journalistic attempts to stay cool in the face of incredible human cruelty, from dark humor to Henderson's eventual heroic attempts, and reminds all of us that broadcasters really do have feelings.

The China Syndrome (1979) This four time Oscar-nominated film is worthy of best broadcasting movie because it shows the amazing crux and curveball of broadcasting: how a

seemingly ordinary beat can cannonball into a colossal story. Jane Fonda plays Kimberley Wells, an ambitious reporter relegated to fluff stories by her sexist employer. But a seemingly minor story about a local nuclear power plant becomes much more when a source from inside the plant leaks information about an accident that occurred there. With the help of her hippie cameraman, (Michael Douglas), Wells resolves to expose the breach, but has to go against network brass to do it. This is an important story about broadcasting legalities as an impediment to the truth, and Jack Lemmon's portrayal of the source that leaked is a sobering reminder to journalists that they are not the only ones who sacrifice for a story.

Up Close & Personal (1996) This movie is as an easy, feel-good broadcasting movie, as comforting as the provocative refrain veteran news mentor Warren Justice (played by Robert Redford) tells Tally Atwater (Michelle Pfeiffer) when he's coaching her on how to deliver news: "tell me a story." And, despite its flaws, such as many sappy and clichéd love scenes, this movie is compelling because it reminds us that the simple task of broadcasting really is storytelling, while showing us how complicated that simple task can be. Atwater goes through all the normal learning curves of broadcasters, putting herself in the story too much, failing to connect with her audience, offending sources, etc, but in the end she gets it exactly right. The finale of the film is her humble, patient, and intelligent account of the life and death of a prison inmate who just happened to father the first baby of the New Year. This is where the movie should have ended, but instead it drags on in an obvious attempt to steal the spotlight for Redford as a journalistic martyr. But it doesn't work. Pfeiffer's meteoric rise from dowdy assistant to detached, objective newswoman is what we remember. Also watch for Stockard Channing's steely realistic portrait of a veteran reporter who is both Pfeiffer's nemesis and muse.

Live from Baghdad (2002) Based on a true story, this film is the account of how CNN Producer Robert Wiener (Michael Keaton) and his news team told true stories from the front lines during the 1991 Gulf War, and almost didn't get to air them. Attempting to find sources despite the strict Iraqi government's mandated code of silence, and trying to navigate the country's censorship policy while still producing true news all collaborates to be a tough challenge for this news team, who is also under strict orders to provide constant updates and outscop the competition. When the bombs finally fall in Baghdad, the CNN crew is one of the few still left, and is able to transmit the attack first hand via a "four wire" transmitter. This movie follows the broadcasting saga from cumbersome interviews, false leads, and frustrating conflicts of interests, to its stunning ending that remind us, in broadcasting, it's the ends that makes it all worth it.

The Insider (1999) Starring Al Pacino and Russel Crowe. Based on the Marie Brenner article entitled "The Man Who Knew Too Much," this movie is the story of fired tobacco company Brown & Williamson's research chief Jeffery Wigand and his relationship with Lowell Bergman, producer of CBS's "60 Minutes." The movie chronicles the infamous suppressed interview of Wigand, and the results of its eventual revelation. After Wigand's interview comes to light, Brown & Williamson launch a retaliating smear campaign against Wigand, which is disproved by the Wall Street Journal. Bergman then leaks the story to the New York Times, quits 60 Minutes, and becomes a teacher. This broadcasting movie is a good look at the producing side of the craft, and is inspirational because it shows someone at the top-a 60 minutes producer-abandon everything to do what he knows is right, instead of the other way around.

Pump Up the Volume(1990)-In Suburbia, Arizona, radio-pirate DJ Hard Harry is a hero for the disillusioned youth who dreams of being heard. Instead of just lying around daydreaming about fame and hating his parents however (although he does plenty of that too), Harry actually seizes the idea and launches a one-man broadcast from his bedroom transmitter at night. Airing his politically incorrect opinions and suggestive music, Harry causes quite a sensation. With the help of a gal pal, the two avoid escalating heat from police, school officials, and the FCC.

Think of it as Ferris Beuhler's Day Off for the broadcasting junkie.

The Network(1976)-Paddy Chayefsky's hilarious look at what happens when a news anchor refuses to take his network's shift from informative to entertaining lying down. Howard Beale, played by Peter Finch, is a TV anchorman who becomes a casualty of the ratings quest, but he refuses to go quietly. Instead he announces on live air he is going to commit suicide. His ratings shoot through the roof, and garner the attention of the Communications Corporation of America (CCA), who is about to become the parent company of the network, (hence the shift in the network's values). The ratings-hungry company recognizes a star when they see one and give Beale his own spot as "the mad prophet of the airwaves." Beale is allowed to tell the real truth about everything to Americans, but the plot takes another chaotic turn when Beale turns his honest attentions on the CCA. Future broadcast producers watch this movie for a cautionary performance by manic, sensation-obsessed producer, Diana Christensen, played by Faye Dunaway.

Broadcast News (1987)- This famous film garnered seven Oscar nominations for its behind-the-scenes look at broadcast news. Not quite an expose, *Broadcast News* is more of an insight into the inner workings of a broadcasting crew. Its tone is more comical than cynical, but nonetheless true, as anyone who has worked in the newsroom knows. Holly Hunter, William Hurt, and Albert Brooks play the news team, each representing different paradigms of the shifting loyalties in network news. Hunter is the quintessential producer, all snap and sizzle, running on pure adrenaline and loving every minute of it. Hurt plays a pretty boy reporter who epitomizes broadcasting's shift from hard news to infotainment. Brooks plays his antithesis, a talented but unsexy correspondent with no on-screen presence. A look at the ongoing battle in the newsroom between sensation and substance, it is worth watching this film just because of how director James L. Brooks, a former journalist, perfectly documents the adrenaline rush of broadcast news that is the very pulse of the business.

Veronica Guerin(2003)- Okay, so she's a print journalist. But with the title role played by Oscar-nominated Cate Blanchett, this film is based on the true story of the fearless reporter who covered the rampant drug wars of 90's Dublin, is a must-see for anyone who wants to achieve social good through media. After multiple attempts on her life did not decrease her tenacity to publish the truth, Guerin was brutally murdered in 1996. What is inspiring about this story is that unlike the death of many reporters', Guerin's was not in vain. Her death led to important reforms in Irish laws and arrests of top criminals. See this film for its fascinating glimpse into Ireland's underworld, and a realistic depiction of the myriad challenges journalists face, from personal danger to tension at home.

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