

DVD Review: Terrence Malick's Beloved 'The Thin Red Line' Joins Criterion

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 12, 2010 - 12:04pm

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CHICAGO – Whenever two power players in the world of cinephiles come together, it creates a critical buzz and such was the case when it was announced that The Criterion Collection had chosen Terrence Malick's "The Thin Red Line" for induction in their world-renowned series of DVDs and Blu-rays.



DVD Rating: **5.0/5.0**

"Director Terrence Malick recommends that The Thin Red Line be played loud." — The first thing one sees after hitting play on the new edition of "The Thin Red Line."

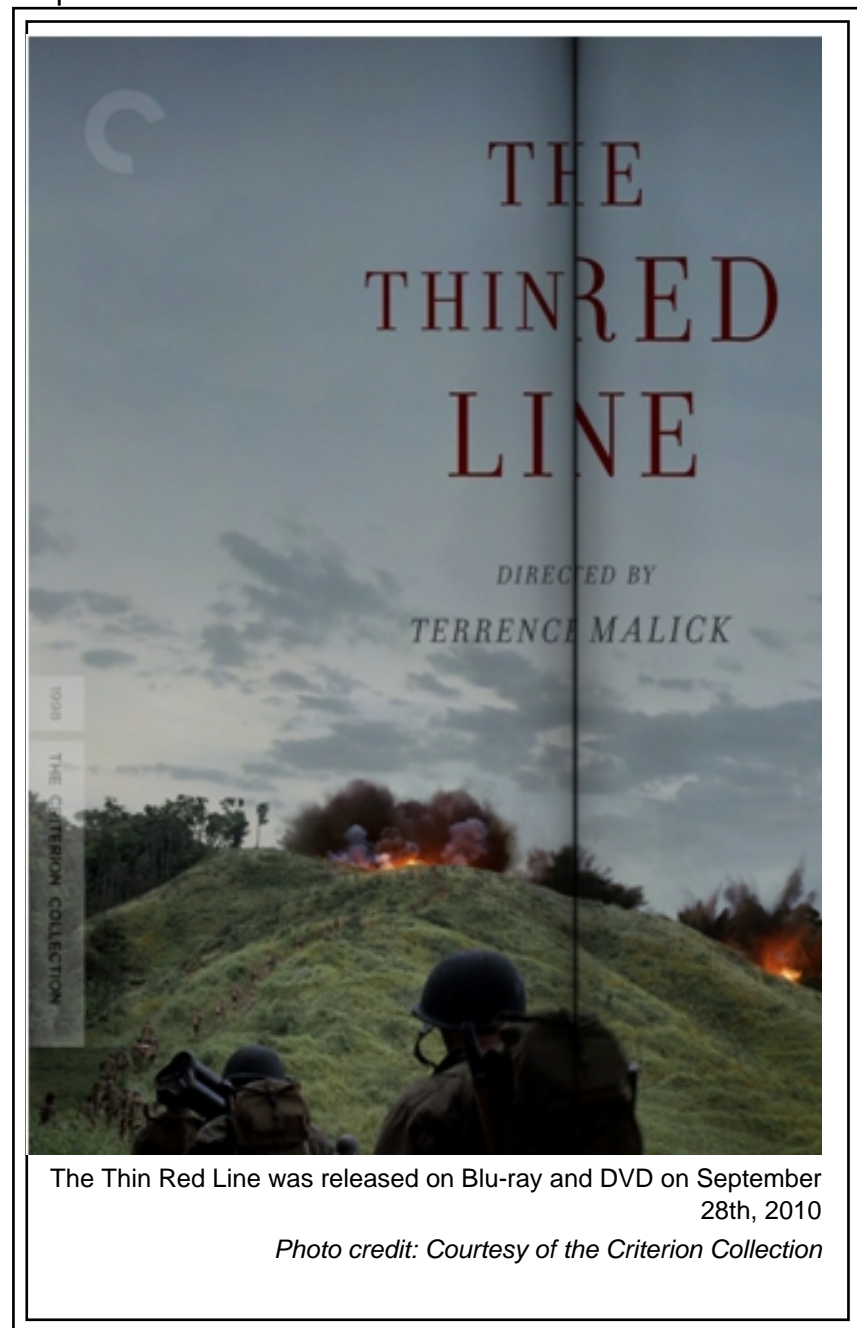


The Thin Red Line was released on Blu-ray and DVD on September 28th, 2010

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection

As with most Criterion releases, the most notable thing about the edition is the film itself. They never skimp on the actual transfer and one can only imagine the time and effort the notoriously-detailed Malick must have put in with cinematographer John Toll on this new, restored high-definition digital transfer. Of course, if you can get it, pick up the Blu-ray version, but the DVD we were sent looks remarkable as well. It is a transfer that's not overly-polished with some noticeable film grain but one gets the feeling that the movie looks exactly as Malick would want it to look on DVD. It wouldn't have been released otherwise. And the audio mix in Dolby Digital 5.1 is strong enough that, yes, you should turn

it up loud.



The movie itself marked Malick's return to cinema after a twenty-year absence and its release was met in some circles with as much anticipation as "Star Wars" fans held for the prequels to their beloved trilogy. A new Malick film is an event for cinephiles and "The Thin Red Line" had been the subject of rumors for months; rumors of a laborious editing process that had left major actors on the cutting room floor and shocked most of the people involved who thought they were making a different film. On the eve of its release, we were all excited to see what exactly Malick had cut together. What was "The Thin Red Line" and, it should be noted, how would it compare to that year's "Saving Private Ryan," a film that turned out to be a very different kind of war movie?

"The Thin Red Line" is a war movie that only Terrence Malick could make. It is at times violent but also lyrical. At its core, it is an adaptation of James Jones's 1962 novel about the World War II battle for Guadalcanal, but it is a unique epic, a film that has grown for this viewer in the years since its release. I'll admit to being one those average film goers who was a bit disappointed by a film that was sold as a high-powered star vehicle but turned out to be a piece where the performances weren't nearly as important as the mood of the entire piece. "The Thin Red Line" is a film about the on-the-ground experience of combat and how men can do something as completely unnatural as war in the beauty of nature.

It would go on to be nominated for dozens of awards, including Best Picture, but was somewhat seen as a disappointment culturally, not really delivering at the box office. History has been and will continue to be very kind to "The Thin Red Line." This is a film that gets better with every single viewing, making it a perfect fit for Criterion.

The Criterion release is packed with special features that offer an incredible amount of detailed information about the controversial production. It's interesting to this critic how many of the key players in "The Thin Red Line" were willing to come back to discuss a 12-year-old movie. It's not often that A-list stars will line up like they do for the featurette on this edition in which Kirk Acevedo, Jim Caviezel, Thomas Jane, Elias Koteas, Dash Mihok, and Sean Penn discuss their recollection of the film (along with Hans Zimmer, the film's editors, and the daughter of the writer of the source material). Combined with a new commentary by Toll, production designer Jack Fisk, and producer Grant Hill, the release makes for a great look at the making-of the film from both sides of the camera.

Other special features include the original theatrical trailer, a new interview with casting director Dianne Crittenden with archival audition footage, fourteen minutes of outtakes from the film, World War II newsreels from Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands, Melanesian chants, and a booklet featuring an essay by film critic David Sterritt and a 1963 reprint by James Jones.

"The Thin Red Line" stars Sean Penn, Adrien Brody, Jim Caviezel, Ben Chaplin, George Clooney, John Cusack, Woody Harrelson, Elias Koteas, Dash Mihok, Tim Blake Nelson, Nick Nolte, John C. Reilly, and John Travolta. It was written and directed by Terrence Malick. It was released on DVD and Blu-ray on September 28th, 2010. It is rated R and runs 171 minutes.

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