

DVD Review: 'Restrepo' Harrowing Depicts Human Cost of War

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 15, 2010 - 11:09pm

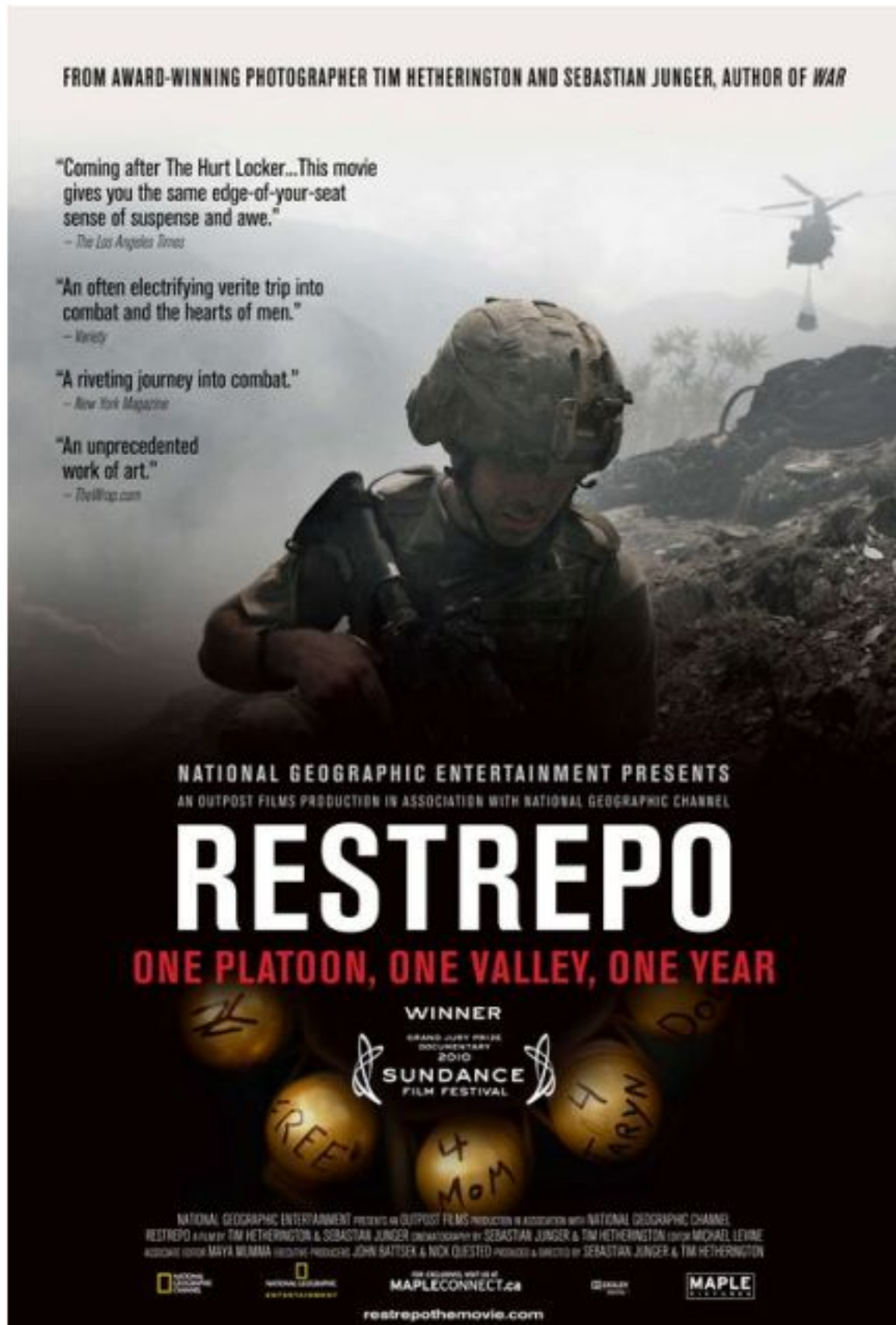
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CHICAGO – “Restrepo” is not your average war documentary. It is a terrifying you-are-there experience that will give you goosebumps as the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. This is real. This is not Hollywood. And it is riveting, spectacular filmmaking.



DVD Rating: **4.5/5.0**

The Korangal Valley in Afghanistan could be compared to a corner of Hell. CNN dubbed it “*the deadliest place on Earth*.” One of the soldiers that we meet in “Restrepo” was told on assignment to the area that it is shot upon every single day. Imagine if someone tried to kill you every single day. Journalist Sebastian Junger and photographer Tim Hetherington have crafted a deceptively-simple documentary that focuses solely on the men on the ground. There are no interviews with generals or war analysts — only the men who call themselves “fish in a barrel.”



Restrepo was released on DVD on December 7th, 2010

Photo credit: National Geographic

Junger and Hetherington dove into that barrel and spent a year in Afghanistan on assignment for Vanity Fair. The film focuses on time spent with the 2nd Platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment of the 173rd Brigade Combat Team in the Korangal Valley. The men are stationed there in an outpost called Restrepo, named after a medic who was killed.

"Restrepo" intercuts footage that Junger and Hetherington shot while they were embedded with interviews with the men they met there. The filmmakers offer no "big picture." We don't see footage at home and we get very little commentary on the conflict as a whole other than some insight from the men. This is not a political piece (although you'd be forgiven for wondering what can be accomplished by putting these young men into such a deadly situation). It is an experiential documentary showing, perhaps better than any film ever has, what it's like to be stationed in one of the most dangerous places in the world.

It's hard to put into words the visceral experience of "Restrepo" and that's probably why Junger and Hetherington don't use many. They don't narrate or appear. It's about the men and their campaign. And when you hear gunfire in a movie like "Restrepo" it can take your breath away. We see Doc Restrepo in a grainy footage while hearing gunfire in the background. It was a moment like that in which he breathed his last breath. Talk about bringing the human conflict of war home.

There's an amazing speech near the end of "Restrepo." The men have been emotionally devastated by conflict and just heard that a nearby company suffered a large number of losses recently. As they mourn, their captain gives a speech about how other people have died and they mourn and then they move on. One body falls and the rest of the men mourn and move on. That is war.

And that's what "Restrepo" does so brilliantly. It reminds us of the human cost of war. We've seen a number of political documentaries about the larger picture in Iraq and Afghanistan but "Restrepo" (and, coincidentally, another of the best documentaries of 2010, "The Tillman Story") serves as a reminder that war isn't fought by politicians. It's fought by men like Doc Restrepo. And the men who mourned him and moved on.

Special Features:

- o Extended / Deleted scenes
- o Extended interviews
- o Update on the Soldiers of 2nd Platoon

"Restrepo" was directed by Sebastian Junger and Tim Hetherington. It was released on December 7th, 2010 and is rated R. It runs 97 minutes.



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