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# Full Metal Jacket Diary



## Synopsis

Despite the infamous reputation of the enigmatic Stanley Kubrick, Matthew Modine couldn't refuse his offer. Faced with the prospects of a career-defining role and mentorship by a cinematic great, the 24-year-old Hollywood actor arrived in London armed with a large-format Roliflex camera inspired by Kubrick's early career as a Look photographer and a notebook to record his own on-set reportage; preparation for his starring role as a Marine Corps journalist. But expectations eroded as a strange, creeping sickness pervaded the set, a horrific accident sidelined a principal, and an unexpected rivalry arose with a co-star. And as the months dragged on, take-by-take, Modine realized he was falling victim to a manipulative mind-game of the Grand Master himself. By the time his tour of duty ended a year and a half later, Modine had shot hundreds of photos and written countless entries. Only now, after two decades and the death of Kubrick, can Modine look back on his images and words. The result is a coming-of-age drama set against the backdrop of a seminal Vietnam saga. A book like no other, Stanley Kubrick would have been the first in line to buy Full Metal Jacket Diary.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Modine, who starred as Private Joker in Stanley Kubrick's 1987 Vietnam War masterpiece, Full Metal Jacket, gets right to the core of his subject by beginning with the question, "What was Stanley like?" He supplies the answers throughout this diary on the movie's filming, which should provide

new insights for Kubrick enthusiasts. Modine's writing isn't graceful, but his insider's view of events have enough acrid flavor and authenticity to compensate. He explains Kubrick's philosophy by quoting him, "There are no bad ideas—only better ones," and convincingly highlights the fanatical perfectionism that caused Kubrick to go "dangerously overboard... way behind schedule." Modine mentions the horror of eating fruits and meats that were actually from the Vietnam War, kept in cans for 20 years. Other atmospherically effective details include the "incredibly uncomfortable, gummy and viscous" makeup blood, freezing in jungle fatigues and experiencing through Kubrick's emphasis on raw reality what the war was like. The book is filled with Modine's excellent photographs, which powerfully supplement the sometimes sketchy narrative. In the end, the work succeeds in expressing Modine's attitude—"I'm going to make you feel the horror of death." The stainless steel—covered book—each one laser-etched with a serial number—should become a collector's item for fans of the legendary director. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Matthew Modine has starred in over forty films, including *Any Given Sunday*, *Pacific Heights*, *Married to the Mob*, *Vision Quest*, and *Birdy*.

This is a "must read" for fans of the classic film, "Full Metal Jacket". Actor Matthew Modine shared his personal insights in a humble and revealing manner, which made me appreciate the final product even more. Great anecdotes about the legendary Stanley Kubrick's process for creating and directing "FMJ", and how Kubrick obtained the best possible performances from his cast and crew. I especially liked the story behind R. Lee Ermey's iconic performance as Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, the most authentic portrayal of a Marine Corps Drill Sergeant in any film to date. By the way, I highly recommend reading "The Shorttimers" by Gustave Hasford, as a prelude to FMJ Diary. This is the novel upon which FMJ was based, and Modine makes frequent reference to its influence on him and Kubrick. It's a classic novel in its own right, and provides important context to the film.

What's important about Matthew Modine's unabridged reading of his FULL METAL JACKET DIARY is what was important about the illustrated book, released in 2005, bound in hardcover—very hardcover—in a numbered edition of 20,000. Modine's book is the best personal accounting to date of working with one of the great masters of cinema. For such a chronicle, genius at writing is a plus but not a necessity. What's required is an eyewitness author with intimate access, acute observational

skills and good notes. They also need to have known the importance of the position in which they were placed, and to have wanted to pass along the details of what they encountered and, in some cases, suffered in the company of a master. As the star of the film, Modine, who played Private Joker, was constantly on the set; he absorbed the lengthy process intensely; he kept a personal diary that is perceptive and honest; he took photographs with a square-format Rolleiflex; and he put it all together in a handsome, readable book that has not been reprinted and is now a collector's item. As a result, *FULL METAL JACKET DIARY* compares with James Lord's *A GIACOMETTI PORTRAIT*; Brassa's *CONVERSATIONS WITH PICASSO*; and Michael Ventura's *CASSAVETES DIRECTS* as a detailed accounting of genius at work and, too, of what it's like to be around and, in Modine's case, perform under direction by one of the finest film artists of the century. Narrating a book is an art in itself. It is a treat to hear an author reading his or her work, but it is not necessarily as compelling as a professional in the recorded books field. Even celebrity performers such as Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Sean Penn and Johnny Depp have fallen a bit short reading authors they admire. But Matthew Modine is perfectly at ease narrating his own diary, and his plainspoken approach makes sense to the diaristic form. "Production on most recorded books means getting the voice right and editing out glitches and mistakes. But *FULL METAL JACKET DIARY*, which is also an award-winning iPad app, is very much a production in the style of old radio, with Modine and Adam Rackoff who developed the app together credited as producers and directors. Modine's voice is altered for different forms of entry; sound effects are liberally employed; there is music by Juano Lippi; sound design by Dan Timmons; and Modine creates the suggestion of other voices throughout. The metal-jacketed *DIARY* is fully illustrated with Modine's photography, and some of these images are reproduced in the fine booklet that also features a timeline and statements by Modine, Rackoff, Kubrick's daughter Vivian (who composed the music for her father's film), and Leon Vitali, who acted in two of Kubrick's films, served as Kubrick's assistant, and was casting director on *FULL METAL JACKET*. The downloadable version of *FULL METAL JACKET DIARY* includes a PDF that reproduces the booklet included with the CD. The decision to turn the audiobook into an event, and the complex production values that entails, are admirable, and it can be seen as creating the audio equivalent of the photography and the varied layouts in the printed book. It's not a criticism of this effort to say that it is not what makes this

recording most significant. That Matthew Modine has the goods on working with Stanley Kubrick, and that he has taken the time, and has the skill, to render what it is to practice the art of acting in playing Private Joker, is what matters most, and so hearing Modine tell it is enough of a delight that he could have read the diary into the mic and gone home. It's no fault of the audio production team that their admirable efforts are secondary. Quite simply, the book itself is terrific. Early in the narrative, Modine attends a SAG meeting in which actors complain about leaving late for lunch. Modine's attitude is, in effect, what does ten minutes matter if you're working with Kubrick? Then he faults himself for not seeing it wasn't about time, but about meal-penalty fees that were important to cast members who relied on them to live. This is not a Kubrick anecdote – there are plenty of those here, e.g. Kubrick noticing that his lens has been placed a few inches off, or Kubrick trying to talk his star out of being with his wife for childbirth – but it captures an essential even of shooting a masterpiece: filmmaking is complicated with scores of individual duties and concerns. It also emblemizes Modine's willingness to get at what his days on the set were really like, even when his self-portraits are less than flattering. At a time when it seems as if everyone in the public eye is writing at least one if not a stream of memoirs, we have few such day-to-day accounts of actual work with film directors by men and women who were there. Most celebrity bios feature a few paragraphs, perhaps a chapter, about working with a director. Modine's extensive account of adventuring with Kubrick on FULL METAL JACKET is thus still a rarity in the literature of film. It is essential listening for any aspiring film actor, filmmaker, student or enthusiast of cinema, as well as for anyone intrigued by the creative process, and of course for Kubrick aficionados. More than that, FULL METAL JACKET DIARY is a very good story very well told, another reason why I strongly recommend this audio version of FULL METAL JACKET DIARY for private listening as well as for all library and university collections.

Fun read and perfect behind the scenes companion for one of my favorite movies.

This actually metal book is a must-have for any serious FMJ/Kubrick fan. Matthew Modine kept copious notes and took hundreds of photographs during the filming of FMJ in London in the mid-1980s and he has put many of them together in this 20,000 copy, limited-edition numbered book.

If you love the movie like I do, you will enjoy this unique book. It's great to get the behind the scenes

stories and pics.

Matthew Modine (who plays Joker in the movie) published the story of first meeting Stanley Kubrick to finishing the movie. The filming was pushed back due to R. Lee Ermey's car crash and Vincent D'Onofrio hurt knee. Plus the drama that ensued between the cast and crew. I would recommended this book for anyone who loved the movie.

Modine showed up on the set of Stanley Kubrick's 1987 Vietnam War masterpiece "Full Metal Jacket", in which he starred as Private Joker, armed with his weapon and his gun and his Rollei. Not only does Modine prove himself to be quite a talented photographer, but his behind-the-scenes account of the making of the motion picture is a wonderfully revealing look inside the movie making process that few people see. If you've ever been curious about how movies are made, or are curious about what it was like to work with Stanley Kubrick, Matthew's book lifts the curtains and let's you inside.

Awesome story telling from Matthew Modine. Very insightful and compelling. I give this a 5/5 . Don't have it? Get it

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