

The Image of the Journalist and the News Media in the Feature Films Directed by Steven Spielberg

By Melissa Farrar

Abstract

Steven Spielberg, one of Hollywood's most recognizable names, has directed numerous blockbuster films during a career that spans over three decades. The topics of his films range from the adventures of a boy and his extra-terrestrial buddy to the Holocaust. Somehow amid the variety of these cinematic worlds, journalists or news media find their way into the majority of Spielberg's films.

Most often, journalists and news crews play bit parts in Spielberg's films. However, when looked upon as a whole, they most consistently serve as commentators on important situations within the films, and are there to provide the audience and characters with vital information.

The images of journalists and news media in his films are particularly notable because of Spielberg's reach as a director. What he puts onto film is seen by millions around the world, and an audience's perception of journalists and news media is no doubt affected by Spielberg's representations of them.

Directing Pop Culture

This paper will examine the image of journalists and the news media in the films directed by Steven Spielberg¹. One of the most popular filmmakers of the 20th century,

Spielberg has articulated his keen interest on the topic of journalists and news media in multiple interviews, and he has included them, on some level, in many of his films.

Spielberg utilizes the news media and journalists as plot devices and props, and in some cases they play a more major role.

As a director, producer and founding partner of DreamWorks², Spielberg has been responsible for some of the most financially successful and beloved films of all time. The 24 feature films directed by Spielberg have grossed over \$3.5 billion³ internationally and earned him multiple honors, including two Academy Awards for Best Director.⁴ Five of his films are included in the American Film Institutes list of the 100 Greatest American Movies of all time⁵ and in 1998, *Time* magazine named Spielberg the “most influential” filmmaker of the twentieth century.⁶

In a 1999 *New York Times* magazine piece, Stephen J. Dubner described Spielberg’s filmmaking style: “Freely toggling between history-based dramas and his “popcorn movies,” he is the most popular filmmaker in the world and king of an entertainment empire whose aesthetic—a sort of right-minded, irony-free, thrill-seeking aesthetic—has permeated the cultural landscape. His creations live on not only in classroom discussions but also in theme parks, on lunch boxes, in TV commercials.”⁷

From early on in his career to his most recent works, the presence of news media or journalists has been included in many of these Spielberg films in varying degrees.

“I’m always interested in the way media can determine the outcome of a public event,” Spielberg told writer Mitch Tuchman in a 1978 *Film Comment* piece, “Ever since I began following the seven o’clock evening news, I’ve watched the complete commercialization of news programming all across the country. I think it began in media

centers and then branched out successfully into the smaller towns.⁸ *Network*⁹ certainly makes the point better than I ever could.”¹⁰ Tuchman noted that Spielberg included “the microphone and the cameraman and the crowd”¹¹ in a number of his films.

News crews play a particularly a pivotal role in *The Sugarland Express* (1974), Spielberg’s theatrical feature film directorial debut. The film was based on the true story of a down-on-their luck married Texas couple who led police on a highway chase during an attempt to reunite with their baby son after losing custody of him. In the film, the news media quickly catch wind of the plight of Clovis (William Atherton) and Lou Jean Poplin (Goldie Hawn) who’ve taken police officer Maxwell Slide (Michael Sacks) hostage. Soon, news crews pursue them just as doggedly, if not more so, than the police.

Toward the end of the film, a red news van with the logo 6KION screeches out from behind a billboard and catches up to the trio’s car. A reporter stands with the van doors open while traveling at a high speed, precariously holding out a long boom microphone as he attempts to interview the police officer, Slide.¹² While the reporter gets comments from Slide, Captain Tanner (Ben Johnson), who’s leading the police chase, yells into a megaphone warning the news van to get out of the way. The news crew ignores the warning, so Captain Tanner shoots the van’s tires and it goes tumbling to the side of the road where it crashes, ejecting all those aboard into a muddy pond.

This scene comes after multiple instances where news crews are shown in a less than flattering light. By this point, it seems that the audience is meant to be cheering for the police after they’ve essentially given the news crew what they deserved. Other directors took it further in later films like *Scream*¹³ and *Die Hard*.¹⁴ In these films, central characters actually punch reporters in the face.

In a 1974 interview for *Take One*, David Helpen asked Spielberg if he considered *The Sugarland Express* a political film. Spielberg replied, “Yeah, highly political. It’s a terrible indictment of the media, more than anything else. It was a circus on wheels.”¹⁵

Not all of Spielberg’s films are simply negative or positive portrayals of journalists or the news media. Rather, they are representative of the variety of journalistic and news media images that have become commonplace in both film and television. But because these are Spielberg films, chances are more eyes are seeing his images of the journalist and news media, more ears are hearing their words, and more filmmakers are imitating what they see on screen in their own films.

The Heroic Journalist

While the majority of Spielberg’s works incorporate aspects of journalism or news media at some level, the only film in which a journalist serves as one of the central characters is *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (1997).

In the film sequel to the blockbuster *Jurassic Park* (1993), John Hammond (Richard Attenborough), the owner of Jurassic Park, still smarting from the disastrous results of that venture, hatches a plan to protect another island inhabited by some of its surviving dinosaurs. In an attempt to prevent his no-good nephew from having the animals captured and brought to San Diego for a theme park, Hammond hires a team of experts to document the dinosaurs in their habitat.

Hammond tries to entice a skeptical chaos theorist, Dr. Ian Malcolm¹⁶ (Jeff Goldblum), into joining the team in an effort to gather images that could be used by the news media.

“Public opinion is the one thing that I can use to preserve it,” Hammond says. “But in order to rally that kind of support, I need a complete photo record of those animals alive and in their natural habitat.” He claims it is the “last chance for redemption.”

Nick Van Owen (Vince Vaughn) is the documentarian and photojournalist hired to document the dinosaurs inhabiting the island of Isla Sorna. The rest of the part includes Dr. Sarah Harding (Julianne Moore), a behavioral paleontologist, Eddie Carr (Richard Schiff), a field equipment expert, and Dr. Malcolm.

Nick's character has roots in the early portrayals of journalists in movies, many of which used Ben Hecht and Charles McArthur's famed play and later film *The Front Page*¹⁷ as prototypes for their reporter characters.

“No one talks faster than the reporters and the rapid-fire wisecracks and overlapping cut-ups create a hyped-up comic velocity, a kind of verbal slapstick,” say Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy, authors of *The Hollywood Social Problem Film: Madness, Despair and Politics From the Depression to the Fifties*. “The reporters are lovable roustabouts, as smooth and charming as the lawyers while at the same time somewhat rowdy and vulgar.”¹⁸

Throughout the film, Van Owen never strays far from the early film representation of the reporter, both good and bad. However, his character is a photojournalist and environmentalist.

Nick's introduction to the audience and Dr. Malcolm comes as he's preparing to leave for the island and is indicative of his multi-faceted, often self-contradictory personality.

Dr. Malcolm: “What’s your background? Wildlife photography?”

Van Owen: “Yeah, wildlife, combat. You name it. When I was with *Nightline*, I was in Rwanda, Chechnya, all over Bosnia. Do some volunteer work with Green Peace once in a while.”

By mentioning that he has covered combat, Van Owen becomes associated with war correspondents, who according to Joe Saltzman, in *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, are considered the “undisputed hero”¹⁹ of the journalist world. “Often news photographers shoot pictures of indescribable horror and barely escape death to bring pictures back the public,”²⁰ Saltzman says.

A connection to the crème de la crème of journalism gives Nick a certain amount of credibility, yet just as quickly as he achieves this, he puts his reliability into question.

Dr. Malcolm: “Greenpeace. What drew you there?”

Van Owen: “Women. 80 percent female, Greenpeace.”

Dr. Malcolm: “That’s noble.”

Van Owen: “Yeah well, noble was last year. This year I’m, getting paid. Hammond’s check cleared or I wouldn’t be going on this wild goose chase.”

Soon after arriving on the island, Van Owen takes his first photographs of the dinosaurs and gives audiences a fairly negative impression of his character as a stereotypical ego-driven, competitive journalist. He more than pats himself on the back, saying, “These images are incredible. Legendary.” Van Owen brags, “Guys shoot their whole life they never get stuff half this good. I mean you can give me the Pulitzer right now, today please. Competition’s over. Close the entries. I’d like to thank everybody who lost.”

Van Owen then takes out a cigarette and Dr. Harding tells him not to light it because they are there to document, not interact. To the audience and team, it may initially seem that Van Owen will be a burden to the group, as it seems that he might be a troublemaker or difficult to deal with. However, his initial cockiness and projected just-in-it-for-the-money attitude prove to be outweighed by his actions as an invaluable member of the team, as well as the film's main source of comic relief. Throughout the course of the film, Van Owen shows that he, like many other film journalists, is experienced in life and well traveled.²¹ He is often the first person to pick up on important things,²² is quite resourceful²³ and stays calm under pressure.²⁴

Van Owen is a capable photographer, even while snapping away in his safari-style outfit. Van Owen is aware of maintaining boundaries with his subject. Dr. Harding, on the other hand, gets too close to a dinosaur while trying to take its photograph. This is not to say that Van Owen doesn't ever exhibit questionable judgment.²⁵ The most pugnacious character in the film, he has to be restrained when taunted by the game hunters²⁶ they encounter on the island. He yells at a T-Rex, calling it a "son of a bitch" after it chases him into a waterfall. Still, Van Owen is also the person who people respond to and look to for guidance.²⁷ When Hammond's unlikable nephew tries to rally a large crew of men to get up during a rest break, they ignore him. When Van Owen, who along with his team has been forced to join the larger group, says, "Alright guys. Let's get the hell out of here," everyone gets up.

Ultimately, Van Owen redeems himself of any of the negative traits he has displayed by bravely risking his life to help others.²⁸ He also shows strong convictions as an environmentalist²⁹ and thwarts the plans of Tembo to kill a T-Rex.³⁰ Still, Van Owen

doesn't wind up as the sole hero of the film and, in fact, doesn't even appear in the last twenty minutes of the film. The man who saved the day more than once simply drops out of the picture.

Jaws (1975), the runaway success that caused many a beachgoer to run away from the ocean, included a minor, but memorable character, Ben Meadows (Carl Gottlieb³¹), the *Amity Gazette's* editor. The beach town of Amity becomes newsworthy after a series of shark attacks occur off its shores. Early on, Police Chief Martin Brody (Roy Scheider) walks purposefully down a main street on his way to post a "beach closed" sign. This is the first scene that Meadows appears in, and he's exiting the front door of the *Amity Gazette*, watching Brody intently, likely aware that something newsworthy must be afoot.

Brody next encounters Meadows while walking down a corridor on his way to a Town Hall meeting. Meadows scribbles down notes as he tells Brody that the mother of a boy killed by the shark is advertising a \$3,000 bounty "not just in the *Gazette*, she's advertising in out of town papers," for capture of the shark. Like any good editor, Meadows wants to be in the know and talk to the people at the center of the story, because "success of the newspaper, its triumph over all competition, is more important than anything else...Just get to the front-page story that will humble the competition."³²

Fishermen claim they've caught the shark that killed the boy and a young woman and hang it up in the harbor. In a fairly extended scene, Meadows orchestrates a photo op of the men and the shark. He tells a woman, who appears to be his secretary, "Listen Ginny, I want to go AP and UPI. I want to get on the state wire service and see if Boston will pick it up and go national. Call Dave Axelrod in New York. Tell me he owes me a

favor, all right?” Meadows then turns his attention to the photographer saying, “Now this is the shot I want, with everybody and the fish in it. OK? Guys, can we please get organized. I want to get a picture for the paper.”

Meadows seems perturbed that the men appear more interested in celebrating their success than posing for his news photo. The scene shifts from his almost pitiful efforts at organization to a discussion between Brody and Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss), a marine biologist who doubts that this is, in fact, the correct shark.

Hooper’s inquiry highlights Meadows lack of research into whether this is, indeed, the killer shark. Instead, he appears to be little more than an opportunist hoping to get greater coverage for his paper. Directing the men in their poses, Meadows sounds more like a yearbook photographer, saying, “C’mon guys, c’mon, please, I need a picture for the paper. Can we get the sign please? Beach closed sign? Just like in high school. One row kneeling, one row standing....”

Lights, Camera, Anonymous Journalist

A big event is just about to go down, or maybe it just did. A crowd gathers around to witness the person or thing involved. Most likely there’s a camera crew on site or a news van speeding to the scene. This is a scenario often played out in Spielberg’s films, including *The Sugarland Express* and *Jaws*.

The news stations or newspapers are meant to look familiar. The news reporters look and sound like what audiences have come to expect because of their past filmgoing experiences. And chances are you'll never get to know their names.

Anonymous packs of journalists seeking out news stories are nothing new in cinema. Famed director Frank Capra, whom Spielberg has listed as an influence, often incorporated them into his films. And while they are "still chasing after stories in countless movie and television programs," the news media of today's film are more intimidating and intrusive with their cameras and boom mikes taking the place of notepads and pens³³. This representation of news media has been present in Spielberg's films since he began directing.

Often these movie journalists hound an unwilling subject into commenting, and sometimes even their sheer presence is enough to make someone feel compelled to talk, when perhaps they should not.

Prime examples of these aggressive journalists in Spielberg's films appear in *The Sugarland Express*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *War of the Worlds* (2005).

In *Sugarland*, a group of male journalists with microphones, cameras and notepads descends upon the home of the foster parents caring for baby Langston, whose biological parents Clovis and Lou Jean are on their way to claim him. The news media³⁴ stand at the front door where the foster mother, Mrs. Nocker (Jessie Lee Fulton), politely greets them saying, "Hello. Of course, I know why you're here, but I have nothing to say."

Meanwhile, one of the men snaps a photograph of her without asking. One of the journalists speaks for the group:

Anonymous Reporter: “We’d just like to see the child, Mrs. Nocker.”

Mrs. Nocker: “Well of course the child board says that the child is ours to keep now. And we love him very much and I’m his mother.”

Anonymous Reporter: “We understand that. How old is the little boy?”

Mrs. Nocker: “Oh he was two in January.”

Anonymous Reporter: “We sure would like to interview him.”

Mrs. Nocker, seemingly overwhelmed by the group and not questioning their request gives in. She calls for her husband, who has been holding Langston. Mr. Nocker brings the baby out to reporters as Langston is crying, “No!”³⁵

With the child in front of them, the reporters bombard the tot with such questions as, “Langston, Do you know where your papa is?” “Who’s your mama?” “Did you wave goodbye to your real mama?” “Can you say papa?” Meanwhile, Langston’s foster parents look somewhat distraught. Spielberg incorporates closeup shots of the cameras and reporters’ faces to convey the invasion of space.

Mrs. Nocker attempts to take charge of the chaotic situation by commenting that Langston is their boy now and they’ll give him all the love he needs, but the decision to continue talking to the reporters seems to backfire. She holds Langston up lovingly, but he starts to cry and the reporters take it as a photo-op of a weeping baby and his foster parents. Again Spielberg utilizes multiple close-ups of the cameras snapping away.

Spielberg both wrote and directed *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. The film centers on Roy Neary (Richard Dreyfuss), a line worker, and Gillian Guiler (Melinda

Dillon), the single mother of a small boy. Both characters have an encounter with the same UFO and become obsessed with a vision that leads them to a site where many others who have experienced encounters are drawn as well.

One particularly intense scene takes place at the police station, where Gillian is surrounded by a number of television news crews reporting on her encounter with a UFO and her son's subsequent disappearance. The news media are quite aggressive and unsympathetic to Gillian's frail condition. Most of the reporters' faces are not shown. The focus is on Gillian and her forlorn body language. Her head is down and she makes no eye contact with anyone. It's as if she's almost numb to the news media presence and their deluge of questions.³⁶

Finally, Gillian reaches a breaking point and as if to remind the reporters of what they are *not* focusing on, she simply says, "My kid's name is Barry."

With their bright lights and big cameras and microphones, the news crew corners her in front of an elevator. One reporter asks her to repeat her statement while another tells her, "We'd like to make the 6 o'clock news, please," as if their deadline should be of concern to her. Despite the reporters' shouted requests that she turn around, Gillian never faces them as she waits for the elevator to arrive. Roy and his wife look on as she enters the elevator and presses her body up against one of its walls as if she's trying to escape and has nowhere to go. The elevator doors close as the emotionally draining sequence ends. The scene exemplifies the phenomenon in more recent films where the audience identifies with the main actor or character in the film, and roots against the reporters³⁷. Anonymous reporters pursue the protagonist and unlike in the past, "it isn't Clark Gable

or Barbara Stanwyck chasing after a story. It is now overzealous media newshounds chasing Bruce Willis or Julia Roberts.”³⁸

Soon after Gillian’s encounter, Roy attends a meeting held by the U.S. Air Force. Amid a buzzing room of a people, it is only a reporter who can get a word in edgewise. Just as Roy is about to ask a question, a seemingly entitled reporter jumps in saying, “Major Benchley, I’ve been in the news business a long time and our cameras have never been able to take a picture of a plane crash as it actually happened or an automobile accident and get it on to the 6 o’clock news.”

Spielberg’s *The War of the Worlds* also depicts an exceedingly assertive anonymous journalist, in this case a female news producer. Ray Ferrier (Tom Cruise) and his son and daughter survive an alien attack and hide overnight in his ex-wife’s basement. When Ray comes outside the next morning, he’s surprised to find fiery plane wreckage on top of the house. Ray sees a man rummaging through the plane and tries to talk to him, but the man doesn’t respond. Out of nowhere a loud woman appears on the scene, the news producer. It turns out that the unresponsive man is her cameraman. “He’s deaf,” she tells Ray. “Shell went off right beside him. The camera on the shoulder saved his life. You hear that Max? Your stupid camera saved your stupid life.”

From these initial harsh words, it is apparent that this is a tough, confident woman, necessary traits to be a successful female in the world of journalism. Clearly, the producer and her crew have been through a traumatic experience, but she shows little emotion. Since their first appearance in films, female journalists have been depicted as “hardboiled dames, ready and willing to do anything their male counterparts would do to

get the story.”³⁹ This female producer is no exception and she makes quite an impression in her brief appearance as an anonymous journalist.

The producer never asks Ray if he’s all right, or relates to him as a person. Her main focus is chasing the story, no matter how dangerous it may be. Her interaction with Ray seems to be little more than an opportunity to vent about why she has been unable to get the story on air.

An obviously competent producer, she takes Ray over to her news van and gives him a great deal of information about how the aliens are attacking Earth in their “tripod” machines. She also explains how her crew has tried to get the news out to people saying, “We were feeding New York but New York went dark. So we patched over to DC. They went down. L.A, Chicago, uplinked to London. Even called affiliates to try to get them to catch the feed. But nobody answered. It’s the same everywhere. Once the Tripods start to move, no more news comes out of that area.”

Despite the news producer’s efforts to inform Ray, she ends up looking like the story-hungry stereotype of a journalist. Upon hearing an ominous sound while talking to Ray, she says, “You hear that? We’re getting the hell out of here.” As her crew piles into the news van, she turns to Ray and almost as an afterthought says, “Hey, were you on that plane?” He shakes his head, no. “That’s too bad. It would have been a really great story,” she says while closing the van in his face. Ray looks somewhat dumbfounded after the encounter.

In Spielberg’s comedy *1941*, panic-stricken California residents prepare for a Japanese invasion in the days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In an early scene, a female reporter gets out of a car where it appears she’s been getting quite friendly with

Captain Birkhead, a general's aide. The two are at an airfield where the general is about to arrive for a press conference. The anonymous female reporter tells Birkhead, "I've got to go get my story." "Well I was just giving it to you," he replies. In a scene soon after, a pack of anonymous journalists await the general's arrival. The general assures the news media that there will be no bombs dropped in California. Meanwhile, a bomb rolls toward them after falling out of a plane due to a mishap involving an overly amorous Captain Birkhead. The press scatters away and the bomb explodes where they had been standing.

In other Spielberg films, like *E.T The Extra- Terrestrial* (1982),⁴⁰ the anonymous journalists appear to be less intimidating, perhaps because of the brevity of their appearance,⁴¹ or because they are not in packs, as in *Jaws* (1975).

In *Jaws*, an unnamed reporter (Peter Benchley⁴²) walks down the beach talking to a camera, which is not visible. Still, his microphone in hand, beach-inappropriate attire and dialogue tell the audience that he is obviously a reporter. Beachgoers look up as he passes along, calmly saying to the camera, "Amity Island has long been known for its clean air, clear water and beautiful white-sand beaches. But in recent days a cloud has appeared on the horizon of this beautiful resort community. A cloud in the shape of a killer shark."

The reporter doesn't seem to be telling audiences anything they don't already know, yet his mere presence seems to give the story a certain level of authenticity. His lines also counter to the Amity mayor's words in the next scene. The mayor is dead set against closing the beach during the busy Fourth of July weekend, because of the potential loss of business.

An off-camera, anonymous reporter (possibly Benchley) interviews the mayor who says, “I’m pleased and happy to repeat the news that we have, in fact, caught and killed a large predator that supposedly injured some bathers. But as you see, it’s a beautiful day. The beaches are open and people are having a wonderful time. Amity, as you know, means friendship.” In reality, the shark has not been caught yet.

Anonymous journalists may not have high-profile roles in most Spielberg films, but their appearances frequently occur at key points. In addition to interacting with characters, they often move the plot forward by conveying information observed by the audience or characters. Typically, these nameless journalists appear on television screens in the background. Such is the case in *The Terminal* (2004), which tells the story of Viktor Navorski (Tom Hanks) who is stranded indefinitely in JFK Airport after war breaks out in his native Krakozhia. A language barrier makes it impossible for Viktor to understand airport officials when they try to explain his situation to him. It is only when Viktor sees a CNN-like international news station’s coverage of his country at war on the airport’s television screens that he understands.

Toward the end of the film, Viktor sees an anonymous anchor on television and the headline “Peace in Krakozhia.” The news plays on overhead televisions at the airport Daily Grill bar as Viktor celebrates with fellow revelers.⁴³

Playing the Part

Since the 1920s, real-life journalists have been included in films to give movies more authenticity.⁴⁴ In several of Spielberg's films, real-life journalists appear doing what they often do in films of recent years, "serving as background to the action or as commentator on the people in the news who happen to be the stars of the movie."⁴⁵

Anchor Howard K. Smith appears as himself in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* at a vital point in the film.⁴⁶ CNN news anchor Bernard Shaw also plays himself in *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* in the film's final scene,⁴⁷ and anchor Roz Abrahms appears as herself in an early scene in *War of the Worlds*.⁴⁸

While no real-life journalists acted in Spielberg's most recent film, *Munich* (2005), actual news footage of them was used heavily throughout. The line between reality and fiction is blurred by having characters in the film watch the same thing that audiences may have seen in real life. *Munich* follows five Israeli men hired to assassinate those responsible for the murders of Israeli Olympic team members at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich.

Reviewing *Munich* for *Variety*, Todd McCarthy wrote, "For Americans of a certain age, the 1972 Olympics will always be remembered through the reporting of ABC anchor Jim McKay, with the assists from Peter Jennings and Howard Cosell, and it is with their able efforts that Spielberg begins this 'inspired by real events' account of the Black September gunmen's break-in to the Israeli dormitories, where they killed some men and took others hostage."⁴⁹

McKay's news segments add realism to the film that would likely have been difficult to effectively re-create. Inclusion of his footage reminds the audience from the start that this event actually took place.

“I’m Jim McKay speaking to you live at this moment from ABC headquarters, just outside the Olympic Village in Munich, West Germany. The peace of what have been called the serene Olympics was shattered just before dawn this morning, about five o’clock.”

In the film, audiences hear McKay narrate during the hostage situation as Peter Jennings describes what he sees, and the audience sees a French reporter in front of a camera in the Olympic stadium while news media monitor multiple feeds to several different countries. The situation is couldn’t be more intense.

After audiences watch various anonymous anchors prematurely announce that the hostages are safe, McKay receives word that they are all, in fact, dead.” Our worst fears have been realized tonight,” McKay says somberly, “They’ve now said that there were 11 hostages. Two were killed in their rooms yesterday morning. Nine were killed at the airport tonight. They’re all gone.”

The simplicity of McKay’s reports demonstrates the emotional impact the event has on him. Scenes of Israelis and Palestinians watching news coverage add to the enormity of the situation.⁵⁰ Spielberg’s use of unforgettable, well-reported actual segments reveal how vital reporters were as the news of Munich unfolded, providing a mostly positive image of journalists.

The Imposters

In two Spielberg films, *Catch Me If You Can* (2002) and *Munich*, characters impersonate print reporters in order to meet with people who can help them achieve their

goals. In *Catch Me*, Frank Abignale (Leonardo DiCaprio) is a teenage con artist posing as a commercial airline pilot. He successfully scams Pan American Airways by pretending to be a reporter for the Munroe High School newspaper, calling himself Frank Black and telling an airline official that he wants to know all there is to know about being a pilot. Frank looks the part of an eager, cub journalist with a camera around his neck and a notepad in hand, where he furiously scribbles notes. Frank is able to get valuable information as well as an FAA license by simply asking, “Hey, do you think I could make a copy of this to put in my article?”

In *Munich*, Robert (Mathieu Kassovitz), the bomb-making member of the Israeli team of assassins, pretends to be a newspaper journalist in order to get into the home of one of their intended victims, Mahmoud Hamshari. Robert conducts a fake interview with Hamshari and his wife and then excuses himself saying, “I’m sorry. I need to use your phone. I need to call my editor.” He goes to the phone and plants a bomb in it.

These character no doubt realized the advantages that come with being a journalists, including access and the trust of interview subjects. By posing as print reporters, Frank and Robert’s characters gain entry into places, people talk to them openly and, in Frank’s case, help him out.

Your Name in Lights

Like so many other movie journalists eager to get the scoop, the characters in Spielberg's films also seek fame and notoriety. The power of the press can often go to the heads of both those who report the news and those who make it.

Spielberg noted the concept of news coverage as a catalyst for fame, in his 1974 interview for *Take One* with David Helpern, discussing *The Sugarland Express*. "Yeah, I liked the whole idea of the media. Also, I liked the idea of here is the American condition of today, that people want to be a part of the Walter Cronkite 7:00 News. They don't want to just watch it, they want to be in it and I like the idea that today any one of us can create a major news story by doing the smallest, most simple, neurotic act – which is sort of what this picture's about."⁵¹

Spielberg, while discussing *Sugarland*, could well have been talking about *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Catch Me If You Can* and *Munich*.

Early on in *The Sugarland Express*, an "Eye on Houston Big 6" car pulls up to the gas station where Clovis, Lou-Jean and the Slide have just stopped to fill up their tank. Right after they leave, a news reporter runs up to the gas station attendant who unwittingly pumped gas for the outlaws.

The reporter, a blond young man, sticks a microphone into the rural, older gas station attendant's face. Without introducing himself he asks, "Your name sir." The station attendant, obviously caught off guard in the frenzy of cop cars that also have just pulled up, stutters out a response.

Station Attendant: "Fred Major. I own this station."

Reporter: "Do you know that you just served gas to an escaped felon?"

Station Attendant: "Well, I sure did. Yes sir. And I seen the whole thing happen!"

The scene ends here, but after witnessing Fred Major's initial hesitation quickly fade once he realized that he could be a part of the story, the audience is left to imagine what tale he may have concocted for the reporter.

Clovis, Lou Jean and Slide also fall prey to the allure of fame once they realize that they are a big news story. When a news reporter in a van that has caught up to them asks, "Would you two do an in-depth interview exclusive with my station?" Clovis responds, "Cash money?" Later on, Slide tells Clovis and Lou Jean, "OK, we're not talking to any more reporters and such until we decide on our deal." They agree.

At another point, the trio pulls up to a drive-in restaurant window and Lou Jean yells, "We're the Poplins. Anybody home?", assuming they will be recognized because of the media coverage they've received.

As the Poplins near their destination to claim custody of their son, crowds who have heard their about their story have gathered on the sides of the road to wish them good luck. A man hands Clovis a newspaper, which contains a page with photos of him, Lou Jean and Slide. It is as if the three are oblivious to the story attached. Slide seems excited to see his photo, saying, "Maxwell Slide. There's my picture." Clovis notes that his is an old mug shot, while Lou Jean complains, "Well I look like shit in my picture".⁵²

A news camera creates a comical moment in *Close Encounters* when a man who's obviously 'not all there' bursts out, "I saw Big Foot once." Spielberg cuts to a shot of the news crew turning their camera toward the man.

In *Catch Me If You Can*, Frank is interviewing an airline official who doesn't want to deal with his incessant questioning.

Airline Official: “Kid, I’m really not in the mood for this right now. This Skyway Man’s driving me crazy.”

Frank: “Who’s the Skyway Man?”

Airline Official: “Oh some nut that’s flying around the country posing as a Pan Am pilot. There’s a column about him in the paper today.” (Hands him what appears to be the *New York Times*. Frank looks at the article, seemingly concerned.)

Airline Official: “Newspaper loves this clown. They call him the James Bond of the Sky.”

Frank lights up when he hears about the nickname he’s been awarded and asks, “Did you say…” and the scene cuts to a movie theater where Frank is watching a James Bond film.

Munich provides a more sober comment on the relationship between news and fame. Early in the film, terrorists inside the Olympic dormitories have been watching news coverage of themselves on a television and are frustrated to see that German police are attempting a siege. One of them says, “It’s just a show.” Another responds by saying, “Go talk to them, go tell them to get back or something bad will happen.”

Later on, the five avenging Israeli assassins watch a television news report that details the hijacking of a Lufthansa jet taking off from Damascus. The Arabs who hijacked the plane successfully demanded release of killers who survived Munich. The freed killers are then shown giving a press conference,⁵³ dressed in suits. Robert, one of the Israeli assassins remarks, “Look at them. They’re movie stars.”

Extra, Extra

While newspapers may not take center stage in Spielberg's productions, they are noticeably present in many of them.

Newspapers often are used to convey information to the audience and characters in the film, to establish a character or location or simply as props.

The fate of print-edition newspapers may hang in the balance today, but it seems they have landed solidly in the futuristic world of *Minority Report* (2002). Newspapers serve both as plot devices and props in the film, which takes place in Washington DC, in the year 2045. The movie opens in a suburban house where a paper newspaper sits on the kitchen table.

Modern technology has enabled police to predict crimes before they happen ("precrimes"), and it turns out that this house is a precrime site. The film's police officer protagonist, John Anderton (Tom Cruise), becomes embroiled in the imperfections of the system when he is accused of a murder. He is also dealing with his own demons, including the loss of his kidnapped son. His obsession with his son's murder is evident as he looks through newspaper clippings of missing children who have been found or rescued.

While police hunt down Anderton, newspaper headlines either inform the audience or move the plot forward. During a scene on a subway, a "Precrime Hunts Its Own! Breaking News" headline with Anderton's photo pops up on an electronic *USA Today* newspaper on a man's laptop computer. The man looks up and sees Anderton who's seated nearby.

In another scene at a mall, a man drops his briefcase and multiple copies of *U.S. News* magazine tumble out with Anderton and the headline “Countdown to Murder”.

In *Close Encounters*, Roy’s wife goes through a newspaper and cuts out an article noting “UFOs Over Five Counties—Indiana Buzzing” and then crumples it up, so her increasingly UFO obsessed husband won’t see it.

Later on, while seated at the Air Force meeting, Roy stares down at a generic newspaper, which contains a story with a photo of Gillian, showing mostly her back. The shot indicates that she did not want to be photographed or was caught off guard. The headline reads, “Cosmic Kidnapping: Indiana Woman Blames Disappearance of Three-Year-Old Son on Clouds.”

Roy starts sketching a figure he’s been having visions of on the newspaper. It could have been any piece of paper, but the newspaper shows plot information and conveys the fact that the UFO stories are big ones.

Amistad (1997) is the story of the 1839 mutiny aboard a slave ship traveling toward the northeast coast of America. Much of the film centers on the courtroom drama of the case. Newspapers convey the time period and views on slavery.

In an early scene, there is a closeup of the *New Haven Register* with the headline “Massacre at Sea- A Difficult Slave Case.” A character puts another page from *The Emancipator* newspaper on top of the *New Haven Register*, with a decidedly different headline for the same story: “Freedom at Sea.” While the newspapers only appear briefly, they indicate the vastly different takes on slavery that were present during the time.

As Props

In *Empire of the Sun* (1987), a young English boy named Jim (Christian Bale) lives a privileged life in Shanghai until he is separated from his parents during the eruption of World War II and ends up in a POW camp.

At the start of the film, when Jim's parents tuck him into bed, his father holds a newspaper quite conspicuously. Once in the prison camp, Jim and his friends' prized collection of *Life*⁵⁴ magazines are highlighted multiple times.

While the Indiana Jones series (*Raiders of the Lost Ark* [1981], *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* [1984], and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* [1989]) are primarily action-adventure, Spielberg includes news media in a very small way. In *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, newspapers are used as props multiple times, whether being held by Indy's friend Sallah (John Rhys-Davies), who punches a man's face through an open newspaper, or by suspicious-looking men lurking nearby as Indiana (Harrison Ford) and his father (Sean Connery) walk into a building. Indiana's father also holds a newspaper before they board a blimp. He is still holding the paper aboard the blimp while seated at a table with his son. When a Nazi tries to capture the pair, he attempts to hide behind the paper.

A newspaper also makes an appearance in the futuristic world of *Artificial Intelligence: AI* (2001), the Pinocchio-like tale of David (Haley Joel Osment), a robotic boy who longs to become "real" so that his human mother will love him.⁵⁵

In *The Terminal*, Viktor shows his love interest Amelia (Catherine Zeta Jones) his 1958 photo of 57 jazz greats from a Hungarian newspaper and tells her about how his father got all but one of their autographs.

In *The Color Purple* (1985), Spielberg's film adaptation of Alice Walker's novel about the life and trials of Cely (Whoopi Goldberg), a young African American woman in the early 1900s,⁵⁶ newspapers appear in the hands of the men in the film.

Cely's father holds what appears to be a newspaper as he stands on the front porch to receive Mister (Danny Glover). Once unhappily settled into married life with Mister, Cely gets a welcome surprise when her sister Nattie (Akosua Busia) comes to stay with her. As she and Nattie laugh and enjoy each other's company, Mister sits on the porch in a rocking chair reading the *Atlanta Examiner*. Spielberg uses the paper to frame Mister as peeks from behind it, staring at Nattie intently as she's shown with a field and flowers in the background.

In some films, news publications and magazine are simply referred to. *Jaws* and *Close Encounters* refer to *National Geographic*,⁵⁷ while *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* has a reference to *The Washington Post*. In addition to Frank reading about his exploits in the newspaper in *Catch Me If You Can*, Carl Hanratty (Tom Hanks), the police officer on his trail, attempts to track him down through newspaper wedding announcements.

Radio

Much as newspapers do, radio informs both characters and the audience in a number of Spielberg films.

At the start of *Empire of the Sun*, Jim's father listens to news on the radio, which discusses British and other foreigners in the community leaving China because of the threat of Japan. Toward the end of the film, Jim wanders towards plane wreckage and

news of the surrender of Japan plays on the radio in the background. While Japanese soldiers rummage through food and Jim wanders around, the news announcer talks about the atom bomb, describing it as “a flash of light and a fireball hotter than the sun.”

“I saw that. I saw that,” Jim says, grabbing a Japanese soldier who pulls away. “I thought it was Mrs. Victor’s soul going up to heaven.”⁵⁸

Radio is used similarly in *Schindler’s List* (1993). The film is the story of Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), a businessman who employs Jews at his factory in Poland during World War II. He witnesses the horrors they endure and attempts to save them from certain death in concentration camps.⁵⁹ Toward the end of the film, Schindler’s workers surround a radio, listening to a broadcast that the German war is at an end.

In *Sugarland Express*, radio news enables Clovis and Lou Jean to realize how big their story is and gives the audience background on the characters.

“The fugitives have been identified as Clovis Michael Poplin, 25, a convict from Crowley and Lou Jean Poplin, 25, an unemployed beautician from Sayers. The name of the patrolman has not been released pending notification of next of kin. The hijackers stated to Captain Harland Tanner that their purpose was to protest the action of the child welfare board, which last week refused to return custody of their son to Mrs. Poplin, who has a criminal record. The boy has been living with foster parents in Sugarland. The KKOK mobile command unit is on its way for a live report. This has been a KKOK news KO,” the reporter says.

Two policemen hear a radio news story about the Poplins and how their criminal records make them especially well equipped to give the police officers a run for their money. The pair of police then take it upon themselves to go out and try to capture them.

In *1941*, a woman begins to panic loudly after hearing about Pearl Harbor being bombed, setting the group of women around her into a frenzy.

In *Jaws*, Brody's wife is surprised when Hooper informs her that the shark has yet to be caught. "I'm sorry I thought... You told me the shark was caught and I heard it on the news. I heard it on the Cape station," she says.

Conclusion

Overall, the image of the journalist and news media in Spielberg's films is neither completely negative nor positive. Still, many of his films include notable images of the extremes, from *The Lost World's* heroic Nick Van Owen, to the intimidating herd of reporters and cameras descending upon a frightened Gillian in *Close Encounters*. No matter what subject matter Spielberg tackles in his films, he showcases the pervasiveness of the news media and their influence over society. He also reveals the tenacity with which they chase the story. Journalists risk life and limb during alien attacks to get the news on-air in *War of the Worlds*, hang dangerously out of fast-moving news van to snag an interview with escaped felons in *Sugarland Express*, and use feminine wiles to get information from a source in *1941*. These journalists and news media are not the "main event", but they are never far from the action.

Spielberg's images of journalists and news media not only highlight their prevalence in real world but also their importance to fully establishing the worlds he has created onscreen.

¹ Steven Spielberg was born on December 18, 1946, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He left college at Long Beach State in 1969 to become a professional director after being offered a seven-year contract at Universal Studios. Sid Sheinberg, vice president of production at Universal sought Spielberg out after seeing his 1968 short *Amblin*, which won an award at the Atlanta Film Festival in 1969. (Lester Friedman and Brent Nothbohm, *Steven Spielberg: Interviews*. (University Press of Mississippi/Jackson, 2000), p.XV

²The DreamWorks, LLC (also known as DreamWorks Pictures or DreamWorks SKG) film studio was founded by Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen. In February 2006, Viacom, the parent company of Paramount Pictures took over the studio after the founders sold it.

³ According to <http://www.the-numbers.com/people/directors/SSPIE.php>, accessed February 2007

⁴ Spielberg won the Oscar for Best Director in 1993 for *Schindler's List* and in 1998 for *Saving Private Ryan*. He was also nominated four other times: in 1977 for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, in 1981 for *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, in 1982 for *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* and in 2005 *Munich*. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has also honored Spielberg's films in the Best Picture category. In 1993, *Schindler's List* won Best Picture. Six of his other films have been nominated: *Jaws*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, *The Color Purple*, *Saving Private Ryan* and *Munich*.

⁵ *Schindler's List* (#8), *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (#25), *Jaws* (#48), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (#60), and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (#64) are among the American Film Institutes elite list of the top 100 Greatest American Movies of all time. *Schindler's List* was the only movie from the 1990s (<http://www.afi.com/tvevents/100years/movies.aspx>)

⁶ Lester Friedman and Brent Nothbohm, *Steven Spielberg: Interviews*. (University Press of Mississippi/Jackson, 2000), p.VII

⁷ Stephen J. Dubner, "Steven the Good," *New York Times Magazine*, February 14, 1999.

⁸ Mitch Tuchman, "Close Encounters with Steven Spielberg" *Film Comment*, January-February 1978.

⁹ *Network*, 1976 (running time est. at 121 minutes), Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Directed by Sidney Lumet. Script by Paddy Chayefsky. In the film, "A TV network cynically exploits a deranged ex-TV anchor's ravings and revelations about the media for their own profit" (IMDB.com)

¹⁰ Mitch Tuchman

¹¹ Mitch Tuchman, "Close Encounters with Steven Spielberg" *Film Comment*, January-February 1978.

¹² **Reporter:** "Hey how y'all doing? Can I ask y'all some questions? How they treatin' ya there Mr. Slide? When are you gonna make your escape?"

¹³ *Scream* (running time 111 minutes) Dimension Films. Directed by Wes Craven. Written by Kevin Williamson. The film's main character Sydney (Neve Campbell) punches a tabloid reporter (Courtney Cox), who has been harassing her.

¹⁴ *Die Hard* (running time 131 minutes) 20th Century Fox. Directed by John McTiernam. Script by Jeb Stuart and Steven E. de Souza. A reporter, who's pursued John McClane (Bruce Willis) and his family relentlessly, gets a punch in the face from McClane's wife, Holly (Bonnie Bedelia) at the end of the film. The sleazy reporter is played by William Atherton, the actor who played Clovis Poplin in *The Sugarland Express*.

¹⁵ David Helpern. "At Sea With Steven Spielberg" *Take One*, March-April 1974.

¹⁶ Dr. Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum reprising his role from *Jurassic Park*) is a mathematician and chaos theorist who barely survived his visit to Isla Nublar (the island in the first film).

¹⁷ The 1928 Hecht and MacArthur play *The Front Page* was a Broadway smash hit. It was made into a film in 1931 and adapted in 1940 as *His Girl Friday*. In 1974, director Billy Wilder redid *The Front Page* and in 1988, it was again adapted as *Switching Channels*. Many other remakes were also made.

¹⁸ Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy, *The Hollywood Social Problem Film: Madness, Despair and Politics From the Depression to the Fifties* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1981), pp. 36, 41.

¹⁹ Joe Saltzman, *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* (Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture, a project of the Norman Lear Center, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 2002) p.187.

²⁰ Joe Saltzman, p.185.

²¹ Nick speaks Spanish with the boat operator taking the team to the island. He translates to Eddie and Malcolm, saying that the boat operator wants to unload at the shore where they are (earlier than planned) because he is scared. "He's heard too many stories about this island chain and he wants to drop us off and

go anchor somewhere off shore.” Malcolm asks what kind of stories. Nick translates, “He’s heard stories of fisherman that came too close to the island and then never returned. He has the radio. He has the satellite phone. When you need him send the call and he’ll be here in two hours, but he will not stay here. He won’t stay anywhere near these islands.” They call the islands? (repeats as a question in Spanish) The five deaths,” he says.

²² Nick is the first to notice a fire in front of vehicles and puts it out. Later, the team is trying to catch up with the game hunter group and finds a bag and tells Sarah and Malcolm that he thinks it’s Sanjay’s bag. He is correct.

²³ Nick uses his belt to muzzle a baby T-Rex’s mouth.

²⁴ Nick radios for help. He asks for immediate rescue and notes casualties while giving coordinates. He remains calm despite the imminent danger he and his friends are in.

²⁵ **Dr. Malcolm:** “Sarah! Sarah!”

Nick: “Sarah Harding!”

Dr. Malcolm: “How many Sarahs you think are on this island? Sarah!” Nick rescues a baby T-Rex that has been tied down at the game hunter camp. He carries the crying dinosaur, which has a broke leg, back to his own camp. Dr. Harding repeatedly asks him if he’s out of his mind and if he knows what the creature is. The baby’s parents track it to the camp and kill Eddie Carr and nearly kill the rest of the group.

²⁶ Nick asks, “Are you looking for a problem?” Hunter Dieter Stark (Peter Stromer) responds, “I found you, didn’t I?” Nick then lunges towards him, but is held back. Hunter Roland Tembo (Pete Postlethwaite) says to Nick, “I know you. You’re that Earth First bastard.” He then calls them saboteurs and criminals. “We’re environmentalists,” Nick counters.

²⁷ When Hammond’s team first encounters the game hunter team on the island, Nick tells them, “Uh, I think I should tell you guys. Hammond told me these people might show up. I thought we’d be finished by the time they got started, but in case they weren’t, he did send up a back -up plan.” “What back-up plan?” asks Dr. Harding. “Me,” responds Nick.

²⁸ “I’ll get in there and I’ll send the radio call alright?” Nick says, as he runs into the communication center building alone to call for help. He notes that, “Every second counts.”

²⁹ “Hey we came here to watch. You came to strip-mine the place.” “It’s the looter mentality. All you care about is what you can take. You have no right,” Nick says to Tembo. He also responds to Tembo’s desire to hunt a T-Rex saying, “The animal’s just on the planet for the first time in tens of millions of years and the only way you can express yourself is to kill it.”

³⁰ A helicopter has come to rescue Nick and his team. As they fly away from Isla Sorna, he says, “Well that’s one souvenir they won’t be taking with them.” He holds out the Tembo’s bullets meant to kill the T-rex.

³¹ Carl Gottlieb, who played Ben Meadows, was also one of the screenwriters for *Jaws*.

³² Joe Saltzman, p. 84.

³³ Joe Saltzman, p.147.

³⁴ In *Sugarland*, anonymous cameramen appear, filming and snapping photos as Captain Tanner and another police officer walk into a football stadium where police have convened.

³⁵ Whether it is the journalists outside causing Langston to cry or simply childhood behavior is unclear.

³⁶ Anonymous reporters ask Gillian such questions as, “May we have a statement please? The report you gave to the police is quite spectacular.” and “Is it true you’re leaving the state to look for your son?” She is too overwhelmed to respond and instead quietly says, “They got him,” to Roy, who’s standing nearby with his wife.

³⁷ Joe Saltzman, p. 147.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ A boy named Elliot befriends a stranded alien he names E.T. With the help of his siblings and friends, Elliot helps E.T. return home.

⁴¹ Toward the end of the film, scientist observe E.T at Elliot's home. A crowd has gathered around the house and what looks to be a news cameraman is shown briefly.

⁴² Peter Benchley is the author of the book *Jaws* on which the film is based. He was also one of the film's screenwriters.

⁴³ Viktor also brings his love-interest Amelia (Catherine Zeta-Jones) over to one of the television sets at the bar, pointing to the news coverage and saying the war is over.

⁴⁴ Joe Saltzman, p. 186.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Roy is in the midst of manically building a mountain-like structure in his living room, oblivious to the ABC News report with Howard K. Smith. In this lead-in to the news, Smith says, "Good evening. At the top of the news tonight, a rail disaster. At Devil's Tower, Wyoming, a train loaded with a dangerous chemical gas went off the rails and has forced the widest area evacuation in the history of these controversial Army rail shipments..." Eventually Roy notices the news and the rest of the story leads him to an encounter of the third kind, which is contact with the extra-terrestrials.

⁴⁷ Shaw interviews John Hammond, the founder of Jurassic Park.

⁴⁸ Abrahms is one of many reporting on the strange lightning storms that have occurred in recent days.

⁴⁹ Todd McCarthy. "Munich," *Variety*, Dec. 12, 2005.

⁵⁰ Avner (Eric Bana), the leader of the five Israeli assassins, sadly watches real news coverage of the surviving Israeli Olympic team loading the coffins onto an airplane as names and photos of the hostages are shown. At this point he is just another person watching the news, as he has not accepted the task of eliminating those responsible for the Munich murders.

⁵¹ David Helpern. "At Sea With Steven Spielberg," *Take One*, March-April 1974.

⁵² Lou Jean later tells Slide that she and Clovis want to keep the newspaper and asks him to sign something on it.

⁵³ When asked (in the film) if they thought they achieved anything in the Munich operation, the men's translator responds, "We have made our voice heard by the world."

⁵⁴ Spielberg was named the most influential baby boomer by Life magazine in 2006. (<http://www.life.com/Life/boomers/50boomers01.html#05>)

⁵⁵ IMDB.com, accessed February 2007

⁵⁶ IMDB.com, accessed February 2007

⁵⁷ In *Close Encounters*, Roy describes his encounter to his wife the UFO, telling his wife, "You know those pictures in the *National Geographic* about Aurora Borealis? This is better than that." In *Jaws*, Hooper warns Amity's mayor that they haven't caught the correct shark yet. "And why don't you take a long look at this sign? The proportions are correct." (Hooper refers to a defaced Amity Island billboard with a shark fin added on to it). "You'd love to prove that huh? Get your name into the *National Geographic*?" the mayor responds.

⁵⁸ Mrs. Victor is a British woman who lives at the POW camp with Jim. She dies toward the end of the film.

⁵⁹ IMDB.com, accessed February 2007

Steven Spielberg Feature Filmography

(as director)

Duel, 1971 (running time 90 minutes), Universal Pictures (aka MCA/Universal Pictures), ABC movie-of-the-week. Feature-length directing debut of Steven Spielberg. Story and screenplay by Richard Matheson.

The Sugarland Express, 1974 (running time 110 minutes), Universal Pictures. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Story by Steven Spielberg. Story and Screenplay by Hal Barwood, Matthew Robbins.

Jaws, 1975 (running time 124 minutes) Universal Pictures. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Peter Benchley and Carl Gottlieb. Based on the novel by Peter Benchley.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind, 1977 (running time 135 minutes). Columbia Pictures. Written and directed by Steven Spielberg.

1941, 1979 (running time 118 minutes) Universal Studios. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale.

Raiders of the Lost Ark, 1981 (running time 115 minutes) Paramount Pictures. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by George Lucas (story), Philip Kaufman (story) and Lawrence Kasdan.

E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, 1982 (running time 115 minutes) Universal Pictures. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Melissa Mathison.

Twilight Zone: The Movie, 1983 (2nd segment) (running time 101 minutes) Warner Bros. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Rod Serling (television series), John Landis, George Clayton Johnson, Richard Matheson, Melissa Mathison, Jerome Bixby and Robert Garland. Based on the 1950s and 60s television series.

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, 1984 (running time 118 min.) Paramount Pictures. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by George Lucas (story), Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz.

The Color Purple, 1985 (running time 154 minutes) Warner Bros. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Menno Meyjes. Based on the novel by Alice Walker.

Empire of the Sun, 1987 (running time 154 minutes) Warner Bros. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Tom Stoppard and J.G Ballard. Based on the novel by J.G Ballard.

Always, 1989 (running time 106 minutes) Universal Pictures/United Artists. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Jerry Belson.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, 1989 (running time 127 minutes) Paramount Pictures. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by George Lucas (story) Menno Meyjes (story) and Jeffrey Boam (screenplay).

Hook, 1991 (running time 144 minutes) TriStar Pictures. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Nick Castle and James V. Hart. Based on the story by J.M Barrie.

Jurassic Park, 1993 (running time 127 minutes) Universal Pictures. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by David Koepp, Malia Scotch Marmo and Michael Crichton. Based on the novel by Michael Crichton.

Schindler's List, 1993 (Academy Award, Best Director, Best Picture) (running time 195 minutes). Universal Pictures. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Steven Zallian. Based on "Schindler's Ark," by Thomas Keneally.

Amistad, 1997 (running time 152 minutes) DreamWorks. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by David Franzoni.

The Lost World: Jurassic Park, 1997 (running time 129 minutes) Universal Pictures. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by Michael Crichton and David Koepp.

Saving Private Ryan, 1998 (Academy Award, Best Director) (running time 170 minutes). DreamWorks/ Paramount Pictures. Written by Robert Rodat.

Artificial Intelligence: AI, 2001 (running time 146 minutes) Warner Bros./DreamWorks. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by

Steven Spielberg. Screen story by Ian Watson. Based on the short story “Supertoys Last All Summer Long” by Brian Aldiss.

Minority Report, 2002 (running time 145 minutes). DreamWorks SKG/20th Century Fox. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Scott Frank and Jon Cohen. Based on the short story by Philip K. Dick

Catch Me if You Can, 2002 (running time 141 minutes) DreamWorks SKG. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Jeff Nathanson, Stan Redding and Frank W. Abagnale.

The Terminal, 2004 (running time 128 minutes) DreamWorks Distribution LLC. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Sacha Gervasi and Jeff Nathanson based on a story by Andrew Niccol and Sacha Gervasi.

War of the Worlds, 2005 (running time 118 minutes) Paramount Pictures/ DreamWorks SKG. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by Josh Friedman and David Koepp. Based on the novel by H.G Wells.

Munich, 2005 (running time 163 minutes) Universal Pictures/ DreamWorks SKG. Produced and directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by Tony Kushner and Eric Roth. Based on the book “Vengeance: The True Story of an Israeli Counter-Terrorist Team.”

Bibliography

Friedman, Lester and Notbohm, Brent. *Steven Spielberg—Interviews*. (University Press of Mississippi/Jackson, 2000).

McBride, Joseph. *Steven Spielberg, A Biography*. (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1997).

Saltzman, Joe. *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*. (Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture, Los Angeles, 2002).

Taylor, Phillip. *The Man, His Movies & Their Meaning*. (Continuum, New York, 1999).

