

Armor Movie Classics:

Readers Nominate Their Favorites

(Editor's Note: Quite a few readers responded to our November-December article on *Armor* in the movies.)

From Stanley C. Crist:

I, too, really enjoyed "**The Beast**," especially the opening scenes of the bombardment of the village. Realistic explosions, not the typical Hollywood gasoline-fueled fireball crap. Also like the use of real T-62s, even though they were ones that had been modified by the Israelis, equipped with U.S./British-type 105-mm main guns...

I agree with your analysis of "**Kelly's Heroes**" except for the statement that "...all the military equipment in the film was dead-on genuine." The German "Tiger" tanks were actually Russian T-34s with well-executed VISMOS cosmetic shells. Compare the road wheel and track configuration to photos of real Tigers and T-34s.

From LTC Chuck Wohrab, Ret.

First, a correction to an otherwise excellent article. The 1951 movie filmed at Otter Creek, Fort Knox, was "**The Tanks Are Coming**," starring Steve Cochran and Philip Carey. It is based on the story of the 3rd Armored Division from the Breakout to breaching the Siegfried Line. It has some excellent shots of massed armor moving forward and in assembly areas. The credits thanked the Kentucky National Guard and U.S. Army for their help. It is available on video.

I would like to nominate another "sort of" armor movie called "**Theirs Was the Glory**." It is the story of the 1st British Airborne at Arnhem. The impressive thing about this movie was the tanks used. The first time I saw it, I was awed when a real German Panther came around the corner to attack the British defenders. It was one of several used for the movie, and supplied by the French. Later, there was a static shot of a Tiger I. These were actually from one of the French armored divisions. The movie was made around 1950, on the actual sites and using many actual veterans of the battle. It is also available on video.

A couple of other interesting facts to go with the article on tank movies: Lulubelle, the star of "**Sahara**," was kept by the studio until 1970 or so, when it was sold at a studio auction. It has since shown up in other movies, most notably "**1941**" by Steven Spielberg (I haven't seen the 1995 remake of "**Sahara**," so I don't know if it was used there).

"**Kelly's Heroes**" was based on a book entitled *Kelly's Warriors*, written by a former WWII U.S. cavalryman. It made much of the missions and losses of the cavalry groups in that period.



Early models of the M3 Stuart light tank, part of 1st Armored Division, ford Otter Creek during filming of "**The Tanks Are Coming**" at Fort Knox in 1941. The movie was re-made in the 1950s.

From CPT John S. Wilson, Infantry, AR ARNG

Loved the article. There just are not enough good armor/tank movies. Here's my vote for my favorite three:

"**The Beast**." It was an unwritten requirement in AOB 16-89 to watch this flick at least twice before graduation. I thought it was a great movie. Very well done. It showed the stark contrast between the Great Patriotic War generation and the conscript generation, much the same experience we faced with Vietnam and the Israelis in Lebanon. I'm glad you included it in your article. You get a No Go on AFVID, though. The "T-62" is actually a T-55 the Israelis captured and re-gunned with an M68 105mm main gun. No doubt the bore evacuator threw you, but check out the gap in the road wheels. The gap is in the front of the suspension, not the back. I'm sure the Israeli Defence Force loaned these tanks out for the production of the film.

"**Patton**." How could you not include this Armor classic about the god of war himself?! The tank substitutions were lame, but the portrayal was epic. This film was influential in my choice of profession.

"**Kelly's Heroes**." Deep down (even though they won't admit it) most armor officers would rather be more like Oddball than Patton. As for your animosity over the '70s antiwar treatment of the military in this comedy, "Don't hit me with those negative waves, man." Even the most astute military professional can pick out some valuable lessons on combined arms employment and the MDMP (Check out the download).

From LTC Tom K. Terry, Armor (Ret.)

Here's my vote(s). "**Sahara**" is the best movie for accurate/pure tanks and tank action. "**Kelly's Heroes**" was the most entertaining, by far.

All the others and their use of new vehicles to simulate old or foreign ones pretty much spoil the effect for me.

I am not familiar with "**Here Come the Tanks**." But along in the '50s or real early

'60s, I caught part of a movie on TV that was about WWII U.S. tankers. The only thing I remember was a tank commander who kept carrying on about how he would take care of the Germans if he could get ahold of one of the new tanks (M26?). I think he got one at the end of the movie. I would like to see this show again.

I think a well made movie about the trials and heroics of WWII U.S. tankers along the lines of "**The Big Red One**" or "**Saving Private Ryan**" would be tremendous. There are lots of Shermans, Stuarts, Chaffees, etc., still around and "**Kelly's Heroes**" showed that German tanks can be fabricated in a believable fashion.

Keep up the good work. I have been a member since 1973 and, as (now) an old guy, I appreciate seeing some articles and topics that deal with history and stuff other than technology, blue sky weapons systems and long essays explaining "new" leadership concepts, which in reality are the same things we have done for a century, but spiced up with catchy new terminology. History is important. I always found it difficult to accept current strategy and technology until I understood all the stuff (history) leading up to it.

From Francis G. Blake

Read your article about old war movies, and was wondering if some of your information came from my "**Sahara**" article in the Fall 1996 issue of *Army Motors*. (Yes, it did. -Ed.)

The movie, "**Five Graves to Cairo**," also used an M3 Lee (in the opening scenes). The movie, "**The Tanks Are Coming**" (1951), should also be listed, but my vote is for, of course, "**Sahara**."

From David W. Bessemer

In response to your request in the Nov-Dec '99 *ARMOR*, I nominate "**Cross of Iron**" (I think made sometime in the early '80s), starring Maximilian Schell and James Coburn. For tankers, the main attraction is a sequence showing WWII Eastern Front style attack by a platoon of real T-34s accompanied by infantry.