



The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara

Director: Errol Morris

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Production Companies: @radical.media, SenArt Films

In association with: Globe Department Store

Presented by: Sony Pictures Classics

Executive Producers: Jon Kamen, Jack Lechner, Frank Scherma, Robert May, John Sloss

Producers: Michael Williams, Julie Bilson, Errol Morris

Co-producer: Robert Fernandez

Associate Producers: Ann Petrone, Adam Kosberg

Production Supervisor: Dia Sokol

Production Supervisor (Film Crew):

Tonya Bertram

Production Supervisor (China): Sarah Gold

Technical Supervisor (Interview Crew):

Chris Fadale

Production Co-ordinator (Interview Crew):

Karen Corsica

Production Co-ordinators (Film Crew):

Dina Marie Piscatelli, Kevin Hayes

Production Accountant: Heidi August

Location Managers (Film Crew): John Cefalu,

Dan Kemp, John Latenser V

Post-production Supervisor: Brad Fuller

Archival Research Supervisor: Ann Petrone

Researchers: Jeffrey Crocker, Claire Jones,

Jeff Krulik, Jason Kohn, Paul Loram,

Andy Rice, Shawn Tabor

Director of Photography (Film Crew):

Peter Donahue

Director of Photography (Interview Crew):

Robert Chappell

Portrait Photographer (Interview Crew):

Elsa Dorfman

Still Photographers (Interview Crew):

Claire Folger, Sumaya Agha

Visual Effects Supervisor: Robin Hobart

Graphics Supervisor: Alex Kreuter

3D Animator: Zachary Morong

Animation/Visual Effects: Evan Olson

Editors: Karen Schmeer, Doug Abel,

Chyld King

Associate Editors: Steven Hathaway,

Daniel Mooney

Editorial Consultant: Charles Silver

Production Design: Ted Bafaloukos,

Steve Hardy

Art Director (Interview Crew): Steve McNulty

Prop Master (Film Crew): Gary Shartsis

Wardrobe (Film Crew): Julie Vogel,

Eddie Marquez

Make-up (Interview Crew): Maria Scali

Make-up (Film Crew): Donyale McRae

D.I. [Digital Intermediate] Titling:

Benjamin Murray

Digital Intermediate: Post Works

Original Music: Phillip Glass

Additional Music: John Kusiak

Executive Music Producer: Jim Keller

Musical Producer: Kurt Munkacsi

Associate Music Producer: Cat Celebrezze

[Music] Recording Engineer: Héctor Castillo

Additional [Music] Engineering: Dan Bora

Sound Designer: Tom Paul

Production Sound Mixer (Interview Crew):

Steve Bores

SHIFTING LAYERS: THE FILM SCORES OF PHILIP GLASS

The Fog of War Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara

Morris's Oscar-winning portrait of Robert S. McNamara, the former US Defence Secretary, who offers his thoughts on modern warfare, is both compelling and provocative. The director made great use of his 'interrotron' – a device that allows the subject to see their interviewer on a screen in front of the camera, giving the impression that they are engaging with the audience directly. The film's score underpins the gravity of the issues under discussion, but also adds a lyricism that elevates the artistry of the whole project.

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A contemporary review

Aged 85, Robert S. McNamara describes his life's work to off-camera interviewer Errol Morris, structured in the form of sequential 'lessons'. After an outstanding education, McNamara joined the US Air Corps and, alongside General Curtis LeMay, oversaw the fire-bombing of Japanese cities in 1945, causing him to reflect upon 'how much evil must we do in order to do good'. After the war he became CEO of the Ford Motor Company, before being head-hunted by President Kennedy as Secretary of Defence. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 taught him that 'the indefinite combination of human fallibility and nuclear weapons will destroy nations'.

After Kennedy's assassination, he served Lyndon Johnson as the US first engaged in and then escalated the war in Vietnam. As the war became a political quagmire and public support waned, McNamara concluded it was a lost cause, and left the Cabinet in February 1968. He was subsequently instructed by meetings with Castro (who did have missiles in 1962) and a North Vietnamese general (who denied any attack on the US fleet in the Tonkin Gulf). Pressed by Morris to assess his own personal responsibility for failed policies, he concludes 'I am not going to say any more than I have'.

Playwright David Rabe once protested the labelling of his magnificent Vietnam Plays as 'anti-war', arguing that plays about unruly youth, for instance, were not considered 'anti-youth'; and that war, like youth, was 'permanently a part of the eternal human pageant'. A medical corpsman in Vietnam, Rabe knew of what he spoke, albeit not so comprehensively as Robert McNamara, subject of Errol Morris' latest investigation. 'I'm not so naive or simplistic to believe we can eliminate war,' McNamara tells Morris. 'We're not going to change human nature anytime soon.'

Robert S. McNamara has aged quite well, and lived long enough to revisit the byways of his awful career for a new generation perhaps less familiar with the name and face of the notorious cerebrate who prosecuted the Vietnam War under Kennedy and Johnson. Morris gives McNamara a spare, respectful platform here, their lengthy interviews augmented by vivid and unfamiliar archive footage, the airing of declassified White House tapes, and one of those thrumming Philip Glass scores suggestive of contemporary opera.

Re-recording Mixer: Lee Dichter
Recordists: Harry Higgins, Terry Laudemilch
Supervising Sound Editor: Coll Anderson
Dialogue Editor: Brian Bowles
Sound Effects Editor: Sean Garnhart
Military Consultant: Shawn Tabor
Technicolor Co-ordinator: Joe Violante
Special Advisers: Julia Sheehan, Janet Lang,
James Blight
Very Special Thanks: Caroline Kaplan,
Jonathan Sehring
In Memory of: Harvey Goldberg,
George L. Mosse
With:
Robert S. McNamara (interviewee)
Erol Morris (interviewer voice)
USA 2002
107 mins
35mm

SHIFTING LAYERS: THE FILM SCORES OF PHILIP GLASS

The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara

Mon 19 Aug 20:30; Mon 26 Aug 20:10
Candyman

Fri 23 Aug 18:20

Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent

Fri 23 Aug 20:40

Koyaanisqatsi

Sat 24 Aug 12:50; Mon 26 Aug 11:30 BFI
IMAX

Powaqqatsi

Sat 24 Aug 15:20

Naqoyqatsi

Sat 24 Aug 18:00

The Hours

Mon 26 Aug 17:30

Visitors + UK Premiere: Once Within a Time

Tue 27 Aug 17:50

The Illusionist

Thu 29 Aug 18:10

Notes on a Scandal

Thu 29 Aug 20:40

Jane

Sat 31 Aug 15:10

With thanks to

Richard Guérin, Director of Orange Mountain Music

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SIGHT AND SOUND

Morris tries to generate a probing intimacy with his subject, and McNamara is clearly on a mission to explain, if not to fully disclose. He implies that he came to see the Vietnam War as a hopeless endeavour before his Pentagon peers, but still insists upon the gravity of the Cold War stakes of the age (which Morris illustrates, perhaps inevitably, with tumbling lines of dominoes). McNamara's toughest call on himself concerns the US fire-bombing of Japanese cities and civilians in 1945, decisive actions which, he offers, would be construed as war crimes had the war against fascism foundered. But then, every school-leaver knows that victors write history; and McNamara can offset his seeming remorse with the untrammelled bloodthirst of his accomplice General Curtis LeMay, who went on to lobby for pre-emptive nuclear war against Cuba.

Morris' film is perhaps sharpest in showing how a wonk such as McNamara could be propelled to the zenith of the Pentagon, and how his intellect crashed, as any body's would, in the face of a mission so wrong-headed as Vietnam. The McNamara of the 21st century shows an interest in counterfactual history that befits both a scholar and a man with compendious causes for regret. Naturally, he suggests that had Kennedy lived, the US would have smartly extricated itself from South East Asia, a delusion that was equally risible when essayed by Oliver Stone in *JFK*.

The force of recall does not leave McNamara unmoved: his eyes moisten before the camera on several occasions. Inevitably there are tears for Jack and Bobby Kennedy, and for the strains upon his wife Marge and three children. (One can imagine how the kids felt when a war protestor immolated himself below McNamara's office window in 1965.) But then McNamara weeps even in reciting a stave from the hardy conservative mysticism of T.S. Eliot. He is not, one senses, a broken man, but rather someone who believes that tough choices are the unhappy lot of truly substantive individuals.

The Fog of War is handsomely assembled, and will enjoy currency for as long as the United States is embedded in Iraq, since McNamara ventures a critique of US unilateralism which is congruent to the critics of Bush's war ('If we can't persuade nations of comparable values of the merit of our cause, then we'd better re-examine our reasons'). But its lasting impression is of a man who won't be lured out from his wilderness of mirrors. It's a diverting lecture on a big theme, but a frustrating experience too.

Richard Kelly, *Sight and Sound*, April 2004