

The Thin Red Line (BFI Film Classics)

Michel Chion



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The Thin Red Line (1998) is only the third film directed by Terrence Malick, the maverick genius of American cinema, in his thirty-year career. Set during the savage World War II battle for Gaudalcanal, it boasts a stellar cast--including George Clooney, Nick Nolte, Sean Penn, and John Travolta--but otherwise goes entirely against the grain of conventional Hollywood filmmaking. Action, narrative, and patriotism are subordinated to cryptic interior monologues and exquisite images of animals and nature, a strategy found by many to be perplexing and disconcerting.

How to make sense of this extraordinary film? Michel Chion traces the film's connections to Malick's earlier work and links *The Thin Red Line* to the novel on which it is loosely based. More than that, he pays minute attention to the film itself--the images, sounds, faces, landscapes, and words that create a magnificent reflection on the beauty, inexplicability, and tragedy of our coexistence with each other and with the world.

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