

Operation Homecoming (5 stars out of 5)

Florida Film Festival: March 23 - April 1, 2007

Roger Moore, Sentinel Movie Critic

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Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience is the best documentary to come out of the Iraq War (thus far), and clearly the class movie of this year's Florida Film Festival.

Richard E. Robbins' film is a dazzling display of technique and storytelling, all serving the central thesis -- soldiers who can write are the best ones to describe what has happened and continues to happen there.

This National Endowment for the Arts project began with writers, many with war experience, training or talking to groups of soldiers in Iraq. They must have emphasized vivid description, pungent detail and ringing universal truths, because that's what comes through in what these veterans are writing.

Short stories, poems, biographical essays and simple letters home capture the absurdity, the horror and the humor of this war. Robbins has interviews with the writers, and interviews with combat vet writers from World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the first Gulf War, to provide context. He marries this to brilliant visuals that illustrate each story. One patrol essay becomes a graphic novel, another a photo essay, still others, actual patrol footage with voice-over narration telling of innocent civilian deaths, ambushes, the drudgery of camp life, the difficulties of doctoring ripped and shattered bodies, and the grief and duty one man feels on taking a fallen comrade to his grave.

It's stunning work, movingly narrated by actors from Josh Lucas to Robert Duvall, all telling the stories of those who fought and bled and lived to tell the tale.

Screening at: 12:30 p.m. March 25 at Regal and 4:15 p.m. March 29 at Enzian.

 OrlandoSentinel.com Florida Film Festival coverage

 www.floridafilmfestival.com



Movie details...

Cast:

Director:

Runtime:

Rating:

Genre:

On DVD:

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