

## Film From the Frontlines: New Glimpses of a War

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

When the Wehrmacht hanged 18 civilians in a World War II reprisal killing in Serbia, tugging on the victims' ankles to hasten death, a German propaganda cameraman dutifully recorded the grisly sequence on color movie film. When Russian partisans executed a suspected German spy deep in the forest, that killing, too, was caught on camera.

Nearly 65 years after the Allied victory, long-lost or overlooked film footage — some in unexpected color and almost all raw and unedited — continues to emerge from military archives and family trunks worldwide, adding new dimensions to history's most exhaustively covered conflict.

Two documentaries featuring such finds — "WWII in HD" on History and "Apocalypse" on the Smithsonian Channel — make their debuts this week and next on American television, keyed to Veterans Day. And one, "Apocalypse," comes with a dose of controversy, as its filmmakers have colorized black-and-white reels, rekindling debate about a practice usually confined to old Hollywood movies.

The two-hour segments of "WWII in HD," running Sunday through Nov. 19 and narrated by Gary Sinise, weave enhanced but original color footage into the stories of 10 American service members and two war correspondents as told through interviews and journals using the voices of actors.

"We're finding material people haven't seen before," said Nancy Dubuc, president and general manager of History. And, she said, the footage was shown in all

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its raw context: "We make sure the heads and tails stay on."

Compiled from 3,000 hours of film rarely if ever seen since the 1940s, the segments depict test firings of the Nazis' V-2 rocket and actual launchings against

Britain, with Wernher von Braun — later to become an American space-flight pioneer — on the phone literally calling the shots. There is also President Franklin D. Roosevelt with George S. Patton and other top generals at the supersecret 1943 conference with Winston Churchill in Casablanca, and a bird's-eye view of the Japanese surrender, taken by a Navy cameraman perched high on the Battleship Missouri.

And when the American Fourth Marine Division fighting on Saipan broadcast appeals to terrified Japanese women and children to stop their cliff-top suicide leaps into the sea, there, too, stood a Marine cameraman.

On Wednesday the Smithsonian Channel starts "Apocalypse," a six-part series of nightly one-hour segments narrated by Martin Sheen. The programs are taken from 600 hours of rediscovered footage, in this case mostly colorized from the original black and white and also restored to high definition.

The series, directed by the French husband-and-wife team of Daniel Costelle and Isabelle Clarke and originally broadcast in France last year, is billed by the network as "the footage deemed 'unfit' for civilians to see." Notably, the series dispenses with interviews, said David Royle, Smithsonian's executive vice president for programming and production. "The films speak for themselves," he said.

In one chilling German clip, a U-boat sights a British supply ship and fires a torpedo, exploding the vessel and sending it nose-first into the sea. Then, as dazed survivors cluster in lifeboats, the German submariners approach and toss hunks of bread before leaving them to die.

There are lighter moments too: when a Nazi soldier, suffering dysentery on the Russian front, risked lowering his pants in minus-40-degree cold, a comrade

with a movie camera was ready.

The Smithsonian series also includes scenes of Nazi brass at the Kremlin before the German sneak attack on Russia, futile Polish cavalry charges on German tanks, and Jews being forced to dig their own mass graves before being shot.

Much of the footage was collected by Bill Murphy, an audiovisual archivist retired from the National Archives who found and copied about a thousand reels of film, most seven to nine minutes long, Mr. Royle said. "Fifty percent has never been seen before," he said.

The Good War genre has gotten a vigorous workout on PBS recently, from "The Perilous Fight: America's World War II in Color" in 2003 to Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's 15-hour special, "The War," in 2007.

But the History and Smithsonian channels call their latest offerings especially fresh and disturbing.

"This is the war the way they lived it," said Michael Stiller, an executive producer at History.

One segment on History offers a participant's view of the Nazis' Day of German Art rally in Munich in 1938. Filmed in brilliant color by an amateur cameraman, the clip shows Nazi storm troopers stoking the crowd, tossing out swastika flags to a frenzied populace straining against police lines to greet Hitler.

"When I came across that, I said, 'Incredible, like a Cecil B. DeMille movie,'" recalled Steve Bergson, a British researcher, who said he had obtained it from a German private collector who buys films secreted away over the years by German families.

He also obtained color footage of private moments of Hitler and his deputy, Martin Bormann, at the Königssee and Eagle's Nest, the Führer's retreat in the Bavarian Alps, and, from a contact in Moscow, Soviet-captured film of 1944 Nazi rocket launchings from Peenemünde on the Baltic coast.

In one case a woman in Virginia, Kay Nehring, came forward with film, shot by her aviator father, of a 1945 parachute assault



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on the Philippine island fortress of Corregidor.

Some of the film for the History series was found at the National Archives and Records Administration and various military archives but had been largely overlooked, said Marty Morgan, the project's historian and a longtime historian at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

The Army did not shoot in color because it had built up a stock of black-and-white film, but other branches of the American military and many German units and civilians used color, Mr. Morgan said.

One noted film historian said he did not understand the need for colorization. "There's suddenly plenty of color material out there," said Anthony Slide, retired associate archivist of the American Film Institute and formerly resident film historian of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. "I've never seen colorization that would compare with the original color footage."

Mr. Royle defended the colorization as a way to convey the essential truths of the conflict, particularly to younger audiences. He said that up to 30 percent of the Smithsonian footage was in original color and that the rest was colorized to exacting standards of historical accuracy, with each minute of screen time requiring three days of examination and research. Only the Holocaust footage in black and white was left untouched, Mr. Royle

said, so that no one could say the record was manipulated.

As for the rest, he said: "World War II was experienced in color.

It wasn't fought in black and white. Soldiers bled red."



BETTMANN/CORBIS

Men put leis on the graves of Pearl Harbor victims at the Naval Air Station in Kaneohe, Hawaii, in "WWII in HD" on History.



SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL

Belgian refugees in France, in "Apocalypse" on the Smithsonian Channel.

DOCUMENTARY SERIES IN COLOR - 6X52'

# APOCALYPSE

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR

**100% ARCHIVES**  
**100% STORY-TELLING**

*"APOCALYPSE: The Second World War movingly captures one of the most violent and chaotic time periods in history. The amount of previously unseen archive footage and the quality of the colour HD images sets this series apart from other WWII anniversary programs."*

Carlyn Staudt, Senior Vice President, Global Acquisitions,  
National Geographic Channel.

*"In Japan, the memory of war is gradually fading. This series will be a good opportunity for people, especially the young generation, to experience the realities of WWII."*

Junichi Katayama, Senior Producer  
of NHK International Co-productions.

**HD**  
MIX 5.1



# THE SECRETS OF APOCALYPSE

## WORLD WAR 2 AS NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

So many documentary films have been made on WW2 that one can wonder if there is any use to do new films on this subject.

The series APOCALYPSE shows that 70 years after the beginning of the war – and in some ways because so much time has gone by – we can today address this theme in the most original way.

## 50% OF UNSEEN FOOTAGE

There are still unpublished images on WW2 to be found today. Amateur films, from German soldiers or British families, or "top secret" material that was recently declassified by state authorities after being inaccessible for decades! APOCALYPSE features over 50% of this previously never released footage, and shows the war in a way that differs greatly from the official often propagandistic newsreel footage.

## 600 HOURS OF RUSHES

Louis Vaudeville, the producer of APOCALYPSE, put the emphasis on having one of the best international research ever conducted: for the six hours of the series, more than 600 hours have been collected, coming from 100 sources all around the world. This abundance of images enabled the film makers Isabelle Clarke and Daniel Costelle to select only the most interesting footage and to show the point of view of all sides. It makes it also possible, by combination of many isolated shots - 800 by episode on average, to edit original sequences on subjects that may have already been talked about, but have never been treated this way.

## A TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE

Giving back the colour and the sound to these images is another major aspect that, on this scale, is an unseen endeavour. Even when we take the best known black and white footage and turn in into colour footage with sound, we discover completely new images and engage the audience in a strong emotional experience. With the HD, mix 5.1, this experience is really theatrical.

*"Our interest is not high strategy but the most intimate recount of the people who fought and suffered in this war.*

*We accompany them in their superhuman effort to survive during a period of uncontrolled violence."*

Isabelle Clarke and Daniel Costelle.



MIPDOC/MIPTV STAND # 10.01



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DOCUMENTARY SERIES IN COLOR - 6x52'

# APOCALYPSE

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR



**100% ARCHIVES**  
**100% STORY-TELLING**



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