



# A 'Toxic Genre': The Iraq War Films

*Martin Barker*

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Over the last five years, a cycle of films has emerged addressing the ongoing Iraq conflict. Some became well-known and one of them, *The Hurt Locker*, won a string of Oscars. But many others disappeared into obscurity. What is it about these films that led *Variety* to dub them a 'toxic genre'?

Martin Barker analyses the production and reception of these recent Iraq war films. Among the issues he examines are the borrowing of soldiers' YouTube styles of self-representation to generate an 'authentic' Iraq experience, and how they take refuge in 'apolitical' post-traumatic stress disorder. Barker also looks afresh at some classic issues in film theory: the problems of accounting for film 'failures', the shaping role of production systems, the significance of genre-naming and the impact of that 'toxic' label.

*A 'Toxic Genre'* is fascinating reading for film studies students and anyone interested in cinema's portrayal of modern warfare.

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