

REVIEWING THE IMAGE OF THE PHOTOJOURNALIST IN FILM:
HOW ETHICAL DILEMMAS SHAPE STEREOTYPES OF THE ON-SCREEN PRESS
PHOTOGRAPHER IN MOTION PICTURES FROM 1954 TO 2006

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1930s, photojournalists in motion pictures have been portrayed as everything from screwball and comic relief characters to stubborn and ruthless sidekicks. With the exception of James Cagney's tabloid photographer character in *Picture Snatcher* (1933), the early on-screen photojournalists were largely supporting characters who displayed absurd, unethical behaviors.

However, the 1930s and 1940s image of the photojournalist changed with James Stewart's portrayal of a lonely and voyeuristic magazine photographer in *Rear Window* (1954). Stewart's cynical and detached L. B. Jeffries established a stereotype that would persist through the 1970s. By the 1980s, the heroic but ethically challenged war photojournalist stereotype evolved. *Under Fire* (1983), *The Killing Fields* (1984) and *Salvador* (1986) were a few of the films that perpetuated this recurring leading character. The films from the final decade of the 20th Century, and into the mid-2000s, projected varied and alternative stereotypes of photojournalist characters. Although the number of appearances of on-screen cameramen in motion pictures has increased, their role-related responsibilities and ethical dilemmas have changed alongside trends and technological advances within the field.