

James Burks

Christopher Robinson

MCOM 2306-01

6 December 2019

Paper II:

Richard Linklater was born July 30, 1960 in Houston, Texas. Linklater is a self-taught director that got his start after purchasing a super 8 camera and other equipment required to produce and present his work. Linklater's first feature was "It's Impossible to Learn to Plow by Reading Books". This feature consumed two years to shoot and edit before it was ready for presentation. (Contributors) Linklater has been producing and directing movies for several years. I am going to discuss two movies "Last Flag Flying" directed by Linklater in 2017 and the movie that inspired the previous "The Last Detail" directed by Hal Ashby in 1973.

"The Last Detail" is a story about two U.S. Navy sailors, Billy "Badass" Buddusky and "Mule" Mulhall, who are planning to retire from the Navy and collect their much deserved pensions. The word "Detail" in the movie title means a task assigned by higher personnel in the Navy. Badass and Mule are tasked to deliver a young former Navy thief, Larry Meadows, from Norfolk, VA to the brig in Portsmouth, NH. Well, the two sailors figured this detail would be a vacation and a good time to relax and see different sites during their road trip. Their plans are soon curtailed by the thief and the two escorts teach the young former Navy sailor some much needed life lessons. (Key)

"Last Flag Flying" is a close sequel to "The Last Detail". Names have been changed, branch of service and even the plot has been changed. "Last Flag Flying" plot is about how a father (Larry "Doc" Shepard) played by Steve Carell deals with the news of the death of his only

son while serving in Iraq. Shepard reaches out to his two best friends (Sal Nealon) played by Bryan Cranston, and (Reverend Richard Mueller) played by Laurence Fishburne, whom he served with in Vietnam to help him with the required tasks to lay his son to rest. (Tallerico)

“The Last Detail” was made after a novel written by Darryl Ponicsan whom also helped with the production of the movie. Ponicsan also co-wrote and provided his expertise for the movie “Last Flag Flying” with Linklater”. (Tallerico) I was able to see the changes Ponicsan incorporated in the latest movie by the faith of a higher power that was exhibited by the actors in the latest movie. Ponicsan provided only two weeks of expertise for “The Last Detail”. He was very upset about the ending chosen by the director and was able to understand years later when he was working on “Last Flag Flying”. The ending of the first movie allowed the second movie to relate and help release some bottled up regret. (Rowlands)

“The Last Detail” was directed by Hal Ashby. Ashby would use long crossovers between scenes. For example, while riding on the train Ashby was following the train as it traveled right across the screen. During the crossover the direction of flow was changed to the left. Ashby liked to pan quite a bit. He also liked to use a single camera and follow subject/s.

Ashby would use many framing shots during the film. He would take each scene, attack it and draw the viewer into the action as they were part of the scene. “The Last Detail” was a call on the sole and how the victim was screwed over by the General. The punishment did not fit the crime. Meadows was sentenced to eight years for attempting to steal forty dollars. The sad part in this whole story was Meadows was caught before he could even pull it out of the box and take ownership of the forty dollars.

During the trip towards Portsmouth, Badass and Mule were moved on how Meadows was naive towards the world. They made a few stops and tried to educate Meadows in the way of life.

Meadows was given his first beer and how Ashby made a complete scene on how much they drank, had a good time and eventually went to sleep. This scene looked like it was handled with two cameras and never crossed the 180° rule.

You were able to see how Badass and Mule was drawn into having feelings and empathy for Meadows. Both were amazed on the amount of time Meadows was given for attempting to steal 40 dollars. Just because the money was from a charity the General's wife supported, they wanted to make an example out of Meadows.

Now "Last Flag Flying" was directed by Richard Linklater. Linklater was only 13 when "The Last Detail" was produced. You can see a lot of the newer techniques compared to 1973. There were a few camera angles that were the same for both films. Linklater did not use the technique where the camera would follow the action. Nor did he use a long cross fade to change directions or to make a smoother transition into a different topic.

You know I really believe the "Last Flag Flying" directed by Richard Linklater could have been a little bit better on the plot. The movie starts out in a bar where Doc comes in and orders a beer. As the movie progresses you learn more about the three main characters. You learn that Doc spent some time behind bars in the military. Sal and the preacher were in the same platoon as Doc. The history into what happened in country was never explained. In the bar Sal hugged the doc and said you made it. What does that mean. Some history behind their relationship from the time they spent in country.

I believe this movie could have flowed better with the characters from "The Last Detail". I can imagine how Meadows served his time in Portsmouth and then decided to live there. Meadows married and had a son, named after his dad. The son joined the Marine Corps and was killed in Iraq just like the movie. The twist here is that Meadows reaches out to his closest

friends Mule and Badass. The same two Petty Officers that escorted Meadows to the Brig in Portsmouth. There were several times in the “The Last Detail” where Meadows referred to Mule and Badass as his friends instead of his military escorts. Meadows two best friends whom he could count on would be there to help Doc with his Son’s funeral details. Sal is a perfect image of Badass but in a different branch. He was always wild and did not care about what others thought. Doc on the other hand, in “The Last Detail” was a little drawn back. I can see how he would change over to become a preacher.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed each movie and the techniques each director brought to the table. Yes, it was approximately 45 years between the two movies but you could see how each looked at the various scenes similarly. Some techniques such as a long pan followed by a long cross fade was not evident in the two movies. However, each movie held me in my seat and was wondering what was coming next. Not as in a horror movie but how the director was going to craft the scene to keep the audience interested.

## Works Cited

- Augustyn, Adam, et al. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Linklater>. Ed. Adam Augustyn. 30 Jun 2014. 5 Dec 2019 <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Linklater>>.
- Austin Film Society. Austin Studios. ? ? 1985. 4 Dec 2019 <<http://www.detourfilm.com/#linklater>>.
- Contributors, Multiple. Richard Linklater. 11 Jul 2004. 4 Dec 2019 <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Linklater](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Linklater)>.
- Key, Adam. The Last Detail. 13 Feb 2004. 4 Dec 2019 <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0070290/>>.
- Rowlands, Paul. An Interview with Darryl Ponicsan part. Sep 2017. 4 Dec 2019 <<http://www.money-into-light.com/2017/09/an-interview-with-darryl-ponicsan-part.html>>.
- Tallerico, Brian. Last Flag Flying. 3 Nov 2017. 4 Dec 2019 <<https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/last-flag-flying-2017>>.