

The World of Aviation Through Film

Israeli Air Force

Michal Khayut

Over the years, the world of aviation has been known as a dangerous world, overwhelmed by many threats, and as such has inspired action movie directors, both successful and unsuccessful. Many films that describe the world of aviation show aerial wars, disasters, and moments of glory, all of which are spiced up with the beautiful views pilots encounter every day.

"The Battle of Britain": Historical Victories

One of the first aviation movies in theatres, "The Battle of Britain", takes place in May of 1940, during a WWII battle in France, while British pilot are fleeing the German blitzkrieg. The movie was released in 1969 and its plot attempts to portray in the most accurate way possible what the Royal Air Force went through in those difficult days of the war: victories, losses and fierce battles. The Royal British Air Force is portrayed during its most trying moments towards achieving aerial superiority against the Germans, while the viewer absorbs its fighting spirit, its determination, and its part in the victory in the war. For the purposes of filming, much was allocated in the way of resources on approximately a hundred of the original aircrafts of the period as well as on filming the complex flight scenes.

"Top Gun": Viewers Fell In Love with the Pilot Figure

Unlike most of the aviation films that were inspired by history of great air forces, there is one movie that left a deep impression on the world of aviation and its people all over the world: the movie "Top Gun", which was released in 1986, upgraded the status of pilots in the U.S. and worldwide. The film tells the story of Maverick (Tom Cruise), a young, talented American pilot who arrives at the respected flight school, "Top Gun". Maverick's image consists of the very qualities attributed to aerial team members ever since the film's release: intelligence and beauty.

"Top Gun" portrayed a pilot's military service in a different light and more glorious. Immediately after Tom Cruise, in his role as Maverick, conquered the silver screen across the U.S. and around the world, thousands of young people felt a newfound interest in enlisting in the U.S. army as pilots. Producer John Davis said that "'Top Gun' was the recruiting movie for the aerial branch of the Navy. People saw the movie and said: 'Wow! I want to be a pilot'". After the release of the movie, the U.S. Navy published data that indicated that the number of young people who aspired to serve as aerial team members grew 500%.

"The Aviator": Who are you? Howard Hughes?

One of the most known and admired pilot figures in the U.S. is Howard Hughes. Hughes was an American aviation pioneer who was known for film work and his great wealth. In the movie, "The Aviator", directed by Martin Scorsese and released in 2004, presented a colorful image of

Hughes (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) in Hollywood from the 20s to the 40s of the 20th century. During this period, Hughes used his money and power to make flashy aviation films and, at the same time, to break world aviation records as a pilot, and became famous all over the world. The film also portrays Hughes' inner world, in which he suffered from serious obsessive compulsive disorder, which stood in the way of his ability to achieve his goals. The film was a huge success and won three Academy Awards: Best Drama, Best Actor for DiCaprio's performance, and Best soundtrack.

"Planes": In Colour and Animation

Despite the fact that most aviation movies are influenced by stories of pilots throughout history, not all of them are geared towards adults. Last, August, an animated movie, "Planes", appeared on the silver screen from Walt Disney Company, which is famous for its 3-D graphics. The cartoon film is geared towards children who, through the film, are also exposed to the world of aviation, if only in a slightly different manner. The plot of the film revolves around Dusty, a young aerial spraying aircraft who dreams of taking part in a global flight competition. The film breaks the stereotypical image of the pilot by staying away from human emotion in its portrayal of the pilot. Dusty the plane becomes personified as a young boy: He is afraid of heights and has big dreams. Alongside Dusty are other planes, such as Skipper the jet, who helps him cope with his fears to compete in the first competition. Young viewers are exposed to Dusty's trials and tribulations on his way to the competition of his dreams.