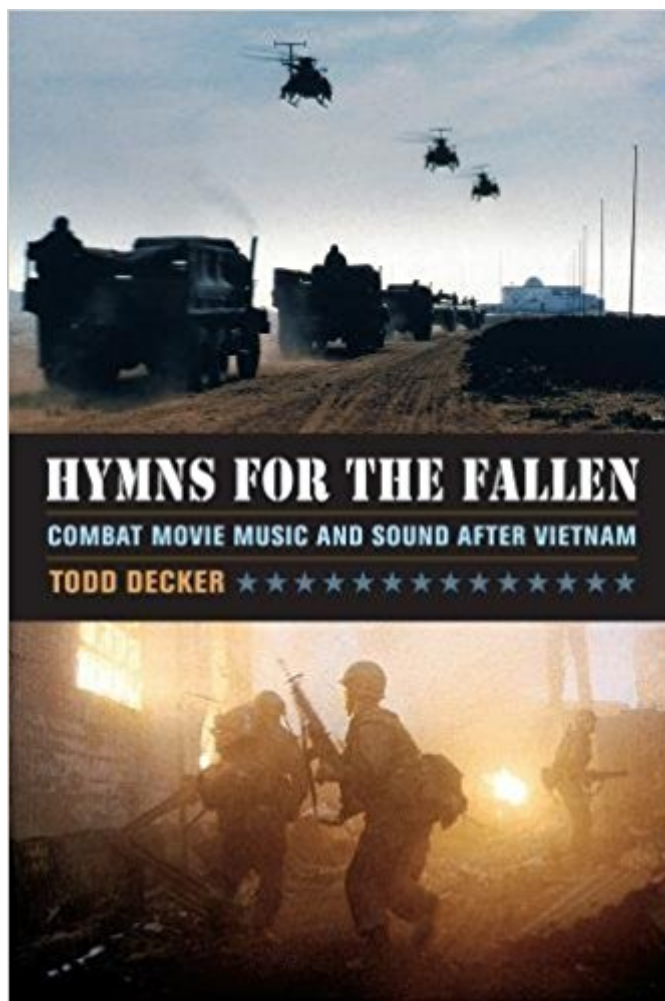


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# Hymns For The Fallen: Combat Movie Music And Sound After Vietnam



## Synopsis

In *Hymns for the Fallen*, Todd Decker listens closely to forty years of Hollywood combat films produced after Vietnam. Ever a noisy genre, post-Vietnam war films have deployed music and sound to place the audience in the midst of battle and to provoke reflection on the experience of combat. Considering landmark movies—such as *Apocalypse Now*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Black Hawk Down*, *The Hurt Locker*, and *American Sniper*—as well as lesser-known films, Decker shows how the domain of sound, an experientially rich and culturally resonant aspect of cinema, not only invokes the realities of war, but also shapes the American audience's engagement with soldiers and veterans as flesh-and-blood representatives of the nation. *Hymns for the Fallen* explores all three elements of film sound—dialogue, sound effects, music—and considers how expressive and formal choices in the soundtrack have turned the serious war film into a patriotic ritual enacted in the commercial space of the cinema.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this dynamic study, Todd Decker explores the significance of sound in four historic cycles of Hollywood combat films. Made in the decades following the Vietnam War, these movies reflect the changing public psyche, with shifting perspectives on soldiers, veterans, sacrifice, catharsis, and memorialization. What the audience hears is key to evolving narrative and political strategies, and the insightful—holistic focus on all soundtrack elements—dialogue, sound, and music—reveals the complex ethical territories and representational maneuvers of films that

exploit violence while simultaneously making moral statements about violence." — Miguel Mera, City, University of London "Decker has captured the aesthetic, emotional, and narrative sorcery of modern combat films'; soundscapes, and has woven engaging and articulate close analyses of the musical, vocal, and sound-effect components that illustrate the most bombastic and sensitive filmic moments. He reveals the sonic elegance behind the tragic despair." — Vanessa Theme Ament, author of *The Foley Grail: The Art of Performing Sound for Film, Games, and Animation* "By undertaking a meticulous and far-reaching sound analysis of a broad array of war films, Decker reveals hidden continuities that a normal audience member could never discern. This is extremely important work, because these hidden structures are subtly shaping contemporary attitudes to war, and to violence more broadly. Decker doesn't merely describe how music, voice, and sound work in these films (although he does do this, admirably); he also helps us understand how these films work on us. Given the extent to which popular ideas about war and ethics are formulated through cinematic experiences, this book should be required reading." — J. Martin Daughtry, author of *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma, and Survival in Wartime Iraq*

Todd Decker is Professor of Music at Washington University in St. Louis. The author of four books on American commercial music and media, he has lectured at the Library of Congress, London's Victoria and Albert Museum, and LabEx Arts-H2H in Paris.

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