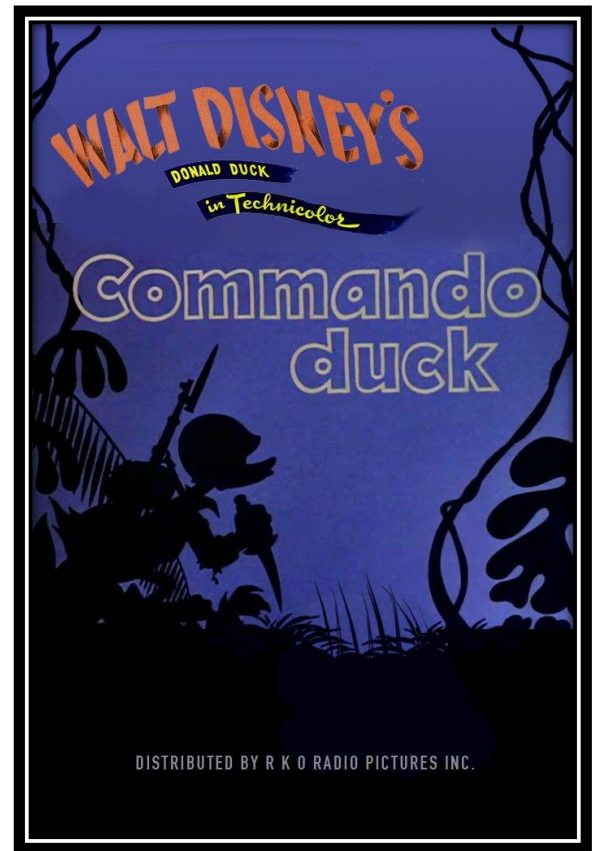




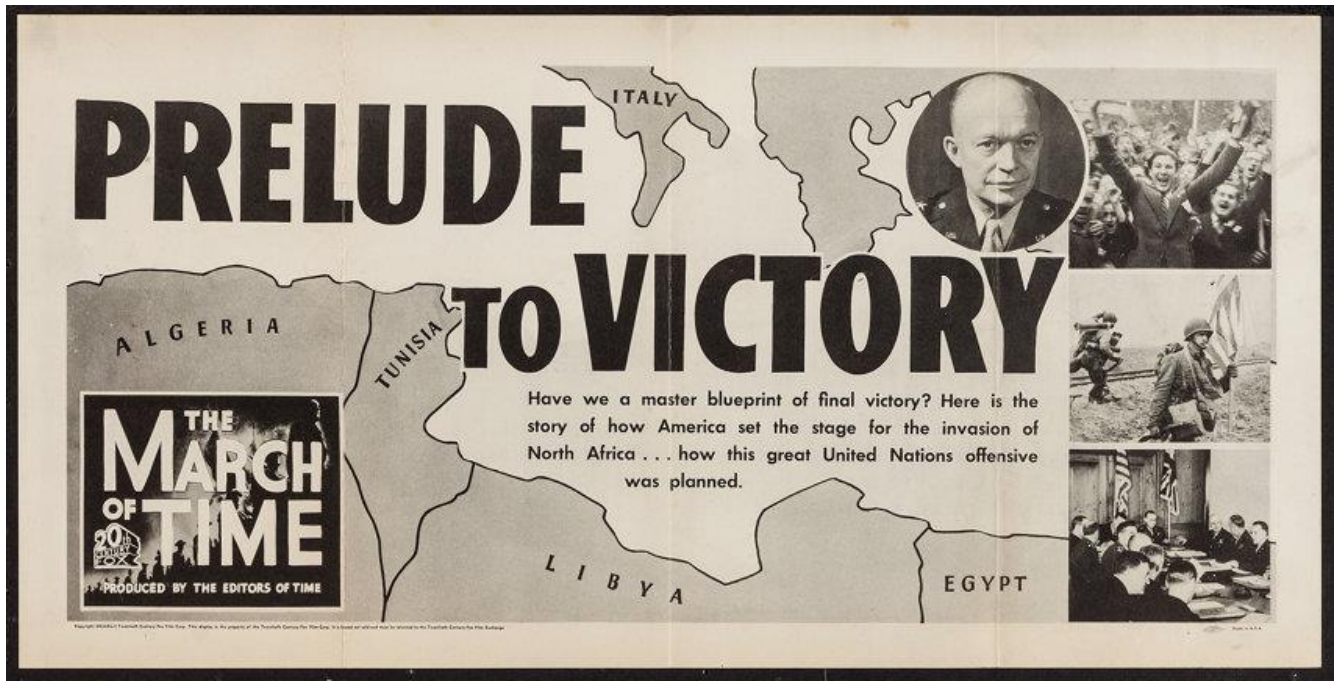
Walt Disney, Hollywood, and American Propaganda

Presented by the Hampton Roads Naval Museum

Walt Disney formed the Walt Disney Training Films Unit to produce military training films for the government in 1941. Disney produced pro-American war propaganda in order to increase public support for the war, making films for the Navy, the Treasury Department, and the Army Air Force. Per the request of the U.S. government, Disney produced films that were anti-German as well as anti-Japanese. Disney's vision was to portray both Axis nations as having leaders who manipulate, have no morals, and were self-obsessed. Disney also used his well-known characters, like Donald Duck, to help further the cause of propaganda by reaching a broader audience. Donald Duck appeared in "Der Fuehrer's Face" and "Commando Duck." "Der Fuehrer's Face" won the 1943 Academy Award for best animated short film.



Hollywood's main goal during the war was to boost morale in America. Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, there were very few anti-Nazi or anti-Japanese films produced. At the time, Hollywood was afraid of offending foreign audiences. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hollywood changed its stance and worked to produce films that were patriotic and promoted the war effort. The films produced were centered on the themes of patriotism, teamwork, and individual sacrifice for the greater good of the country. Female characters in the films were typically active in the war effort as well. They were seen on the big screen as nurses working in combat zones, factory workers, or mothers at home dealing with the needs of the family while the husband/father was off to fight. This helped to further promote the idea that everyone was in the struggle together.



Hollywood, per the direction of President Roosevelt, was to receive no censorship, meaning they could cover as much as they wanted without fear of getting in trouble. Instead, two agencies were created by the government to supervise Hollywood and the films it produced. The Bureau of Motion Pictures focused on education films, and the Bureau of Censorship dealt with the export of Hollywood films. For the most part, their job was to make sure that the videos were pro-American enough for audiences.

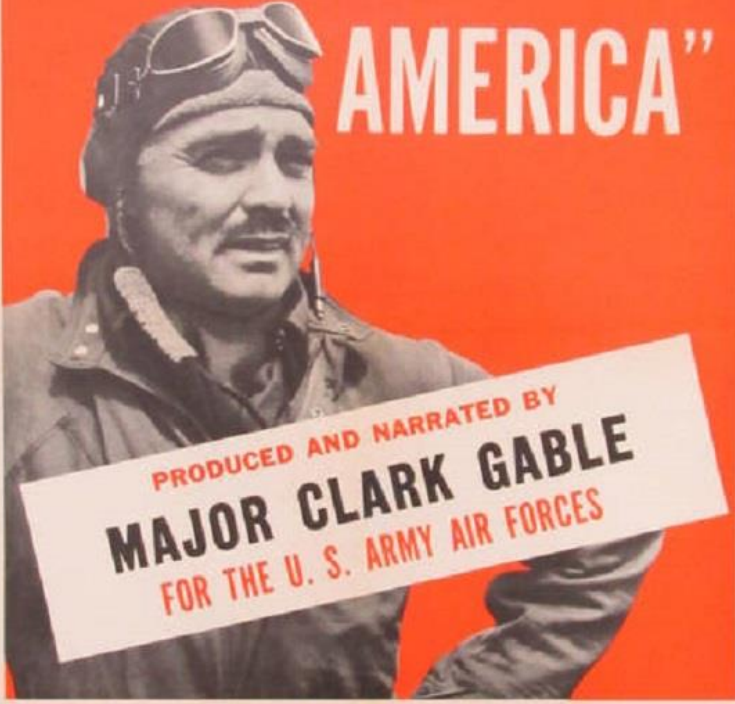
As the war progressed, Hollywood directors became more involved in the promotion of the war by actually joining the military. John Ford, John Huston, and Frank Capra made documentary films while in the combat zone to bring to the viewing audience a first-hand glimpse of what war was like. Their films were used as recruitment devices, inspiring more men to join the military.



Most importantly, the directors and their films helped answer the question about why America should fight in a war that often seemed so far away. Big name actors also

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put their movie careers on hold and joined the military. Clark Gable and Jimmy Stewart served in the Army Air Corps, and Henry Fonda served in the U.S. Navy.

Hollywood producers like Walt Disney consistently produced propaganda during World War Two. They kept the public morale up during the war by providing pro-U.S. and pro-service themed films. The American population responded to these films by joining the military, working in the factories and shipyards, and purchasing war bonds.

