

Fail-Safe Encyclopedia Article

Fail-Safe

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Released in 1964, Director Sidney Lumet's taut nuclear thriller is based on the 1962 Eugene Burdick and John Wheeler novel of the same title. Examining the changing face of war in the nuclear age, *Fail-Safe* depicts the possible consequences of the military's ever increasing reliance on computers. This is where *Fail-Safe* differs from its famous cousin of the genre, *Dr. Strangelove*, where a lone military madman plots an atomic attack upon the Soviet Union. In *Fail-Safe* nuclear apocalypse is at hand as an electronic error directs a squadron of U.S. long-range bombers to drop their nuclear payloads on Moscow. Through the exchange of sharp dialogue, the concepts of limited war in the nuclear age, the decreased time of humans to analyze potential nuclear strikes, and the survival of a nation's culture after the bomb are effectively challenged.

Further Reading:

Burdick, Eugene, and John Harvey Wheeler. *Fail-Safe*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1962.