It is well-known that Hollywood shied away from addressing the Vietnam War until well after its end – and then went about it heavily ‘metaphorical’. When therefore the US-led invasion of Iraq took place in 2003, there was immediate speculation as to how long it would take for traditionally ‘liberal’ Hollywood to rise to the bait. In fact it did not take long. Between 2004-7, 23 films were released, culminating in (and closing the cycle with) a 24th, *The Hurt Locker*, which won Oscars and took a respectable amount of money. Without a single exception, all the others were financial failures, many of them quite disastrously so. These films are, I believe, very important not in spite of their failure, but precisely because of it, and the debates those failures induced. Perhaps most important of all is the way in which many of the films did three things, textually: they took real incidents, and fictionalised them; they introduced ‘shock’ elements – narrative turning points where a startling turn collides with the narrative alters the course of events; and in so doing, they focused accounts of the war around the ‘figure’ of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In this presentation I will give an overview of the films, and place them in the context of the history of representations of American soldiers, focusing closely on particular ones to illustrate these themes: notably *In The Valley of Elah*, *GI Jesus*, and *Badland*. 