

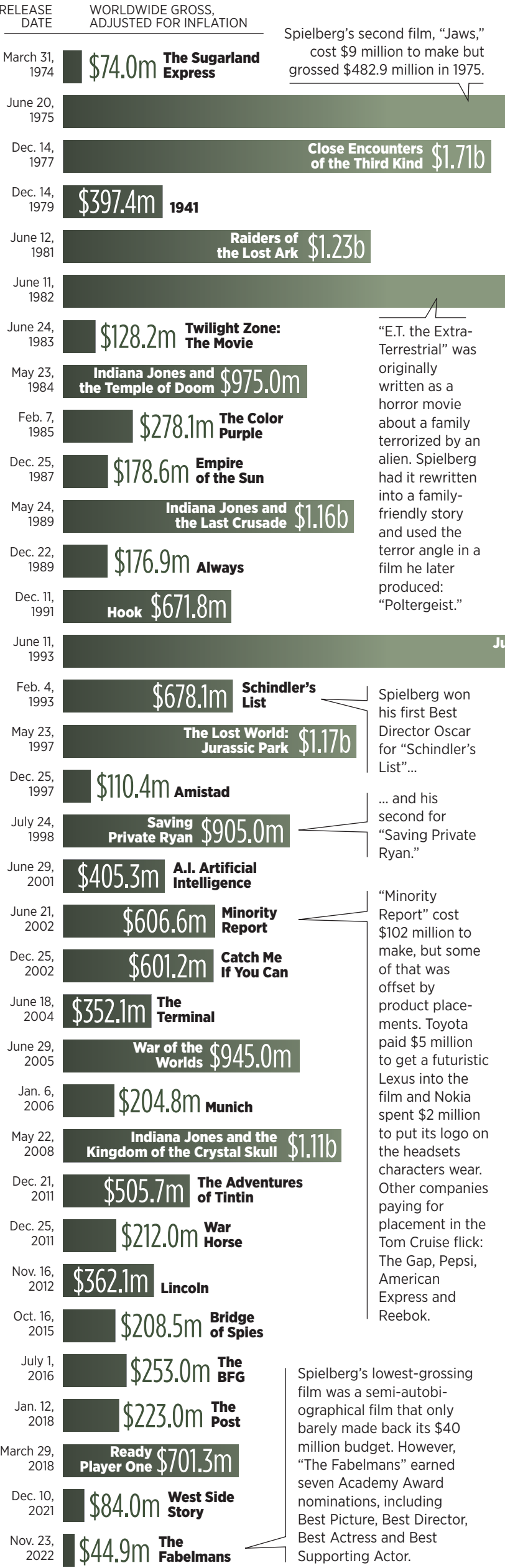


By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

A quarter-century ago, “Saving Private Ryan,” directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Tom Hanks, Matt Damon, Edward Burns and Tom Sizemore — was released nationwide.

Spielberg had set out to make the most realistic World War II movie. He succeeded, resulting in the second-highest-grossing film of 1998 and earning 11 Academy Award nominations and five Oscars, including Best Director and Best Cinematography.

SPIELBERG AT THE BOX OFFICE



THAT AMAZING D-DAY SCENE

In a film that contained a number of breathtaking scenes, one of the most stunning was the opening sequence showing the D-Day invasion of Omaha Beach from the point of view of the film's lead character, 2nd Ranger Battalion Capt. John Miller, played by Tom Hanks. U.S. troops take heavy casualties during the landing.

Spielberg spent \$12 million on that one scene, which was filmed over 25 days at Ballinesker Beach in southeastern Ireland. More than 1,000 members of the Irish Army Reserve were hired to play U.S. soldiers. Thirty or so were amputees issued with fake limbs that were then blown off with special effects.

Forty barrels of fake blood were used, as were more than 17,000 squibs: Tiny little explosions rigged to look like bullets hitting the sand and the surf.

Spielberg himself operated a hand-held camera for many of the shots. The scene consisted of more than 200 shots and played over 24 minutes of the film. That's an average of about 7.2 seconds per shot.

Spielberg intended the scene to be "ugly" but was worried the Motion Picture Association of America would give the film an NC-17 rating. It was rated R instead.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, aware that veterans might be traumatized by the film, set up a special toll free phone number for veterans and their families.

Spielberg had the entire film desaturated — about 60% of the color was removed — in order to make "Saving Private Ryan" look more like a product of its era. This would cause an issue many years later when the movie would be broadcast on TV: DirecTV and Dish Network both digitally adjusted the color back to normal levels.

Since then, most copies of the movie have disclaimers at the beginning that explain the presentation of color was intended by the filmmakers.



The weather was cold and overcast when Spielberg filmed the D-Day landing scene — this matched the weather from the actual landings in 1944. After filming, a crew hired by the studio spent a month restoring the beach to the way it had been before production had begun.

AN 'UNKNOWN' AS PRIVATE RYAN

■ Spielberg considered both Harrison Ford and Mel Gibson for the lead role of Capt. Miller before settling on Tom Hanks.

■ Spielberg wanted a relatively unknown actor with an all-American look for the title role of Pvt. Ryan. After Edward Norton and Noah Wylie turned down the part, Spielberg cast Matt Damon. But then Damon's previous project — "Good Will Hunting," which Damon co-wrote with his co-star, Ben Affleck — won Damon and Affleck an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay.

■ Spielberg sent all the principal actors to a weeklong "boot camp" where they were put through intensive army-type training. When the other actors complained bitterly about the session, Tom Hanks stepped up to point out how

helpful this would be to add realism to the film. This caused the unhappy actors to back down.

■ Spielberg intentionally left Damon out of this session. He wanted the other actors to resent Damon's character.

■ The story Damon's character tells near the end of the film — about spying on his now-deceased brother with a girlfriend in the barn on the family farm — was made up by Damon off the top of his head. Spielberg liked it so much he left it in the film.

■ At one point in the film, a character is mocked for wanting to write a book about "the bond of brotherhood that develops between soldiers during war." In 2001, Hanks and Spielberg would team up as executive producers of a TV series about soldiers in World War II: "Band of Brothers."



Tom Hanks



Matt Damon