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.

In a film that contained a number of breathtaking scenes, one of the most stunning opening sequences showing the D-Day invasion of Omaha Beach from the point of view of the film’s lead character, Capt. Ranger Battalion Capt. John Miller, played by Matt Damon, U.S. troops face heavy casualties during the landing. Spielberg spent $12 million on that one scene, which was filmed over 25 days at Balliwester Beach in southeastern Ireland. More than 1,000 members of the Irish Army Reseve 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 bars of fake blood were used, as were 100 10-gallon oil drums. 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 1.25 shots per second.

Spielberg intended the scene to be “ugly” but was surprised 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 hot line for number of veterans and their families.

Spielberg had the entire film desaturated about 80% of the color in an effort 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 discarnations at the beginning that explain the presentation of color so intended by the filmmakers.

The weather was colder 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 in ‘Saving Private Ryan.’ After Edward Norton and Noah Emmerich were considered for the role, Spielberg found he had found the best fit 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 role of Pvt. Ryan. After Edward Norton and Noah Wyle turned down the part, Spielberg cast Matt Damon. But then Damon’s previous project — “Good Will Hunting” — spoilt the story Damon’s character tells near the end of the film — about spying on his now-dead brother with a girlfriend in the barn on the 30th of June when Damon was made up by Damon off the top of his head. Spielberg liked it so much he left it in the film.

AN ‘UNKNOWN’ AS PRIVATE RYAN

Spielberg intentional- ly left Damon out of this scene. He wanted the other actors to react to Damon’s character.

The story Damon’s character tells near the end of the film — about spying on his now-dead brother with a girlfriend in the barn on the 30th of June when Damon 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 2005, Harris and Spielberg would team up to executive produce a TV series that explores the presentation of color so intended by the filmmakers.

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