

ULZANA'S RAID  
(1972, 104 Minutes)

Hollywood's depiction of the struggle between the U.S. Army and Native Americans in the West too often consisted of immaculately clad troopers crushing the "savages" in a magnificent and heroic cavalry charge. The reality was usually very different. Depicting a bitter struggle in a grim land, *Ulzana's Raid* is perhaps the most realistic portrayal of what combat was actually like in the southwestern U.S. during the period of the Indian Wars. The Apache were masters of guerilla warfare, well adapted to survival in the often unforgiving terrain of Mexico, New Mexico and Arizona. The Army employed small unit tactics with Apache scouts to pursue, harass, kill and drive recalcitrant groups back onto reservations or into Mexico.

The film was made during the Vietnam War and can be seen as an allegory of that conflict, but it is much deeper and complex. It shows the culture clash between whites and Apaches without taking sides. It is a technically correct portrayal of the weapons, dress, mindset, demeanor, and tactics of both the army and the Apache. The viewer gets a realistic feel for the absolute terror, fear and uncertainty of small unit warfare. Both sides are portrayed as three-dimensional human beings caught in a hopeless conflict. They are rough men immersed in a deadly confrontation trying to outsmart and defeat the enemy. Like the Elmore Leonard inspired films, this film also was made in southern Arizona and featured typical Leonard protagonists: loners, stubborn, quietly competent people.

Directed by Robert Aldrich (*The Dirty Dozen*, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*)  
*Ulzana's Raid* features a mature Burt Lancaster as McIntosh, a world weary army

scout who, with his Apache assistant Ke-Ni-Tay, attempts to guide an inexperienced cavalry second lieutenant in pursuit of Ulzana. Both men focus on campaign tactics and Apache beliefs and traditions as they work to educate the lieutenant on the realities of guerrilla warfare. As McIntosh says: “the first one who makes a mistake gets to diggin in the ground.”

*Ulzana's Raid* is based on an actual incident. Ulzana (aka Josanie) launched a raid from Mexico into the Florida Mountains of New Mexico in November 1885. Until they reentered Mexico in late December 1885, Ulzana and eight followers covered between 1200 and 2000 miles through extremely difficult terrain, killed 38 people (20 of whom were fellow Chiricahuas near Ft. Apache-- men, women, and children -- accused of supporting the Americans), stole upwards of 300 horses and mules, and captured numerous weapons and supplies of ammunition. The raid contributed to the replacement of George Crook by Nelson Miles as army commander of the Department of Arizona. Unlike the film ending, the real Ulzana survived the raid (losing only one man), surrendered with Geronimo in 1886, died in exile at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma in 1909, and is buried there.