

# WarGames

US : 1983 : dir. John Badham : M-G-M / United Artists : 113 min  
 prod: Harold Schneider : scr: Lawrence Lasker & Walter F Parkes : dir.ph.: William A Fraker  
*Matthew Broderick* .....  
 Dabney Coleman; John Wood; Ally Sheedy; Barry Corbin; Juanin Clay; Maury Chaykin;  
 Michael Madsen; John Spencer; Kent Williams; Dennis Lipscombe; Joe Dorsey

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 € M ⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
6039	1.5	7	0	721	3 7 7 7 7	Yes	Mar 2003

## “ Is it a game or is it real? ”

Leonard Maltin's *Movie and Video Guide*  
 2001 review:

“ **"FAIL SAFE"** for the Pac-Man generation: a pop movie about a computer whizz-kid who taps into the government early warning system and nearly starts WW3. Entertaining to a point, but gets more contrived as it goes along, leading to a finale straight out of an old B-movie. Incidentally, it's easy to see why this was so popular with kids; most of the adults in the film are boobs. \*\*1/2 ”

Halliwell's *Film Guide* review:

“A teenager unwittingly taps his home computer into the Pentagon and pretends to be Russia on the point of launching missiles. Mildly intriguing science fantasy which becomes uncomfortable and finally boring because of the excess of jargon and flashing lights. \* ”

“All the film's adventure and suspense is inevitably at odds with its ostensible sentiments... [but] the result has a kind of seamless efficiency.” - Steve Jenkins, **MFB**

*The Film Yearbook* vol.2 review:

“A teenage computer whiz inadvertently plugs into the Pentagon's defense systems and nearly starts World War III - believing it to be a new video game. Thin but effective up-to-the-minute suspense with an anti-nuke message so inoffensive as to slip by Reagan himself (he reportedly dotes on the film as a suspense

adventure, pure and simple). Nice performances and workmanlike depiction, but when the end credits roll the film evaporates in the mind. US opening: June 3<sup>rd</sup> ”

*The Good Film and Video Guide* review:

“An Awful Warning. A high school computer whizz (Matthew Broderick) accidentally taps into the government's defence system, simulating a nuclear attack by the dreaded Russians. The computer takes on a mind of its own, to the consternation of an expert (Dabney Coleman) but not to its disillusioned but whimsical inventor (John Wood), who look on as the boy tries to save the world. The pacing lacks the urgency of some movies with similar themes, e.g. **"FAIL SAFE"** and **"DR STRANGELOVE"**, so that its message is less against war than against giving expensive toys to rich brats<sup>1</sup>.”

*Movies on TV and Videocassette* 1988-89  
 review:

“A funny, suspenseful and timely adventure about a teenage computer whiz who, believing he's playing an advanced new video game, accidentally taps into the United States nuclear defense system and nearly causes World War III. Director John Badham has made a film that succeeds as thrill-a-minute action,

<sup>1</sup> He presumably means Matthew Broderick, not the Pentagon...

cautionary political satire, and intricate suspense. \*\*\*1/2 ”

**Video Movie Guide 1993** review:

“A young computer whiz (Matthew Broderick) who thinks he’s hooking into a game manufacturer’s computer to get the scoop on its latest line accidentally starts World War III when he decides to "play" a selection titled "Global Thermonuclear Warfare". Though the movie contains almost no violence or any other sensationalistic content (apart from a wee bit of vulgar language), it still grips the viewer. Rated PG. \*\*\*\*1/2 ”

Videocassette - Warner United Artists VHS  
PES 99405 - sleeve notes:

“Matthew Broderick plays the ultimate game in an enthralling, suspense-packed fantasy thriller. A computer whizz-kid accidentally gains access to the top secret mega-computer controlling the entire United States defence system. Challenging it to a nuclear power "game" between America and Russia, he innocently starts the countdown to World War III. And with Earth’s survival at his fingertips, he must work against the clock to avert an impending holocaust.”

[no listing in "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Not to be confused with the 1970 **“WAR GAMES”**, originally released as **“SUPPOSE THEY GAVE A WAR AND NOBODY CAME?”**

The computer hardware looks quaintly antique already, and from our internet-saturated present, there’s something olde worlde about a film which has to patiently explain for us all such things as modems, passwords, and hacking. Note how computers in films of this date always emit sound effects when they print any message to screen, or perform any operation at all

White collar crime  
The Matrix

See subject index under **COMPUTERS / HACKERS / VIDEO GAMES, TEEN LOVE** and **[WAR](#)**.