



# Movies and Culture Report

## DVDs for Christmas, Anyone?



A rogue prince and mysterious princess race against dark forces to safeguard an ancient dagger capable of releasing the Sands of Time—a gift from the gods that can reverse time and allow its possessor to rule the world.

The summer movie season has petered out, but those big movies from May are hitting the DVD market. Summer's hits released on DVD will continue to roll out well into the Christmas buying season—starting... right...NOW.

### September 14

**Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time** (PG-13 – Disney) Says volumes about our culture that brilliant talents like Sir Ben Kingsley and Alfred Molina are reduced to appearing in cheap corporate cinematic deposits; like a five-star chef flipping burgers at a fast-food restaurant. Zoroastrianism and polytheism are prevalent. Jake Gyllenhaal, Gemma Arterton, Ben Kingsley, Alfred Molina.

**Letters to Juliet** (PG – Summit) Simple chick flick set in Italy; draws on romantic ideals of Romeo and Juliet—far from the romantic ideal. Tag line: “What if you had a second chance to find true love?” Wouldn't true love be unique? Okay, maybe *True-ish love?* Amanda Seyfried and Gael García Bernal.

**Casino Jack and the United States of Money** (R – Jigsaw Productions) Documentary about Jack Abramoff and the corruption of politics: Republicans = bad. Got it. But shouldn't that be, Politicians = bad? Elite class = bad? No matter, we have an agenda to dispense.

### September 21

**Robin Hood** (PG-13 – Universal) Some fleeting, nice moments that support individual liberty and freedom from the

State, but if you're expecting arrows, Friar Tuck, and the Merry Men, you'll be sorely disappointed. [For more, read the review.](#) Russell Crowe, Cate Blanchett, Max von Sydow, William Hurt. See Parental Warnings [here.](#)

### September 28

**Iron Man 2** (PG-13 – Paramount) Remember how surprisingly good the first *Iron Man* was? This is nothing like that. Only film two and the franchise is already grasping for ideas. Downey returns and has found a perfect character for his personality. Unlike Depp's Jack Sparrow, however, Downey has trouble building that character; often appears to be going through the motions more than acting. [Read the review.](#) Robert Downey Jr., Mickey Rourke, Don Cheadle, Scarlett Johansson, Sam Rockwell.

**Babies** (PG – Canal+) Looking for an overload of cute? This dimple documentary follows the fresh lives of four babies from around the world. I can't imagine watching this and not smiling.

Hear Scott on [The Christian Author's Show](#) September 13th & 14th.

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You Are What You See:  
Watching Movies  
Through a Christian Lens  
— **BUY IT TODAY!**

- Monthly Movie-Watching Tip:  
*The Wilhelm Scream*

- Current Culture Links and Comments





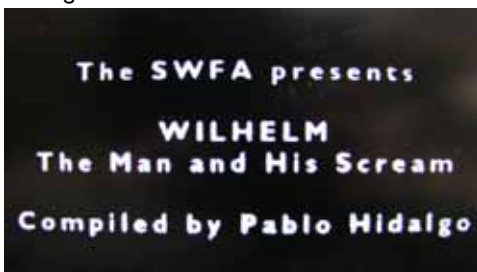
## YOU ARE WHAT YOU SEE

“As a rule, any time the action stops in a film you should be on guard because something important is being delivered to you.”<sup>1</sup>

### Movie-Watching Tip 1: *The Wilhelm Scream*

You've probably heard this scream dozens of times and didn't know it. The Wilhelm Scream is a short piece of audio inserted into films by sound designers as an in-joke. The brief yelp was pulled from the 1951 film *Distant Drums*. After the audio was used in the original *Star Wars* by sound designer Ben Burt, it began to be used by others. Today it's commonplace to hear this scream in films and television.

Below are two collections of the Wilhelm Scream, including the use in *Star Wars*; you can hear it as a stormtrooper falls into the chasm after being shot. The Wilhelm Scream is often used when a minion is dispatched by the hero. That means violence. That means those who are not wild about seeing violence will probably just want to skip these compilations as they are wall-to-wall people getting shot and thrown off high places. Note that in the first clip shown they call the guy Wilhelm—the original source for the name of the sound bite.



The second collection has more violence in it but has better audio and video.



From this point forward, you'll begin to hear this scream all over our culture. You'll hear it in movies where you never noticed it before, in television, video games, even in commercials. It has become a massive in-joke for the industry—and now you're in on it. #

### Movie-Watching Tip 2: *Plants & Callbacks, Pt 2*

One of the best callbacks ever put to film is in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

The *plant* is at the end of the thrilling opening sequence. Indy crawls inside an airplane and is whisked away from a mob of angry tribesmen. Rather than end the scene, director Steven Spielberg keeps the action going for one final bit: Once seated in the plane, Indy finds a large snake slithering around his legs. In horror, Indy exclaims, “I hate snakes, Jacques! I hate 'em!”

The *callback* occurs when Indy finds the mysterious Well of Souls. His workers pry up a large rock and Indy peers down into the dark chamber. It is brimming with, you guessed it, snakes. He rolls away from the hole and asks dejectedly, “Snakes. Why'd it have to be snakes?”

Of course, it isn't long before our hero is surrounded by the objects of his greatest fear. His phobia, clearly established by the opening scene, makes the moments in the Well of Souls more harrowing, more exciting for us as an audience because we already understand and empathize with Indy. We know that despite his heroic stature he is still scared.

In *Raiders* the *plant/callback* is a character trait, but they can also be a physical gift or wisdom from the mentor. This wisdom or gift is often not critical to the storyline until the end of the film. A repeated phrase, sometimes a short poem, can also be a callback; when the storyline is well thought out, those few words take on new and deeper meanings when they are recalled.

Return to an earlier moment in a story has structural purposes within a plot, but it also acts as a pleasant surprise for the audience. We feel as though we are on the inside regarding that bit of wisdom; we recognize the gift. We no longer feel like we're on the outside looking in. The filmmaker has captured us and brought us further onto the side of the hero. #

1. *You Are What You See: Watching Movies Through a Christian Lens*. Scott Nehring, 2010. 219.

### Culture Links & Comments

Internet Evangelism Day has a great article entitled *Evangelism: Using Popular Culture as Starting Point*. Popular culture as a ministry tool and a way to speak to non-believers—great to see this message get out there. (<http://www.internetevangelismday.com/popular-culture.php>)

*Avatar* is making its way through the multiplexes once again thanks to a re-release. While I thought the film was an abomination on many levels, I have to admit *Movie Glimpse* has an interesting take on the production: <http://www.movieglimpse.com/avatar>.

and

Cameron McAllister's thought-provoking article on *Avatar*, story, analogy and paradox, and what James Cameron couldn't show on camera: <http://www.rzim.org/justthinkingfv/tabid/602/articleid/10628/cbmoduleid/881/default.aspx>

D. G. D. Davidson shares thoughts on *The Expendables* and modern masculinity: <http://www.scificatholic.com/2010/08/my-granddad-can-lick-your-granddad.html>.



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Julie Davis is running through a great list of *Movies You Might Have Missed*—some solid recommendations: <http://happycatholic.blogspot.com/search/label/Movies%20You%20Might%20Have%20Missed>.