



Movies and Culture Report

HERE COMES HALLOWEEN



The most dangerous killers on the planet... but this is not our planet.

We are heading into Halloween season, so DVD shelves will be loaded with cheap, direct-to-DVD horror flicks. Some bigger-name productions are coming as well, but for the most part DVD releases will be few for the remainder of the month. "It's Christmas, Buy Our Stuff" nonsense throttles up soon—can already see titles appearing on Amazon.com.

October 19

Predators (R for strong violence, gore, pervasive language – 20th Century Fox) Ultimately, a failed attempt to reboot the always-lacking *Predator* franchise. A collection of conscienceless killers wakes up on a distant planet to discover the whole planet is a game preserve—and they are the game. A straight-up action flick with no real value beyond the flash bang on screen. Adrien Brody, Alice Braga, Topher Grace, Laurence Fishburne. [Read full review.](#)

Oceans (G – Disney) Originally released on Earth Day, this nature film hopes to inspire with its beautiful and instructive footage of the oceans. Is an obvious choice if you liked *Planet Earth* or the other lush enviromentaries on Discovery or National Geographic. Pierce Brosnan.

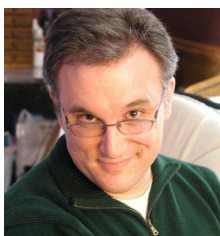
Agora (R for violence – Newmarket Films) Historically inaccurate portrayal of 4th century Rome and a scientist/teacher, Hypatia, during a time of upheaval. Though she claims the sun does not revolve around Earth, other concepts are questionable: Christians slaughter pagans, hunt Jews,

and are about to burn down the world's richest library. Bottom line—science and rationalism are wonderful, theology turns people into violent fanatics. Rachel Weisz, Max Minghella, Oscar Isaac, Rupert Evans.

October 26

The Girl Who Played with Fire (R for brutal violence including rape, some strong sexual content, nudity, language – Music Box Films) Freaky lesbian / computer hacker / hermit and a journalist investigate a Russian / Swedish sex-trafficking ring. Follow-up to the wildly popular *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*. Popular, particularly in Europe, these films are probably too frank and crude for most American audiences (which is why they are being remade to match American tastes). In Russian with English subtitles. Noomi Rapace, Michael Nyqvist, Lena Endre, Sofia Ledarp.

Sex and the City 2 (R for strong sexual content, language – New Line Cinema) One motion picture too many for the television show once described by *Family Guy's* Brian as "three hookers and their mom." Overpaid, morally loose women try on shoes then head off to Abu Dhabi—



You Are What You See:
Watching Movies
Through a Christian Lens
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- Movie-Watching Tip: *Deus Ex Machina*
- Culture Links and Comments





“Never forget that when you watch a movie you allow someone else to explain your world to you.”¹

y’know cuz that’s, like, every girl’s dream vacation spot. Sarah Jessica Parker, Kristin Davis, Cynthia Nixon, Kim Cattrall.

Winter’s Bone (R for drug material, language, violence – Roadside Attractions) After her missing, drug-dealing dad puts the family house up as collateral to make bail, a teenage daughter searches for the loot. She deals with poverty, drug abuse, and violence. Not exactly the family-fun movie of the season. Jennifer Lawrence, John Hawkes, Kevin Breznahan.

November 2

Toy Story 3
The Pacific
Centurion

November 9

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World
Grown Ups
Charlie St. Cloud

Movie-Watching Tip:

Deus Ex Machina

Aliens invade Earth. All seems lost, but suddenly they all die. Why? They catch a cold and croak (*War of the Worlds*) or their heads explode when they hear Slim Whitman sing (*Mars Attacks!*).

In other words, they are all killed by a plot convenience rather than the hero.

The intrusion of an external person, entity, or machination in the place of heroic action to resolve an issue is a writing device known as *Deus ex machina*

(Latin for “god out of the machine”). This contrived, unexpected intervention of a new character, skill, or tool (*Iron Man 2*) is also known as bad writing.

Use of *Deus ex machina* dates back at least to Euripides—as far back as there have been bad storytellers. When an author does not have a properly thought-out narrative, has painted the hero into a corner, so to speak, and the hero will be involved in a conflict which he cannot possibly resolve on his own, then the writer is forced to either rewrite a more structurally sound story, or he can take the lazy route and simply throw the hero a safety net.

Most often writers avoid the hard work and the next thing you know, Batman has the perfect tool available—a canister of shark repellent in his helicopter, for petessake (*Batman*, 1966)! ([Watch the scene.](#))

When the hero manages to come up with the perfect answer out of nowhere (TV’s Dr. House overhears a convenient conversation) or is saved by some remarkable coincidence (*Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*—Ron’s dog, Baxter, arrives to speak for his owner), understand you are witnessing a writer taking a short cut.

When watching a movie and you witness *Deus ex machina*, pause and realize the writer has copped out. Ask yourself, How could the writer have gotten the hero out of the situation without cheating? You may have a better answer than the writer.

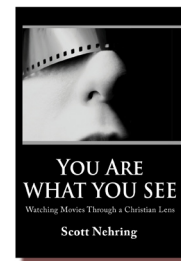
Culture Links & Comments

[The Aesthetic Underground presents The Banishment of Beauty](#) — video presentation by Scott Burdick. A great look at the stark differences between traditional and modern art.

“[Ideas have consequences.](#)” Brian Godawa’s *Cruel Logic* — a short film where a serial killer puts his victim’s philosophies to the test.

Christianheadlines.com has a [good summary of Christian film.](#)

M. Leary at Film-Think.com has an interesting look at [What on Earth is Christian Film Criticism?](#)



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1. *You Are What You See: Watching Movies Through a Christian Lens*. Scott Nehring. 2010. 44.