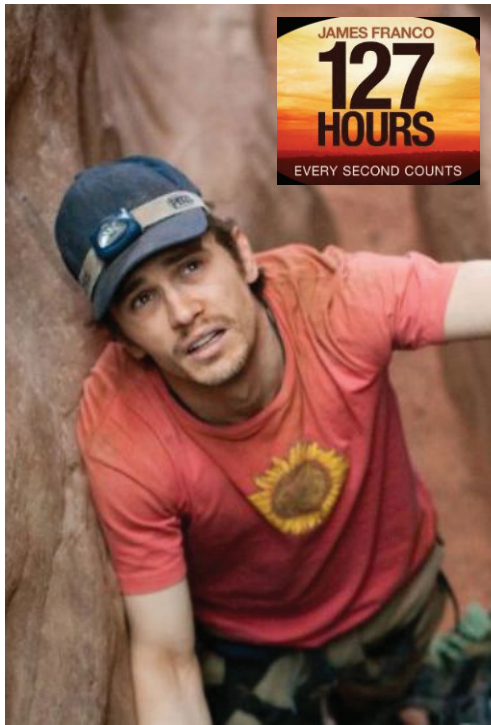




Movies and Culture Report

THE SEASON FOR AGENDAS



James Franco as Aron Ralston in Danny Boyle's *127 Hours*

Between the cheesy horror flicks of Halloween and the big Christmas releases come the Oscar-ready films of November. Some McMovies are released (*MegaMind*, *Due Date*), but this is the season for notable performances (Harrison Ford, *Morning Glory*; Naomi Watts, *Fair Game*) and films destined for Oscar Night (*127 Hours*). This is the last hurrah of “important” movies before big ticket productions like *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part I*, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and *Tron: Legacy* take over the multiplexes beginning mid-month.

November 5

127 Hours (R for language and disturbing images – Fox Searchlight) Danny Boyle follows up *Slumdog Millionaire* with mountain climber Aron Ralston’s harrowing tale of survival. Ralston is forced to amputate his own arm after suffering for 127 hours with it trapped under a boulder. James Franco, Kate Mara, Amber Tamblyn, Treat Williams.

MegaMind (PG for language – Paramount Pictures) Evil villain MegaMind finds his life is without purpose after he defeats his heroic nemesis Metro Man. I advise waiting to see this one. It stars Will Ferrell (*Land of the Lost*), Jonah Hill (*Superbad*), Tina Fey (*Baby Mama*), and Brad Pitt (*Inglorious Basterds*)—not the best performers to hand your children over to for ninety minutes.

Due Date (R for language, drug use, sexual content – Warner Bros.) Cross-country trip with a goofball; struggles

for hilarity. Trailer contains a gag where Ethan intentionally drinks his deceased father’s cremated ashes. Stay classy, Hollywood! Robert Downey Jr, Zach Galigianakis.

Fair Game (PG-13 for language – Summit Entertainment) Remember when you didn’t care one whit about the Valerie Plame “scandal”? Well, now you have opportunity to not care about the agenda-driven movie about the Valerie Plame “scandal.” Odd—not one movie about the impeachment of the President of the United States of America (Clinton), but there’s a film about this nonsense? Naomi Watts, Sean Penn, Sam Shepard.

Also:

- Four Lions** (drama—British jihadists)
- Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench** (fatalistic musical drama)
- Red Hill** (bloody crime thriller)

November 12

Unstoppable (PG-13 for action/peril and language – 20th Century Fox) A runaway train full of explosives and toxins must be stopped or it will destroy a city. A full-length movie with a short-movie plot—not a great sign. Denzel Washington, Chris Pine.

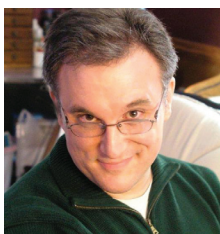
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Watching Movies
Through a Christian Lens
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“Coincidence is God being obvious.”¹

Morning Glory (PG-13 for some sexual content [including dialogue], language, drug references – Paramount Pictures) Comedy about a fledgling, morning television program. Expect to see praise for Harrison Ford’s performance as a curmudgeonly old broadcaster brought back from retirement. Harrison Ford, Rachel McAdams, Patrick Wilson, Jeff Goldblum, Diane Keaton, 50 Cent.

Skyline (PG-13 for intense sci-fi action and violence, language, sexual content – Universal) Aliens show up and if you look at their flashy lights they suck you into their spaceship. Expect fancy special effects, moments of peril, and very little actual storytelling. Eric Baldour, Scottie Thompson, David Zayas, Donald Faison.

Also:

Cool It (documentary)

Tiny Furniture (comedy)

You Won’t Miss Me (dramatic comedy)

EARLY NOVEMBER DVD RELEASES

November 2nd

Toy Story 3 (animated comedy)

Centurion (historical action drama)

Splice (sci-fi thriller)

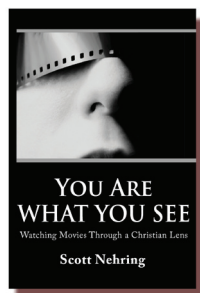
November 9th

Charlie St. Cloud (romantic fantasy)

Jonah Hex (Western action thriller)

Grown Ups (screwball comedy)

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World (fantasy comedy)



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Movie-Watching Tip:

Chekhov’s Gun

In 1889, Russian playwright Anton Chekhov wrote, “One must not put a loaded rifle on the stage if no one is thinking of firing it.” This storytelling rule is now known as Chekhov’s gun. If a writer specifically introduces an object or idea into their story, that element must be used before story’s end. If not, it should never have been inserted.

When a hero like Indiana Jones exclaims, “I hate snakes, Jock! I hate ’em,” expect him to have a close encounter with a slithering friend. If he does not, you know you are not watching a high-quality production.

Good writers understand this rule and apply it often. As an audience member this is important. You must understand that everything you hear and see on screen is there for a reason, whether props (books or bombs) or ideas and concepts that the filmmakers want conveyed to their audience.

If a character says or does something offensive (spews racist remarks, for example), that character’s low behavior should come back to haunt him. He should be punished for his transgression by having his racism revealed (*O Brother Where Art Thou?*) or be forced into a situation where he must confront it (*Crash*). This set up and resolution promotes or condemns a social behavior the storyteller wants the audience to know.

When a character gives strong statements or opinions, expect the rule of Chekhov’s gun to apply. Characters never say anything by accident. Dialogue is the most intentional part of a film. Every syllable is there for a reason. Keep this in mind and consider what a film is saying by its choice of words.



Culture Links & Comments

[The Vatican supports how faith is handled by The Simpsons.](#) One would think they have bigger fish to fry than watching Homer Simpson.

[Cloud Nine Productions has announced they have cleared the rights to make more Left Behind movies.](#) No word on if they plan to actually make them worth watching.

[Terry Mattingly](#) writes about The Future of Narnia.

1. *You Are What You See: Watching Movies Through a Christian Lens.* Scott Nehring, 2010. 4.