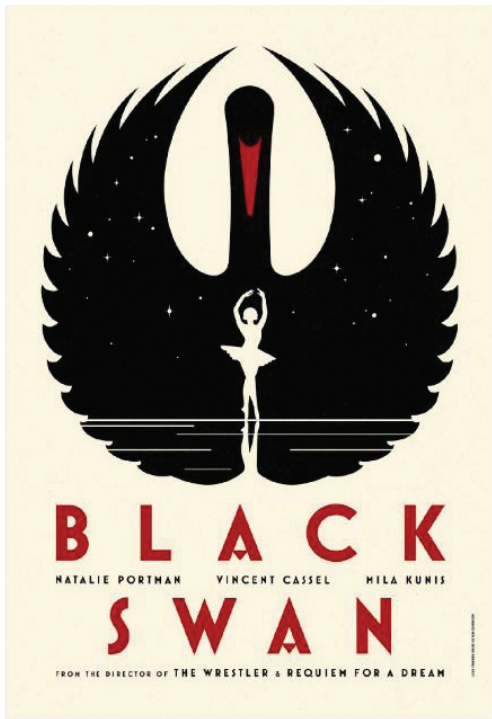




Movies and Culture Report

THE BEST COMES LAST



Aronofsky's skillfull *pas de deux* between the sensual world of the ballet and the passions of those who inhabit it.

Winter film-release season has come. Long anticipated movies are to finally be released.

The Christmas film season has perhaps become the best time of year for a film buff. Along with big ticket productions like *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, *Tron: Legacy*, and *The Tourist*, there are also mature, serious films including Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan*, *The Tempest*, and *The Fighter*.

If you can't find something to watch over the next few weeks, you're simply not looking hard enough.

December 3

Black Swan (R for strong sexual content, disturbing violent images, language, drug use – Fox Searchlight) Director Darren Aronofsky is known for gripping, stylized, albeit depressing character pieces such as *Requiem for a Dream* and *The Wrestler*. Aronofsky's films deliver memorable visuals and striking characterizations but he has a penchant for mysticism and existentialism.

This well-received film focuses on an emotionally unstable ballerina (Portman) and her growing rivalry with a younger colleague for the plum role in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. Natalie Portman, Vincent Cassel, Mila Kunis, Winona Ryder, Barbara Hershey.

I Love You, Phillip Morris (R for sexual content, strong dialogue, and language—Roadside Attractions) Steven (Carrey), an ex-cop, leaves his wife for Phillip Morris (McGregor) after they meet in prison.

Steven goes through a series of wacky adventures as he tries to break Morris from the pen. Jim Carrey, Ewan McGregor, Leslie Mann.

Yet another mainstream flick trying to portray homosexuality as a viable alternative to heterosexuality. This won't do well in theaters because the general public isn't accepting of the argument that two men in love is the wonderful event Hollywood wants it to be. What? Don't want to see a comedy about a criminal, gay adulterer?

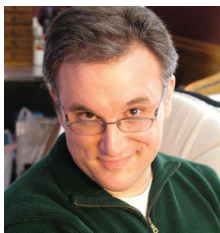
Also:

The Warrior's Way Cowboys and Ninjas
Night Catches Us Black power in 1976
Bhutto documentary on assassination of Benazir Bhutto

The Assistants trying to be Hollywood producers

December 10

The Tourist (PG-13 for violence and brief strong language – Sony Pictures) Remake of the French film *Anthony Zimmer*, this film tells the tale of poor Frank Tupelo (Depp) who is traveling in Europe when he is picked by the plotting Elise (Jolie) because he looks like an actual, at-large criminal. Elise drags Frank into a world of deception and crime. Angelina Jolie, Johnny Depp, Paul Bettany, Timothy Dalton.



You Are What You See:
Watching Movies
Through a Christian Lens
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“The imitation of those we respect and idolize extends to our heroes on screen, so those who hope



The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (PG for some frightening images and fantasy action – 20th Century Fox) Lucy and Edmund Pevensie return to Narnia with their cousin, Eustace. This time they travel with Prince Caspian across the sea aboard *The Dawn Treader*. Fighting and shouted dialogue ensues.

2005's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* was impressive. *Prince Caspian*, meh, not so much. There is a lot riding on this production. If it resembles the first, the series will continue. If it fails, this may be the last one. Ben Barnes, Georgie Henley, Simon Pegg, Tilda Swinton.

Also:

The Fighter Bale and Wahlberg tell the story of “Irish” Micky Ward

The Tempest Helen Mirren recreates Shakespeare's deposed ruler

The Company Men trying to survive corporate downsizing

You Won't Miss Me portrait of a misfit released from a psychiatric hospital

Angelina Jolie star-vehicle about a super spy. Passed in and quickly out of the theaters for good reason. Angelina Jolie, Liev Schreiber, Chiwetel Ejiofor.

Also:

Across the Line: The Exodus of Charlie Wright crime drama

Restrepo docudrama on war in Afghanistan
Shrek Forever After more of the same

December 14

Despicable Me (PG for rude humor and mild action – Universal Studios) An evil villain learns the errors of his way. Steve Carell, Jason Segel, Russell Brand, Julie Andrews.

Another in a line of anti-hero kid's movies where the traditional bad guy is posed in the heroic role (*MegaMind* is another recent example). While this may seem innocent, it adds confusion to a child's moral development when the bad guy is “good.” If the bad guy is good, what's the good guy?

The A-Team (PG-13 for intense action violence throughout, language, smoking – 20th Century Fox) In an effort to remake the childhoods of every American over the age of 40, this rehash of the cheesy '80s action show is apparently as stupid as it looks. One has to believe that Liam Neeson has begun accepting acting gigs based on the set's proximity to good golf courses. I can't think of any other reason why he's in this thing. Liam Neeson, Bradley Cooper, Jessica Biel, Patrick Wilson.

Also:

Nanny McPhee Returns uses magic to teach life lessons to a family whose father is at war

Gasland documentary on the “insidious” natural gas industry

The Other Guys Ferrell and Wahlberg are cops hunting dirty capitalists

DVD RELEASES

December 7



Inception (PG-13 for sequences of violence and action throughout – Warner Bros.) Perhaps the best film of the last ten years and probably the most stunning display of existentialist philosophy put to film.

This is a great film, but “great” does not equal “good.” The story explains that reality is malleable and fluid, and teaches that what we think we know is actually not real. There is also trenchant promotion of suicide. Worth seeing, but make sure you pay attention to what is being said.

Salt (PG-13 for intense sequences of violence – Columbia Pictures) An

to push social change look to on-screen, larger-than-life figures to promote their philosophies.”¹

What is Hollywood Teaching You?

Most of us do not think twice about watching movies. We end a long day of work and turn to movies to distract us from daily troubles. Why should we second guess ourselves about this desire to relax and enjoy a fun story or exciting adventure on screen?

Rather than looking at film as a means of entertainment, consider what it actually is: a mode of communication.

Screen images are more than flashing pictures blended to give the illusion of movement—they are composed and edited to make statements. Filmmakers intentionally mold sequences of images to manipulate your conscious and subconscious.

The medium of film relies on direct manipulation of the audience to succeed. We loathe the villain as he guns down the hero's friend then cheer as the hero blows away the villain's bodyguard. Both acts involve killing, but we choose sides because a gifted director or storyteller influences our thought processes.

Cinema magic is not based on logic, it is based in the heart. We rarely expect or enjoy having our intellects touched directly. No one goes to the cinema to watch abstract mathematical concepts explained—we need an emotional hook to grab us, to engage us, so we can feel and not think. Explanations of complex mathematical equations require the mathematician to be a debilitated, hallucinating genius (*A Beautiful Mind*), then people are interested. We want to be manipulated into that slightly hypnotic

state and have the director caress our emotions.

You are not a passive lump of meat in front of a screen. You are a vibrant, active soul created to experience story, and you react as the filmmaker plays with your emotions.

We must ask: If films are manipulating us, where are those manipulations leading?

Because film speaks to us through our emotions rather than our logical mind, we run the risk of prolonged manipulation that extends well beyond our time in that darkened room. Film is a hypodermic needle through which morality is injected into the social body.

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Film is a mode of communication. What is ultimately communicated is morality. Every film

is simply a story told in images instead of words. The social function of stories are to deliver moral messages. This is why we end with “and the moral of the story is...”

Every story, every film, begins with a Central Question: Will the boy get the girl? Can the hero learn to forgive? Can you fight city hall? The hero struggles through various trials on his way to learning the moral of the story—and in that ending we see the Answer to the Central Question.

Every film has the question and answer structure. Through this structure films promote, condemn, or question our common morality. An example of this can easily be seen in *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*.

In the opening of the film, Will Turner falls for the beautiful Elizabeth Swann. Will the boy get the girl? The answer at the end of the film is, Yes. How? Swann's

father, the Governor states it quite clearly: “Sometimes an act of piracy is what's needed.” The audience learns a pirate's situational ethics—might makes right and selfish morality—is the proper way to get what you want; in this case, the beautiful Swann.

Movies are perhaps one of the biggest influences on our morality, on how our society views ethics, even on our relationship under God. Has there been any other time in our nation's history where we have come closer to being like the distracted, pitiful people warned of in Scripture?

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3 NIV).

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles (Rm. 1:21-23 NIV).

Pay attention to what is whispered in your ear in dark rooms. Be mindful of what you allow strangers to teach your children. Many false teachings come as flashing shadows on a wall. Watch with your eyes open. Look for films that teach Biblical truth and reliance on the Lord.

Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in Him (Ps. 32:10, NIV).





Movie-Watching Tip *The Dutch Angle*

We use the horizon as a way to balance ourselves. When the horizon angles sharply, it troubles us. You've seen this: an odd character appears (Joker, for example) or a disorienting situation occurs (someone is drugged or confused) and the camera tilts off kilter. The tilt unsettles the image visually and tells us normal perception no longer applies.



This is a simple trick used to manipulate the audience. We unconsciously register the change and the filmmaker has manipulated our feelings toward a character or situation with very little effort. ❄

Culture Links & Comments

Robert Redford [announces](#) a new Documentary Premiere Section at Sundance Film Festival. **Remember:** [George Soros and his company are the historical sponsors of Sundance's documentary material.](#) Fascists don't just take over the government—they take over the arts and culture, as well.

[A Catholic exorcist discusses the connection](#) between Harry Potter, *Twilight*, and possession.

Deadline Hollywood [takes a look at the contenders](#) for next year's Best Actress Oscar race.

Culture Quote

“Art is mostly about commentary — it's making a statement that you're expecting other people to contemplate and be moved by emotionally, or altered by in terms of their perceptions.”²

At Rest

But as for you, go your way to the end, then you will enter into rest and rise again for your inheritance at the end of the age (Dan. 12.13 NASV).

Irvin Kershner (1923–2010)

Best known films: *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Eyes of Laura Mars*, *Never Say Never Again*

A student of director Roger Corman, Kershner's long career covered television, film, and documentaries. His career's best work is often considered to be his handling of *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back* (or, in film geek terms, “the good one”). Kershner's darker tone and more adult approach to the episode set a perfect contrast to the high adventure of the first film. He enabled George Lucas to build the remainder of his franchise with a proper sense of drama.



Leslie Nielsen (1926-2010)

Best known films: *The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!* and *Airplane!*



Canadian actor who transitioned to television guest roles in the 1960s-'70s (*The Big Valley*, *The Virginian*, *Bracken's World*, *Night Gallery*), Nielsen was a familiar face when he landed a role as the Captain on the original *The Poseidon Adventure*, the role that perhaps led to the gig that resurrected his lagging career, *Airplane!* Nielsen's perfect deadpan delivery in the Zucker Brothers' *Airplane!* and *Naked Gun* movies made him one of the strongest comedic film actors in the last half of the 20th Century.



1. *You Are What You See: Watching Movies Through a Christian Lens.* Scott Nehring. 2010. 37.
2. Bill Moggeridge, Director, Smithsonian Institute's Cooper-

Hewitt National Design Museum, quoted in *The Washington Post* “Facebook design: Pro and con” by Blake Gopnik, *Washington Post Staff Writer.* November 12, 2010.

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