

ARTS & STYLE

Movie Critic Ranks Top Ten Films of 2005

By Matthew Esterline
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Welcome Back! I've got enough recent ticket stubs and bootlegs to fill up a suitcase. That's how much I want you, the faithful readers, to know about my effort to be as accurate as possible when I name the ten best movies and the worst movie of 2005. The only requirement to make the list is a 2005 theatrical run in America. I've seen almost all of the Oscar crap. Allow me to summarize. "Munich" sucks, "Syriana" sucks, "The Constant Gardner" sucks, "King Kong" is too long and sucks, "Brokeback Mountain" is poorly directed and contains some of the worst acting of the year, "Memoirs of a Geisha" is annoying and the ending sucks, and "The New World" is the slowest movie of the bunch (and it sucks). Enjoy the list below!

10. "Sin City" - There were some other movies in competition for this spot. "2046" was decent. "Constantine" was actually worth watching. "Lord of War" had its parts. "Palindromes" and "Kontroll" were slightly less annoying than most movies. Instead, I have decided to go for the gaudy monstrosity that is "Sin City". The effects are good, but the stories were crap and every actress should have been replaced with someone better. Still, the movie is unique and is certainly one of the milestones of 2005.

9. "Broken Flowers" - The best thing about this movie was the realism. The story was crap and the resolution was nonexistent, but at least I could watch the movie and see characters talk like people actually talk. Bill Murray's character searches for the writer of a letter saying that he has a long-lost son. The search leads nowhere, but is still worth watching.

8. "Torremolinos 73" - This is a 2003

festival holdover from Spain that did not hit any real theaters worldwide until 2005. I don't know what the holdup was; I really enjoyed this movie. The story concerns an encyclopedia salesman and his wife getting involved in the film industry and accidentally becoming famous. Any fans of Bergman or fans of movies that don't suck should see this movie.

7. "Corpse Bride" - When I first saw this Tim Burton/Johnny Depp film, I thought it was just average. Upon reflection, I realized how good this movie actually is. I thought the songs were good, the story was better, and the animation was incredible. Screw "Wallace & Gromit: The Overly Long Subtitle", "Corpse Bride" was the best animated anything of 2005.

6. "Nine Lives" - This was the best ensemble movie put out last year. The movie is just nine uninterrupted takes put together as a film. The themes range from family to love to loss. There were many actors in the movie who were good, but Molly Parker, Robin Wright Penn, and that child of the corn from "War of the Worlds" stole the show. The movie's good. The ending is solid. Watch it if you can find it.

5. "Thumbsucker" - This is a slightly upbeat movie about a teen who is addicted to, you guessed it, sucking his thumb. Usually the teenager with a problem movie is boring, but this movie was not. Strong performances by Vince Vaughn, Vincent D'Onofrio, Keanu Reeves (for once), and Tilda Swinton make up for any story problems in the movie. This is a solid movie worth watching.

4. "Melinda and Melinda" - This was the first Woody Allen movie released this year (and the best). The movie tells two different versions of the same story. One is dramatic and

one is comedic. Will Ferrell stole the movie and Radha Mitchell should be nominated for Best Actress. This movie stands alone while the recent "Match Point" stands as more of a rehash of older, better Woody Allen movies.

3. "Nobody Knows" - "Nobody Knows" came out in American theaters in 2005 as a 2004 holdover from the festival circuit. This movie is amazing. Four children in Japan are abandoned repeatedly by their mother and are often forced to fend for themselves in a small apartment. Eventually, the mother disappears permanently and the children choose to stay together rather than go to child welfare and be separated by local agencies. This film is worth watching.

2. "Me and You and Everyone We Know" - This movie is one of those "Magnolia" or "Go" type movies where a lot of characters interact over a period of time. This movie was just as strange. The story focuses on a recently divorced man named Richard (John Hawkes) trying to save his life from becoming a misery. He meets a strange woman (Miranda July in the best performance by an actress this year) in a similar situation while trying to reestablish a relationship with his two children. The movie seemed to comment on everything while avoiding being pessimistic like most independent movies. This movie was almost perfect.

1. "Capote" - The best character actor alive today will finally get an Oscar, thanks to his performance in this movie. Philip Seymour Hoffman made this movie perfect. No other movie put out in theaters this year was better or more deserving of any awards. The film dealt with Truman Capote, the writer of "In Cold Blood", and the years he spent developing and writing the book. This movie is the perfect example of a biopic and may be the best movie of the last five years. See this movie.

And now, the worst movie of 2005... "War of the Worlds" - I was really hoping nothing else came out this year that was worse than this

movie so I could bash the crap out of it again. It was still a pretty close race, though. "Munich" is a horrifying image of things to come from the already crappy Steven Spielberg ("Inspired by Actual Events" means no one involved with the film cares about what actually happened). "Crash" was an insult to anyone's intelligence (Since when is a real person motivated entirely by race? What about age? Class? Sex? Location? Intelligence? Actual Emotions? Morons). "The Constant Gardner" is a perfect example of a movie that was a complete waste of effort from beginning to end. "The Longest Yard" may be the worst remake ever made (or "Fever Pitch"). "Hustle & Flow" sucked. "North Country" sucked. So did "Proof", "Shopgirl", and a bunch of others. Where were all the good roles for women and minorities? Movies were so white this year I was nearly blinded.

And guess which movie was the whitest of all? Yes, "War of the Worlds." Let's nitpick at the more annoying aspects of the film. That camera could not have worked. No car on Earth can be fixed in ten minutes. How stupid is that kid to drive a car right into a crowd of people? They make it on the ferry. They make it out of the water. They make it down that hill even though the ships are mere feet behind them. Cruise warns another survivor not to hit a probe with an axe, kills him later, then hits another probe with the very same axe. The ex-wife, her family, and her new husband are untouched after days of attacks while Cruise and the kid have been to hell and back. All the kids make it. I was wondering if a full-course meal and some classical music would be waiting for Cruise's character when he entered that cracker house. This cracker movie was made with just enough cracker sensibilities to ensure that crackers would enjoy the movie and buy copies of it. "War of the Worlds" sucked beginning, middle, and end. Every copy should be destroyed and that kid (either one) needs a savage beating.

Nationally Known Writers To Read at NC Wesleyan

Decree Staff

Two days after his dog gets hit by a car, my son starts playing dead—the opening line in Quinn Dalton's short story "Endurance Tests"

We'd been kissing all day—all summer—kisses tasting of different shades of lip gloss and too many Cokes...—from the Stuart Dybek story "We Didn't"

Two award-winning writers will read from their work this semester as part the NC Wesleyan Visiting Writers' Series.

Series coordinator Jim Bowers has announced that fiction writer Quinn Dalton will open the series Feb. 16, and poet and fiction writer Stuart Dybek will come to campus on March 21. Free and open to the public, both readings will take place in Powers Recital Hall of the Dunn Center. A question-and-answer session, a reception and book-signing will follow the readings, which will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Bowers, an assistant professor of English, has been impressed by the work of Dalton, a South Carolina native and graduate of the North Carolina-Greensboro MFA program. "In sharp, elegant prose, Dalton writes of contemporary women's struggles with men, marriage, and family," he said. "I'm teaching a 'love and friendship' sequence in my composition courses this term, and her stories will not only introduce many of my students to the joys of contemporary literature, but also add to my students' knowledge and understanding of our topics."

Dalton has published a novel, "High Strung" (2003), and a story collection, "Bulletproof Girl" (2005). Her stories have appeared in such literary magazines as Glimmer Train, StoryQuarterly, The Baltimore Review, and the Kenyon Review. She was awarded the Pearl 2002 Fiction Prize for her story "Back on Earth," and received a North Carolina Arts Council Fellowship in 2002-2003.

Dr. Bowers credits Dybek with turning him on to contemporary fiction while he was an undergraduate. "When most of one's time is spent on the past—and the Norton anthologies—Stuart Dybek was the first contemporary writer I recall reading who 'knocked my socks off,'" Dr. Bowers said. "In a way, he started me on a path that led to my Ph.D. in contemporary American literature."

Dybek, a Chicago native and a professor of English at Western Michigan University, is the author of the story collection "I Sailed with Magellan," chosen by the American Library Association as one of the 26 Most Notable Books in 2005. His earlier works include story collections "The Coast of Chicago" and "Childhood and Other Neighborhoods," as well as two books of poetry, "Streets in Their Own Ink" and "Brass Knuckles."

To obtain copies of individual stories by Dalton and Dybek, contact Dr. Bowers in the English Department.

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basketball player, you have to go out and shoot as much as Kobe does. Kobe is a very good player, and right now is playing better basketball than any other player in the NBA. Can you name someone else right now that you think is playing better basketball than Kobe is?

AD: I give Lamar Odom credit for not ringing Bryant's scrawny neck yet. Odom playing like a middle schooler? You can't be serious!!! Odom has a better FG % than Kobe this year. His field goal attempts average is the lowest it's been in his seven-year career because Kobe Bryant is a ball-hog. Odom is almost averaging a double-double with over 14 points a game and over nine rebounds a game. Correct me if I'm wrong but aren't guards supposed to be the assist men in basketball? Then why is Odom, a 6'10" power forward, leading the team in assists?

TS: I'm going to stop writing this article in five seconds if I have to keep listening to this crap. Odom is "almost" averaging a double-double, great, but was he not supposed to be the next big



"Bicycle Rider," a kinetic sculpture by North Carolina folk artist Vollis Simpson, is one of many works exhibited at the Mimms Gallery as part of an anniversary reunion show. Simpson is one of 53 artists featured in the show. More than 200 attended the recent 10th anniversary celebration.

Photo by Shannon Williams

thing on the Lakers franchise. What has he done? He's doing nothing. He has done nothing to help improve that team. Sure, Kobe takes a lot of shots, but he has to because he's the only good player on that team. I don't think Lamar Odom is even half the player that Kobe is. If Odom doesn't like him, then he can get off the team. Now let's get back to the Shaq issue. If I'm the Lakers, I'm looking for a better under-the-basket player, because that's all Kobe needs to have another championship ring. What has Shaq done with Dwayne Wade? Answer that. That team has sat in second place in the East, THE EAST, for two seasons. Hell, Shaq can't even handle Ben Wallace. Answer my question, Ant.

AD: Are you kidding me? Shaq is the best big man, without question. He took a mediocre Heat team and made them a playoff team. Now that Wade has a little more experience, you're talking about a championship-caliber team. The real question should be how have the Lakers fared since they lost Shaq? They were 34-48 last year, tied for dead last in the division with Golden State. Pathetic.

TS: Shaq has a back-up man in Wade. Who

does Kobe have? I heard the crickets chirping before I asked the question. Kobe has nobody else on that team except him. If you'd put a mediocre center on that team at best, you're talking a playoff caliber team again and maybe even a championship.

AD: Thank you...you just made my point for me. Kobe doesn't want anybody around him because all he wants is the spotlight. He had better than a mediocre center with Shaq.

TS: They had to get rid of one of them, they really did, because the two guys didn't like each other. One had to go, and who went? Shaq. That's my point exactly.

AD: You need to go see a doctor. You must still be suffering from that hit you took in high school from Mario Williams. I hope it's a good diagnosis so you can make me laugh some more in the next Speak Your Mind!

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you would like to take issue with our opinions or recommend a topic for debate, contact us at Trev1986@aol.com, or AD285203@mail.ncwc.edu.