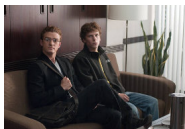


The Flicks Are All Right: Mike Schulz's 10 Most Enjoyable Movies of 2010

Written by Mike Schulz

Monday, 03 January 2011 06:00

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Before commencing with the annual fawning, I thought I'd begin by exercising one of my God-given rights as a reviewer: the right to bitch about the sorry state of movies. I think it's supposed to go something like this:

Boy, are the movies in a sorry state!

During what felt like every weekend in 2010, we were subjected to some example of bloated Hollywood overkill designed to appeal to the absolute lowest common denominator, be it a boring video-game "adaptation" such as *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, or a lazy, cynical "reboot" such as *Robin Hood* R

,
or a predictable, juvenile "entertainment" such as *Grown Ups*

We were inundated with disappointing star vehicles, such as *The Tourist*, in which even the stars didn't appear to be having fun. We were expected to take kids to slapdash kiddie fodder, such as *Tooth Fairy*, and ignore the fact that the filmmakers were treating us all

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like four-year-olds. We were sequel-ed and remake-ed to death, and for the second summer in a row, a long-dead TV series was resuscitated on the big screen ... and no one cared. (Winner of the 2010

Land of the Lost

Award:

The A-Team

.)

And don't even get me *started* on the 3D craze, which found movies that would've been crummy under any circumstances – *Pirahna 3D, Saw 3D, Step Up 3D ...* – somehow even crummier with \$3.50 less in your wallet.

But while all those grievances are definitely justified, I still find it incredibly difficult to moan about the past year in movies; all things considered, 2010's output was actually pretty *great*.

True, Hollywood foisted a lot of garbage on us, but there were also plenty of star-laden, big-budget offerings that *did* deliver the goods, including *Inception, The Next Three Days, The Other Guys, Salt,* and *Unstoppable*. Sure,

there was dopiness galore, but also a surprisingly hearty dose of smarts, on display in *Easy A, Fair Game, Megamind, Scott Pilgrim Vs. the World,* and

The Town

. Plus, all throughout the year, odd, quirky little gems came along to renew your faith in movies, at least for a while:

The Ghost Writer,

and

It's Kind of a Funny Story

, and

Cyrus,

and

Hot Tub Time Machine

, and

Despicable Me

, and

So yeah, not a bad year at all. And when presented with a roster of titles such as the ones I've noted below, you could even argue that 2010 was one of the strongest we've encountered over

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the past 10 years. For my money, the first entry on the list, all by itself, marks this past movie year as one for the ages, at least if my four viewings of the film (so far) are to be trusted



1) *The Social Network*. Just how united are reviewers in their adoration for director David Fincher's and screenwriter Aaron Sorkin's origins-of-Facebook saga? To date, the film has won Best Picture citations from 20 separate critics' groups nationwide, while

Black Swan, *The King's Speech*, *127 Hours*,

and

Winter's Bone

are tied for the second-most wins ... with one apiece. (And

127 Hours

received its recognition in a

tie

with

Social Network

.) Yet while such unilateral praise might be vexing to some – it certainly must be to potential competitors for the Best Picture Oscar – I don't think it's unjustified: of the 150 titles I've seen, Fincher's and Sorkin's achievement is indeed the boldest, brashest, and no-contest-best movie of 2010. I could go on and on about the film's performers, with Jesse Eisenberg's powerful and subtly nuanced Mark Zuckerberg the most staggering creation in a work boasting beautifully detailed character turns by Andrew Garfield, Justin Timberlake, Max Minghella, Rooney Mara, Douglas Urbanski, and a pair of Armie Hammers. (With recognition to Josh Pence for providing the frame on which Hammer's face was oftentimes superimposed.) I could compose a lengthy treatise on the electrifying intelligence of Fincher's fast-paced, insightful direction, and the ease with which so many outstanding collaborators – cinematographer Jeff Cronenweth, editors Kirk Baxter and Angus Wall, composers Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross – make sizable, and recognizable, impacts without overwhelming the movie's whole. I could wax eloquent, or at least

try

to, on the blistering perfection of Sorkin's gleefully acidic dialogue, and the story construction that blends past and present with supreme clarity and wicked cleverness. But really, what's the point? The movie's available on DVD and Blu-Ray on January 11. See it for yourselves. And then, like many of us, expect to want to watch it again and again and again.

