Chapter 2 – History of film Essay

For this assignment, I am going to compare twelve films to a story I’m in the process of writing. My film’s story involves a young man and his two friends taking an experimental drug one night while at a party. The drug is said to “enlighten” the user. The main character wakes the next morning with no recollection of anything that happened after that point, but slowly discovers that many things have changed since that point. For one, everyone else in his town has vanished. All power seems to have disappeared as well. The protagonist must now put together pieces of what happened, and if and how he can make things return to normal. It doesn’t take long for him to uncover that some very disturbing discoveries, and make some difficult decisions with potentially huge consequences. My story still has many wrinkles being worked out, has a definite tone and feel that I’m trying to convey. For this assignment I’ve tried to pick a variety of films, across different genres to analyze. Studying these films will hopefully give me a good understanding of what works in terms of tone of a film, and what works (or doesn’t) in terms of story and character development. The goal is that this exercise will help me as a writer to understand how my story needs to be shaped to have the greatest impact.

Shaun of the Dead

The first movie I will compare my story to is Shaun of the Dead. In this film, a group of Englanders must band together to survive an outbreak of a virus that is turning people into flesh-eating zombies. What separates this film from many others in the same genre is the unlikely heroes, and the often improvised and humorous fashion they must fight to survive. They wind up going to a local watering hole to wait it out, partially because they know there is a gun there, and partially because they want to be able to drink during the strange turn of events. Witty banter spliced with shocking violence (Edgar Wright is very underrated as an action director) set the tone for a fun and memorable ride.

Shaun of the Dead compares favorably to my film in many ways. Both stories start of in regular environments. This provides a setting that most everybody can relate to. Both stories have single, young-ish, otherwise boring male leads. Both stories involve having a small group of people who must come together to overcome a strange and seemingly insurmountable obstacle. Where the tone of my story differs, however, is in the central threat. In Shaun of the Dead, the threat is a more immediate and dangerous than in mine. Their primary goal is just survival, and working out whatever personal drama each character has going on in their lives. In my story, the conflict is also external, but more of a looming dread that each of the characters may not be returning to their normal lives any time soon. Another reason I chose to compare this film to mine is because of the scale. Shaun of the Dead attempts to tell a large story, but does it without a huge budget (most of the effects are practical). Having a smaller scale movie to learn from can help teach of the types of scenes that can translate well since I will likely be forced to work on a shoestring budget as well.

The film works very well for the most part. The protagonist, Shaun (played by Simon Pegg) is kind of a loner, but has enough charm and humor to make him endearing. His best friend Ed (played by Nick Frost) provides a good foil to Shaun, and gives the film good tidings of friendship and humor. The plot of the movie attempts something that is very hard to pull off, which is combining elements of genuine humor and horror. The film is able to do this at some points, and sometimes the two seem to contradict each other. When a film sets up humorous situations, typically it does it at the expense of building suspense caused by zombies in the film. The film does manage to bring out a few genuine jump-out-of-you-seat scenes that come from out of nowhere. But there are also times, when the humor provides the audience with a sense of comic relief when things seem to be getting too tense.

The characters in this movie seem to fall into two categories, those who are relatable and those whom are caricatures. Shaun, Lucy, and Dylan are all very relatable characters. They share problems in the beginning of the movie that allow the audience to relate and sympathize. On the other hand, characters of Ed, Peter, and Liz are more single dimensional, with each representing the buffoonish best friend, the asshole roommate, and shrew ex-girlfriend respectively. Each of these characters serves a purpose in the arch of the movie, but the audience is not as invested in their survival throughout the course of the film.

Office Space

The second film I will compare my story to is Office Space. In this film, a twenty-something male is struggling with his soul-crushing cubicle job at a mundane tech company in Texas. Along with a couple of his co-workers/friends, they decide to deploy a bug into the company’s payroll software that will make them a large amount of money without the company being able to detect anything wrong. The trouble comes when it is revealed that due to a glitch in the bug, accidentally steal a huge amount of money instead. The third act of the film sees the three men trying to figure out a way to fix this without being caught.

I believe this film, although not a science-fiction film, matches the tone of my film very well. Like my story, it involves a young male protagonist and two of his friends, whom are all of above-average intelligence. The core plot of the movie is driven when the three main character are thrust into a situation that they find themselves suddenly in over their heads. Despite the fact they are all book smart and well-to-do, they are all humorously bad at dealing with the fallout when something does not go according to plan. In my story, the situation is seemingly something super-natural, which gives the story a more suspenseful stage, rather than the more dreadful looming doom built by Office Space.

The film works very well for the most part. Interspersed throughout the film is dark humor from the cast of secondary characters that one would find in any small company office environment. The main character Peter Gibbons (Ron Livingston) spends the first act of the film getting more and more fed up with his job (and his life outside of work) in various humorous ways. The film also has great supporting characters of Bill Lumbergh, Milton Wadams, and Lawrence, who play Peter’s boss, squirrely co-worker, and neighbor respectively.

The characters in this movie seem to fall in to two different categories as well, well-rounded sympathetic characters and one-dimensional caricatures. Peter Gibbons is a likeable every-guy, who is frustrated with his job and personal life. That is a situation most people can identify with. The two friends, Michael and Samir, are also very likeable. You are rooting for the characters to get away with the crime, and actually sympathize with them when things go wrong. The secondary characters may not have much depth, but they do provide a great deal of comic relief.

I feel like I may be alone in this criticism, but the character of Joanna, Peter’s love interest, didn’t really work for me. The character is supposed to be equal parts lovely and witty-funny, but both neither really resonated with me. By the end, you have a character that you don’t really care if Peter winds up with her or not. That could be part of her character though, as Peter begins to fall for her after having his “revelation” and maybe, by the end of the film, we see that the revelation wasn’t really right for the character.

John Dies at the End

Another film with similar themes to my story is John Dies at the End. In this film, a character named David Wong recounts a long, bizarre story about how was introduced into a drug called soy sauce, that gave him the ability to see into new dimensions. Along with his friend John, the two are set on a journey that involves helping a girl from her stalking dead boyfriend, involved in some police conspiracy, and visiting other dimensional planes of existence.

This film matches the tone of my story in some ways. The two main characters are set on a journey they are unprepared to take after taking a mysterious drug. The drug in this film gives the characters the ability to see into other dimensions that others cannot see, whereas my story introduces the characters to something of a new world. The two main characters in John Dies at the End are not noted for being particularly smart. They might be called junkies or burnouts by some people. They do, however, gain a type of clairvoyance after being introduced to the drug that makes them seem omnipresent to other people in the film.

The film works in some regards and fails in others. For a type of film like this dealing with monsters and other worldly beings, there needs to be either a large amount of practical effects or CGI. It’s clear that the film did not have the budget to meet its ambitions in many of the scenes, and it distracts from the story in many instances. It’s unclear if some of the scenes are being played for horror or for a bizarre abstractness, but often fails at both. One defense however, is that most of the story is being told in flashbacks by a un-reliable narrator. If that is the case, then some of the scenes that were bizarre and other-worldly may be more excusable.

The characters in this film are only moderately relatable. John and Dave both seem slightly *off* even before taking the soy sauce for the first time. Not necessarily dumb or evil, but prone to hanging around nefarious characters and winding up in bizarre circumstances. Some people may say it makes the characters un-relatable, but some may say it also makes them more interesting. Strangely, the seemingly most reliable and relatable character in the film, the journalist Arnie Blondstone (played by Paul Giamatti) ends up being the one who is the most deceiving by the end of the film. His character is doubtful about the story Dave is telling throughout the film, and in the final minutes of the film, we find out that he is actually dead and finding a way to reconcile.

Wall-E

I wanted to pick a film that is not entirely related to my genre, so for this I will compare my story to the film Wall-E. This may seem like an unusual choice, being that this is a kids cartoon made by the Disney owned Pixar, but the story and struggles faced by the protagonist, a robot named Wall-E, actually do mirror many of the those in my story. In Wall-E, a humanoid robot is programmed to clean all the garbage left behind on an abandoned land we assume is Earth. His actions throughout the film indicate that he is more sentient that most robots and may be capable of many human emotions including love. He also seems to be curious and enjoys exploring this world he lives in, often examining and collecting strange pieces of memorabilia he finds instead of disposing of them. He finds another robot, a “female” robot named EVA. And his quest to win her affection leads them on a strange adventure.

The film matches the tone of my film in some ways. The protagonist Wall-E, while not human, is a relatable character. We are interested to find out what happens next to him on his exploration of Earth. Although he is a robot, we grow to like him and trust his judgment, even in strange or unusual circumstances. Much like the protagonist in my story, Wall-E represents a sense of optimism in an otherwise bleak existence. There is not much else in the way of life, or other robot companionship, but he remains steadfast. Wall-E also has a similar plot structure to mine. Both films start off with the main character in their natural “boring” environment. Soon enough, they make a decision that puts them on a mysterious, potentially dangerous adventure. Choices made during the second act of the film lead our characters to a scenario at the end of the movie that can have huge consequences in the survival of the human race. Wall-E also has the task of carrying much of the screen time in the movie all by himself. Observing how the animators are able to do this without losing the audience’s attention can help me control the pace and tone in my film.

The film works pretty well for the most part, but it’s not without its flaws. The tone of the film is darker than most other Disney/Pixar films, but unfortunately still can’t tackle all of the ramifications of the fall of Earth/humanity in a PG format. What we are stuck with is a story that skews more towards silliness rather than the bleak nihilism about the human condition. The leftover humans that have left Earth are now living in a space station, and have all become morbidly obese and more or less ineffectual. In a series of events that doesn’t really make any narrative sense, Wall-E guides the ship back to Earth and convinces the humans to start taking care of the Earth, as if this was somehow a new concept to them. The film also suffers from poor pacing. It almost seems that the first half was written completely independent of the second half. It is however, an incredibly beautiful animated film. From the large decomposing landscape of future dystopian Earth, to the sleek futuristic look of the space station Axiom, it’s clear the animator and directors spent a lot of time perfecting the look and feel of this film.

The characters in Wall-E are strong, considering the primary characters are two robots and obese, lazy remains of humanity. The character of Wall-E walks a fine line balancing all the human characteristics of a hopeless romantic trapped in the body of a emotionless robot. EVE at first doesn’t show much signs of emotion, but we take this to mean that later in the movie when she begins to, she initially was just following her programming which Wall-E shows there is more to. The film also has a “bad guy” robot named GO-4, which seems to exist only to give the film a climactic final showdown. Still, when you put the package all together, it amazingly turns into a enjoyable movie for people of any age, which is what most people want from a movie at the end of the day.

I am Legend

I wanted to pick a range of films, from big budget to small, and different genres to compare mine to. For this reason, I chose I am Legend to compare my story to. This film, probably had the biggest budget of any movie on my list. It is interesting to see how this helps the film in some regards, and hurts the film in others. In I am Legend, Will Smith plays a scientist Robert Neville, who after a zombie outbreak tries to find the cure to reversing the disease. Along the way, he finds a few other survivors whom he helps to survive and keep the hope for human re-population alive.

The tone of this film matches mine somewhat. After the zombie outbreak occurs, the film hits a somber tone where the protagonist must deal with his new world, which involves no other living human beings. Robert Neville is a very smart man, who believes he can return the world back to the way it was. He basically spends most of the movie doing this in various ways. In order to study the effect of possible cures, he must abduct some of the “infected” and perform tests on them in his home lab. The story does deal with some moral implications of what could be the ramifications of such behavior, but doesn’t seem to deal with any of their fallouts.

The movie works in some regards and feels like a huge missed opportunity in others. It seems to value the scare factor of the monsters over the suspense and intrigue surrounding possible cures. For a movie that clearly had a huge budget to be able to shutdown large parts of New York City to film, it has some cheesy looking special effects. The monsters in this film take the view immediately out of the movie. That said, however, Will Smith’s performance is actually pretty great. He has the charisma to carry huge chunks of the movie just by himself. The secondary characters in the film do little more than to cause emotional development in Smith. The films’ ending is unforgivably bad. I try to judge a film in a vacuum, and not compare it to its source material, but knowing the conceit of the short story “I am Legend” makes me angry that the filmmakers completely missed the point of the story. I would like to think the ending to my film would have more of a payoff than just “bad guys are bad” and “heroes do heroic things.” It eventually boils down to a man with nothing to lose going on a hero’s journey for the greatest goal, the survival of mankind. It’s one of the oldest stories ever told, and unfortunately has been done many times better than this.

Primer

This is another smaller film that compares well with the tone of my film. Primer tells the story of a group of engineers who accidentally invent something of a time traveling machine. It might actually create alternate universes that are slightly offset in time. Either way, two of the men, Aaron and Abe, don’t wait to fully understand the situation before they both decide to use it for their own personal means. They start by using it to win money through the stock market, but it’s not long before the machine they build begins to have unexpected and dire side effects. It is an interesting take on how technology and responsibility can have corrupting influences on people.

This film matches the tone of my film very well. It is shot as a low-key adventure/thriller, from the point of view of two young, sharp male leads. Although they are quite smart, their intentions and ethics are always in question. After they discover what the machine they built is capable of, they are put on a track that they may not be able to return from. Using the time machine as a device to fix problems that they made using the time machine, creating loops and paradoxes that they cannot undo. Also like my story, the truth of what is actually is happening is not clear. Much of the second two-thirds of the story are non-linear and somewhat open to interpretation as to what is actually happening. It is a complicated story that does not play down to the audience. Unlike my story, Primer has a series of time-lines and events that may require an advanced math degree to decipher. From that standpoint, my story seems straightforward.

The story in Primer works well for what it is. It tells about how four men created a time machine, and what the practical implications involved with such a device would entail. It would be used to gain any kind of benefit that it can. At first it would be used for small financial gain, then go up in stakes from there. In a different movie, the characters would use a time machine to explore ancient lands and do fantastical things not possible in real life. It’s somewhat shocking to see a film that tackles such a fantastical concept, and handles the scientific aspects so frankly. It’s amazing a film can tackle a difficult concept like this on such a small budget. It does miss the mark in some regards however. It’s clear no one in the film is an A-list talent at acting. It’s actually the film’s writer and director, Shane Carruth, who is the leading actor as well. The second and third acts of the film become muddled due to the film’s convoluting time-lines. This style of story-telling can be polarizing and drive some people away from the film’s story.

Unfortunately, the characters in the film are pretty dull. The four lead characters are engineers, who are stereotypically dull personalities. The film is true in that regard. This is good for providing smart characters whom can take advantage of situations, but not great at providing emotional depth. None of the supporting characters provide much character depth either. The cinematography of the film leaves much to be desired as well. Dull colors and low quality film match the tone of the film, but do little to help the overall end product. The main character of this story is the plot, and the characters are basically stand-ins for the audience to put themselves in their place. It is great accomplishment that the film can achieve this level of intrigue while up against so many obstacles.

Idiocracy

Another dark comedy from Mike Judge (he also wrote/directed Office Space) that I will compare my story to is Idiocracy. Idiocracy tells the story of a man “who is average in every single way” and a female prostitute who are put into cryo-stasis as part of a military experiment, and then forgotten about. When it wakes, it’s a dystopian future where mankind has become exponentially dumber, to the point where he is now the smartest man remaining on Earth. The revived two must try to find a way to get back to the “time-machine” to get back to the 21st century.

This film matches the tone of my story somewhat. This film is played as a straight comedy, albeit a dark one. The inhabitants of the future are either comically hostile, being offended by someone who is “smart” or just comically dumb and ineffectual. My film is played more as a science-fiction adventure, with comedic elements. They do both involve a young male lead, being transported to a place he is not familiar or comfortable with. They are both forced to work with a team to help try to return to their home world.

The film works well at some things and not so great at others. There are some truly genuine funny moments in the film. Seeing Terry Crews as President Comacho and Dax Sheppard trying to explain anything that requires any sort of attention span will always make me laugh. The film does have serious issues with the plot and pacing of the film. It’s hard to take any of the films climactic moments seriously due to the overall silliness of the situations and characters. The film also seems to have more ambition than it does budget. Several of the scenes look like they are obviously shot with green screen and using CGI effects, which even in a film that is a straight comedy, does detract from the humor and overall effectiveness.

Probably the films biggest weakness is the characters. None of the characters are seem to have any depth. All of the characters in the future are parodies and not supposed to have any kind of impact other than just straight comedy or to drive the plot of the film. But the two leads, Joe and Rita, don’t have a lot of depth in their performances either. Seeing a character go from pessimistic and nonchalant, to just slightly hopeful and caring doesn’t inspire a lot of emotion from the audience.

Donnie Darko

Another film that compares well to my story is Donnie Darko. In this film, a young man (the titular Donnie Darko) lives in a small suburban town in the mid-80’s. Donnie suffers from having strange visions and sleep walking, often winding up in different places without remembering how he got there. One morning he wakes up, having walked onto a golf course and finds a series of numbers scrawled on his arm. He begins having dreams and visions that reveal that this is when the world is going to end. The rest of the film finds Donnie trying to discover the meaning behind these numbers, while fostering relationships with other members of his small suburban town.

This story matches the tone of my film pretty well. Both involve single young-ish males who are thrust into unusual situations. Donnie Darko is put on a journey that involves supernatural things happening that only he can perceive. He has visions and wild dreams that make the audience unsure if he is supernaturally gifted, or just . Despite this, the character has such charisma and charm that the audience roots for him even despite his actions which are sometimes immoral or outright illegal. It has a great tone that balances its suspenseful atmosphere with humor, nostalgia, and genuine character interactions and development. By the end of the movie, we are rooting for Donnie to “save the day” as it were, in the context of the movie. The movie’s time travel and wormhole plot does get overwhelming at times. I think even if you dissected the film’s science, you’d probably find plenty of plot holes relating to the plot and character’s motivations. The positives far outweigh the negatives though if you’re willing to go along with the ride.

The characters in this film work great. Jake Gyllenhaal as Donnie Darko is a troubled and troublesome teenage who is equal parts disturbed and enlightened. His interactions with the various other characters in the film are what drives the narrative. He has love-hate relationships with the other members of his family, including his real life sister Maggie Gyllenhaal, which reveal the alienated nature of what Donnie is going through, but the hurt shown at times by the other family members show what love they have for him and the end of the day. There are many tertiary characters throughout the movie, which help guide Donnie on his hero’s journey. While they may not all be fully developed (the bullies at Donnie’s high school are particularly bad), they are interesting enough. Although my film deals more so with hard science, the mystical feel of the film contrasted with the dark humor and heart strike a balance that I hope my film can achieve as well.

12 Monkeys

Another film to compare my film to is 12 Monkeys. In this film, it’s the near future and Earth’s remaining population is forced to live underground due to a virus outbreak. Scientists have developed an inexact method of time travel. In exchange for a pardon, one man attempts to travel back to Washington D.C. in the mid 90s to try to determine the cause the cause of the outbreak. He accidentally travels back too far and gets institutionalized, and must find a way to escape and get his plan back on track. Several themes in the movie compare to themes in my film. Memories of unreliable characters and the use of technology that isn’t quite understood are key in my film as well. The looming threat of a terrorist threat provides an external threat that is unlike anything found in my story.

The tone of this film compares to mine somewhat. The post-apocalyptic world is this film is huge and daunting and contrasts to the small isolated feel of mine. The lead in this film, James Cole (played by Bruce Willis) is put into a situation, albeit not totally against his will. He does, however, get himself in over in head due to various circumstances out of his control. He is forced to rely on others in this new world that may not believe him, or have his best intentions.

The film works well for the most part. 12 Monkeys has a very dystopian vibe permeating throughout the whole film. John Cole is a very smart and competent man who is doing what he has to do. We get a feeling very early on in the film that humanity may be doomed despite his best efforts.

The characters in this film are strong if not uninspired. John Cole plays the tough “everyman in a bad situation” he plays in so many movies. Brad Pitt plays something of an antagonist as Jeffrey Goings. His performance is somewhat over the top, but entertaining nonetheless. Madeline Stowe plays Kathryn Railly, Cole’s doctor/psychiatrist, and later unwilling partner in crime. She is an interesting character study based on how she slowly changes her attitudes towards Cole’s character throughout the course of the movie. Terry Gilliam’s directorial style adds a unique drama and tone to the already surreal environments. Unfortunately, we’ve seen all these pieces work better in other films.

The Game

Another film I want to compare my film to is The Game. In this film, a reclusive investment banker is given a strange gift for his 48th birthday: membership into a program, or “Game” that integrates itself into the players’ life in strange ways. He reluctantly decides to check it out. When he attends the facilities for the company preforming the operation, Consumer Recreation Services, he begins to get asked increasingly strange questions about his life. He eventually leaves the facility with the game set to begin at an undetermined time in the near future. After a string of events, he finds himself drugged, robbed of all his belongings, and left for dead in rural Mexico. He must sell his gold watch, one of his most prized possessions, to just get the money to make his way back home. At this point he is decided that game is actually a big scam. After a long journey of piecing together clues, in an attempt to get his money and life back, he finds himself on the brink of suicide. This is significant because his father committed suicide on his 48th birthday.

The Game compares to my film very well on a number of levels. The protagonist of the Game, Nicholas Van Orton, is a smart lone-wolf type of character, like the protagonist of my film. Nicholas Van Orten is older, and has been abandoned by most of his friends and family, unlike my character. However, both have similar dispositions. They are smart and have suspicious personalities. They are both semi-willingly thrust into unusual and dangerous situations. How they react and handle the challenges faced in their new situations dictate how the rest of the film transpires. The tone of the film also matches mine favorably. The atmosphere created, due in large part by the suspense and mystery of the company and the “game,” keeps the viewer on edge all throughout the course of the film. We put ourselves into his situation and imagine how we would react at each and every turn. I also want to mention the soundtrack of the film, which helps create such a creepy atmosphere. I believe my film will have a minimalist soundtrack, but this film’s score does illustrate a great example of how musical scores can help elevate the tension and mood of scenes.

Nicholas Van Orton (Michael Douglas) is the only primary character in the Game. His performance is terrific. He holds command of the film during many long stretches when he is the only character on screen. His character must reassess his life and several points throughout the course of the film. The audience can almost gauge his feeling by watching his level of intensity at various points in the film. He is later joined in his journey by a female “actress,” Christine, who was supposed to be a part of the scam, but eventually sympathizes with him. Her performance is solid in a small role. Nicholas’s brother, Conrad (Sean Penn), has very few scenes in the film, but his presence looms large. It is, after all, Conrad who gives Nicholas the Game as a gift. It is Conrad who is being alternately cursed and lamented by Nicholas during his plight. The final scene between Nicholas and Conrad, seems very implausible by realistic standards. But after seeing what Nicholas has been through during his game, we are willing to look past that to accept the final embracing of life Nichoals experiences, and his loving reunion with his brother. This movie works excellently as a mystery/thriller with strong moral message. The film also works on a more interesting, meta level as well. All the events that transpire after Nichoals signs up for the game, seem incredibly unrealistic that it could be staged. Every turn has him facing seemingly real danger and suspense. This is the same philosophy that a filmmaker has when telling his story. The audience doesn’t want to believe that the events of this film could possibly be orchestrated. But by the end of the movie, we realize it could *totally* have been staged. That’s because it was staged, in order to film this movie.The Hangover

The last film I want to compare my story to is the Hangover. This is the film that probably feels least likes the story I want to tell. The Hangover is a straight R-rated comedy that tells the story of a bachelor party gone foul. The four characters in the story travel to Las Vegas to being a night of partying in honor of their friend Stu getting married. The movie cuts to the next day, where we find the four men wake up extremely hung-over and with no idea of the events of the previous night. They are also missing their friend Stu. They spend the course of the movie trying to piece together clues about what happened, and trying to locate their lost friend before his impending wedding.

This film does compares to my film in some ways. The Hangover plays as mostly a straight comedy, often with slapstick and cartoonish action. My story is more of suspense with humorous elements. In the Hangover, most suspense or drama that happens on the screen keeps the pace of the plot of the movie going, but seem to serve as more as set up for humorous dialogue and physical comedy scenes. In my film, humor is used as a tool to cut the building suspense throughout the course of the story. There are also some parallels in the story. In both the Hangover and my story, the characters wake up without much recollection of how they got to where they are and what happened the previous night. The characters must try to put together odd clues to determine how to fix their problems. There are some dramatic beats and timing that could be learned for writing to my story.

The movie does work pretty well as a comedy. At the time, most audiences were not familiar with the comedic styling of Zach Galifinakis, so his scenes were particularly memorable. The setup of the film was pretty fresh for a comedy film. When the remaining three characters awake the following morning to a trashed hotel room a stolen live tiger, it sets the tone for the rest of the movie. The four main characters in the film all work pretty well. I say four because I consider the city the film takes place in, Las Vegas, to be as crucial of a character as any. The other three leads (Phil, Stu, and Alan) all bring different flavors of comedy to the table, without anyone really overshadowing. Their contrasting styles lead to several intense and humorous interactions throughout the movie. The movie has “bad guys” such as the police and Leslie Chow, the Chinese gangster, but the real enemy in the movie is time. The men have to find their friend and get him home in time for his wedding, ideally without his fiancé or family being any the wiser to the events that transpired in Vegas. The ending is a little anticlimactic thematically, but the film makes up for it with a great gimmick. After the wedding scene, the four guys find a camera filled with pictures of the night they can’t remember. They decide to view the photos once and afterwards delete them forever, which the audience gets to view during the end credits.