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Donnie Darko

At first glance, seeing this movie in trailers in other video online and advertisements and such; this one had always caught my attention. I remember watching a plot analysis that did a good job of not giving too much away and realized I wouldn’t know what this movie was really trying to get across until I actually watched it. Donnie Darko has a demented, twisted feel to it all the way through and at the same gives off a ton of positive vibes and small-time comedy alongside the brilliant use of its amazing soundtrack and dark tone.

Donnie Darko follows the troubled and corrupted life of Donnie Darko. Donnie is a more or less confused medicated teen, who through some eye might not seem so, “off”. Throughout a certain special 28 days in his life an ominous creature dressed in a bunny suit by the name of Frank accompanies him, that plagues his everyday life in to aid him through this 28 day course. At the end of said course, something is meant to bring about the end of the world, and from the start we don’t know if Frank is the one meant to cause or prevent it. Only through finding out what is truth and fiction can Donnie truly see what he must do to prevent the destruction of the world around him.

One thing Donnie Darko does a great job of doing is having the viewer question what is reality and what is in Donnie’s head. Throughout many scenes in the film we also question if what Donnie is doing is necessarily right or wrong and that is just great in my opinion. Any movie that creates doubtfulness about the main character, the one were supposed to be rooting for; without completely chopping up the movies plot gets an A in my book. That is one of the aspects that I want to take from Donnie Darko and place in my film. Horror films do a good job of doing this (Like My Bloody Valentine) but many horror films fail in the process of doing this because they utterly destroy the quality of the film by adding too much to its entire story, straying too far away from its original roots. Donnie Darko isn’t a horror movie, although some others might disagree, but it does one of the best jobs putting itself across as one and always having its viewers on their toes.

Good Will Hunting

In the past, I’ve heard nothing but good things about Good Will Hunting. Some saying it’s one the greatest movies you’ll ever see, and a good friend of mine actually on my case for months to watch it for months because he thought it would help in creating ideas for my movie. I can tell you now that that movie lived up to all the hype created for it despite being made in 1997 and it now being my first time watching it in 2016. It’s one of those movies where the director wants to you to stay focused on it story and question what the main character (Will) is really doing in life and feel and relate to just as much of the emotional trauma that Will experiences in his life.

For those who like to judge right of the back, Will is a lowlife. A young orphan with a job as a janitor at MIT who clearly does not see his full potential. One thing holding him back is the fact that he sees himself as every normal man in America, but Will has an underlying ability to push himself academically, solving equations some of the greatest professors wouldn’t be able to solve. He just needs the “push” that everybody receives in there life that he never got the chance to receive and will the help of his “therapist” he soon realizes in isn’t just some useless kid that deserves a regular day-job because he’s bigger than that.

Robin Williams is the one who guides Will to face his demons and helps him to realize, he’s not the only one with a few of his own. That bad stuff in the world doesn’t just happen to him. Just giving your all in the world and finding out that you want to do with it and be doing what you love most is one of the greatest thing Will learned and probably changed the course of his future more than he realizes.

Dazed and Confused

Its rare to find a movie with more than 2 or 3 characters that you can really connect with and find down-right interesting. Dazed and confused did it like it was no problem and got a great story to along with it as well. From the very beginning of the movie I was somewhat lost and didn’t exactly know which character the director wanted the audience to turn all of the attention to and considering it is a highschool movie there’s is of course going to be the average school setup following your nerds, jocks, stoners, underclassmen, and more popular upperclassmen, that’s a lot of groups that could be home to just one “hero”. My whole point is that towards the end of the movie you might think twice about who you were rooting for the entire film.

Like I stated previously about the groups the film follows, every last one of them have one thing in common and that is in fact their love desire get one more great day in before the last day of high school and that is to party like they never have before. The movie picks up in the middle of the insanity that is driving the minds of the students waiting to end their yearly high school careers as everybody is eagerly awaiting easily the greatest party of the year and christening the youth in welcoming them to the great high school experience. Two students at the end of both of the sticks eventually cross paths and find a way to enjoy themselves the way school is meant to be and that is one big confusion.

The premise of the film in my opinion is to get teens and adults to enjoy the movie for one, and to get the entire audience to relate each and every person they know to somebody in the movie itself. It does a great job at it as well. Throughout the entire film I used my comparison and contrast skills harder than ever. Maybe it Richard Linklaters own experiences that helped drive the pure realness behind its entire duration or just a brilliant mind. It is although a fact the director really helped touch me with the movie, mainly because if anything then the film I eventually create is going to have massive elements from this movie and you can count on it.

Boyhood

From my perspective on film I believe that for a movie to be good it has to either make you truly feel or it you can find one its topics to relate to. Well throughout almost the entire duration of the film I felt like as if I could relate to nearly all of the aspects of Masons life. From a divorced set of parents, to listening to The Beatles in high-school, to the teenage mischief that almost everybody has been though. And it might be due to the similarities of Masons life and mine but I also felt as though I could simply say what he was thinking during those times of hardship and ecstasy during his life and that brought out of sea of emotions that rarely any movies bring up. He fact that the film was filmed over the course of 12 years also completely blows me away. In my case I feel like after 12 years of production the whole premise of the film for me would seem a little askew and out of place but Richard Linklater must’ve took his sweet time to carefully look at every little detail.

This essay is a little different from my others because I cant really go into too much detail explaining the film because if I did I would probably have to tell the entire story and there would be plenty of potholes. The whole premise of the film is Masons shift from childhood to manhood and without watching the movie I feel as though I cant really tell anybody how great of a film it is. I remember asking myself throughout the entire movie as Mason matures “Is that’s a different actor?” or “Is that his same sister because they found some of the best look-a-likes ever?”. Coming to find out at the end that it’s all the same people just blew me away. Not that that has anything to deal with how I want my film to be or anything but the whole setup of boyhood is almost exactly like how I would like my film to unfold. I want everybody in the audience to grow attached to my characters and feel for them just as those who watched Mason grow old felt. Building a connection with the audience is one of the most important bonds I want to build with my audience because from experience I see that if you build relationship between your characters and your audience, then all you need from there on is a fantastic story to make every get those feels everyone gets when they watch the credits of titanic for the first time.

Being John Malkovich

Now this is an odd one out of every other in this list. A love-story, for the most part, but also consisting of a few mellow-dramatic comedic elements that only the gloomy at heart will truly find funny. From the beginning it didn’t really hook me the way most movies normally do, but not every movie will always get you like that, so after about 20 minutes understanding what I was seeing and listening to. In the area of New York city where everything unfolds, just like everywhere else in the world, there’s that low-key group of people who spend their personal time indulging in there own forms of ecstasy. Usually in most real life scenarios and film cases the purest forms of bliss for characters is sex, drugs, or money; just remember that.

Craig Schwartz is a up and coming puppeteer struggling to make a decent living with his wife Lotte. He then turns to looking for a new profession to sustain there lives at office company by the name of LesterCorp where he meets a unlikely colleague named Maxine and discovers a portal leading directly to the mind of the actor John Malkovich. Craig is the first to discover the portal where he views the world through the eyes of John. What follows for everybody through the portal is 15 minutes is pure psychedelic euphoria in the mind of Malkovich. Maxine views this discovery as a money-making opportunity which attracts many people around New York as a form of drug. Although for Craig its an opportunity to live life in a newer different skin like a real puppet master.

Once I saw how everybody in the city reacted to entering Johns mind I was gripped by the film as it starts out following a fairly confusing path with subtle humor. The love life that Craig deals with and having Maxine twist and confuse his mind reminds me of love-lives that many people deal with and just let happen without realizing the toll its taking on their mind. I also come from a neighborhood where many people like to expand there mind and imagine there life as something its completely not like as if it were a world without any consequences for the actions we make.

Fish Tank

A very low-key sleeping beauty in the western film world is one of the first things I would say about fish tank if anybody were to say anything involving it. Iv never heard any word about it until the past 2 months and maybe it just wasn’t popular at the box office in Europe for it to really reach the American public. Katie Jarvis even made it seem like her character was believable enough to really fit her character and had played a really great role of the rugged-independent troubled teenage girl. Actually unlike any I’ve ever seen in any other movie.

Mia is a fifteen-year-old girl who lives with her slightly careless mother Joanne and little sister Tyler. Not completely sure how she films about her way of life around the neighborhood she lives in Mia is always on the move out and about, looking and listening to those around her and not taking any kind of crap from anybody around her. Her mother then introduces her new boyfriend to the home who encourages Mia to chase her ambition in Dance. What the follows is a mix of emotions and feeling even the cast probably explain and Mia finding out what she truly should be doing instead of antagonizing everything.

What hooked me at first for this film were the amazing filming aspects that captured the essence of everything around her. The gloomy western weather really attributes to the gloomy tone of Mia’s whole character. When I get into filming more of my own films I would like to capture the atmosphere of everything around the protagonist to help affect the vibes that the audience gets from the movie because as I always believe any film can be notable as long as it makes the catch some emotions besides slight comedic elements.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

This and maybe two other films on this list are ones that might throw you off a little. Be warned that it’s not for those who are easily inhibited or those who appreciate seeing high amounts of drugs large enough to kill Mick Jagger. To be fair Fear and Loathing is a great comedy that will only have you leaving your seat thinking either, is Duke a mad genius or am I the one that’s mad because I really just don’t get this guy. If great enough attention is paid then you will see that clearly the two main characters shift between what their true goals are throughout the film. Rest assured though, the whole point of the film for them two is to keep the American Dream alive and running on anything they can get their hand on.

The film follows the journey of a journalist by the name of Raoul Duke and his attorney Dr. Gonzo. Their journey begins as they’re flying down the freeway on their way into Las Vegas in a Red Convertible loaded “to the teeth” with as much alcohol and as many psychedelic drugs you can name. As they make their way into the damned city a good amount of the drugs they’ve ingested have already kicked in. What follows is a hazy few nights filled with absolute hilarity, Zen, and severe self-loathing for the bunch. Almost immediately they ask themselves why are they out in the middle of the dessert and that is just the start of their “American Dream”.

Gonzo and Duke have very unethical goals for main characters in a film but for some reason throughout the film you’re rooting for them all they. There is also not really a clear antagonist throughout the film as well, a little more looking is required. You must see that the only thing stopping these two from reaching their “goals” in Vegas are themselves and the massive amounts of drugs clouding their consciousness. I’m not saying I want my film to exactly like a drug-induced trip into the Vegas, but I very much want it to feature a main character who’s ambitions are wild and doubtful. So much to the point where halfway through the film they might shift an immediate protagonist to the antagonist that’s been there from the very start of the show, you just had to open your eyes a little more.

The Shining

I will say from the start that this is not your average gore fest, jump-scare horror film. Steven King uses one of the greatest horror elements that I’ve known about since about third grade and that is psychologically induced horror. Even then I’m not saying this is one of the scariest movies I’ve seen but it is one of the most well made horror flicks I’ve seen. That is actually saying a lot too. There are a ton of horror movies we see announced ever other month and I can tell you that not very many catch my eye or seem appealing because they all honestly seem like they’ve followed basically the same horror template they’ve been following for years and haven’t thought of anything fresh. This movie is one that had me hooked on just the thought of it for a while and after seeing it I don’t know what delayed so long in viewing it.

The Shining is a cult horror classic that follows the life of a Mr. Jack Torrance and his family. Jack is a struggling author and has been recently offered a job at the Overlook Hotel for the winter to watch over it during its off-season. This is good news for him because in the seclusion of the hotel he can get more alone time in from his wife Shelley and son Danny, so he can focus more on his muse. The only catch to the position, which turns down most others, is the incident involving the last man hired to watch over the hotel. It’s not very much worth paying any mind to though since Jack is with his wife and son in the Hotel by himself there should be no issue anyway.

That’s where I went wrong in thinking as well. Immediately the family starts to see the negative affects the hotel has to offer, Danny being the first to notice them. As time progress through the film you can start to see the toll the hotel history starts to have on everybody as Jack slowly loses his own mind to himself. Steven King fit that into place almost perfectly. Jack has nobody besides his own psychological demons forcing him the rabbit hole and it seems as though he likes it. My film will have little to no horror aspects but this film is worth noting in this essay anyway due to its great story with somewhat of a twist ending and amazing cast that offered the acting.

Were the Millers

If I were recommending this movie to anybody I would tell him or her to go watch it without reading any type of synopsis or back-story. You do that and I assure you will have the same hilarious experience I did when I saw it. Even just looking at the cover first glance, without reading anything on it, you can easily be mislead into thinking this film is going to be one thing it totally isn’t and everybody loves a cliché family road trip movie. Give the movie less than one minute and it completely makes a 180 showing you what its really about in the inciting incident. From there on out you’re hooked.

Were the Millers follows the story of the great happy family The Millers. Everything kicks off from the beginning in the height of fulltime drug dealer David Clark. What marks the height of his service to the game just so happens to mark one of his lowest points as well. After trying to settle a scrap with some street heads across from his apartment they receive word that he is indeed a drug dealer. What follows is a chase that eventually leads to a mugging, which leads to David losing all of his money and product. This means that David now has to resort to talking with his connection about how he can pay back a chunk of his debt. This involves him renting an RV, playing the part of the family guy, going across the border to pick up a “little” weed, and smuggling said weed back across the border. Easy enough, but one thing keeping David from moving forward is the role he’s going to have to play in securing a safe drive back to the United States.

I actually wasn’t originally planning to have this film on my list because I had never seen it before but after viewing it I knew I would have to. One of the greatest things in this film is its clichés and they’re not there so you wont notice them, they’re the clichés that I feel like everybody notices in movies that every loves/hates. In my opinion that makes this movie hilarious. A little satire is always a god thing to me and I one of the main things I would like to use to drive my film. The story seems as though it could have been executed a little differently but I have no serious issue with it, it kept me hooked and watching for its entire duration and left me waiting for the sequel.

The Purge

Compared almost everybody else who’s seen this film and every critic, my perspective of the film is just on a different side I guess. I had never seen any of The Purges’ until this year and I’ve always loved its premise and thought that it cant be as bad as everybody claims. It has a type of feel that a slasher film has and keeps you on the edge of your seat like one too. Also, having the main antagonists be the American public and still have the rest of the films population be able to call them “sane” is brilliant to me because those who are purging are doing so as its their way of life and it is 100% legal. Some people might argue to say that the acting was unbelievable or the characters were stupid in their decision-making. Honestly I’ve never seen some smarter group of protagonists in a horror movie before, although they did pull some of the same old slasher screw-ups that have been repeated countless times before.

The film revolves around the Sandin family who is in the midst of boarding their home in preparation for the annual purge. With about an hour left of preparation the Sandins say hi to a few neighbors, eat dinner, and then family time before the house goes on complete lockdown. After lockdown the house is still, aside for the loud gunshots heard outside their doors. After about an hour of being locked down their son disarms the security system, letting in one of the surviving strangers looking to take shelter. That being bad enough, at the same time their daughter Zoey reveals that her boyfriend has been over since the house was locked down which then leads to his attempted murder on their father. What seems like is the end of the worse leads to even more when a group of purge participants stroll down their street to find that the Sandins have taken in the stranger that they were going to purge and they don’t like that one bit.

From there on the Sandins story just get worse as you can assume. But one thing I really noticed about the film is the camera angle, movements and what I assume is editing techniques that just helped bring the film together. Like I said earlier too, by the end of the movie I was on the edge of my seat, Almost wanting to cry, almost letting out a chuckle of excitement, and then back to feeling angry again. Up until the end I was satisfied though that’s for sure; I wish it was the same for everybody else though I guess I just look at movies a little differently.

Walk Hard: The Dewy Cox Story

This might just be one of those movies of the generation that you’ve either seen it or you’ve never even heard of it before in you life. My brother just so happened to stumble upon this jewel during my middle school years and I’ve always thought it was my favorite movie of all time since. It’s a brilliantly composed story comprised of many big-time actors and actresses that doesn’t receive enough credit in my opinion. John C. Reily surprises the entire audience with his pipes throughout the entire movie following the fictional story of his fictional character Dewy Cox.

Dewy has seen every hardship life could throw at anybody since his early childhood, starting with cutting his brother in half with a machete and losing his sense of smell in the same day. Gradually Dewy learns to overcome these vices that haunt his memory and takes to the stage to express what’s been built up for over 14 years as he shows off his love for rock n’ roll, which almost completely divides his entire town. With his dad being on the opposing side to his dream, Dewy leaves home and marries his 12-year-old girlfriend Edith. What follows is nearly 60 great years of music, sex, drugs, and pain.

Simply telling the synopsis of the story gets me wanting to watch the film. In the end Dewy’s story wraps up perfectly when he and the audience realizes how “great” his life was, and we were watching it unfold with him the entire time. Dewy’s goals in the story changes gradually across the course of the film but his purpose is always true and you can’t help but root for him to succeed. The film hit me in the right spot and made me also feel as though after seeing all the tough times Dewy had been though and then the outcome of those hardships, made me want to be successful in what I do in life as well and taught me to want to strive for my own goals and make everything I do in life have meaning to me in some way. When I do come to the point of making a film I want to tell the story of a character that leaves an impact on peoples minds in such a vivid way they’ll remember it forever.

Harry Potter: The Prisoner of Azkaban

I chose this harry potter simply because it has literally always been my favorite Harry Potter to this date. I was thinking about writing about the Deathly Hollows pt. 1 because I really love how that entire film was shot and its story, of course. But I cant really put finger on it, one point that makes this one stand out from the others because there’s just so many. I’ve always loved that you can see the Harry, Ron, and Hermione’s transitions as they get older and I’ve always kind compared them from the beginning to the end each movie. I feel as though this one was where the group realized “okay there’s real evil out there, we know cant rely on the school for our continuous protection.” My point in that is that after this movie everything changed for them it seemed like, they all got considerably older looking and in the following films as they look back on 1 & 2 they prepare for challenges they would have never dreamed about before what the dealt with at their 3rd year of Hogwarts.

There’s a killer on the loose this year at Hogwarts. Even the children know the name Sirius Black and everybody shutters in terror as if they’ve just heard the Dark Lords name when it’s uttered. Sirius Black has just escaped the highest maximum-security prison in the Wizarding world, Azkaban and apparently his sole intentions are to find Harry Potter and end his life just as he nearly ended Voldemorts. This strikes Harry’s curiosity instead of scaring him away. Especially after his run in with one of the guards of Azkaban and his “Defense Against the Dark Arts” teacher who shows him how to fight them off with a spell rarely any of the best wizards may produce with ease. What follows is an all out battle to preserve everything the group has fought for and seeks to protect.

The entire 2 and a half duration of the film can lose you if you don’t pay attention or if you’re just not a harry potter fan but be sure it’ll be a nice 2.5 hours that you’ll enjoy spending. I want to capture the essence of this Harry Potter film in particular when I’m telling my story. Watch it and you will see that the 40 minute “Flashback” to wrap up the film helps close up the story in the best way any of these movies could’ve ended. Attempting to fulfill their mission off the words Dumbledore said before sending them on their way “If you succeed more than one innocent life should be spared tonight”, indicating that if they truly want to make a good difference they’re going to have to do some good of their own.