
Imprint's X-Mas Festive Film Guide

Mark Kimmich;Arts Editor;arts@imprint.uwaterloo.ca

Alas, the final fall term issue of Imprint, and Imprint's Arts section, is upon us. However, you may eschew your tearful farewells, because there is light to lead you along the darkened tunnel that is four weeks without Imprint.

The light is twofold: first, its X-mas holidays, obviously; second, the Winter blockbuster film season is here.

Clearly, a guide to the holiday season's moving pictures is a necessary one. From those that are sold on a purely “Christmas” or whimsical basis, to the startling amount of films completely unrelated to the jolliest

of seasons, the barrage of fare that attacks us annually in this season is almost too much for anyone to bear — at least it is when you've heard the “Little Drummer Boy” for the 500th time around December 2.

While the list is somewhat arbitrary, these are some of the films that are bound-to-be blockbusters, along with some films that will no doubt be lesser known. With that in mind, the guide's film selection will hopefully bring the necessary variety, while not straying — too far! — from the mainstream.

So to help you navigate this festive film season, Imprint has put together a short list of some of the films that you are bound to encounter this holiday season, along with an accompanying synopsis and a humble opinion on whether each film is either absolutely unmissable or can wait until January.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

David Fincher

Paramount Pictures

Loosely based on the 1920 short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald (celebrated American author of *The Great Gatsby*) *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* stars Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett. Set in New Orleans at the end of World War I, the film tells the story of a man who is born in his 80s and ages backwards, gradually growing younger as the years pass.

Written and adapted for the screen by Eric Roth (*the Insider*, *Munich*, *Ali*), and directed by David Fincher (*Zodiac*, *Fight Club*, *Se7en*), *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* has the distinct potential of being the *Forrest Gump* of this decade. If the existing trailers are any indication of the quality of this film, this one's worth the trip. Debuts Christmas day.

Verdict: Unmissable.

— Marco Baldasaro

The Punisher: War Zone

Lexi Alexander

Lionsgate

While fortunately not a third reimagining of the story of Marvel vigilante Punisher, *Punisher: War Zone*, the sequel to 2004's *Punisher* starring Thomas Jane, still seems bound for the failures of the first. Directed by a native German and former world karate and kickboxing champion Lexi Alexander, the film is sure to have fantastic fight scenes with one so adept at fighting at the helm.

Unfortunately, the 1989 version of *Punisher* starring Dolph Lundgren was about as good as all of Dolph Lundgren's movies, which isn't saying much. The 2004 version starring Thomas Jane was very disappointing, considering the quality of some of the superhero movies that had come out

around that time.

All of that leaves little hope for this latest installment. I, as much as anyone, believe

in the old adage "forgive and forget" but unfortunately, while I forgive the old Punishers, I certainly haven't forgotten them.

Verdict: Wait 'til January.

— Mark Kimmich

Valkyrie

Bryan Singer

MGM

This upcoming movie is based on true events that took place during the peak of World War II and follows a group of high-ranking German officers who plan to assassinate Hitler. The name of the movie stems from the code name for the assassination plot, which became Valkyrie. In the film, Tom Cruise portrays a leader of the group working toward the assassination deadline of July 20, 1944.

The plan was unsuccessful and the film portrays the drama and the urgency of this

assassination plot. Tom Cruise's presence in the movie, his association with Scientology, and the Nazi theme caused problems in the post-production of this movie, with advertisers and marketers raising concerns. This aside, the movie looks to be incredibly dramatic.

Verdict: Go see the movie, if only for Tom Cruise in an eye patch.

— Alicia Boers

Bedtime Stories

Adam Shankman

Walt Disney

Adam Sandler, seemingly since Big Daddy, has made a string of family-friendly comedies. While some deride this trend as being a step down from Sandler's earlier work — a la Happy Gilmore and Billy Madison — I see it rather as being a step up from Little Nicky.

Certainly a different brand than his earlier work, Sandler's recent films, notably

Spanglish, have been family-friendly. Bedtime Stories is certainly in this vein. Released by Walt Disney, the film will undoubtedly be a fantastic romp through the imaginations of not only Sandler's character, but also his character's nephews, bringing a childlike innocence that is sure to make this movie a hit with the ankle-biters who are around you at Christmas.

Verdict: Bring your own nieces and nephews to this one.

— Mark Kimmich

Four Christmases

Seth Gordon

Warner Bros. Films

This coming weekend, the typical holiday “I don’t want to spend time with my crazy family or my boyfriend’s crazy family” movie is coming out starring Reese Witherspoon and Vince Vaughn. The storyline seems to be predictable: a happily un-married couple escapes from their family every Christmas and takes a trip to the tropics. Of course, this Christmas their trip is cancelled due to blizzards.

The movie looks funny from the previews. I’m sure it will be completely predictable and end in a lovely family Christmas or a wedding, but the trials that the couple encounters while visiting parents, step-parents, siblings, and other family members will cause awesome problems and hilarity. The “in-your-face” comedy Vince Vaughn usually brings to the plate will mesh in a hilarious way with the ditzy blonde type of humour from Reese Witherspoon.

Verdict: I’d say this movie is a must watch and I hope Reese Witherspoon doesn’t ruin a perfectly good Vince Vaughn comedy.

— Alicia Boers

Frost/Nixon

Ron Howard

Universal Pictures

Based on Peter Morgan’s play of the same name and featuring the original two stars of the London and Broadway dramatic productions Frank Langella and Michael Sheen, Frost/Nixon tells the story of the 1977 interview series between David Frost and the former US President Richard Nixon three years after his impeachment.

Frost/Nixon debuted in October at the London Film Festival to positive reviews. Look for it in the Americas after December 5.

Verdict: Unmissable.

— Marco Baldasaro

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

Mark Herman

Miramax Films

Based on Irish novelist John Boyne’s book touting the same name, The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas traces the story of Bruno, an eight-year-old son of a high ranking Nazi officer during the Second World War. When his father is posted to a nearby concentration camp, his life quickly changes.

The story not only follows Bruno’s coming of age as he begins to explore freedom outside the rules of his parents, it also traces his coming to terms with the terrible events of the Holocaust through a young Jewish boy that he befriends on the other side of the fence of the concentration camp. Clearly, this is a story that, while likely uplifting, contains subject matter that may force some children out of their Christmas comfort zone. While certainly an idea that seems worth watching, it might be better to wait until after Christmas.

Verdict: Wait ‘til January.

— Marco Baldasaro

