



FILM

WHICH Highbrow MOVIE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

This year's unusually strong Oscar season is proving an embarrassment of movie riches—far too many for any one person to take in. How do you pick which film to see? By answering our handy questionnaire. —**JOHN LOPEZ**

FROM WHICH HEADLINES DO YOU PREFER YOUR CINEMATIC THRILLS TO BE FRESHLY RIPPED?

Pseudo-heroic subversions of American power →
THE FIFTH ESTATE, with Benedict Cumberbatch as WikiLeaks' Julian Assange.
Opened October 11

Stories of real-life heroism in our global world →
CAPTAIN PHILLIPS, with Tom Hanks as a sea captain battling Somali pirates.
Opened October 11

WHAT KIND OF AMERICAN CON MAN CHARMS YOU MOST EASILY?

Seventies swindlers with giant collars and bad hair →
AMERICAN HUSTLE, starring a permed Bradley Cooper.
Opens December 13

Nineties bankers with too much money and bad hair →
Martin Scorsese's **THE WOLF OF WALL STREET**.
Opens November 15

WITH WHICH TYPE OF AUTEUR WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE A COCKTAIL?

One with a goofball sense of humor and relentlessly ironic view of fate →
The Coen brothers' **INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS**.
Opens December 20

One with a wry sense of humor that hides a midwestern heart of gold →
Alexander Payne's black-and-white road movie, **NEBRASKA**.
Opens November 22

HOW DO YOU PREFER TO EXAMINE THE HARSH REALITIES OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE?

Via an artful period piece replete with costumed brutality and Southern accents →
Steve McQueen's **12 YEARS A SLAVE** (see "Can this Man Turn High Art into Boffo Box Office?").
Opened October 18

Through an Italian neorealist-style lens, only set in gritty, present-day Oakland →
Netflix and Sundance hit **FRUITVALE STATION**.
Opened July 12

WHY DO YOU GO TO FRENCH FILMS?

To escape America's puritanical sexual mores →
Controversial Cannes hit **BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR**.
Opened October 25

For restrained drama powered by subtext-laden glances →
Oscar-winner Asghar Farhadi's latest, **THE PAST**.
Opens December 20

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR GRIPPING TALES OF SURVIVAL AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS?

As Kubrickian thrillers set in space →
Alfonso Cuarón's latest, **GRAVITY**.
Opened October 4

Sans dialogue, à la *The Old Man and the Sea* →
Cannes darling **ALL IS LOST**, starring Robert Redford.
Opened October 18

THROWBACK

WALTER MITTY'S LIFE LESSONS

Ben Stiller's paean to the golden age of magazines.

Like many great film adventures, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* sends its hero on a globe-hopping quest in search of extraordinary treasure. But where Indiana Jones scours the Holy Land for lost relics and James Bond hunts femmes fatales with stolen MI6 secrets, Walter Mitty's after something that may soon be far rarer: a single frame of Kodak 400TX negative. As other movies this holiday season bludgeon us with budget-busting CGI, Ben Stiller's update of the classic James Thurber story banks on simple reality to stir a deeper sense of wonder in us. To that end, Stiller and his team drew inspiration from a midcentury giant of iconic photojournalism—*Life* magazine—for their tale of a hapless dreamer whose most elaborate fantasies pale in comparison to the real-world journey he undertakes.

"I always looked at Walter as an analog guy in a digital world," says Stiller,



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