

# 300 Family Friendly Films



## Movie Alternatives for Kids, Teens, Dads, and even Moms!

Compiled by film critic Phil Boatwright

Presented by



300 Family Friendly Films  
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## Introduction

*“Here’s looking at you, kid.”* CASABLANCA

This e-book features films from each decade and every genre. Many of the films listed were made in a time when filmmakers had to refrain from including curse words, exploitive sexuality or desensitizing violence. To younger members of the family, that means, *these films are old!* Understandably, a younger generation will not relate to styles and mannerisms of a time gone by, but here is something to keep in mind. Though haircuts change and clothing tightens, people all desire to be warm, to be fed, to be loved, to be respected, etc. In other words, we share a commonality with those of all generations. We’re really not all that different from one another. The following movies will entertain because they contain the most *special* special effect of all: great storytelling. (A few may be hard to find, but are worth the effort.)

Please keep in mind that it’s impossible to find a film wherein someone couldn’t find something to object to. My intention is to point out quality movies for your edification, films that will not bombard your senses with crudity or contain a flagrant disrespect for family values.

**Note:** Several films listed will be more enjoyable with the use of the TVGuardian foul language filter. The following symbol will be listed next to the films most in need of the TVGuardian: Use TVG.

## Preface

### The Moosehead on the Wall

There was a time when men wore spats, cars had fins, den walls were furnished with moose heads, and the movie studios were governed by a Motion Picture Code. Though most of us don't miss spats, fins or stuffed animals peering from mountings on the wall, the demise of that production code may be a tragedy. To many members of the entertainment community, the Motion Picture Code was the equivalent of the archaic moose head on the wall, but without this code, there seems to be no self-governing among those who dominate the culture through media.

Between the 1930s and the mid-1960s, studios were regulated by the Motion Picture Code, which was established in order to protect the moral concepts society considered at the time to be the standard to live by. Violent acts had to be filmed in a way that would not jolt the viewer. Actors could not utter "God" or "Jesus" in a profane manner. And nudity and perversity were verboten. This frustrated many a filmmaker who felt it restricted their artistic integrity and prevented them from addressing serious issues. However, when closely examined, films from those periods dealt with the same issues moviemakers address today. The difference: the execution of the subject matter tended to be more profound when handled with discretion. In reality, the Code helped protect us from the dumbing-down or coarsing-up of our culture.

The Motion Picture Code is long gone, a distant memory to some movie buffs, while completely unheard of by two younger generations. Because of its demise, "modern" movie viewers have been so simmered in a stew of moral ambiguity that the innocence of past productions has become un-relatable. It's not just the clothing, the verbal jargon or the B&W that alienates this generation from entertainment past; present-day moviegoers also have trouble connecting with the social sensibilities of those times. I've raised this question before; have we evolved into beings capable of processing any amount of abuse Hollywood puts before our eyes? Evidently, for there seems to be no excess Cineplex patrons are willing to walk out on. But is that what our Creator desires for us?

For years, I have included Video Alternatives (then DVD Alternatives) at the end of my film critiques in order to remind readers that there are films that contain the same theme or style as the new releases, but without the roughhewn or the profane. The trouble with presenting this added service is that one has to now search decades back in order to find films that avoid the excesses of obscene language, graphic sexuality, or intense violence. (Yes, there are exceptions; I'm speaking generally).

I had nearly given up trying to rally Generations X, Y and Twitter behind the cinema's celluloid classics, believing the battle to be lost. But fate has stepped in. A recent discovery that a young teller at my bank has never seen *Casablanca* (a movie regarded by most film buffs to be the best of all time) has renewed my dedication to preserve pictures from the past. Perhaps a quote from another not-to-be-forgotten classic, *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington*, will explain my dedication to film preservation:

*"I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine. All you people don't know about lost causes. Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for. And he fought for them once, for the only reason any man ever fights for them: because of just one plain, simple rule – love thy neighbor."* James Stewart as freshman senator Jefferson Smith.

Though today's young people are bombarded by a glut of entertainment venues and an endless stream of movies with II, III, and IV behind their titles, there are motion pictures from every decade (including this one) that not only entertain, but enlighten and enrich. Like the motion picture's sister art forms of sculpture and music, classic cinema shouldn't be cast asunder. The most endearing films, like Bible parables, nourish the spirit as well as entertain, and I maintain that if the cinematic art form is to better the culture and the society, it needs to aim up, not just placate our baser instincts.

The moose head on the wall and other expressions of days gone by now seem antiquated, but movie art is timeless. Each generation of filmmakers has made movie moments that reflect both their outer surroundings and the changeless inner spirit of mankind. Below are a few samples of movies that should not be overlooked. They entertain, enrich or educate, and sometimes all three.

*Phil Boatwright*

## FILMS FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

**ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS** (1940). Raymond Massey plays the great emancipator from log cabin days to his departure to Washington, D.C. as the 16th President. Don't miss it!

**THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER** (1938). Tommy Kelly. Best version of the Mark Twain novel.

**AKEELAH AND THE BEE** (2006). Akeelah Anderson (Keke Palmer) is a precocious 11-year-old from south Los Angeles with a gift for words. Despite the objections of her mother (Angela Bassett), Akeelah enters various spelling contests, for which she is tutored by the forthright Dr. Larabee (Laurence Fishburne), her principal, Mr. Welch (Curtis Armstrong) and the proud residents of her neighborhood. Akeelah's aptitude earns her an opportunity to compete for a spot in the Scripps National Spelling Bee and in turn unites her neighborhood, which witnesses the courage and inspiration of one amazing little girl.

Smartly written, uplifting and charming, it's a great film that reminds viewers of the obligation we have concerning the maintenance of language. The film has several positive messages, including caring and sacrificing for others. It also reminds each of us that while there are dark valleys we must go through on our travels through life, green pastures also lie ahead. PG (2 uses of the s-word and four or five minor expletives. Two bullies beat Akeelah, but she is not injured; both Akeelah and her mentor have lost loved ones: her father to a stray bullet, his son to sickness; there are dramatic discussions concerning these deaths, but they are designed to help heal kids dealing with similar tragedies). Use TVG

**AMERICA'S HEART AND SOUL** (2004). Filmmaker Louis Schwartzberg packed up his camera and hit the road, with a goal of capturing both the unparalleled beauty of the U.S. and the incomparable spirit of its people. Here you have the chance to meet ordinary Americans with extraordinary stories. Schwartzberg's gift is his ability to connect with people, honestly capturing their values, dreams, and passion. AMERICA'S HEART AND SOUL is a celebration of a nation told through the voices of its people.

**ANNE OF AVONLEA** (1987). Engaging sequel to ANNE OF GREEN GABLES.

**ANNE OF THE GREEN GABLES** (1985). A superb cast headed by Colleen Dewhurst, Richard Farnsworth and Megan Follows. One of the few instances where the film lives up to the quality of the book.

**BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE** (2005). Jeff Daniels, Cicely Tyson, Dave Matthews, Eva Marie Saint, AnnaSophia Robb. A lonely 10-year-old, abandoned by her mother and ignored by her grieving minister father, prays for a friend.

Soon after, an energetic stray pooch scampers his way into the little girl's heart while she shops for macaroni and cheese at the local Winn-Dixie. As the two bond, she finds that they are having a positive effect on the friendless and disenfranchised in her small, rural community. Despite the low budget and occasional klutzy comedy, BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE develops into a well-told story about a child's coping with her mother's desertion. Without being preachy, it addresses poignant themes, including reaching out to others and how small thoughtfulness can alter a life. What's more, it achieves these goals while never neglecting its aim of amusing the child in all of us. Certainly not as layered or flavorful as TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD as a movie that examines childhood experiences, nor in the league with MY DOG SKIP for pure enjoyment value, but it is a satisfying children's film, clean, respectful of Christian values (there's even a reverent prayer that acknowledges our Lord), and full of life lessons, sentiment and laughs (though admittedly aimed mostly at kid viewers). Oh, by the way, do you have a dog? If not, expect to hear, "Daddy, can we..."(PG) Use TVG

**BEYOND THE GATES OF SPLENDOR** (2005). Based on a best-selling novel, the documentary catches the spirit of people who trust so much in God that they are willing to sacrifice their lives in order to follow His will. BEYOND THE GATES OF SPLENDOR is a moving testament to those who have taken Christ's teachings to heart and given all in order to save the soul of man. It is an emotional journey that will give you new insight concerning foreign missions and a deepening respect for missionaries. You'll be entertained and challenged. PG-13 (occasional topless native nudity, but nothing is done with an exploitive intent; the subject matter of people facing death is unsuitable for little ones).

**THE BIG COUNTRY** (1958). Gregory Peck. Western epic about a sea captain who comes west to marry. Soon he finds himself embroiled in a range war. Great supporting cast including Jean Simmons, Charlton Heston, Charles Bickford, Carroll Baker, Chuck Connors and Burl Ives (winner, Best Supporting Actor).

**BOLT** (2008). The most creative film since WALL•E, Bolt is sometimes touching, often hysterical and always mesmerizing. The film opens with a great chase, ala James Bond only better. Where the opening sequence for QUANTUM OF SOLACE was muddled by extreme close-ups and quick cutting, Bolt's adroit draftsmanship immediately draws us into the chase as if we were a part of the action. The scene encourages those who have attended merely to please offspring that maybe, just maybe, they are going to be entertained, as well. And they are, for the writers and artists have embraced moviegoers of all ages with this animated girl-and-her-movie-star-dog-who-thinks-he-has-real-superpowers adventure. Every detail has been given loving and experienced detailing, from the animation to the film's score, to the directorial pacing. Disney has once again

given us the perfect family film. And the pigeons. They're the new penguins! (PG – for the action sequences.)

**BORN FREE** (1966). Virginia McKenna, Bill Travers. Family fare about Kenya game wardens and their pet lioness, Elsa.

**THE BOY WITH GREEN HAIR** (1948). Dean Stockwell, Pat O'Brien. A fable about a war orphan who becomes an outcast when his hair turns green. Although when made, the film spoke of European children whose parents were killed in the war, today's audience gets a poignant message about the discrimination children with AIDS must face. (As of this writing, it is not yet on DVD.)

**BUGSY MALONE** (1976). Rated G. A spoof on 1930s gangster movies with a pre-teen cast that includes Scott Baio and Jodie Foster. Some good songs by Paul Williams, and all the machine guns shoot custard.

**CABIN IN THE SKY** (1943). Ethel Waters, Lena Horne, Eddie “Rochester” Anderson. Musical comedy. Fable about faith and devotion. Ingratating performance by Waters, and several moving musical numbers, including “Taking a Chance on Love” and “Happiness is Just a Thing Called Joe.”

**CARS** (2006). Voices: Owen Wilson, Paul Newman, Bonnie Hunt, Larry the Cable Guy. Rated G. Lightning McQueen (voice of Owen Wilson), a hotshot rookie race car driven to succeed, discovers that life is about the journey, not the finish line, when he finds himself unexpectedly detoured in the sleepy Route 66 town of Radiator Springs.

With brilliant digital cartooning and masterful voicing by its gifted cast, this skillfully retooled **DOC HOLLYWOOD** is a surefire winner for the whole family. Funny, yet subtly poignant, this action comedy teaches life lessons to kids while tickling the funny bone of each family member.

**CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS** (1937). Spencer Tracy, Freddie Bartholomew, Lionel Barrymore, Mickey Rooney, John Carradine, Melvyn Douglas. Adventure. Top-drawer version of the Kipling story of a boy who becomes a man on a seafaring fishing ship. Tracy won Best Actor Oscar for his textured performance as a Portuguese fisherman.

**CHICKEN RUN** (2000). From the people who gave us the “Wallace and Gromit” shorts comes a claymation comedy set at a chicken farm where a flock of hens is determined to fly the coop before meeting a fowl fate. The expressive faces (chickens with teeth – is that great?), the pacing, adventure and witty dialogue make for a fun family film.

**CINDERFELLA** (1960). Jerry Lewis, Ed Wynn. Spoof. If Jerry gets on your nerves, definitely pass on this one, but there are some very funny moments (notably when Jerry descends the stairs in the party scene).

**DAVID COPPERFIELD** (1935). Freddie Bartholomew, W. C. Fields, Lionel Barrymore. Super production of

Dickens' tale of young man's adventures in 19<sup>th</sup>-century England.

**DESPICABLE ME** (2010). Mr. Gru, an “evil” genius, lives fairly unnoticed in a happy suburban neighborhood. It's time, however, to prove once again just how despicable the villainous mastermind can be. So, he plots to steal the moon! But our world and the moon are saved when three orphaned girls turn his world upside down. The story, the dialogue, the voice characterizations and the humor manage to hold the attention of not just little ones, but their accompanying older companions as well. (PG)

**EARTH** (2009). Narrated by James Earl Jones, this fascinating documentary tells the remarkable story of three animal families and their journeys across this planet we share. For older children, this is a perfect introduction to the wondrous mysteries of life. For adults it can be a reminder that God is sovereign and beyond our mortal understanding. G (depictions of animal killings by other animals; just before they become gory, the scene ends; a little blood is seen coming from the head of a walrus just attacked by a starving polar bear).

**ELF** (2003). This is a sumptuous blend of sight gags and witty dialogue. Along with one of the funniest performances I've seen this year, **ELF**'s main ingredient is charm. It contains the same enchantment found in **A CHRISTMAS STORY**, that annual chestnut about a boy who wants an official Red Ryder Range Model 200 Air Rifle for Christmas. The filmmakers are reminding tinsel hangers of the magic found in family. There's a nice message about fathers and sons connecting. And of course, the Scrooge-like father discovers what's really valuable. But it's not a message film. It's a forget-your-troubles film.

**THE ENDLESS SUMMER** (1966). Not rated, there are a few cuss words (which TVGuardian will remove). This two-disc set of Bruce Brown's seminal surf documentary concerns the lengths two men will go to in order to chase the perfect wave. It's pretty good. Use TVG

**FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER** (2007). Marvel's first family of superheroes returns, perhaps to redeem themselves for the 2005 installment almost as much as to cash in on the comic book genre. Director Tim Story's first attempt at bringing the blue-suited super-crime fighters to the silver screen was uneven. It had some humor, but the special effects were so-so and the dialogue less than. Due to sloppy writing, that production had little heart. The heroes didn't seem to do much for others, the story constrained to their own desires to return to normalcy. Surly, narcissistic and charmless, the foursome was not so fantastic. All that has changed. The effects here are as good as I've seen. And the pacing, the humor, the action, and even the dialogue are superior not just to the first installment, but to many action/adventure wannabes. Quite simply, 2 is Fantastic!

**FOR ALL MANKIND** (1989). Rated G. Documentary the whole family can view. A beautifully made film about Neil Armstrong's flight to the moon.

**FORBIDDEN PLANET** (1956). Walter Pidgeon, Leslie Nielsen, Anne Francis. Intelligent sci-fi film about space explorers landing on a planet ruled by one man and an evil force. Plot derived from Shakespeare's *THE TEMPEST*.

**THE GIRL WHO SPELLED FREEDOM** (1986). Wayne Rodgers and Mary Kay Place star in this made-for-TV story of a Christian family who take in a Cambodian refugee. Not only does the teenager learn English, but she goes on to win a national spelling bee. Theme: With love and perseverance anything is possible. Strong performances and a literate script make this a pleasure for kids and adults. (Hard to find, but worth the effort.)

**THE GREAT ESCAPE** (1963). All-star cast includes Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson, James Coburn, Richard Attenborough and James Garner. Splendid wartime drama of men set to escape a Nazi P.O.W. camp. Based on a true story. Entertaining script, cast and musical score.

**THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD** (1965). Max Von Sydow heads all-star cast, and although the story of Christ can't be topped, this film version can. It's okay, but for a superior effort try *Jesus of Nazareth*. (Well, here's a first: a video alternative for a video alternative!)

**HARRIET THE SPY** (1996). Michelle Trachtenberg, Rosie O'Donnell. PG (a couple of mild expletives, but no profanity; when her friends act cruelly, our heroine extracts revenge, but she quickly learns how destructive vengeance can be to oneself; teen attitude, but she loves her family and learns life lessons). An inventive 6th grader learns life lessons from her Mary Poppins-like nanny. An enchanting look into the world of children and how they see life. Positive messages including responsibility, compassion, using your imagination, growing up, and the fruitlessness of revenge. One of the most entertaining children's films I have ever seen. Some attitude toward her parents, but when lessons are learned, it becomes obvious that there is a great family relationship. It does not condescend to children, nor does it ignore the adult audience. Contains a jazzy score, amusing dialogue and situations, plus pleasing performances.

**HARVEY** (1950). James Stewart, Josephine Hull (Best Actress Oscar), Cecil Kellaway, Jesse White. Comedy. A gentle soul by the name of Elwood P. Dowd likes everybody—including his invisible six-foot rabbit, Harvey. Very funny and very touching.

**HELLFIGHTERS** (1969). John Wayne, Katherine Ross, Jim Hutton, Vera Miles. Based on the work of oil-well fighter Red Adair (who served as technical adviser).

**HOODWINKED** (2005). It's the story of Little Red Riding Hood, with several of the main characters giving various accounts to the police – kind of a *Rashomon* for

kids, if you will. Witty, song-filled, it is a funny film parents will enjoy with the little ones. PG (There are a couple of jolting scenes with the wolf scaring Red and there are a few perilous situations, but the filmmakers handle these scenes with sensitivity and humor. That said, parents should view with little ones in order to reassure in case something alarms them.)

**ICE AGE** (2002). A sloth named Sid befriends Manfred, a woolly mammoth. As they travel to warmer regions, they come upon a human baby who has been separated from his family. Moved by the infant's helplessness, our heroes decide to find his family. They are joined by Diego, a sinister saber-toothed tiger who befriends Sid and Manny, all the while planning to set them up for a deadly ambush. This action-filled comedy has tons of heart. Life lessons: the importance of family and friendship; self-sacrifice; laying down one's life for others; caring for potential enemies. (PG)

**INKHEART** (2009). – Action fantasy – PG - Brendan Fraser. Based on the best-selling book by Cornelia Funke, *INKHEART* is a fantasy adventure that sends a father and daughter on a quest through worlds both real and imagined.

**INN OF THE 6TH HAPPINESS** (1958). Ingrid Bergman. Based on a true story of a missionary who leads a group of children on a perilous journey in pre-WWII China. Contains the most moving conversion I've seen in the movies, as we witness change in a man's life due to this courageous woman's example. It reminds the Christian viewer that our lifestyle does greatly affect others.

**IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD** (1963). the all-star cast includes Spencer Tracy, Milton Berle, Sid Caesar, Buddy Hackett, Ethel Merman, Mickey Rooney and many others. A non-stop laugh-a-thon as a group of motorists learn of a fortune buried 200 miles away. Rated G and certainly one of the funniest movies ever made. Now available in a wide-screen format, including newly restored sequences and interviews with the director and several of the cast members.

**KEN BURNS' THE CIVIL WAR** (1989). Made as a PBS miniseries, this documentary shows what television can achieve. One of the best made, most informative, and most spiritually touching works of art I have ever witnessed on TV. It should be mandatory viewing for every high school student.

**KING KONG** (1933). Fay Wray. An impressive beauty and the beast study with effective special effects. Take a pass on the bloated and profane 1976 and 2005 remakes.

**KING OF KINGS** (1961). Jeffrey Hunter as Jesus. All-star cast also includes Robert Ryan, Rip Torn and narration by Orson Welles. Another Hollywood attempt at presenting the greatest story ever told nearly falls flat. Still, it has its moments and beautiful musical score. Zeffirelli's epic

JESUS OF NAZARETH is far better. I was also extremely moved by THE ROBE because rather than seeing an actor playing the Christ, we merely witness Him through His effect on the lives of others. BEN HUR catches that same quality.

**MADAGASCAR** (2005). DreamWorks comic computer-animation with the voices of Ben Stiller, Chris Rock, David Schwimmer, Jada Pinkett Smith. Four pampered zoo animals escape and explore the world, but soon find themselves captured and sent to Africa. A clever, witty tale, containing a subtle lesson about appreciating what you have. I found MADAGASCAR to be stylish, engrossing and very funny. PG (there are a couple of mild innuendos meant for adults, but generally the content is mild; the animals get into some perilous situations, but the filmmakers are sensitive to little viewers and never assault the senses; there are positive messages regarding friendship and appreciating what you have).

**MEGAMIND** (2010). Megamind is the most brilliant super-villain the world has ever known...and the least successful. It doesn't have that indefinable charisma of, say, *UP* or *Wall-E*, or even *Bolt*, but *Megamind* is downright fun. There are enough visual and verbal jokes to keep older audience members' attention and kids seemed glued to the screen. I'm pleased that the film avoids crudity and there are positive themes. Not quite as enjoyable as *Despicable Me* (the best animated film of the year so far), but the look, its energy and the attention to witty dialogue made it an enjoyable movie outing for parents and little ones, and not too painful for teens to sit through with their younger siblings (well, I admit, I'm guessing there). **PG** (for some minor expletives, but I caught no harsh or profane language; "Oh God" is uttered by the villain one time; there's lots of comic book action, but with a comic twist, much like the old Warner Bros. cartoons).

**MAD HOT BALLROOM** (2005). This is a light-hearted documentary concerning likeable New York fifth graders who are given a free course in dance as part of their school curriculum. Funny, insightful and completely engaging, these kids gain direction and confidence as they learn the merengue, tango and swing dance steps. There's an innocent wisdom that generates from many of these kids. We also experience the pain of those who learn for the first time about disappointment ("But we did everything they told us to do"). PG (a couple of conversations concern children having to be vigilant of sexual predators).

**THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN** (1960). Yul Brynner, Steve McQueen, Eli Wallach. Derived from the Kurosawa eastern *THE SEVEN SAMURAI*, about seven gunmen defending a poor village against bandits. Every part perfectly cast, and Elmer Bernstein's music is outstanding.

**THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES** (1936). Roland Young. Fantasy of a meek man who's given the power to do miracles. An engaging satire.

**MARCH OF THE PENGUINS** (2005). A fascinating documentary about penguins, raw nature and survival, it's full of impressive, almost unworldly locations and amazing cinematography, and most important, it sends a powerful message concerning the importance of life. In a time when audiences are subjected to pro messages concerning euthanasia (*MILLION DOLLAR BABY*, *THE SEA INSIDE*), the need for abortion (*VERA DRAKE*), and desensitizing images of violence toward our fellow man (most films), here is a movie that reveals creatures in the wild sacrificing all in order to *preserve* life.

**THE MARX BROTHERS: IN A NUTSHELL** (1982). Compilation of their best routines. 100 minutes of madness. Not to be missed! Distributed by Vestron Video. Gene Kelly narrates, with remembrances by Dick Cavett, Robert Klein, George Fenneman and family members.

**THE MARK OF ZORRO** (1940). Tyrone Power, Basil Rathbone, Linda Darnell. Witty dialogue and great swordplay enhance this tale of a vigilante who rights wrongs in old California. Hey, Don Diego—where are you when we really need you!?

**MEET THE ROBINSONS** (2007). Lewis is an orphan, a creative 12-year-old inventor who dreams of finding a family. His journey takes an unexpected turn when a mysterious stranger named Wilbur Robinson whisks him away to a world where anything is possible...**THE FUTURE**. There, he meets an incredible assortment of characters and a family beyond his wildest imagination, the Robinsons, who help lead him on an amazing and hilarious adventure with heartfelt results. But while Lewis is experiencing the joy of family, he is also being perused by the dastardly Bowler Hat Guy, a villain bent on possessing one of Lewis's latest inventions – the Memory Scanner.

I felt good when I left the theater. I had just seen a family film that had more on its mind than being rated G. I sensed the filmmakers were having a blast making this film and that they wanted to go the extra mile. They succeeded. Quite simply put, **MEET THE ROBINSONS** is a winner for the entire family.

**THE MOUSE THAT ROARED** (1959). Peter Sellers. English satire concerning small country declaring war on U.S. in order to get federal relief from America. (It must be mandatory viewing for Third-World dictators.)

**MR. BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSE** (1948). Cary Grant, Myrna Loy, Melvyn Douglas. Spoof concerning the American dream of building your own home.

**MR. HOBBS TAKES A VACATION** (1963). Roger Hobbs (James Stewart) takes a vacation with the family. A lot more humor and warmth than all the National Lampoon films combined.

**MUSIC OF THE HEART** (1999). Meryl Streep, Angela Bassett, Aidan Quinn, Cloris Leachman. Newly divorced Roberta Guaspai (Meryl Streep) began teaching the violin to

students of an East Harlem school. At first, the kids, the parents, and the principal were skeptical. Soon, however, her passion became infectious. But where would a film like this be, if the school board didn't eventually cut her funding? Not wanting the kids to lose out on this opportunity, Guaspai fought back to preserve this class. With the support of her friends and the community, plus a little help from Isaac Stern, Itzhak Perlman and Arnold Steinhardt, the real-life Guaspai and her students raised money to continue the music program by performing at – Carnegie Hall! Yes, it could justly be called *MRS. HOLLAND'S OPUS*, due to its similarities to the Richard Dreyfuss vehicle, but the film, nonetheless, is most entertaining. Its strength lies in Ms. Streep's performance and several positive messages it conveys, including examples of compassion and understanding between races and not giving up when things get difficult. Although the film suggests that the lead lived with a man outside marriage after her husband abandoned her, there are no sex scenes. The film does not focus on a romance, but on her determination to provide for her children and to help her students. PG (five or six expletives, and several uses of the expression "Oh my God;" an implied sexual situation; the lead has a glass of wine in one scene and a drink in another).

**MY DARLING CLEMENTINE** (1946). Henry Fonda, Victor Mature, Walter Brennan. Full of John Ford details and the descriptive photography of Joseph P. MacDonald, this is a superb telling of the legend of Wyatt Earp and the O.K. Corral.

**MY DOG SKIP** (2002). Drawn from Willie Morris's best-selling memoir, *MY DOG SKIP* is a coming-of-age tale that looks back on how a terrier pup helped a shy boy, bullied by schoolmates and strictly handled by an aloof father, come to grips with loneliness. Young Frankie Muniz as the film's junior protagonist is never cutesy or precocious, but rather down-to-earth. It is replete with lessons in friendship, loneliness, and death. And that dog; he could give Snoopy charm lessons! (PG) Use TVG

**NATIONAL TREASURE** (2004). Sci-action starring Nicolas Cage – PG - a few minor expletives, but I caught no harsh or profane language; the film receives its rating mostly for the tense situations and some violence. The violence includes guns shooting, chase scenes, and our heroes placed in perilous predicaments, but all this activity is handled with Disney discretion.

**NATIONAL VELVET** (1945). Family drama about a young girl who disguises herself as a boy in order to compete in the English Grand National Steeplechase. Elizabeth Taylor, Mickey Rooney.

**NO TIME FOR SERGEANTS** (1958). Andy Griffith, Don Knotts. Want a really good laugh? This is full of them. Andy's a country boy drafted into the army. Myron McCormick as the frustrated sergeant is outstanding.

**THE NUTTY PROFESSOR** (1963). Jerry Lewis in top form as the lovable Professor Julius Kelp and his alter ego, Buddy Love. A comic version of Jekyll & Hyde with Lewis providing some of his greatest sight gags. (Caution: contains one scary scene where the kindly professor transforms into a beast before becoming Buddy Love). Though Eddie Murphy's remake is funny, it derives much of its humor from crude bodily functions and sexuality.

**OCEANS** (2009). DisneyNature, the studio that presented the record-breaking film *EARTH*, brings *OCEANS* to the big screen on Earth Day, 2010. Nearly three-quarters of the Earth's surface is covered by water, and *Oceans* boldly chronicles the mysteries that lie beneath. (G)

**OCTOBER SKY** (1999) Jake Gyllenhaal, Chris Cooper, Laura Dern. True story of a 1950s West Virginia youth and his determination to be a part of the space program, despite his apathetic coal-miner father's objections. Although a bit formulaic, *OCTOBER SKY* dazzles the soul with its positive messages of the importance of believing in yourself and having others who also believe in you. Outstanding performance by young Gyllenhaal. Opening imagery/cinematography artfully sets the mood and lifestyle of those living in a coal-mining community. Three-dimensional characters, honor, responsibility are each paid tribute. The family prays together at mealtime. PG (two profanities and several mild obscenities sprinkled throughout; a drunk parent beats his son until another parent intercedes; intense father-son dispute; frightening moments as men are injured in a mine accident; the death of a close friend is sensitively handled).

**OF HUMAN HEARTS** (1938). Walter Huston, James Stewart. Wayward boy learns to appreciate his religious folks once he grows up and becomes a physician during the Civil War. Not outstanding, but worth watching.

**PAST THE BLEACHERS** (1995 Made-For-TV). Hallmark Home Entertainment. Richard Dean Anderson. Not rated, I found nothing objectionable. Dealing with the loss of his son, a grieving man coaches a grade school baseball team. Genuine messages, including dealing with the loss of a loved one.

**PAT & MIKE** (1952). Spencer Tracy, Katherine Hepburn. Sports manager falls for female athlete in this Ruth Gordon/Garson Kanin war of the sexes comedy. It's "cherce." Contains first screen appearance of Charles Buchinski (Bronson).

**PAUL BLART: MALL COP** (2009). Kevin James stars as a single, suburban dad who tries to make ends meet as a security officer at a New Jersey mall. It's a job he takes very seriously, though no one else does. When Santa's helpers at the mall stage a coup, shutting down the megaplex and taking hostages (Paul's daughter and sweetheart among them), Jersey's most formidable mall cop will have to become a real cop to save the day. PG (some name-calling by the bad guys and a few fat jokes, but mostly the



filmmakers are family-friendly; I caught one obscenity (the s-word), not from the lead; a couple of expletives from other characters; two “oh my Gods” but no other misuse of God’s name; some pratfalls and the lead comes up against thieves at the mall and must outthink them; a couple of fights and some gun shooting; hostages are held; but the action is not overly graphic; that said, parents should be there with little ones in case the need for reassurance arises; Paul is a lonely single parent (his wife ran off, leaving him and his daughter), and the family tries to get him to find a lady with an online dating service; he falls for an employee at the mall; one kiss, no sexual situations; though he doesn’t drink, Paul accidentally gets drunk at a party and behaves like a klutz, and later winds up with a huge tattoo; the film doesn’t promote drinking, but rather shows the negative consequences of overindulgence).

**THE PRINCESS BRIDE** (1987). Mandy Patinkin, Peter Falk, Cary Elwes, Robin Wright. PG (caution: does contain a couple profanities, sorcery and some violence). Fairy tale of lovers separated by the bad guys. Bewitching, but beware, it does have a few obscenities which were totally out of place.

**RACING STRIPES** (2005). Bruce Greenwood, Hayden Panettiere, and the voices of Frankie Muniz, Dustin Hoffman, Whoopi Goldberg, Joe Pantoliano, Jeff Foxworthy and Snoop Dogg. A widowed rancher finds a lost zebra colt one cold and rainy night. Giving the animal shelter in his barn seems like the right thing to do. But no good deed goes unpunished. When his perky teenaged daughter spots the adorable striped yearling, it’s love at first sight. “Can we keep him? Please, Dad!” This Warner Bros. comedy adventure may begin from a human perspective, but as soon as man and girl exit the barn, the shelter comes alive with talking animals, each trying to figure out what this strange-looking beast is. Even the newly dubbed Stripes doesn’t know what he is. But with four legs and a mane and tail, well, he must be a horse. But what kind of horse? The following day our four-legged protagonist spots a racetrack and meets two thoroughbred colts. They know who they are – they will one day be racehorses. That sounds pretty good to Stripes. If they are racehorses, then he must be, as well. NATIONAL VELVET it’s not. Nor BLACK BEAUTY. Nor CHICKEN RUN, for that matter. But the film, like the zebra who stars, has a lot of heart. Would it be my first choice for a film outing on a Friday night? No. But I wasn’t the intended audience. This one belongs to those who believe in Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy and the suggestion that a zebra could outrun a trained thoroughbred. Caution: It is rated PG (there are a couple of sexual innuendos that will no doubt go over the heads of the littlest audience members, a few flatulence jokes, and some barnyard poop humor, but overall it’s a satisfying kids’ movie, one filled with positive messages).

**THE ROAD PICTURES.** Hope & Crosby's **THE ROAD TO SINGAPORE, ZANZIBAR, MOROCCO, UTOPIA, RIO, BALI, and HONG KONG** are all available on DVD.

The boys get around, and always seem to run into Dorothy Lamour. Each contains enough slapstick to keep the kids interested and enough droll one-liners to put adults in stitches. MOROCCO is my fav.

**THE ROBE** (1953). The Special Edition DVD release of this powerful 1953 sword, sandal and Christ epic (renown for being the first film shot in CinemaScope, a widescreen attempt to lure people away from that new home entertainment system - television) is now available and worth having in your home movie library.

Based on the Lloyd C. Douglas novel, the episodic costume drama concerns a Roman centurion who wins Christ's robe in a dice game. Soon his life, and that of his slave, are changed as they discover Jesus to be the Savior of the world. We see Jesus through the use of long shots and camera angles that focus the attention not on an actor portraying Christ, but on the people who came into His presence. This method was effectively used in *Ben Hur* as well, giving both productions a great dignity. Richard Burton was nominated for an Oscar, but Victor Mature steals the picture with a moving performance as the converted slave, Demetrius. The depiction of the early church and the life-changing power of our Lord make this film worth viewing. The Special Edition contains several bonus features, including a “Making Of” featurette and a most interesting commentary track that focuses on the contribution of Alfred Newman, the film’s composer.

As for the “Making Of” featurette, those involved seemed more inclined to the political dynamic of the filmmakers than the spiritual significance of the book’s author. Lloyd C. Douglas, a former minister who generally put religious significance in his stories, is more or less dismissed by the commentators. They are determined to equate the struggles of the early Church with ‘50s McCarthyism. More insight is given to communist sympathizers than to those who endured imprisonment and death because of this new religion, Christianity. But remember this when listening to those featured in the provocative, though myopic featurette: *The Robe* was the 4<sup>th</sup> highest grossing film of that decade. People weren’t sitting in the theater thinking, “Gee, this is about blacklisting.” Moviegoers were being moved by the life-changing power of the Man from Galilee.

Not rated, the film contains several battle sequences and mature themes. However, governed by the then Motion Picture Code, the studio presented this adult subject matter with taste and discretion, two words seldom applied to today’s movie-making procedure.

**THE ROCKETEER** (1991). Bill Campbell, Jennifer Connelly, Alan Arkin, Paul Sorvino, Timothy Dalton. Action/adventure - PG (4 or 5 expletives and comic-book action). A rocket pack attached to any hearty young daredevil’s back will cause him to fly. It’s 1938 and, of course, the Nazis want such a device. Enter the Rocketeer, who must defend the American way of life by preventing

the Germans from gaining possession of the rocket. Not great, but fun. Use TVG

**ROCKY** (1976). Forget the sequels, but the original was quite powerful. Won Best Picture that year. (PG) Use TVG

**THE ROOKIE** (2002). Based on the true story of an aging ball player who came to astound scouts with successive 98-mph fast balls, this is the best baseball film I have ever seen. Involving storytelling, tight direction, witty dialogue, an outstanding lead performance, beautiful cinematography, and a toe-tapping score – it's all there. Top that off with the subtle implication that the main character is a person of faith (in real life, Jim Morris is a dedicated Christian), and Disney scores with a film that not only entertains, but nourishes as well. First-time director John Lee Hancock (producer of *MY DOG SKIP*) hits a home run by including an element found in the works of past masters like Ford and Capra – the awareness that movies are not just about showing what we are, but also about what we can become. A stirring film for the whole family. (G)

**THE SANDLOT** (1993). Kid's comedy - PG (a few mild expletives, one graphic scene where the kids get sick after chewing tobacco). The new boy in town struggles to become a member of the neighborhood baseball team. A pleasure to view. Use TVG

**THE SEA HAWK** (1940). Errol Flynn. The old swashbuckler at his best as he battles the Spanish Armada.

**THE SECRET GARDEN** (1993). Kate Maberly, Maggie Smith, Heydon Prowse. The 1949 version with Margaret O'Brien and the 1987 British version with Gennie James are both 4-star productions.

**1776** (1972). William Daniels, Howard DaSilva. Historical musical/drama. The beginning of the American Revolution set to music. Inspiring as well as entertaining. (Caution: contains a few expletives and the phrase "By God" is used several times. But it is also evident that these men respected the Creator.) Use TVG

**THE SOUND OF MUSIC** (1965). Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer. Oscar-winning film based on the lives of the Von Trapps, a talented musical family, with the children seeking their distant father's love.

**SOUNDER** (1972). Paul Winfield, Cicely Tyson, Keven Hooks. Rated G. Stirring story of a black sharecropper's family during the Depression. Nominated for best picture that year along with the lead actors. Truly marvelous.

**STAR KID** (1998). Joseph Mazzello. PG (a few mild expletives, but no profanity other than a couple "Oh my gods"; some mild bathroom humor; a bully threatens our young hero and even beats him up, but later they become friends; the older sister is rather hostile to her sibling, but again, when danger threatens the family pulls together; the sci-fi violence is tame for older kids, but may be a little intense for toddlers). The new kid on the block is taught to

face his fears, first by his teacher after the school bully picks on him; then by a space robot who comes to Earth to do combat with an unfriendly alien. The mechanical being can function only with the aid of a life force inside him, so without much convincing, the boy climbs inside, causing innocent havoc in the neighborhood before facing the enemy from outer space. A fairly clean film with life lessons, humor and enough action to keep 8- to 12-year-olds amused. I confess, I enjoyed it myself. Use TVG

**STARS IN MY CROWN** (1950). Joel McCrea. Uplifting drama. After the Civil War, a minister attempts to tame a western town. Heartwarming.

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF** (1969). James Garner, Walter Brennan, Joan Hackett, Jack Elam, Bruce Dern. Rated G. Very funny western send-up with Garner hired as town sheriff. Often hysterical.

**TANGLED** (2010). This is classic Disney. And I do mean classic. Though the makers have used state-of-the-art technology to produce lifelike images and the heroine is much heartier than her animated ancestors, the mood and sensibility of *TANGLED* is reminiscent of the iconic hand-drawn imagery found in *SLEEPING BEAUTY*, *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS* and all the best from Mickey's beloved studio.

Now, if you remember, in the best of the Disney classics there were some startling situations that would have required a PG rating had that rating been around (a certain fawn's mother comes to mind). Same goes for *TANGLED*, with an evil old woman kidnapping a baby and wounding the hero with a very big knife. But the creators carefully follow the violence with humor and justice in order to make the scary moments palatable for the wee ones.

Disney is in the details, both with the use of witty dialogue and clever plot development and just-right voice characterizations. Where the studio's recent Oscar winner, *UP*, brilliantly touched the heartstrings as well as the funny bone, *Tangled* brings back the charm and coziness of *CINDERELLA* and *SLEEPING BEAUTY*. (PG)

**THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES** (1946). Abbott & Costello. Mistaken as a traitor during the Revolutionary War, Lou is sentenced to haunt a country estate until proven innocent. Some funny moments. (Caution: Contains a séance.)

**THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT, PARTS 1 & 2** (1974, 1976). The perfect musicals for those of us who love the artistry of MGM's stable of stars yet hate the corny story lines that so often accompanied the '30s and '40s musical comedies. No silly scenarios here, just Astaire, Rogers and about a hundred other luminaries doing what they do best.

**THE THIEF OF BAGHDAD** (1940 version). Sabu. Outstanding special effects for the time, and a very imaginative script about a young merchant who frees a genie.

**TIME CHANGER** (2002). Starring Gavin MacLeod and Paul Rodriguez, this time-travel adventure concerns a Bible professor from 1890 who travels through time to the present. The action/adventure illustrates the pit a society falls into when it sheds itself of an ultimate authority. Involving, **TIME CHANGER** is full of Christian teaching, and contains a powerful ending. Ask for it at your Christian bookstore.

**TOM THUMB** (1958). Stars Russ Tamblyn and is based on the Grimm fairy tale. Features Peter Sellers and Terry Thomas, and great music from Peggy Lee and Sonny Burke. Oscar-winning special effects.

**TREASURE ISLAND**. This Robert Louis Stevenson classic has been remade several times. Most critics agree that the 1934 version with Wallace Berry and the 1950 version with Robert Newton are the best.

**WAY OUT WEST** (1937). Laurel & Hardy travel west to present a deed for a gold mine to the daughter of their deceased friend. Great score includes "Trail of the Lonesome Pine." One of their best.

**WHAT'S UP, DOC?** (1972). Barbara Streisand, Ryan O'Neal. Rated G. Very enjoyable screwball comedy set in San Francisco.

**WHERE THE RED FERN GROWS** (1974). Affectionate story full of charm and lessons of responsibility. Stars James Whitmore.

**WHITE FANG** (1990). Klaus Maria Brandauer, Ethan Hawke. A young man befriends a wolf in this Jack London tale. Beautifully photographed in Alaska.

**WIDE AWAKE** (1998). Joseph Cross, Rosie O'Donnell. PG (1 obscenity from the lead's best friend; 1 mild obscenity repeated over and over as the lead runs from a bully, but when he passes a cross with the suffering Christ on it, the boy apologizes; 1 expletive from the football coach; the boys innocently examine a magazine featuring a bikini-clad woman, but I did not feel this was exploitative, and the picture is not predominantly shown to the audience—the youngsters are merely curious about the opposite sex; the best friend does not believe in God - until the end; deals poignantly with the loss of a grandparent). A young boy enters fifth grade at a Catholic school for boys while dealing with the death of his beloved grandfather. One of the most sensitive and entertaining movies I have seen in quite some time. It shows the lad searching for God so he can ask if his grandpa is okay. The film deals perceptibly with questions concerning death and our Creator, but it is not a sermon. The writing is true to boyhood thoughts, mischief, and dialogue. It may be a little intense for very young ones who do not understand death, but questions such as the one our hero asks a troubled priest, "Do you ever feel like giving up?" will relate to older kids and adults alike. There's no crudity associated with this film as it is with most kids' movies. The boy, terrifically played by young Joseph Cross,

learns forgiveness, compassion and faith. And Grandpa, played by a superb actor, Robert Loggia, stays true to the philosophy, "Hold on to your faith. Faith will get you through," even when he learns he is dying. The Movie Reporter does not tell its readers to attend movies, but I'd rather film goers see a film like this, with life lessons, than others with a blatant disregard for biblical teachings. As a reporter who unfortunately sees very few films with positive messages, I was thoroughly entertained and moved by **WIDE AWAKE**. Use TVG

**YANKEE DOODLE DANDY** (1942). James Cagney as song-and-dance man George M. Cohan. Cagney rightly won Best Actor Oscar.

**YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU** (1938). All-star cast in very funny Frank Capra film about an eccentric family. Won Best Picture. Dated, but still amusing.

**YOUNG MR. LINCOLN** (1939). Henry Fonda. Sterling rendition of Lincoln's struggles as a lawyer and statesman.

**YOURS, MINE AND OURS** (1968). Lucille Ball, Henry Fonda. Based on a true story of a widow with eight kids who marries a widower with ten. Lucy is very funny in this film for the whole family.

## **DVDs FOR CHILDREN (Adults will enjoy as well)**

Caution: Many fables contain witches, ghosts or sorcery. If you should see some element in a movie that might be confusing to young minds, take the opportunity to discuss it with them.

**ADVENTURES FROM THE BOOK OF VIRTUES** (1996). Based on the bestselling book by William J. Bennett, this superbly animated series is designed to cultivate the best in human qualities: loyalty, courage, honesty, perseverance, self-discipline, respect, etc. Two children, Zach and Annie, face everyday challenges and issues, with the help of Plato, a wise and friendly buffalo, Aristotle, a feisty but loyal prairie dog, and Aurora, a warm and caring red-tailed hawk. With the voice talents of Ed Asner, Pam Dawber, John Forsythe, Mark Hamill, George Segal, Peter Strauss, Wes Studi, Elijah Wood, Alfre Woodard and many others, the cartoonists have sculpted delightful vignettes that are as entertaining to parents as they are to the little ones.

**THE ADVENTURES OF MILO & OTIS** (1989). Rated G. A great adventure film starring animals, with Dudley Moore serving as narrator. For years, it was the highest grossing film in Japan.

**BABES IN TOYLAND** (1934 version with Laurel and Hardy). Good battles evil in this lovely musical fantasy.

**BAMBI II.** Rated G. After his mother's death, Bambi is reunited with his father, The Great Prince, who must now raise the young fawn and teach him the ways of the forest. The proud parent discovers that there is much he can learn from his spirited young son. Thumper, Flower and Owl return to meet new friends as Bambi's legacy continues.

I was completely surprised by this screening. Generally, any children's cartoon movie with a "II" behind the title is a stinker. What's more, Disney has chosen to take it directly to DVD release. That's usually not a good sign, either. But I found this to be charming, a real delight. The main ingredients found in the classic Disney toons are the deceptively simple animation and the kid voices. It's full of life lessons that address the death of a parent, the need for father and son bonding, and a respect for God's creatures. The filmmakers have given audiences an entertaining film that is both insightful for children and engaging for Mom and Pop. Full of humor, action and pretty pictures, **BAMBI II**, like its predecessor, is a treasure.

**BATMAN: MASK OF THE PHANTASM** (1993). Voices: Kevin Conroy, Mark Hamill, Dana Delaney, Efram Zimbalist, Jr. - G (it does contain lots of comic book style violence, but a well-thought out script, artsy animation, and a moral lesson). Feature-length version of the animated TV series has Batman falling in love while battling both The Joker and a new nemesis to Gotham City, the Phantasm.

**BEETHOVEN** (1992). Charles Grodin, Dean Jones (against type as the bad guy). Comedy - PG (1 vulgar expression for which the culprit is reprimanded). Escapist fare about a St. Bernard eluding a mad doctor who wants to use puppies for target practice. Soon, the mischievous canine transforms the mundane life of a dysfunctional family. In spite of disapproving critics, both kids and their parents seem to enjoy this film.

**THE BRAVE LITTLE TOASTER** (1987). This creative animated story of household appliances that come to life when no one's home is full of positive messages about friendship, loyalty and self-sacrifice. These kitchen machines share several adventures as they go into the world searching for their owner. The talents of several SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE alumni make this silly tale a pleasure for adults as well.

**BUGS BUNNY CLASSICS** (1941-48). Some of his best.

**CAPTAIN JANUARY** (1936). Shirley Temple. During the process of putting this book together, I viewed several of Shirley's films that I hadn't seen since I was a boy. And you know what—she was fabulous! A phenomenon: gifted and charming and always real. This sweet tale of an orphaned girl raised by a lighthouse keeper is one of her best. Here, she dances with Buddy Ebsen and sings "At the Codfish Ball," and her guardian teaches her from the Bible, proclaiming "with it you'll steer a straight course." This is one fathers will especially enjoy with their daughters.

**CARTOON ALL-STARS TO THE RESCUE.** This anti-drug video, which ran on all the networks simultaneously several years ago, is now at your local video store. Truly an effective weapon against a destructive force that no child is too young to learn about. It's excellent. Adults will enjoy it as well. Good for starting a conversation with kids.

**CURIOUS GEORGE** (2006). Rated G. From the beloved children's stories by Margaret and H. A. Rey, George is an inquisitive little monkey, more lovable than Cheetah. And that's saying something considering the little guy doesn't seem to have any family. By day he's pals with everyone in the jungle as he learns how life works. But at night, he covers up all alone in his tree house built for one. Suddenly, an adventurer shows up wearing a silly hat, looking for a lost treasure. He needs to find and bring back the sacred statue or the museum he works for will be turned into a parking lot. Sadly, the treasure is disappointing and all he returns to New York with is an adoring, inquisitive baby primate. Aided by a gentle story, highlighted by kid-friendly slapstick, engaging songs by Jack Johnson, and funny vocal assistance by Will Ferrell and Dick Van Dyke, **CURIOUS GEORGE** is a sweet-tempered animated comedy.

**DR. SEUSS' HORTON HEARS A WHO** (1966). The Peabody-winning story of a rhyming elephant's attempt to rescue Whoville is magically animated by MGM/UA and lovingly narrated by Hans Conried. Positive messages for children, including "a person is a person, no matter how small" and believing in things you don't see or understand: a great opening for biblical discussions.

**THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE.** Public Media Video presents a 4-star adaptation of the C. S. Lewis classic tale. This is really superb programming for the family, complete with terrific special effects, animation, as well as live action, musical score and costumes. A group of children discover a closet that leads to a far-off land called Narnia. (1995's **CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE** is also a step up from most children's fables: the book, and now the film, are full of evocative analogies and iconic images, and while adventures, not sermons, take center stage, most churchgoers will find that the story serves to open a rewarding dialogue between parent and child concerning the Christ-like symbolism found in the pivotal Aslan.)

**THE NEVER ENDING STORY, Part II** (1990). Rated PG. A fable most kids 8-13 will enjoy with its adventure and special effects. Teaches sacrifices, honor, friendship and courage.

**THE ROACH APPROACH: DON'T MISS THE BOAT.** (2006) (for kids 3-8) This animated comic adventure for wee ones concerns a family of bugs about to enjoy a vacation in Florida when a hurricane nearly blows them away. Although they are unable to enjoy other activities until the storm passes, Grandpa Lou and Nana use the time

to tell their grandson Squiggz the fitting story of Noah's Ark.

With a sound biblical message, this song-filled cartoon manages to captivate its intended audience. My nephews Austin (7) and David (5) each gave it, you should excuse the expression, a "Thumbs Up."

Also available from the same creator, Bruce Barry: **THE ROACH APPROACH: THE MANE EVENT!** This adventure is based on the story of Daniel In the Lions' Den. In this animated adventure, Grandpa Lou takes the Roach kids on a camping trip. As they travel through a drain pipe, Grandpa Lou tells the kids the biblical account. Along the way, they learn valuable lessons about faith, friendship and standing up for their beliefs. Both DVDs are available at Christian bookstores (released through 20th Century Fox). Not rated (I found nothing objectionable; the filmmakers are considerate of children's sensibilities. I suggest parents view these productions with their little ones in order to answer questions and to see if they understood the parables).

**ROCK-A-DOODLE** (1992). Animated film by Don Bluth with the voices of Phil Harris, Christopher Plummer, Charles Nelson Reilly and Glenn Campbell. When a cocky rooster learns he doesn't make the sun come up, he goes off to become a rock 'n' roll star. I found it a lot more fun than most critics, with several positive messages.

**ROOKIE OF THE YEAR** (1993). Thomas Ian Nicholas, Gary Busey, Daniel Stern. PG (a few "oh my God's" uttered, but I caught no other profanity or obscenity). After a fluke accident, a 12-year-old discovers his once broken arm now serves a deadly baseball pitch. He becomes the youngest member of the Chicago Cubs. One has to suspend all reality for this comedy, but it is a funny, uplifting narrative without condescending to kids.

**THE SECRET GARDEN** (1993). Kate Maberly, Maggie Smith, Heydon Prowse. Fantasy - G (1 brief scene where the children chant a nonsensical phrase). A Dickens-esque tale of an orphan going to live with her brooding uncle in 1800s England. The classic story of three children discovering a magical garden is a nearly perfect movie with atmospheric direction, endearing performances, striking photography, and positive messages of hope, responsibility and the need to be loved. Also worth a look, the 1949 version with Margaret O'Brien and the 1987 British version with Gennie James. Both are 4-star productions.

**WEE WILLIE WINKIE** (1937). Shirley Temple, Victor McLaglen. Comedy/action. My favorite starring the curly-haired moppet. Shirley is sent to live on a British outpost in India with her mother and her grandfather, the Colonel (C. Aubrey Smith). Inspired by Kipling's GUNGA DIN and directed by, get this, John Ford.

**WHITE FANG** (1990). Klaus Maria Brandauer, Ethan Hawke. A young man befriends a wolf in this Jack London

tale. Beautifully photographed in Alaska. Caution: some perilous situations may frighten very little ones.

## **DVDs FOR TEENS**

**THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN** (2008). Though this sequel is more action driven than the first episode, character development has by no means been abandoned. Between the many white-knuckle battle sequences, the intricate plot and the growth of the main characters will likely serve to open a rewarding dialogue between parent and child. The Christ-like symbolism found in the pivotal character, Aslan, and the meaning of God's silence at times in our lives are addressed with transparency. PG

**THE CLIMB** (2002). Concerns two mountaineers (one black, one white) forced to team up as they ascend Mt. Chicanaagua, a dangerous Chilean alp that tempts the most astute of adventurers. With different backgrounds and views on life, their struggle with each other becomes as daunting as the mountain itself. What impressed me most was the script's delicate inclusion of the Gospel message. After the success of the comical road picture *Road To Redemption*, which gained the highest decision rate of any televised Billy Graham movie to date, World Wide Pictures is following with an outdoor adventure that reveals an innate need for Christ's salvation. The day of the "church" movie is past, at least at Dr. Graham's film organization. No Bible thumping here, just a sincere portrayal of God's mercy, Christ's sacrifice, and how to welcome both into our lives. PG (mature themes).

**DANCER, TEXAS POP. 81** (1998). Eddie Mills, Peter Facinelli, Ashley Johnson. Engaging comic drama. PG (a few mild expletives & 1 obscenity, but no profanity; muted sexual innuendo as a ne'er-do-well father brings home a date, but no sex scenes). Talky LAST PICTURE SHOW wannabe about four graduating high school chums set to leave their teeny, tiny town due to a vow they made in grade school. Although the big city of Los Angeles holds the promise of excitement, responsibilities and fears fill the 90-some minute film with the question, "Will they or won't they?" Good technical aspects, fine performances by the unknowns, and it is a pleasure to see a film about teens without the usual crudity, exploitation and profane language. Enjoyable. Use TVG

**THE GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST** (1990). Annette O'Toole, Joanna Cassidy, Heather Fairfield. A young girl is determined to get an education in 1908 rural Indiana. Good storytelling and character development. Use TVG

**GREAT EXPECTATIONS** (the 1946 version). John Mills heads an all-star English cast, including Jean Simmons and Alec Guinness. Yes, it is an old film and, yes, it is in black and white, two turnoffs for today's teenager. But if you can get them to sit still for 10 minutes, most will be hooked.

Directed by one of the greats, David Lean (*DR. ZHIVAGO*, *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*), this Dickens tale is brought to life in one of the best movies ever made. Several Oscars went to this classic about an orphan and his mysterious benefactor.

**REMEMBER THE TITANS** (2000). In 1971 Herman Boone (Denzel Washington), a young black coach new to Alexandria, Virginia, was hired as head coach of the T. C. Williams High Titans over Bill Yoast, a white man with several years seniority, a steadfast following and a tradition of winning. I suppose if you looked hard enough you could find something not in agreement with your own personal view of biblical teaching, but it contains a concerted effort to tell an uplifting story sans today's accepted ratio of obscene and profane material. I left the theater feeling good about the possibility of man learning to care about his fellow man. I am pleased to tell you that one of the athletes is a Christian – and he is not mocked for his beliefs. He even has a positive effect on his fellow teammates. (PG) Use TVG

**SMILE** (2005). Mika Boorem, Luoyong Wang, Beau Bridges, Sean Astin. The story concerns Katie (Mika Boorem from *SLEEPOVER*) a self-centered teen from an affluent Malibu family, cute and at the top of the social order at her school. Struggling with adolescent issues, including whether to have sex with her boyfriend, Katie is beginning to sense that there is more to life than what's offered by her preferential world. When a favorite teacher presents an opportunity to get involved with a charitable group, she hastily agrees to travel to China as a volunteer, not knowing that this trip will change her life. PG-13 (A mother discusses sexual matters with her teen daughter and supports her decision to get birth control pills. There is a make-out scene, but the girl realizes that she is not ready for sex and puts an end to it.)

**STEEP** (2008) is an interesting documentary about men – and women – who live for danger. Like surfers searching for the tallest wave, extreme mountain skiers attempt to conquer the highest and most inaccessible adversary. Best moment: Three skiers are photographed from a helicopter while getting caught in an avalanche. Not only a thrilling, armrest-grabber of a moment; the aftermath also shows a camaraderie known only to those who risk their lives together. Now, that's awesome, dude. (PG) Use TVG

**TOY STORY 3** (2010). Once again cowboy Woody (Tom Hanks), spaceman Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen), and friends emerge from their toy box and burst onto the screen in this delightful fantasy-adventure Pixar animated film. The toys' owner, Andy (John Morris), is heading off to college and his mother insists the toys either go to the attic or the dumpster. By mistake Andy's beloved childhood companions end up in the dumpster. But that's just the beginning of a hilarious escape/rescue roller-coaster string of events. The first rescue takes them to the Sunshine Day Care Center, where they are greeted by Lotso (Ned Beatty), a giant fatherly teddy bear –

or is he? The newcomers are tormented by toddlers who tear, mangle and almost destroy the new toys. The seemingly idyllic day care becomes a prison. How will these displaced friends overcome the dangers they face? Can Woody lead them to freedom? Will they remain loyal to Woody? G (action scenes, toys are mangled by toddlers, cruel treatment and some threats; Messages about trust, loyalty and friendship).

**A WALK TO REMEMBER** (2002). Shane West, Mandy Moore. A smart drama aimed at the teen market, whose central figure is – are you ready for this – a committed Christian! Based on the best-selling novel by Nicholas Sparks about a high-school bad boy who finds love and a reason for life when he falls for the Baptist preacher's daughter. Youth leaders may occasionally blush during the first third of the film, but parents don't have to worry that their children will be subjected to the profane use of God's name or see explicit sexual activity. The "S" word is used several times, but no other harsh expletives. And there is no irreverence to God or Christ. The sexual references, I admit, border on the objectionable, but these moments are utilized to set the stage, to show the difference between the spiritual and the non-spiritual. PG (ten obscenities, but no misuse of God's name; one character utters crude sexual remarks, but I found these infractions merely depicted the moods and feelings of many high schoolers; it shows the difference between secular society and those who have been instructed by God's Word concerning how to conduct themselves). Use TVG

## **MOVIES FOR MOM...**

**I REMEMBER MAMA** (1948). Irene Dunne, Barbara Bel Geddes. It's an oldie, but it captures the essence of motherhood - nurturing, caring, self-sacrificing. Ms. Dunne portrays the matriarch of a Norwegian immigrant family struggling with life's problems. A great film. You'll need Kleenex!

**BABETTE'S FEAST** (1987). Winner of that year's Best Foreign Film Oscar and based on a short story by Isak Dinesen, it concerns two sisters in a small Danish town who take in a homeless woman as their servant. More like viewing a fine old painting or enjoying a sumptuous meal, it is a remarkable example that American filmmakers could take a lesson from.

**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** (1946). This French version of the classic tale is a masterpiece. I think you ladies will find it romantic, if you don't mind subtitles. Stars Jean Marais and directed by renowned French director Jean Cocteau.

**SARAH PLAIN AND TALL** (1991). Glenn Close and Christopher Walken star in this Hallmark Hall of Fame made-for-TV movie about a woman in the 1880s who answers an ad to share a life on a Kansas farm. Superb.

**SENSE AND SENSIBILITY** (1995). Emma Thompson, Alan Rickman, Kate Winslet, Hugh Grant. PG (no profanity, no sexual situations, no violence--just great storytelling). An engrossing screenplay by the film's star, Emma Thompson, from the Jane Austen romance novel about two sisters discovering the joys and tribulations of young love. Set in prim and proper 18th-century England, the beautifully photographed and splendidly acted melodrama is full of humor, wit, and passion.

**SOUNDER** (1972). A stirring story of a black sharecropper's family during the Depression. Nominated for Best Picture that year, with a standout performance by Cicely Tyson.

**THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL** (1985). Geraldine Page. Simple but well-told story of a discontented widow who decides to make a last pilgrimage to her childhood home. Page won Best Actress for her wonderfully textured performance. The beautiful rendition of "Softly and Tenderly" by Christian performer Cynthia Clawson is worth the rental price. PG (contains a couple of expletives).

**ENCHANTED APRIL** (1992). Joan Plowright, Polly Walker. A delightful fable about four women in the 1920s escaping their repressed lifestyles in London by renting a castle in Portofino. They soon discover the estate has a magical effect on all who stay there. Witty dialogue, dreamy cinematography, and savory performances. At last, a PG film with no sexual activity, profane language, violence, or religion-bashing. A romantic comedy that nourishes the spirit.

**ENCHANTED COTTAGE** (1945). Robert Young, Dorothy McGuire. Lovely fantasy about a scarred war vet and a homely woman, both made beautiful by their love. Moves slowly, but a very romantic film with a gratifying ending.

**MISS POTTER** (2008). Renee Zellweger is witty, touching and erudite in this sharply written PG-rated tale of writer Beatrix Potter. Ms. Zellweger plays an independent woman in an era when that outlook was shunned. What's more, she radiates joy as a woman who discovers self-respect and one who lives to see her work appreciated. On top of that, **MISS POTTER** was the most romantic film of 2006. (Have hankies on hand – one for you, and yes, one for him.)

**PRIDE AND PREJUDICE** (2005). Keira Knightley, Rosamund Pike, Jena Malone, Brenda Blethyn, Donald Sutherland, Matthew Macfadyen. The classic tale of love and misunderstanding unfolds in class-conscious England near the close of the 18th century. The five Bennet sisters with the aid of their worrisome mother are seeking husbands and securing the family's future. Fueled by detailed direction, pumped by satisfying performances, energized by fluid and sultry cinematography, and textured by Jane Austen's ability to infuse humor into what would merely be

melodrama in the hands of other authors, this newest adaptation is elegant, genteel and lovely.

**THE YOUNG VICTORIA** (2009). Emily Blunt (**THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA**) delivers an incredibly appealing performance as Queen Victoria in the turbulent first years of her reign. Rupert Friend (**PRIDE & PREJUDICE**) portrays Prince Albert, the suitor who wins her heart and becomes her partner in one of history's greatest romances. This love story, set amongst all the intrigue of the court, also features Paul Bettany (**IRON MAN**, **THE DA VINCI CODE**), Miranda Richardson (**HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE**), Jim Broadbent (**THE DAMNED UNITED**, **THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA**). PG (the queen's life is threatened twice by assassins; a man is wounded by an attempted assassination; blood on a shirt from a gunshot wound; honeymooners cavorting, but the scenes are handled with discretion and reflect the beauty of a married couple delighting in one another; some drinking by members of the court).

## **AND FOR DAD...**

**PUBLIC ENEMY** (1931). There have been a lot of gangster films over the years, but none better than this realistic depiction of the rise and fall of vicious Tom Powers. Along with Robinson and Bogart, the enigmatic Cagney personified the screen hoodlum. He mixed a dancer's agility with a con-artist's energy. Add a smirk that simultaneously suggested self-amusement and depravity and you have one scary little fellow. **PUBLIC ENEMY** contains several startling scenes. Although it does not bombard your senses with today's screen gore, it remains unnerving.

**ROOSTER COGBURN AND THE LADY** (1975). John Wayne, Katharine Hepburn. Let-down sequel to **TRUE GRIT**. I mention it for buffs who want to compare today's so-called movie stars with the real thing. Watch the scenes where the two old pros exchange barbed, yet affectionate, remarks. Their charisma jumps off the screen. Best scene in the film features Strother Martin as a cynical river-rat with no use for women, children, or anyone else.

**RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP** (1959). Clark Gable, Burt Lancaster--and, believe it or not, Don Rickles! Troubles come to a head between two officers on board a Nazi-hounded submarine.

**SIGNS** (2002). Writer/director M. Night Shyamalan, renowned for combining sophisticated entertainment with thought-provoking material (**PRAYING WITH ANGER**, **THE SIXTH SENSE**, **WIDE AWAKE**, **UNBREAKABLE**), has done the remarkable with this sci-fi thriller that harkens back to H. G. Wells's **WAR OF THE WORLDS**. It astounds on several levels. Added to the drama and jolting suspense is the story's subtext about a man losing, then regaining his faith. And lastly, the film has an intriguing take concerning coincidence in our daily lives. Are the details of life

governed merely by happenstance? Or are they a part of a great plan? Do things happen by circumstance or do they purposely serve to develop our nature? (PG-13) Use TVG

**INSIDE JOB** (2010). From Academy Award® nominated filmmaker Charles Ferguson (No End In Sight) comes INSIDE JOB, the first film to expose the shocking truth behind the economic crisis of 2008. The global financial meltdown, at a cost of over \$20 trillion, resulted in millions of people losing their homes and jobs. Through extensive research and interviews with major financial insiders, politicians and journalists, INSIDE JOB traces the rise of a rogue industry and unveils the corrosive relationships that have corrupted politics, regulation and academia.

PG-13 (around six uses of the s-word, one f-word and a few mild expletives; I caught no misuse of God's name; the film discusses prostitution – it seems those in financial and political power tend to pay a great deal of money for every kind of excess, including prostitution). Use TVG

**THE ODD COUPLE** (1968). A very funny Neil Simon comedy about two very different men (Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau) sticking together out of necessity. Rated G, there are a couple of sexual innuendoes, but the material is tame by today's standards and Mr. Simon mines laughs from witty life-observations, rather than from bathroom humor.

**THE STRAIGHT STORY** (1999). Filmed along the 260-mile route that the actual Alvin Straight (Richard Farnsworth) traversed in 1994 from Laurens, Iowa to Mt. Zion, Wisconsin, *The Straight Story* chronicles Alvin's patient odyssey and those he meets along the way. Alvin encounters a number of strangers, from a teenage runaway to a fellow WWII veteran. By sharing his life's earned wisdom with simple stories, Alvin has a profound impact on these people. It contains lessons about the importance of family and forgiveness. Caution: though it is rated G, the film contains the following: a few expletives, one misuse of God's name and one misuse of Jesus' name; many of the main characters smoke; occasional beer drinking; the lead drinks a beer himself, but the film explains why many people use alcohol as a crutch. Use TVG

## **VIDEOS FOR MATURE VIEWERS**

This section serves up all kinds of films that deal with the human condition. Although these movies will not bombard your senses with negative images or profane language, a few of the more recent films may contain some material you deem incorrect for young children. Older teens should be able to handle the subject matter.

**ADAM'S RIB** (1949). A literate battle-of-the-sexes script with married lawyers (Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn) on opposing sides of an attempted murder case.

**ADVISE AND CONSENT** (1962). Henry Fonda, Charles Laughton. The Senate must decide whether to confirm a controversial nominee for Secretary of State. Engrossing look at Washington behind closed doors.

**ALL ABOUT EVE** (1950). Bette Davis at her best as a sophisticated actress at odds with her scheming protégé. Winner of six Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Screenplay. Droll dialogue and sharp performances make this a 4-star picture.

**AMISH GRACE** (2010). This made-for-television drama stars Kimberly Williams-Paisley ("ACCORDING TO JIM," "FATHER OF THE BRIDE" Parts I and II) as Ida Graber, an Amish woman dealing with the tragic loss of her daughter after the shooting by a crazed outsider who swore vengeance on God after his own baby girl died. The true story is about the aftermath of the 2006 schoolhouse shooting in the Amish community of Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. The book's title best summarizes the production's theme—*Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*.

**AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER** (1957). Cary Grant, Deborah Kerr. Sudser about a shipboard romance that suffers a heartbreaking setback. Corny, but very romantic. Lovely theme song.

**ANNE FRANK REMEMBERED** (1995). Narrated by Kenneth Branagh. Sony Pictures Classics. PG (the atrocities of Hitler's concentration camps are seen briefly toward the end of the film). Anne Frank's diary has sold more than 25 million copies and has been translated into 55 languages. Her life and tragic death speak on behalf of the 1.5 million children killed by the Nazis. This poignant documentary works on several levels: a true-life coming of age, the insight of a wise young girl, and the human capacity to survive. Every teenager should see this film to learn of the destructiveness of bigotry and to be uplifted by the courage and power people can display. In one incredible moment, the middle-aged son of a holocaust victim meets the woman who protected his father nearly 50 years ago. Two months after this meeting, the man died. Filled with many intuitive moments, the video reminds us that soon no one will be here to tell the personal events associated with that horrific time.

**AS YOU LIKE IT** (1936). Laurence Olivier. An early attempt at bringing the Bard to the silver screen proves successful.

**AUGUST RUSH** (2007). Freddie Highmore, Keri Russell, Jonathan Rhys Meyers. A charismatic young Irish guitarist and a sheltered young cellist have a chance encounter one magical night above New York's Washington Square, but are soon torn apart, leaving in their wake an infant, orphaned by circumstance. Years later, performing on the streets of New York and cared for by a mysterious stranger (Robin Williams) who gives him the name August Rush, the child (Freddie Highmore) uses his remarkable musical talent



to seek the parents from whom he was separated at birth. It's a wonderful film, because like most the great films, from *IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE* to *CASABLANCA*, *AUGUST RUSH* makes you feel hopeful and good. This one looks to those things that unite us – the music around us, the hope of love, and the adventure of life.

PG (the word “pissed” is used once. I'm not sure if this is an actual obscenity, but it is crude, isn't it? Three or four minor expletives [damns], but I caught no harsh language. One use of “Oh my God,” but I caught no other profanity. The Fagin-like character bullies a kid; a woman is hit by a car off screen, placing her in the hospital, and a boy is also hit by a car – this is jolting, but he is uninjured. It is implied that the lead couple have had sex, which leads to the birth of the film's little hero, but we do not see the act. Members of a rock band drink beer in a couple of scenes. Though the young couple has had sex the very night of their meeting, it is not incorporated into the film to be exploitive, but to further the plot. It is not done to promote premarital sex. Indeed, the couple pays a price for the deed).

**AUTUMN TALE** (1998). Marie Riviere, Beatrice Romand. French film with subtitles. Sensitive (if a little talky) story of two woman in their forties: Isabelle, a happily married bookstore owner, and Magali, a widowed wine grower. Believing that “at my age, it's easier to find buried treasure! than finding someone to love,” the 45-year-old widow turns to her friend for help. Misguidedly, Isabelle places a misleading personal ad, and then impersonates her friend, while checking out the gentleman who answers the advertisement. The romantic shenanigans become both funny and poignant. Director Rohmer, who over the past decade gave audiences three other films in this series, including *SUMMER'S TALE*, *WINTER'S TALE*, and *SPRINGTIME*, here provides a clean, entertaining story about middle-aged friendships. PG (mild, adult subject matter).

**BAREFOOT IN THE PARK** (1967). Robert Redford, Jane Fonda. A very good adaptation of Neil Simon's funny play about newlyweds.

**THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES** (1960). Peter Sellers. From a James Thurber short story, a sophisticated comedy about a hostile business takeover.

**THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN** (1925–Silent Russian). Directed by Sergei Eisenstein about the 1905 Revolution. Still powerful with many milestone thematic images, including the Odessa Steps sequence, which has been copied and spoofed a thousand times. This film made the world aware of just how influential the medium could be.

**BILL** (1981). Mickey Rooney, Dennis Quaid. Touching true story of a mentally retarded man making it outside a mental institution. Upbeat.

**BROKEN LANCE** (1954). Spencer Tracy, Robert Wagner, Richard Widmark. Sons of a cattle baron attempt to take over his empire.

**THE BUCKET LIST** (2007). Two terminal cancer victims become friends while sharing a hospital room. Mr. Nicholson plays a cynical, lonely billionaire eventually led to a better way by Mr. Freeman's good soul. Together they circumnavigate the world, crossing off items they wanted to accomplish before their life came to a close. Unlike most films dealing with a lead character facing death, this one actually addresses the afterlife. While the Morgan Freeman character explains what other religions say about the Hereafter, a scene of him and his family praying over a meal indicates that Christianity has been his spiritual path. He's a man with foibles of his own, but his patient, forgiving and compassionate heart reflects a sincere response to his faith, and this obviously has an effect on the Nicholson character. I was troubled by the profane use of God's name (mostly by the embittered Nicholson character – but once by Mr. Morgan, who is playing the more spiritual of the duo). I don't know how to advise concerned moviegoers troubled by Hollywood's infatuation with profanity. Does the profundity outweigh the profanity? It's your call. (PG-13) Use TVG

**THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY** (1978). Gary Busey, Don Strud, Charles Martin Smith. Acclaimed musical bio of the famed '50s rock-and-roller. Busey did his own singing and guitar playing. Caution: contains a few obscenities. I bring it to your attention for its artistic merits and its moralistic approach to marriage and friendship. Use TVG

**BULLITT** (1968). Steve McQueen at his coolest and the greatest car chase ever filmed. (Caution: contains one obscenity, but I caught no misuse of God's name. Also it has some violence, but nothing like today's standards, or lack of.)

**CABIN IN THE SKY** (1943). Ethel Waters, Lena Horne, Eddie “Rochester” Anderson. Musical comedy. Fable about faith and devotion. Ingratating performance by Waters, with several moving musical numbers.

**CASABLANCA** (1942). Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman.

**THE CAT PEOPLE** (The 1942 version–don't make the mistake of renting the 1982 remake; besides being an inferior film, it also contains extreme violence, nudity, and language.). I usually do not recommend horror films, but like many old classic spook stories, the original *CAT PEOPLE* is a morality play. In one scene our hero holds up a cross and tells the menacing foe to “leave us alone in the name of God.” Slowly, the possessed leopard retreats. You won't find that kind of symbolism in today's slasher movies, which, by the way, is the main difference between old Frankenstein or Dracula movies and today's version of “horror.” Modern fright films are little more than special

effects blood baths, with faceless monsters killing one victim after another.

**CHARADE** (1963). Cary Grant, Audrey Hepburn. Amusing mystery with Grant at his elegant best, aiding Audrey in search of a missing fortune. Adding to the fun—Walter Matthau, James Coburn, and George Kennedy. One of Henry Mancini's best scores.

**CHEYENNE AUTUMN** (1964). John Ford epic about the mistreatment of the Native American.

**THE CHORUS** (2004). Gérard Jugnot. French, with subtitles. **THE CHORUS** is an emotional, music-filled tale about how a very humble man's simple dreams changed the future for a forgotten group of children. Shot inside a castle in the French countryside that lends a rich fairy-tale atmosphere, the film marks the debut of writer/director Christophe Barratier. Supported by a sincere cast and top-notch cinematography, Barratier gives the audience an involving, ultimately joyous film. It thoroughly entertains and uplifts the spirit. Despite having to sit through subtitles (after the first few minutes you aren't even aware of them), the moving story becomes a total delight. PG (boys being boys, there are a few sexual references and crude language, but I caught no misuse of God's name; a couple of boys are slapped by the strict, unfeeling principal). Use TVG

**CITY LIGHTS** (1931). Charles Chaplin. Not only funny, but very moving as the Little Tramp cares for and makes a major sacrifice for a blind flower girl. Incredible ending.

**THE COMANCHEROS** (1961). John Wayne, Stuart Whitman. A Texas Ranger battles an outlaw gang and Comanche Indians. Lots of action, great score.

**CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY** (1951). Sidney Poitier. A British film about the struggle between races in South Africa. Poignant without bombarding your senses with today's screen profanity and violence. Pass on the remake.

**DAN IN REAL LIFE** (2007). An advice columnist/widower takes his three daughters to Rhode Island for a family reunion. There he has a chance encounter and falls for a kindred spirit. Problem: she's dating his brother. *Dan In Real Life* is sublimely charming, lightheartedly funny and explicitly clean. Too often this year, I've left comedies feeling grungy. This one is a welcome alternative: a sweet, relaxing, entertaining movie. There's depth, not a cavern of depth, but just enough profundity to give the humor dimension, and just enough grownup romance to give singles hope. (PG-13) Use TVG

**THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** (1951). This absorbing and eerie sci-fi drama concerns a space alien coming to Earth to warn humans of approaching destruction. Top notch, its acting, script and score are all 4-star. Today's audience may have to adjust because the substance is in the story, not the special effects, but it is one of the few science-fiction films that acknowledges God.

When the alien is asked if he has the power of life and death, he responds, "No, that is reserved for the Almighty Spirit."

**DEAR JOHN** (2009). Green Beret John Tyree (Channing Tatum) returns to his home in South Carolina between tours just as the college kids are celebrating spring break. He meets co-ed Savannah Curtis (Amanda Seyfried) on the beach and they fall in love. John changes his plans to stay in the Army and promises to return at the end of his current tour. Then 9-11 happens, and John writes Savannah he cannot leave the military as promised. Will Savannah wait for John? Teenagers and young adults looking for a romantic movie on Valentine's Day will find **DEAR JOHN**, based on Nicholas Sparks's novel, a good choice. Those looking for action, conflict and real drama might nod off occasionally. (PG-13) Use TVG

**THE DEVIL AT 4 O'CLOCK** (1961). Adventure on a tropic island doomed by a menacing volcano. Spencer Tracy and Frank Sinatra star as a dispirited priest and a sarcastic convict at odds with each other and God until they pull together to rescue villagers from the erupting volcano.

**DISRAELI** (1929). George Arliss won an Oscar for his performance as the great statesman and British prime minister.

**DOWN IN THE DELTA** (1998). Alfre Woodard, Al Freeman, Jr., Esther Rolle, Mary Alice, Wesley Snipes. Fearing her substance-abusing, self-deprecating daughter will lose her life, a Christian mother sends the girl and her two children to relatives down in the South. There, each member of the family learns life lessons about responsibility, commitment, and the importance of family. Sounds a bit high-handed, but I assure you, the screenplay accomplishes all this while entertaining you every second. I just can't say enough about the positive nature of this film. It demonstrates how people can mend when they are nurtured, and not one profanity in the entire production! There's even a respect for God, with family members praying and attending church. I was moved, educated, and entertained throughout. It is perceptive, touching and life-affirming. PG-13 (there are four or five mild expletives, but no obscene or profane language; in the beginning, to set the stage, we see alcohol and drug abuse, and suggestive sexuality; however, the content is not used gratuitously, but rather to indicate how anyone can change his lifestyle). Use TVG

**DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE**. There are three well-made interpretations (1931), with Fredric March (1941), with Spencer Tracy, and (1968), with Jack Palance. A timeless good-vs.-evil theme.

**EL CID** (1965). Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren. Historical drama/romance about the legendary hero who drove the Moors from Spain. Great spectacle, with a literate script, a lovely score, and arguably the most beautiful woman ever to appear on the silver screen.

**ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE** (2007). Reprising the roles they originated in *Elizabeth*, Cate Blanchett and Geoffrey Rush return for a historical drama laced with treachery and romance. Joining them in the epic is Clive Owen as Sir Walter Raleigh, a dashing seafarer and new-found temptation for Elizabeth. Writers William Nicholson and Michael Hirst, director Shekhar Kapur, and all the artists and technicians involved in this production have given moviegoers stunning cinematic entertainment.

The story has much to do with Catholicism vs. Protestantism, or at least the political significance of these Christian faiths during that age. Spain's King Philip, according to the film, was sure he was meant to defeat Elizabeth, seeing Protestantism as the devil's deception. Queen Elizabeth wanted the two religions to dwell in harmony under her reign, and despite urgings from her court, she wouldn't punish subjects or enemies for their beliefs.

**EMMA** (1996). Gwyneth Paltrow stars in this period romance about a self-assured young woman who turns matchmaker for her little English village. Although a most likable Cupid, she is often off the mark. The teen comedy **CLUELESS** was inspired from this Jane Austen novel. Not quite in the league with **SENSE AND SENSIBILITY**, but all of a sudden, about halfway through, I was hooked. Beautiful to look at, amusing to listen to, and oh, yeah, nothing explodes! PG (I found nothing objectionable - no off-color language, no sexual situations, no violence).

**THE ENEMY BELOW** (1957) Robert Mitchum, Curt Jurgens. Tense sea epic with American captain vs. a German U-boat skipper.

**EVIL UNDER THE SUN** (1982). Peter Ustinov as Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot solving a murder on a remote European island.

**EXPELLED: NO INTELLIGENCE ALLOWED** (2008). This investigative documentary probes the snubbing of scientists and educators who teach the theory of intelligent design. The provocative and often amusing documentary unnerves by pointing out that our nation's universities, many of which once embraced a reverence for God, are now helmed by those who don't. For older teens. Rated PG

**THE FANTASTICKS** (2000). Brad Sullivan, Jean Louisa Kelly, Joel Grey. Musical based on one of the longest running off-Broadway plays, it has two fathers scheming to get their two kids to fall in love and marry. When they do, and the fairy-tale ending is on the horizon, all of a sudden the realities of life begin to replace the "tinsel sky" of romantic love. The grand romance of Act 1 is replaced by the symbolic loss of innocence in Act 2. Ah, but it wouldn't be a great musical without a satisfying Act 3.

**THE FAR COUNTRY** (1986). Michael York, Sigrid Thornton. Drama. A doctor who served in the German army escapes to Australia at the end of the war. There he

has to overcome prejudice and a possible prison sentence when he exposes his profession in order to perform a life-saving operation. Rated PG (3 or 4 expletives, one violent murder early on).

**FATHER OF THE BRIDE** (1991). Steve Martin, Kimberly Williams. Truly a sensitive, often hilarious look at a father dealing with his daughter's upcoming marriage. Martin is no Spencer Tracy, but he is credible. Newcomer Kimberly Williams is perfect. And what a pleasure to be able to bring to your attention a recent film with no violence, obscene language or sexual situations. PG (one crude joke about the use of a condom).

**FIREPROOF** (2008). Okay, let's get it out of the way. Yes, **FIREPROOF** has an agenda. It clearly states that you need Christ on the throne of your life and at the center of your marriage. But here's what sets it apart from the plethora of well-intentioned, spiritually themed movies dedicated to the proposition that the message must come first - the brothers Kindrick (**FACING THE GIANTS**, **FLYWHEEL**) never overwhelm the entertainment value with a proselytizing lesson. They keep in mind that they are making a movie and must adhere to the first law of movie-making. Which is? Entertainment. Want to get a message across? Make sure the audience is engrossed and likes your protagonists. Oh, there are the usual filmmatic shortcomings associated with well-meaning religious storytelling. This awkwardness is seen especially in the opening scenes, where both the actors and introductory dialogue seem clumsy and forced. But within minutes, something special happens - we begin to get caught up in the narrative. Now, narrative (story), for you younger readers, is an element that was once the dominate ingredient in movie-making. This was before CGI and comic book concepts became cinematic overlords. So, it's nice to again see an involving tale, one where you grow to care about the lead characters and their fates.

At the same time, the film extols biblical principles and addresses nagging spiritual questions. This is something I seldom see in theatrical releases. And I mean very seldom. Kirk Cameron gives the most mature, complex performance of his career. Like Jimmy Stewart's George Bailey, Cameron's Caleb Holt is a good man, but a real one, one with flaws and foibles. Cameron is willing to display negative traits that seldom take focus in movie protagonists. Supported by Erin Bethea's three-dimensional portrait as the firefighter's wife, Kirk and company approach an important issue: the sanctity of marriage. In a culture that promotes the quick disposal of friendships and marriages at the first hint of dissatisfaction, here is a movie that declares life-long unions are worth fighting for. Marriage is more than a contract, according to the film: it's a covenant. And that word covenant suggests a spiritual, life-long and consecrated commitment. Here, that theme is driven home, not in an attempt to rebuke those who have already been blinded long enough to forsake their "I Dos," but to aid other couples in danger of losing their own 20-20 focus. PG (intense fire sequences).

**FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT** (1940). Joel McCrea, Laraine Day, Herbert Marshall. Hitchcock directed this espionage thriller set in Europe during WWII. A 4-star classic.

**THE FORTUNE COOKIE** (1966). Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau. A decent man is convinced he should fake an injury to win a lawsuit. Funny and poignant.

**GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT** (1947). Gregory Peck. A writer posing as a Jew discovers anti-Semitism.

**GONE WITH THE WIND** (1939). Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh. Storytelling at its best.

**THE GOOD EARTH** (1937). Paul Muni, Louise Rainer. The life of a simple Chinese peasant and his struggling family. Love, honor, self-sacrifice prevail.

**THE GOSPEL** (2005). A semi-autobiographical film about the transformative power of faith and forgiveness, **THE GOSPEL** is a contemporary drama packed with the soaring, soulful sounds of gospel music. Set in the impassioned world of the African-American church, it tells the story of an R&B star (Boris Kodjoe), whose chart-topping albums have earned him fame and wealth, but whose decadent lifestyle has estranged him from his father (Clifton Powell), the bishop of his hometown church. When his father becomes ill, the young man returns home and comes face to face with his beliefs, and, ultimately, himself. **THE GOSPEL** deals with spirituality, something most filmmakers shy away from when attempting a story about healing and passion. One moment at the end especially touched me, as we see a young man coming forward during an altar call. I found tears coming to my eyes because it was an honest depiction of a soul professing an acceptance of Christ. That's a powerful concept, one rarely addressed in the cinema.

PG (some drinking and mild language; the lead, having grown up in the church, becomes a rock star – to emphasize this, there is a brief scene of him doing a music video surrounded by scantily clad female dancers gyrating to his music, but the filmmaker is not attempting to exploit, but merely depict the world of secular entertainment). Use TVG

**GROUNDHOG DAY** (1993). Bill Murray, Andie MacDowell. A cynical weathercaster finds himself waking up each morning having to relive the same day. Rated PG (some surreal violence and two implied sexual situations, but our hero learns life lessons, including the fact that promiscuous sex does not lead to happiness). A very funny modern-day parable with Murray at his best. An intelligent script full of pathos, humor, and character development. And not one profane word in the whole production (very rare for the '90s).

**GUNFIGHT AT THE O.K. CORRAL** (1957). Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas. Another relating of the O.K. Corral, helped along by bravado performances and an

unforgettable score by Dimitri Tiomkin. (Music is an essential element to the success of the western, as evidenced by **THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN**.)

**GUNGA DIN** (1939). Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. One of the first and best "buddy" films, with three British soldiers trying to defuse a native uprising. Great action scenes! Stirring ending as we discover "you're a better man than I am, Gunga Din."

**THE HARDER THEY FALL** (1956). Humphrey Bogart, Rod Steiger. Potent look at manipulation and crime in the world of boxing. Bogart's last film.

**HIGH SIERRA** (1941). Humphrey Bogart, Ida Lupino. An aging gangster hides out from the cops in the mountains. Another example of story development dominating a gangster film, rather than violent bloodletting.

**THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME** (1939). Charles Laughton. It's a great morality play by Victor Hugo and sensitively portrayed by Laughton as the grotesquely disfigured bell ringer, Quasimodo. It was filmed several times. This one's the best.

**THE INFORMER** (1935). John Ford directed Victor McLaglen to a Best Actor Oscar for his role as an Irish Patriot who turns in a friend so he can collect the reward. This drama also won Academy Awards for Ford, Max Steiner (score), and screenwriter, Dudley Nichols.

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON** (2007). This incisive documentary features the accounts of the surviving members of the Apollo teams who walked on the moon, giving a fresh perspective of those achievements, and allowing for the spiritual implications that affected the men on those explorations. At one point, we hear Charles Duke from the Apollo 9 mission give his testimony. I couldn't believe my ears; a man was declaring his faith in Jesus Christ and there were no snickers from audience members. Indeed, my fellow moviegoers were moved, realizing that there is something far bigger than man, or even space itself. **IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON** engages, uplifts and unites.

**INTO THE ARMS OF STRANGERS** (2000). For nine months prior to the outbreak of WWII, Britain mercifully opened its doors to over 10,000 endangered children whose lives had been thrown into chaos following the rise of Adolph Hitler. The film addresses the extraordinary rescue effort and its dramatic impact on the children who were saved. Erudite, perceptive, horrifying, and ultimately uplifting, this moving documentary features several survivors who detail their experiences and realize that their lives have had meaning.

**I.O.U.S.A.** (2008). This documentary examines the rapidly growing national debt and its consequences for the United States and its citizens. Before attending the screening, I couldn't imagine a film I'd rather not watch. So, I suspect that would be your first reaction. But if there's a tiger in the

room, you need to know it. This film tells you how big the tiger is. (PG)

**IRON MAN** (2008). Witty writing (considering the genre), involving direction, perhaps the best special effects I've seen, and actors doing what good actors do best, make this the most entertaining of the Marvel comics screen adaptations. True, the last third becomes top-heavy with the standard combativeness we've seen with the Fantastic Foursome, the mutating Transformers and the go-go Power Rangers, but by then Robert Downey, Jr. and the supporting players have cast their spells, drawing us into a mesmerizing action adventure that's also a morality tale. (PG-13) Use TVG

**JANE EYRE** (1983). Timothy Dalton, Zelah Clarke. A British mini-series adaptation of Charlotte Bronte's novel about an orphan who later becomes the governess of the household. Also, well-made in 1944 with Orson Welles and Joan Fontaine. Gothic, mysterious, romantic—but slow-paced.

**THE JERICHO MILE** (1979). TV movie starring Peter Strauss as a prison lifer who attempts to become the world's fastest runner. Notable script.

**JOAN OF ARC**. The 1999 TV presentation about the French martyr starring Leelee Sobieski, Neil Patrick Harris, Jacqueline Bisset, Peter O'Toole, and Peter Strauss is entertaining, educational, and uplifting.

**JUAREZ** (1939). Paul Muni, Bette Davis, Claude Rains (excellent), John Garfield. Inspiring bio of the Mexican leader.

**JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG** (1961). A U.S. judge presides over wartime criminal trials. Outstanding all-star cast includes Spencer Tracy, Maximilian Schell, Burt Lancaster, Judy Garland, Montgomery Cliff. Oscars went to Schell and screen writer Abby Mann. Well-crafted by director Stanley Kramer.

**JULIE & JULIA** (2009). Based on true stories of two women from different times each discovering their life's reason through passion, strength of character and just the right amount of seasoning, the film shows us how and why Julia became perhaps the most famous chef de cuisine of all time, and how her book, *The Art of French Cooking*, affected the life of a young woman seeking an outlet for her culinary interests. Both Julie and Julia have found reason in life through the art of cooking. Indeed, the story can be seen as a metaphor for living. And if all the ingredients are lovingly and precisely blended together, a film can satisfy like a fine soufflé. Such is the case here. Food becomes a character in the film and its masterful presentation a simile for life's struggles and conquests. Meryl Streep's performance as Julia Child is simply superb. PG-13 (one crude comic term for a male body part; around five or six obscenities, mostly the s-word, with one f-word spoken in frustration; and a woman is called the b-word; no misuse of

God's name; violence: only to an unsuspecting lobster about to be dipped in boiling water; there are three or four implied sexual situations, each between a married couple; several scenes feature people drinking and wine is a part of each exquisite meal; warning: do not go to this movie hungry).

**KING OF THE KONG: A Fistful of Quarters** (2007). Another documentary, this one spotlighting contestants gearing up for the ultimate video arcade championship. So well-conceived, I thought for a while, "Are we being punked?" But no, even though it has a mockumentary feel, it's the real deal. Not mean-spirited or belittling, it is an amusing exposé that masterfully reveals the makeup of advocates of the arcade.

**THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI** (1948). Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth, Everett Sloane. Film-noirish suspense as a seaman becomes entangled with a villainess and her jealous husband. Here again we see adult material handled without exploitive sex scenes or abusive language.

**THE LADY VANISHES** (1938). Paul Lukas, Dame May Whitty, Michael Redgrave. Mystery. An imposter takes the place of a missing woman on a train. Alfred Hitchcock at his best. Film buffs—don't miss it!

**THE LAST ANGRY MAN** (1959). Paul Muni in a sentimental story of a simple country doctor whose life is going to be presented on TV. Muni, the forgotten star, is outstanding in this and almost every other picture he made.

**THE LAST VOYAGE** (1960). Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone. Engrossing tale about a disaster at sea. An actual ship was sunk to capture the realism for the screen.

**LAURA** (1944). Gene Tierney, Dana Andrews. Noted romantic mystery with the great Clifton Webb as the snooty Waldo Lydecker who responds to a compliment about his apartment, "It's lavish, but I call it home."

**LIFEBOAT** (1944). Tallulah Bankhead, William Bendix. Based on a story by John Steinbeck about shipwreck survivors adrift at sea during WWII. Excellent cast directed by the master, Alfred Hitchcock.

**LILIES OF THE FIELD** (1963). Sidney Poitier was the first black man to win a best-actor Oscar for his wonderful performance as a handyman who helps build a chapel for an order of nuns.

**THE LONG VOYAGE HOME** (1940). Thomas Mitchell, Barry Fitzgerald, John Qualen, and a young John Wayne (doing a Swedish accent). Nominated for several Oscars, a well-written adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's play about the lives of a merchant steamer's crew.

**THE LONG WALK HOME** (1990). Sissy Spacek, Whoopie Goldberg. PG (adult subjects, 3 or 4 obscenities). Two women who sacrifice much during the beginning of the civil rights movement. A very important film that not only exposes racism but gives examples of justice. Use TVG

**LOVE IS NEVER SILENT** (1985). Emmy winner featuring Mare Winningham, this made-for-TV movie has a woman torn between building a life of her own and remaining with her deaf parents who depend on her as their link to the outside world.

**LUTHER** (2003). Joseph Fiennes stars as Martin Luther, the 16th century Christian reformer. As a young monk, Luther confronted and challenged the Vatican's supreme, but corrupt, authority and, as such, the law of the land. The filmmakers have interwoven a clear presentation of the Gospel in this suspense-filled epic. While it is a movie and therefore subject to dramatizing and maybe even occasionally "elongating" the facts, **LUTHER** reminds viewers of the importance of the Reformation. The producers have given movie audiences a fascinating, beautiful, well-mounted film, with themes worth discussing once you leave the theater. PG-13 (3 or 4 minor expletives, but I caught no harsh or profane language; we see the remnants of a village butchered by authorities, and there is an element of danger as the Catholic church fights to maintain control, but it is not gory or excessive).

**THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER** (1941). Monty Wooley, Bette Davis. When a pompous man injures himself in front of a family of Good Samaritans, he finds himself their houseguest. Unfortunately for the good souls, he begins to drive them crazy with his boring stories and weird friends. Very funny. Highly recommended.

**THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE** (1962). Noteworthy performances by Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, and Angela Lansbury. Political thriller about a brainwashed man sent to assassinate the incumbent President. The DVD also contains an interview with Sinatra and the film's director, John Frankenheimer.

**MARLEY & ME** (2008). This romantic comedy/drama, based on the true-life adventures of columnist John Grogan, centers on an unruly yellow Labrador who manages to dominate a newlywed couple's lifestyle. It's a smart movie about people finding their way. Fast-paced, with mostly gentle humor, the film celebrates the preciousness of life, while giving a realistic view of a modern marriage. It's a film about love, responsibility, a pro-marriage, pro-life film that moves from comedy to drama with the ease of giving Lassie a command. (PG) Use TVG

**MARTY** (1955). Oscar-winning writer Paddy Chayefsky provides an erudite script, with Ernest Borgnine giving an Oscar-winning performance as a middle-aged, lonely man who finds love. Best Picture of that year.

**MASTER AND COMMANDER** (2003). Russell Crowe. Writer/director Peter Weir has captured the enormity of the sea, while examining the innermost recesses of the human heart in this action tale of friendship, loyalty, courage, and independence of spirit. God is revered as men are seen praying, and when the oddities of the Galapagos Islands are

witnessed and the question is raised, "Do you think God made these changes?" The answer is a steadfast, "Yes."

The film contains one negative, a profane use of God's name in one scene. There are two ways of looking at the inclusion of this profanity. The first, I suspect that the language would be a little salty from sailors on the sea; therefore the writer should be commended for not bombarding us with objectionable language. On the other hand, is there any real difference between misusing God's name once or a hundred times? PG-13 (there are several battle scenes, but the filmmakers are careful not to overwhelm us with blood and guts; a boy has his arm amputated, and a suicide is portrayed as an officer goes overboard, thinking he is a Jonah and doesn't want his fellow sailors to perish because of his jinxed luck – a prayer is said for his soul).

**A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH (STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN)** 1946. Written and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, this engaging fantasy has David Niven as a WWII pilot surviving a crash that should have killed him. Soon, however, he faces a heavenly court that proclaims his survival was a mistake. The flyer must defend his existence in order to remain on Earth with his new love. The scenes filmed in color are breathtaking, Niven gives a sound performance, and the romance, ah, the romance – superb.

**MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS** (1974). Albert Finney, Ingrid Bergman lead an all-star cast in Agatha Christie's murder mystery set aboard the famed European train.

**MUSIC OF THE HEART** (1999). Newly divorced Roberta Guaspari (Meryl Streep) began teaching the violin to students of an East Harlem school. Soon, her passion became infectious. But when the school board cut her funding, Guaspari fought back to preserve this class. With the support of her friends and the community, plus a little help from Isaac Stern, Itzhak Perlman and Arnold Steinhardt, the real-life Guaspari and her students raised money to continue the music program by performing at – Carnegie Hall! Its strength lies in Ms. Streep's performance and several positive messages the film conveys, including examples of compassion and understanding between races and not giving up when things get difficult. Although the film suggests that the lead lived with a man outside marriage after her husband abandoned her, there are no sex scenes. The film does not focus on a romance, but on her determination to provide for her children and to help her students. PG (five or six expletives, an implied sexual situation – not seen; the lead has a glass of wine in one scene and a drink in another). Use TVG

**MY FATHER'S GLORY** (1990). French with subtitles. Based on Marcel Pagnol's memoirs about his childhood summer vacation in the country. An example of storytelling at its finest.

**MY FAVORITE BRUNETTE** (1947). Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, Peter Lorre, Alan Ladd. Parody of '40s detective films with Hope as an aspiring P.I. trying to solve a murder case.

**MY MAN GODFREY** (1936). William Powell, Carole Lombard. Delightful performances and witty dialogue highlight this comedy about a displaced man hired as a butler by a self-absorbed family. Slapstick, with a message: money isn't everything.

**NIGHT OF THE HUNTER** (1955). Robert Mitchum. This is perhaps the most hair-raising film I've brought to your attention. I do so with hesitation. It's a scary film, folks, about a ruthless man masquerading as a minister. He marries then murders a woman, seeking money stolen by her first husband. When he can't find it, he goes after her kids! As terrifying as it is, it's a wonderful alternative to many thrillers of the '80s and '90s that tend to bludgeon your senses with gore and guts. This is a good vs. evil story, with God's children triumphant at the film's end. But be warned, it's not for the squeamish. Mitchum is menacing, to say the least. "Children," he says, "I feel myself getting angry." He'll send shivers down your spine.

**THE ODD COUPLE** (1968). Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau. Two divorced men, one a slob, the other a neat-freak, share an apartment. My favorite Neil Simon comedy.

**THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA** (1958). Spencer Tracy stars in the film adaptation of Hemingway's tale of a Cuban fisherman's heroic struggle to catch a great marlin. A good allegory, a memorable performance by Tracy, and an Oscar-winning score by Dimitri Tiomkin. Want a real treat, read the book.

**ONCE UPON A TIME...WHEN WE WERE COLORED** (2005). Al Freeman, Jr., Phylicia Rashad, Leon, Richard Roundtree. A distinguished effort from first-time film director Tim Reid about black life in the South between the '40s and '60s. Advances the importance of family and biblical teachings. PG (no abusive language other than a Ku Klux Klan member using the N-word; a knife fight, but no one is injured; a brief scene featuring dancing girls in a tent show). Use TVG

**ON THE WATERFRONT** (1954). Marlon Brando, Eva Marie Saint, Rod Steiger. Winner of eight Academy Awards, dealing with New York's crime-ridden harbor docks. Another excellent example of romance, emotional stress and vice masterfully told without the language and brutality associated with today's movies. Best acting I have ever seen in a movie. Marlon Brando in this one.

**ONE, TWO, THREE** (1961). James Cagney. Fast-paced comedy about a Coca Cola executive trying to chaperon his boss's daughter while in Berlin. Complications set in when she decides to elope with a communist. (Caution: several expletives.)

**OPERATION PETTICOAT** (1959). Cary Grant, Tony Curtis. Expert blend of comedy and wartime action as an American sub commander must deal with a con-artist lieutenant, Navy nurses, and the Japanese.

**THE OX** (1991). Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann. Drama—not rated (a few expletives in the subtitles, depressing subject matter, but ultimately uplifting). Swedish film nominated for Best Foreign Film in 1991. True story about the moral conflict a man goes through after slaughtering a stolen ox in order to keep his family alive. Masterful storytelling, beautiful cinematography. Harsh penalties, but forgiveness and mercy triumph.

**THE PALEFACE** (1948). Bob Hope, Jane Russell. Smashing comedy with Hope as a cowardly dentist out of place in the Old West. Music includes Oscar-winning "Buttons And Bows."

**THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST** (2004). Mel Gibson's brutal, yet undeniably artistic rendering of the final hours of Christ's life blew away skeptics when it earned over \$350 million at the box office. Aided by superb cinematography, lighting, music, some dynamic special effects and Jim Caviezel's sincere and muted performance, director Mel Gibson brings a mood and sensitivity never before captured when telling the story of the Christ. Justly rated R for its graphic depiction of scourging, piercing, beating, and crucifixion, **THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST** is meant to shock, unnerve, and clarify the ordeal of Christ's sacrifice. But Mel's film, while showing the physical horrors Christ endured, is not really about what mankind did to Him, but about what He did for us.

**PEARL DIVER** (2006). It had a limited release, but I'd suggest you keep an eye out for this one. It will show up in either art houses or on DVD this coming year. The story concerns two sisters dealing with the twenty-year-old murder of their mother, and what happens when a farming accident rips away the layers of secrecy surrounding that night. Well, that sounds like a lot of fun, I know, but this film moved me more than any other this year. I was very affected by the sacrifices portrayed and amazed at how this incisive film reminds us that no sacrifice ultimately goes unrewarded. PG-13 Use TVG

**THE PERFECT MARRIAGE** (1946). David Niven, Loretta Young, Charles Ruggles, Zazu Pitts. Com/dra about married couple not knowing if they want to remain married.

**PLACES IN THE HEART** (1984). Sally Field, Danny Glover. Rated PG (some mild language, implied adulterous affair). In spite of these few negatives, the film contains an award-winning performance by Sally Field, an uplifting moral, and one of the most moving endings ever filmed. Use TVG

**THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII** (1933). A 4-star adaptation of the 16th-century monarch. Stars Charles Laughton, Robert Donat and Merle Oberon.

**THE RAGE OF PARIS** (1938). Danielle Darrieux, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. A French girl looking for a rich hubby discovers love is more important than money. Funny and engaging.

**RANDOM HARVEST** (1942). Ronald Colman, Greer Garson. Outstanding soap-opera about an amnesiac saved from a mental ward by a showgirl.

**REBECCA** (1940). Joan Fontaine, Laurence Olivier. Hitchcock's romantic mystery of a newlywed not quite able to live up to her husband's first wife.

**REQUIEM FOR A HEAVYWEIGHT** (1956). Jack Palance, Keenan Wynn, Ed Wynn, Kim Hunter. Written by Rod Serling for PLAYHOUSE 90 about a boxer who risks losing his eyesight so his manager can pay off bookies. Uncompromising, often grim, but very moving. Later made with Anthony Quinn and Jackie Gleason.

**ROPE OF SAND** (1949). Burt Lancaster, Corinne Calvet, Paul Heinreid, Claude Rains. An ex-patriot attempts to regain a treasure he hid in a desert country. Will greed or love win out?

**SAVING GRACE** (1986). Tom Conti. Com/dra, rated PG (2 expletives). A pope feeling out of touch with the people and wondering if he has any real effect outside the Vatican walls, ventures out incognito to a small spiritless town. It moves slowly in some places, but it has great heart and reveals how, with God's help, one man can make a difference.

**THE SCARLET AND THE BLACK** (1983). Made-for-TV true story of a priest (Gregory Peck) who harbored allied POW escapees and the Nazi official (Christopher Plummer) who tries to catch him. The film is a bit long (155 min.) but the message contained at the end of the picture should not be missed. A true example of Jesus' compassion will help remind each of us to love our enemies.

**SHADOW OF A DOUBT** (1943). Teresa Wright, Joseph Cotten, Macdonald Carey. Is Uncle Joe a swell guy or the Merry Widow murderer? Only his niece knows for sure! Exceptional Hitchcock suspense thriller.

**SHOES OF THE FISHERMAN** (1968). Anthony Quinn, Laurence Olivier, Oskar Werner, David Janssen. Most critics didn't like this one, but I was entertained by the grand-scale production concerning a pope who may be able to defuse a world war.

**SINGIN' IN THE RAIN** (1952). Most everybody is familiar with Gene Kelly's version of "Singing in the Rain" (alone worth the rental price). But there are several great numbers in this film, including perhaps the funniest musical number ever filmed—Donald O'Connor's "Make Em Laugh." Good story, fabulous dancing, and memorable tunes make this the granddad of musicals.

**STAGE DOOR** (1937). All-star cast includes Ginger Rogers, Katharine Hepburn, and Lucille Ball as young women trying to make it in show business.

**SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS** (1941). Joel McCrea, Veronica Lake. This is exceptional. A filmmaker sets out to do a serious film about the poor and homeless. Starts with laughs, but deals with concern and perception about a problem that has yet to be defeated.

**THE SUNDOWNERS** (1960). Robert Mitchum, Peter Ustinov, Deborah Kerr star in this entertaining tale of shepherders in Australia. Romantic, humorous, moving, and beautifully photographed on location.

**THEY WERE EXPENDABLE** (1945). John Wayne, Robert Montgomery. PT-boats stationed in the Philippines during the outset of WWII. Exciting and moving.

**THE THIRD MAN** (1949). Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten. A film noir about cold war intrigue. The ending contains a good moral.

**THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS** (1935). Robert Donat. Hitchcock spy thriller. Droll dialogue highlights this romantic mystery.

**TOGETHER** (2002). This Chinese film concerns a widowed father who sacrifices everything in order to support his teenage son's gifted musical abilities. The son can't see the sacrifices made on his behalf until the end. Beautifully filmed in the "Forbidden City" of China, full of humor, drama and insight, TOGETHER is a powerful morality tale with an ending that moved me to tears. This film reminded me of 1 Timothy 5:8, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, he has denied the faith."

**THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE** (1948). Humphrey Bogart, Walter Huston, and Tom Holt discover what greed can do to a man in this 4-star John Huston production.

**12 ANGRY MEN** (1957). An all-star cast includes Henry Fonda and Lee J. Cobb. One juror trying to convince the other 11 of the possible innocence of a youth on trial for murder. Positive statement of our judicial system and strong performances make this a must-see.

**UNITED 93** (2006). For me, this was the best film of that year. The day that changed the modern world hits home and testifies to the fact that this war will be unlike any other. (How do you defeat zealots willing to kill themselves and innocent bystanders for a cause they believe is just?) Though our country is at odds with its involvement in Iraq, the film makes it clear that we face an evil masking itself as righteous. It is a film that will touch you, move you and make you think. (R) Use TVG

**VALKYRIE** (2008). Based on the true story of Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg (Tom Cruise), the film tells of the daring plot to kill Adolph Hitler. Aided by a sophisticated camera drive, the director's clever visceral style, and a fine



supporting cast, VALKYRIE becomes a top-notch action thriller. It's a testament to the writer/director that we're sitting there fully believing the would-be assassins might just achieve their task. Now, that's good cinema technique, when it causes us to hope for a new outcome. (PG-13) Use TVG

**VISIONS OF LIGHT** (1994). A compelling movie for buffs of the cinema. Clips of over 125 films are featured in this fascinating documentary showcasing the great cinematographers of the world. A mesmerizing film.

**WAITING FOR SUPERMAN** (2010). Occasionally a movie comes along that clearly defines a threat to our culture – this is one. WAITING FOR SUPERMAN should be seen by all, for this well-produced documentary concerning the crumbling education system in America is the most important film of the year and may help galvanize our nation's citizenry. (PG)

**WAITRESS** (2007). Trapped in a loveless marriage to an abusive wacko, a pregnant Jenna (Keri Russell) fights off depression by making pies for the restaurant where she waits tables. She puts such skill and dedication into her baking that customers find a little piece of Heaven whenever they partake. Though she is unhappy, frustrated and stuck, Jenna shows compassion for others. And though she doesn't want a baby by a man she has come to despise, she realizes that the unborn child has rights and she does everything possible to see that the fetus is getting what it needs to develop correctly. Without uttering the term "prolife," the film suggests that this stance is valid and just.

A poignant parable, WAITRESS makes you laugh out loud and ultimately touches your soul. On one level, it is somewhat fluffy, but as you savor the story, dialogue and performances, you begin to see that it is layered and thoughtful.

Caution: Since I'm putting WAITRESS at the top of my list, I feel it necessary to point out that the film has some sexual situations and adultery. (The sexual situations do not contain nudity and do not become overly graphic.) The lead learns lessons and comes to admit that adultery is wrong; no matter how much it seems to be filling a need in her life (to be loved), she learns in time that such affairs can only harm others. She is not judgmental of a friend who also commits adultery, but eventually shows by example that such a sin is never fulfilling. The lead has done some wrong things, but her caring for others is eventually what completes her life. This is a rare message found in today's movies. (PG-13) Use TVG

**WAKING SLEEPING BEAUTY** (2010). Disney Documentary. In WAKING SLEEPING BEAUTY, the coupling of happy cartooning and an inside look at corporate ego makes for a fascinating combination of art forms. The production is satisfying not just for its revelatory depiction of the obsession with art and ambition, but for us as

Christians the film is a parable in newsreel form. It testifies to the fact that egotism becomes silly and destructive. It's the work, the reason for the work, and who we're working for that becomes profound and lasting. PG (Cocktails are served at a party. One of the creators dies from HIV complications. Another Disney employee dies in a plane accident. Though we do not see these deaths, their loss to their fellow collaborators is sincerely felt). **DVD Companion: FRANK & OLLIE** (1995). This Disney documentary focuses on Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, who, along with Walt Disney and a select handful of others, changed the face of cartoons, bringing character and pathos to their creations such as SNOW WHITE, ALICE IN WONDERLAND, THE JUNGLE BOOK and over 30 other features. Enough clips are presented from these treasures to give viewers an even greater appreciation and a desire to see them all again. But there's another element that makes this a true enjoyment. Frank and Ollie have not only worked together for 40 years, but have maintained a close friendship many believe possible only in a '60s sitcom. They have maintained a respect, camaraderie and intimacy most never accomplish with other humans. It is more than just a retrospective of two old animation artists, it's an appreciative look at two nice people. PG (a few mild expletives and a glimpse of a nude drawing in an art class).

**WEST SIDE STORY** (1961). Romeo & Juliet set to music and ballet, amid 1950s New York city gangs. I don't know how they did it, but it works. Music by Leonard Bernstein (our Mozart), directed by veteran Robert Wise, and winner of 10 Oscars.

**WHISTLE DOWN THE WIND** (1961). Hayley Mills, Alan Bates. Three children mistakenly think the fugitive hiding in their barn - is Jesus. A delightful comedy/drama with Hayley giving the best performance of her career. Only drawback - the misunderstanding coming from the dazed convict uttering "Jesus Christ" when startled by the girl. She has just asked him, "Who are you?" Therefore, the film's one profanity needs to be there, it sets up the whole premise. A gentle allegorical film. At the end, as the convict is captured and being led off, the girl's faith is not shaken. She informs a little friend, "You missed him, but He'll come again." Charming and symbolic, with strong moral messages concerning faith, compassion, and courage to stand for what you believe. (Not yet on DVD, but keep an eye out.)

**THE WINSLOW BOY** (1999). Nigel Hawthorne, Rebecca Pidgeon. Writer/director David Mamet (best known for his salty dialogue in past productions) has sensitively adapted Terence Rattigan's play about a barrister defending a youth accused of school theft. Genteel look at a father's determination to see justice done. A superb screenplay by Mr. Mamet, proving a story can be told without bombarding the viewer with profane and offensive material. G (I found nothing objectionable).

**WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION** (1957). Charles Laughton, Tyrone Power, Marlene Dietrich. Courtroom drama based on an Agatha Christie play about an English barrister defending a man charged with murder. Electrifying climax.

**THE WRONG MAN** (1956). True story of a man accused of robbery and the effect his arrest has on the family. Gripping performance by Henry Fonda, with a trenchant script and Alfred Hitchcock, the master of suspense, directing.

**YOUNG AT HEART** (1954). Doris Day, Frank Sinatra, Gig Young. Melodrama about a luckless composer in love with his friend's girl. Superb performances and music. (Caution: contains an attempted suicide, but it shows the folly of such an act.)

## **CHRISTMAS CLASSICS**

The following are double features – a short Christmas-themed special for kids and a Christmas classic for the grownups. Grab a popcorn ball and gather together. It's Christmas time; enjoy it!

**A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS** (1965). A perfect animated tale by Charles Schultz with the PEANUTS gang searching for the true meaning of Christmas. Great dialogue, charismatic voice performances and an award-winning jazzy score by Vince Guaraldi. And how often do you hear cartoon heroes quoting from the gospel of Luke, proclaiming the Christ-child as the Messiah?

**THREE GODFATHERS** (1948). John Wayne, Pedro Armendariz, Harry Carey, Jr. Three outlaws, running from a posse, come across a dying woman and her newborn baby. The symbolism between the Christ-child and this new founding has a redemptive effect on the three bandits. Sincere performances, beautiful cinematography and the skillful direction of John Ford highlight this insightful western.

**THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY** (1968). The very moving seasonal song comes to animated life with the capable voices of Greer Garson, Jose Ferrer, and Teddy Eccles. Puts present-giving in perspective.

**THE NATIVITY STORY** (2006). Though missing some of the grandeur we would love to have seen when the angels proclaimed the birth of the baby Jesus, the film successfully fleshed out Mary and Joseph, making them real people and clarifying their love and devotion to God and to one another. It's a love story in so many ways.

**THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS: AND BEST-LOVED YULETIDE CAROLS.** Rabbit Ears Productions. Meryl Streep reads classic Christmas Eve tales with moving renditions of Christmas carols by George Winston, The Edwin Hawkins Singers and Christ Church Cathedral Choir

set to breathtaking illustrations. Highlight: The Edwin Hawkins delivery of "Go Tell It On the Mountain," which is both stirring and reverential.

**THE BISHOP'S WIFE** (1947). Cary Grant and Loretta Young. An angel aids a struggling minister. I marveled at the ending sermon given by the bishop, played by David Niven. Standing behind his pulpit, the Reverend reminded his parishioners to focus attention on Christ. "All the stockings are filled, except one. We've even forgotten to hang it up. The stocking for the Child born in a manger. It's His birthday we're celebrating. Don't let us ever forget that. Let us each ask what He would wish for most. And then, let each put in his share." Wow!

**THE OTHER WISEMAN.** This Christmas cartoon has been adapted for children. It tells the story of a man seeking the birthplace of Jesus but, because of his duty to others, is delayed in the desert for 33 years only to see the Savior as He is being crucified. Hard to find; check your local Christian bookstore.

**THE FOURTH WISE MAN.** Gateway Films/Vision Video. Based on the Henry Van Dyke tale of a good magi seeking the birthplace of Jesus, but, because of his duty to others, is delayed in the desert for 33 years, only to see (from afar) the Savior as He is being crucified. Martin Sheen stars as a devout man searching for the Messiah in order to give valuable treasures. But one by one he sells his priceless gifts to help the needy. Full of compassion and illustrations of how our Lord would have us treat our fellow man.

**THE STABLE BOY'S CHRISTMAS** (1979). Danielle Brisebois, Darleen Carr, Sparky Marcus and several of Hollywood's best character actors lend their talents to this Emmy-winning 27-minute TV special concerning a selfish young girl who learns a great lesson about the Christmas season from a figurine that comes to life. Soon we are transported to the night of Christ's birth where we witness the Savior's effect on the people of Bethlehem. Not in the same league as the others mentioned in this category, but, like **THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY**, it helps keep present-giving in perspective.

**A DREAM FOR CHRISTMAS.** Hari Rhodes, Beah Richards. Warner Home Video. A Baptist minister moves his Arkansas family to L.A. in 1950. Unfortunately, the elders have neglected to inform him that the church he's to pastor has been set for demolition. The family must pull together to save the church. Lessons: family togetherness, faith, perseverance.

**THE GREATEST ADVENTURE—THE NATIVITY.** Hanna-Barbera's animated video series explores the lives of biblical heroes including this version of the birth of Christ. Entertaining and educational. Also in the collection: **THE EASTER STORY**, as seen through the eyes of three young visitors from the 20th century.

**THE CHRISTMAS MIRACLE OF JONATHAN TOOMEY** (2007). Tom Berenger, Joely Richardson. A mysterious recluse also happens to be the best wood carver in the valley. Slowly the woodcutter finds his world transformed by a young boy and his mother, who have asked him to carve a yuletide scene. Positive messages, including a respect for God and Christ (prayers are spoken, church is attended and the main characters acknowledge the birth of Christ).

**CHRISTMAS STORIES.** From Children's Circle Home Video come four delightfully told bedtime stories. Entertaining and well-illustrated. Stories include *Morris's Disappearing Bag* - a last present under the Christmas tree contains a bag that causes you to disappear, *The 12 Days of Christmas* - a long song with illustrations, *The Little Drummer Boy* - a simple gift from the heart is the most precious, and *The Clown of God* - a once famous juggler, now old and penniless, gives one last performance on Christmas Eve. For ages 3-10.

**A CHRISTMAS WITHOUT SNOW** (1980). Made-for-TV about a woman (Michael Learned) who becomes involved with the members of her church choir and its perfectionist director (John Houseman).

**PRANCER** (1989). Sam Elliott, Rebecca Harrell, Cloris Leachman. A precocious 8-year-old cares for a wounded reindeer she believes is one of Santa's flying helpers. Not just another film promoting the existence of Santa Claus. Its theme is about believing in things unseen. Contains positive lessons about faith, family love (although the father is a bit of a grump - a no-nonsense farmer frustrated with financial problems and single parenting, but we see his love for the children by film's end), spiritual healing, and doing what you believe is right. Respectful church scene, including the singing of "How Great Thou Art." Sentimental, engrossing. Rated G (3 "Oh my Gods" from different characters in the film).

**ELF** (2003). Having sneaked into Santa's sleigh, a human baby is raised at the North Pole as an elf. After wreaking havoc in the elf community due to his six-foot-two size, Buddy (Will Ferrell) heads to New York City to find his place in the world and track down his father. Absolutely hysterical. Rated PG (mild rude humor and language).

**LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE; THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.** Troubled Laura Ingalls learns a lesson in love from a kind-hearted hermit, who may be more than he seems. Taken from the long-running TV series, it may take a little hunting to find. But it's worth the effort.

**IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE** (1946). I know, I know, we've all seen it a million times, but won't you agree that it is one of the most important films Hollywood ever produced? James Stewart is given the opportunity to see what his community would have been like if he had never been born. He reminds us that our compassion and responsibility make a difference in the lives of those with

whom we come in contact. Director Frank Capra has given the world a great gift with this Christmas classic.

**MR. MAGOO'S CHRISTMAS CAROL** (1962). You put Jim Backus together with Dickens' timeless classic, then add the Broadway talents of Jule Styne and Bob Merrill, and you're bound to have entertainment fit for the kid in all of us. Now, don't tell anybody this, but I've watched this little gem each year since it first premiered, and once or twice in July!

When it comes to the famous Dickens tale, here are three of the best renditions: **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** (1951) starring Alastair Sim; **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** (1984) with George C. Scott; and the musical version, **SCROOGE** (1970), with Albert Finney. Each is a well-acted parable with regard to redemption.

### CHRISTMAS CAROL TRIVIA

Here is a bit of trivia, or at least a blooper you may get a kick out of. In the 1951 version of **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** starring Alastair Sim, I caught a major mistake. If you have it in your video library or decide to rent it for this holiday season, keep an eye open during the final section, just after Scrooge transforms into a good man. There's a scene where he's excited at his awakening to find it's Christmas Day and that he is a new man. Twice he looks into his mirror, holding a conversation, first with himself, then with his maid.

If you look closely, you'll see a stagehand in the reflection. What's more, he doesn't seem to be paying attention to the scene. Surely, this had to stand out on the big screen. But then, people are so caught up with Sim's brilliant interpretation of Ebenezer Scrooge that most are just focused on him. Indeed, I saw this film maybe ten times before I caught the boo-boo.

I get a kick out of it because there's this great acting going on, it's the moment in the film we've been waiting for, an uplifting, fulfilling moment. And suddenly there's this prop man looking around for his lunch.

Don't worry, it won't ruin the mood. Nothing gets in the way of Alastair Sim's wondrous transformation.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### **MOVIE REVIEWS ONLINE**

Didn't see a film you wanted to know about? Visit the following sites for further films, plus in-depth reviews of the ones featured here.

The Movie Reporter [www.moviereporter.com](http://www.moviereporter.com)

Preview On Line [www.previewonline.org](http://www.previewonline.org)

Plugged in Magazine  
[www.pluggedin.com/movies.aspx](http://www.pluggedin.com/movies.aspx)

Christian Cinema.com  
[www.christiancinema.com/catalog/articles.php](http://www.christiancinema.com/catalog/articles.php)

Clash Entertainment [www.clashentertainment.com](http://www.clashentertainment.com)

### **FOUL LANGUAGE FILTER**

TVGuardian is a small box you connect to your TV and it automatically filters out foul language. To see about getting one for your home, go to [www.TVGuardian.com](http://www.TVGuardian.com)

### **FURTHER READING**

Take a look at the book *MOVIES: The Good, the Bad, and the Really, Really Bad* at Amazon.com. Click this link for a closer look: <http://amzn.com/1449570070>

## **ABOUT PHIL BOATWRIGHT**

Phil Boatwright has been reviewing films and writing about Hollywood for over twenty years. His desire is to remind younger generations of great films from the past, as well as spotlight films from today that entertain or enrich without bombarding viewers with graphic or profane content. A Christian, Phil attempts to honor God through his work as well as serve parents and concerned moviegoers.

For more information about Mr. Boatwright's work, go to his website (the Movie Reporter [www.moviereporter.com](http://www.moviereporter.com)).