

FIR



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X02



EDITORIAL

With 2025 coming to a close, and winter truly upon us, it seemed only right to finish the calendar year with another special edition of the FIR Magazine, this time, of course, with a Christmas twist. As well as all the same film and media related content you can always expect from the FIR Magazine, this special issue will have all manner of fun festive content for you to unwrap! I've tried to keep it mixed, so that those who are less keen on this time of year can still find a lot of articles to check out, without having to grit their teeth through the Christmas content.

I have managed to go to the cinema a lot in 2025, especially in the second half of the year - something I enjoy immensely, as I'm sure you have gathered. At some point, perhaps in the January issue, I shall endeavour to count up just how many cinema trips I had, and maybe I'll even try and beat that tally in 2026! My poor bank account... I digress, I think it's been, generally speaking, a pretty good year for films, at least in terms of enjoyment. I think we have all seen and heard about this film or that failing to turn a profit, which is concerning, but to be expected, considering the absurd budgets some of them wield.

This Christmas, I'll be using my free time to feel as merry and seasonal as I can. It's not an easy time of year for a lot of people, myself included, but I've really decided to try my very best to get into the spirit of the season. This means watching all manner of Christmas and winter themed cinema, and, yes, listening to plenty of overplayed, clichéd, and somewhat asinine Christmas music. Regardless, I'll try my best to have fun with it all.

Now, as a slight bit of housekeeping, I mentioned in the Halloween issue of the FIR Magazine; 'X01', that I would be doing an article on '45 Years Of The Shining', but I've decided to leave that until the January issue - I think I can give you a better article that way. Everything else features as normal, and I added an extra Christmas article, just for fun. I hope you'll still be looking forward to reading my article on 'The Shining' next month - I'll make it interesting, rest assured.

I digress, I'll finish this little piece off now, and let you get to the main bulk of the magazine. Happy holidays, whichever one, or ones, you celebrate, and if you don't celebrate any of them, then that's okay too! I hope you have a happy and healthy end to the calendar year, and may the new year be kinder to us all.

With love to all,
Ridley

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THE CINEMA SPOTLIGHT

The second edition of 'The Cinema Spotlight' is a more varied affair than its predecessor. The three films I chose to highlight this time around are all totally different in so many ways, least of all being their genres. They do however have several things in common, chiefly a brilliant starring performance from their leading actors. All three are also very much worth seeing on the big screen.



Predator: Badlands (2025)

"A young Predator outcast from his clan finds an unlikely ally on his journey in search of the ultimate adversary."

An exciting and action-packed return to the 'Predator' franchise, with Dan Trachtenberg bringing the same passion for the Yautja that he has already brought to both 'Prey' (2022) and 'Predator: Killer Of Killers' (2025). This one may be more of a crowd pleaser than those other two films, but it more than stands up on its own two feet. A proper sci-fi action-fest.



Keeper (2025)

"A romantic anniversary trip to a secluded cabin turns sinister when a dark presence reveals itself, forcing a couple to confront the property's haunting past."

If atmospheric, suspenseful, and mysterious supernatural horror is for you, then this Osgood Perkins directed film might just be for you. It won't be for everyone, but I am fairly certain it'll have its audience. Come for the creepy horror, stay for the performance of its main star Tatiana Maslany.



Pillion (2025)

"A timid man is swept off his feet when an enigmatic, impossibly handsome biker takes him on as his submissive."

An emotional, interesting, and fulfilling romantic comedy (or 'Dom-Com', as some have called it), this was a beautiful piece of cinema, which gave audiences a refreshing and memorable look at kink in the queer community, as well as one's journey towards self-discovery, agency, and identity.

Black Phone 2 - A Review

By Ridley Coote

This sequel to the underrated 2021 supernatural horror film 'The Black Phone', based on a story by Joe Hill, son of the King of horror himself; Stephen King, had intrigued me a lot, thanks to some good teaser trailers in the run-up to its Halloween season release. Directed by Scott Derrickson, it may not have been a sequel I'd have expected to see, but I wasn't that mad about it existing, albeit that did depend a little on the quality of it.

More than the first one, I appreciated the visuals of this film a good deal. The use of the phone crackling sound was so effective. It made me lean in and pay attention to what was happening. This too can be attributed to the stronger than I had anticipated sense of suspense I felt throughout much of this film. This level of tension was pretty well orchestrated throughout the film too - no, the film wasn't terrifying, but it unveiled its mystery well.

I love how atmospheric these two films have been. I think Scott Derrickson has done a very good job of creating a very unique blend of dread and mystery into these two films. They feel like the scary bedtime stories you heard before you went to sleep at night as a child, but with an even darker, more adult, twist. I think the isolated winter setting helped establish an even more spooky feel to the film, as well as providing some unnerving visuals.

Often sequels struggle to tell either a compelling or necessary story that links well enough to its predecessor without feeling forced or ham-fisted, but I thought this one was comfortably as enjoyable as the first had been. The film did suffer with some pacing issues, particularly towards the beginning, but by the time the film found its footing, I was truly engrossed and invested in the growing mystery and horror of Finney and Gwen's story. I will admit, though, that I don't think this film will be for everyone, but it certainly was for me, that much was for sure.

The returning Mason Thames put in a very respectable and enjoyable leading performance, which showcased a very different side of his acting. This included one particular scene which really stood out to me, in which Thames' character had an intense release of emotion that was extremely well delivered, in my view. The performance wasn't perfect, but I was still impressed, generally speaking. Although I enjoyed the bulk of Madeleine McGraw's work in this film, as she too retained her previous role, I thought she occasionally verged on overdoing it, at various points. I did, however, really appreciate how she acted with both Thames and Miguel Mora - her on-screen bond with both of them was both clear and endearing to see. Those few moments aside, I thought this was a very solid performance from McGraw.

Ethan Hawke had been a wonderfully creepy villain in the first film, and he was back to his sinister best once again this time around. Hawke seems to revel in this twisted character, and it came across truly wickedly. This film, as well as its predecessor, is a prime example of Hawke flexing his range and pedigree, now that he is such an established name. It has been very cool to see. I also thought Demián Bichir showed by far the best of his talents that I had seen to this point, with a pretty strong supporting performance, which was, at times, even quite emotional and sincere.

I thought three other names were worth mentioning for their performances; with the most prominent of those being Miguel Mora, who actually played a slightly different role in the previous film, but did a good job with this new one. I thought he was very endearing, particularly during his more emotionally intimate scenes with McGraw. I also felt like Jeremy Davies and Arianna Rivas were worth mentioning, despite a relative lack of screentime. I actually thought Rivas deserved more screentime - her character was definitely underutilised, in my opinion.

Overall, despite enjoying the first film, I was still pleasantly surprised by how much I liked this one too. It has its pitfalls, mostly with its early pacing, but, for the most part, this was a really engrossing supernatural horror. As much as I would be interested by a third chapter in this story though, I'm not sure how that would happen, so maybe it's best to leave this at two. Regardless, I thoroughly enjoyed this sequel, and a good deal more than perhaps I was expecting.

COMFORTING WINTER FILMS: *HOT PICKS*

Now that we are well and truly into the winter months over here in the United Kingdom, I think it would be fair to say that we are all seeking a little comfort anywhere we can. With that said, I thought this edition of Hot Picks could reflect that, combining the themes of winter and comfort to give you eight film selections from different corners of cinema, that bring comfort to us during these darker months.

EMILY



About a Boy (2002) - Set around christmas time, *About a Boy* brings a bitter-sweet hopeful sort of comfort to the reality of everyday life.

1

RIDLEY

The Holdovers (2023) - it's funny, it's heartwarming, and it's genuinely one of the best films of the decade so far. In my opinion, this will be a Christmas classic in no time, thanks to its personable and memorable characters, it's earnest comedy, and its beautifully written story. This is fast becoming a must-watch Christmas viewing for me.



2



Arthur Christmas (2011) - This one is pure nostalgic comfort for me. Controversially, my favourite christmas/winter film, it just really strikes me, the animation and story really gets me every time.

The Shining (1980) - wait, wait, wait? *The Shining*? Comforting? Listen, it's a comfort film to me, damnit. And there is a tonne of snow. Not sold yet? What about the cosy and comforting story? What? A secluded writer going slowly insane and trying to kill his family isn't cosy or comforting? Okay, maybe it's just me after all.



3



Paddington 2 (2017) - I mean, what's more comforting than *Paddington*. Comforting, rainy day film if I've ever seen one.

Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens (2015) - the sequel trilogy may have been a failure in the eyes of most, but for the teenage Ridley, 'The Force Awakens' was one hell of an experience. I still remember going to the cinema in December of 2015 to see it - the first time I'd ever been able to watch a 'Star Wars' film at the theatre, and being so excited and happy. The film might be a rip-off of 'A New Hope', but at least it's a pretty good one, and it looks great.



4



The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists! (2012) - Nostalgic comfort, stop-motion is awesome. It defo feels cosy to watch.

Alien Vs. Predator (2004) - probably the most random film in this selection, but it really is a comforting film for me. It may not be as strong as most of the other 'Alien' films, but it's genuinely one of the most fun films I've ever seen. This may, in large part, be due to my love of the 'Alien' franchise, but it would still be a fun film regardless, in my opinion. It's Antarctic, underground pyramid setting is the perfect battleground for the chaos to be unleashed, and boy is there chaos.



FRANKENSTEIN - A REVIEW

BY RIDLEY COOTE

EXQUISITE, IS IT NOT? THIS NETFLIX ORIGINAL ADAPTATION OF MARY SHELLEY'S LEGENDARY SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL, DIRECTED BY THE MASTER OF MONSTERS AND FANTASY; GUILLERMO DEL TORO, WAS AT THE VERY TOP OF MY LIST OF NEW RELEASES I WANTED TO WATCH. I ADORE SHELLEY'S MOST CHERISHED NOVEL, AND I AM ALWAYS INTERESTED IN SEEING A NEW INTERPRETATION OF IT, EVEN IF MANY FAIL TO LIVE UP TO THE NOVEL'S MAJESTY. MY EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS PARTICULAR ADAPTATION, CONSIDERING THE MAN MAKING IT, WERE FAIRLY HIGH, ALTHOUGH I HAD SLIGHT CONCERNS ABOUT SOME OF THE CASTING CHOICES.

AS I SUSPECTED IT MIGHT BE, DEL TORO'S FILM WAS AESTHETICALLY DELICIOUS. THE SET DESIGN AND PROPS WERE IMMACULATE - AKIN TO THOSE OF THE CLASSIC HAMMER HORRORS OF THE FIFTIES, BUT ON A FAR MORE ELEVATED LEVEL. IT MUST ALSO BE SAID THAT THE COSTUME DESIGNS WERE STUNNING. THE DRESSES ADORNED BY MIA GOTH'S CHARACTER WERE PARTICULARLY MARVELLOUS, BOTH IN TERMS OF GENERAL AESTHETIC AND IN REGARDS TO THEIR ATTENTION TO DETAIL. THE FILM ALSO FEATURED A WONDERFULLY FITTING AND ORIGINAL CLASSICAL SOUNDTRACK, COMPOSED BY ALEXANDRE DESPLAT, WHICH WAS BEAUTIFUL TO LISTEN TO.

IT SHOULD NOT BE SO HARD TO ADAPT MARY SHELLEY'S 'FRANKENSTEIN', BUT SO FEW FILMS HAVE DONE SO SUCCESSFULLY. IN THIS INSTANCE, THERE WERE CERTAINLY SOME CHANGES TO SHELLEY'S ORIGINAL TALE, BUT EACH ONE WORKED FOR THE VERSION THAT DEL TORO WAS TELLING. I ADORED THIS ADAPTATION - I THOUGHT IT WAS ABLE TO EXPLORE THE TRAGIC TALE IN SUCH A NUANCED, YET IMPACTFUL WAY. OCCASIONALLY, THE DIALOGUE WAS SLIGHTLY MORE ON THE NOSE, BUT IT WAS EASY TO LOOK PAST FOR ME. I WAS SO ENAMOURED WITH THE REST OF THE FILM THAT IT REALLY DIDN'T AFFECT MY ENJOYMENT ALL THAT MUCH.

OSCAR ISAAC PROVED TO BE THE IDEAL CASTING CHOICE THAT I THOUGHT HE WOULD BE FOR THE ROLE OF 'VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN' - THE MAN HAS SO MUCH RANGE, AND ALWAYS COMMITS SO DETERMINEDLY TO HIS ROLES. I WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH THE VERSATILITY OF THIS PERFORMANCE. THE EMOTIONAL RANGE THAT ISAAC EXHIBITED, AS HE EXPLORED VICTOR'S TRAGIC AND DEEPLY IRONIC TALE, WAS JUST SO SATISFYING. I WAS MOST CONFIDENT ABOUT ISAAC'S ROLE COMING INTO THE FILM, AND IT WAS SO GOOD TO SEE THAT CONFIDENCE WAS SO WELL PLACED.

I MUST ADMIT, WHEN I SAW THE CAST LIST FOR THIS FILM, THE NAME JACOB ELORDI STOOD OUT TO ME FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS. I DID NOT BELIEVE THAT HE COULD PROVIDE A COMPELLING DEPICTION OF 'THE MONSTER', BUT I WAS SORELY MISTAKEN. ELORDI'S PAINED, EMOTIONAL, AND VULNERABLE PERFORMANCE WAS ABSOLUTELY BEAUTIFUL. HE WAS THE HEART AND SOUL OF THIS WONDERFUL ADAPTATION. HIS PERFORMANCE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE FILM WAS UTTERLY MAGICAL.

I WAS ACTUALLY SLIGHTLY UNDERWHELMED BY THE ACTING OF MIA GOTH, WHO I USUALLY ENJOY MORE. I THINK THERE WAS JUST SOMETHING SLIGHTLY OFF ABOUT HER DIALOGUE DELIVERY - IT JUST DIDN'T QUITE SOUND RIGHT. I THINK IT MAY HAVE BEEN SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE INTONATIONS SHE PUT ON WORDS. DIALOGUE ASIDE, THOUGH, HER PHYSICAL ACTING WAS STILL VERY STRONG. MORE MENTIONS GO TO A VERY SOLID SUPPORTING CAST, HEADLINED BY THE EXTRAORDINARILY TALENTED CHRISTOPH WALTZ, AS WELL AS THE LIKES OF FELIX KAMMERER, CHARLES DANCE, DAVID BRADLEY, AND LARS MIKKELSON.

OVERALL, I WAS EXPECTING TO ENJOY THIS FILM, BUT I WAS SURPRISED AND THRILLED BY JUST HOW MUCH I ADORED IT. I HAVE YET TO SEE A BETTER, MORE FAITHFUL FEELING, ADAPTATION OF ONE OF LITERATURE'S GREATEST WORKS. IT WAS SO SATISFYING TO WATCH A FILM THAT WAS APPROACHED WITH SUCH A DELICATE AND OBVIOUSLY PASSIONATE HAND. I REALLY BELIEVE THAT MOST PEOPLE WILL ENJOY THIS FILM A LOT, PARTICULARLY IF THEY ENJOY THE BOOK. IS THIS THE BEST NETFLIX ORIGINAL FILM EVER? I THINK THERE'S A FAIR CASE FOR IT.

5 Seasonal Watches: Christmas

By Ridley Coote



It's *A Wonderful Life* (1946) - Frank Capra's Christmas masterpiece is special on so many levels, least of all its incredible durability, as it reaches its eightieth, yes EIGHTIETH, anniversary. The phrase 'timeless classic' is used, in my opinion, way too often, but on this occasion, the film is more than deserving.



The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992) - my favourite Christmas film of all-time, and one that I rewatch every year with my sisters on Christmas Eve. Nothing beats seeing everyone's favourite puppets acting out one of the most classic Christmas stories ever written, especially when you have Michael Caine, of all people, giving us the most serious and committed Ebenezer Scrooge portrayal he possibly could, all whilst surrounded by muppets.



Die Hard (1988) - is it a Christmas film? Is it not a Christmas film? Who cares? It has Christmas scenes in it, which qualifies it for this list, as far as I am concerned. It's an all-guns-blazing, cerebral, exciting, and well-acted action film, which I absolutely adore. John McClane is undeniably an all-time great action hero, and Alan Rickman's Hans Gruber makes for the perfect foil. Yippee-ki-yay... you know the rest.



Klaus (2019) - this is easily the least well-known pick of the five films in this selection, but that doesn't mean it isn't worthy of its place. This is truly one of the best modern Christmas films, and it really isn't close. The vast majority of newer seasonal films are just meaningless and repetitive sludge, but this one managed to feel fresh, unique, memorable, and fun, all whilst still hitting those familiar Christmas themes. Not bad for a Netflix film.



The Holiday (2006) - as someone who usually rolls their eyes at soppy romantic comedies, and is not a fan of the majority of Christmas films, Nancy Meyer's 'The Holiday' is by far the clearest exception to the rule. I have so much time and love for this wonderfully written and exceedingly heartwarming rom-com - it just gets me in a way that few others ever have. And Jack Black's character might be the sexiest man to ever grace the screen.

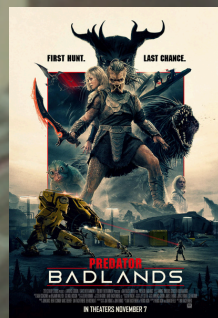
PREDATOR: BADLANDS - A REVIEW

BY RIDLEY COOTE

The prospect of a new entry into the 'Predator' franchise would, four years ago, been met with nothing but apathy from me, considering how poor the vast majority of the film's had been before that, with the exception of the classic original. But, with this film being directed by Dan Trachtenberg, who directed the two most recent films in the franchise, including the highly acclaimed 'Prey', which I loved, my feelings towards this newest film were much more enthusiastic.

The film was typified by its extremely cool soundtrack, which really got the heart thumping, and complimented the epic on-screen action brilliantly. As far as the cinematography concerned, I enjoyed the world and creature designs, as well as the majority of the shot selection, but I was ever-so-slightly underwhelmed by one or two action sequences, in which the camera moved in a slightly distracting way.

As far as the story concerned, I loved how this film pivoted between badass revenge story very wholesome found family story - it may not be the typical arc for a Yautja, but it is not the first time we have seen the legendary predator species team up with others in the name of survival; 'Alien Vs Predator', being the most well-known example. Even so, I was a little hesitant about the film initially, but by halfway through I was well and truly enveloped in the fun and the action. I could really see and feel the visual and writing style of Trachtenberg coming through.



Dimitrius Koloamatangi starred in the film, and helped make his character both interesting and full of personality, something we haven't seen as much of in the franchise, to this point. I also thought he looked very smooth, in regards to his action sequences, another aspect of his performance which made his casting feel well-earned. Elle Fanning took a little while to grow on me in this role - this had a lot to do with her character having too much silly dialogue towards the beginning of her introduction, but once her character settled into the film, she really won me over. I also want to give a very quick mention to Rohinal Nayaran for their very endearing performance as one of the unexpected joys of the film.

Overall, I thought this was a ripping good time of an action survival film, which took the most fun aspects of the 'Predator' franchise and ran with them as far as they could. The story may not have been as driven as in 'Prey', but the action and the comedy of the film more than made up for it. I had such a good time watching this film, and, with a sequel teased at the very least, I will absolutely be keeping my eye out for more Dan Trachtenberg-led films from the world of 'Predator'.

Films Ridley's Christmas Film Traditions

By Ridley Coote

For a bit of fun, I thought I'd write a little article about my little film-based traditions that I keep-up every year around Christmas time. Whether you celebrate Christmas or you don't, it seems that the majority of people have their seasonal habits, and these few are some of mine. Film is a huge aspect of my life, and that doesn't change when the nights grow longer, colder, and darker.

The most well-ingrained "tradition" that my family and I engage in is to watch 'The Muppet Christmas Carol' (1992) on Christmas Eve. This is usually a habit of my siblings and I, but my parents have joined on occasion. It's my favourite Christmas film by a country mile, and it's the one Christmas film that I could happily rewatch every single year without getting bored. It also makes me very happy that I can share it with my siblings in particular - it's one of my favourite parts of the holiday season.

This one is a bit of a loose tradition, but it's also one that I'm sure I share with so many others, and that's to watch whatever new piece of physical media I have been gifted that year. I just can't wait - I get so excited when I'm gifted new films to watch, especially for Christmas or my birthday. It just feels so much better when it's a surprise, as opposed to a film that I've purchased for myself. I can distinctly remember watching films like 'Cars 2' and the 'Star Wars: The Clone Wars' movie, on Christmas or Boxing Day - two films that I absolutely loved as a child.

One thing that I love to do in December is to watch Christmas and winter-based horror films. To some, this will be a strange and baffling choice, to others - those more like myself, this will seem fairly normal. I just find that the long and cold nights lend themselves very nicely to settling in under a blanket and watching spooky, atmospheric, and psychological, horrors - bonus points if they have a snowy or wintery setting. It just feels so cosy and engrossing to me - I think 'The Thing' (1982) is the perfect example of this feeling. It encapsulates the horror, the isolation, and the icy darkness that I find so enjoyable in films this time of year.

Keeper - A Review

By Ridley Coote

If there's one time and tested way to attract an audience to your film, it's through the marketing, and one of the most vital elements of that is the trailers. Now, this supernatural horror was directed by Osgood Perkins, the man behind both 'Longlegs', which I loved, and 'The Monkey', which I didn't - so, really, I had no idea whether I'd enjoy it or not - but what I did know is that the initial trailer had hooked me instantly. There's something to be said about a trailer that can do that without revealing half the plot of the film. I digress, I went into the cinema knowing very little about the film, which suited me just fine.

As it pertained to the cinematography, I thought the film was quietly gorgeous and satisfying to look at. There was a sublime piece of superimposition early on involving a bath and a river. In fact, just about all of the shots involving moving water and the woodland environment were generally quite pretty. The cabin setting was aesthetically appealing, which was juxtaposed effectively by its isolated and rural location - a classic setting choice for horror films.

Unfortunately, though, the easiest way to sum up this film was to call it style over substance. It looked great, but the story was full of well-trodden horror tropes and a generally bland narrative - I really wanted the film to try something a little different, and for a while it felt like it was, but that didn't end up being the case. The unveiling of the film's big twist was a little underwhelming - it felt like a whole lot of build-up for a reveal that felt like it had been done so many times already, and after such a long-feeling film, it just didn't quite cut it for me.

One thing that I couldn't fault about the film was lead actress Tatiana Maslany. She was expressive, interesting, and, ultimately, a worthy and compelling protagonist. I think she elevated the last act quite significantly, because without her it would have felt even more anticlimactic. It was very easy to route for her as a character, particularly in the second half of the film, despite its relatively disappointing storyline developments. In fact, I would argue her performance elevated the rest of the film too - she was extremely solid.

If this film were purely being judged on the first two thirds of its runtime, I'd have exclusively praise for the performance of Maslany's co-star; Rossif Sutherland. He suited his character down to the bone, and very much seemed at home in the film's cabin setting. However, his acting in the final third of the film, much like the narrative, slumped in quality, ultimately feeling hollow and lacking. Neither Birkett Turton or Eden Weiss were in the film very much, and I ended up being happy about that. I did not care for either of their performances, particularly Weiss, who felt like a parody character who had walked into the wrong film. It was jarring.

Overall, whilst I really appreciated the cinematography of the film, I was left so unsatisfied by the story underneath. The commendable performance of Tatiana Maslany was not quite enough to make the increasingly predictable twists and turns of the film feel worth it, but she did at least give it a good go. For a film that, for me at least, promised so much from both its teasers and its first half, it ended up missing the mark with its main reveal. It came across like it thought it was being a whole lot smarter than it was, which is never a good sign. At least it looked pretty good, though.

LEGO and Christmas Movies

By Bradley J. Simmons / DailyWeeklyBuilds

When you think of Christmas films, you probably think of cosy family stories, snowy settings, and classic scenes that come around every year. But when you think of LEGO, Christmas movies aren't usually the first thing that comes to mind. That's because LEGO hardly makes any sets based on Christmas films at all. In fact, I can only think of a few, and all of them happened thanks to LEGO Ideas (fan submissions) rather than LEGO themselves.

The big one is the Home Alone house, which became an instant hit when it came out. It's packed with traps, references to the film, and loads of little details that fans love. It even comes with 24 numbered bags, so you could almost build it like an advent calendar if you wanted to, which feels pretty fitting for a Christmas film set.



Then there's The Nightmare Before Christmas set and the new Gremlins Gizmo build, although Gremlins might not be the most festive film you'd think of. Personally I've always found Gremlins II to be funnier anyway, but either way it's still nice to see LEGO touching on those Christmas-adjacent films. Again though, these only exist because fans submitted them through LEGO Ideas. If it wasn't for Ideas, we probably wouldn't have any Christmas movie sets at all.



And that's the interesting thing. Fans clearly want them. There are so many Christmas film builds on LEGO Ideas and sites like Rebrickable that it's obvious the market is there. People want to see their favourite festive movies recreated with bricks and minifigures. A LEGO Polar Express has been demanded for years now, and every Christmas I see people bring it up again. The film is a classic and the train would make a brilliant LEGO set, but for whatever reason LEGO haven't gone for it.



LEGO and Christmas Movies

By Bradley J. Simmons / DailyWeeklyBuilds

Even outside of the movie world, LEGO have shown that fans love Christmas-themed builds. The Star Wars Christmas sets have been a fun little treat over the last few years, including the rare festive X-Wing and this year's gingerbread AT-AT. So it just goes to show that fans really do like the Christmas spirit mixed in with their LEGO sets. I'll even be building my own LEGO Christmas village display, so if you want to see that you can subscribe to DailyWeeklyBuilds on YouTube.



Christmas films are timeless and they never stop being popular. Every year people rewatch the same favourites and discover new ones. So it's a bit of a mystery why LEGO don't tap into that more. The few sets we do have show how much potential there is for more. With the amount of fan creations out there, it's clear the demand isn't going anywhere. Maybe one day LEGO will finally give us a full Christmas movie range, but for now we just have to rely on fan submissions and hope LEGO takes notice.



What Christmas film would you like to see recreated in LEGO form? I'd pick Elf.



Fun Fact:

The LEGO Star Wars Christmas-themed X-Wing was never sold in stores. It was given exclusively to LEGO employees in 2019, making it one of the rarest festive sets ever made.

Train Dreams - A Review

By Ridley Coote

If I was thinking about new films that were on my radar at the end of 2025, Clint Bentley's Netflix original drama, based on the Denis Johnson novella, would not have been on that list. Quite frankly, it just didn't seem like the kind of film I would leap to watch. However, the overwhelmingly positive critical reception it received convinced me to give it a go, and I'm very glad it did.

There's just something about films set in the American frontier, and the early days of contemporary America, that I find creates such picturesque cinema. This film was abundant in pleasant, nature-rich cinematography, which made you want to breathe deep the oxygen of the trees, and to live off in the peaceful wilderness of the rural America. The shot selection was, at times, immaculate - I loved how the characters were framed within each shot, and there were a number of them that stuck with me well after the credits rolled.

The narrative was slow and gentle, but absolutely devastating from an emotional standpoint. I think what made it so was how personal it felt. It truly felt like we, the audience, were right there with the protagonist, witnessing his quiet and dignified life, feeling his grief, contemplating his life with him. It was a very sombre film, at times, but also a very beautiful one. I adored it. The film's gradual pace might be too slow for some, ultimately, but I was swept along by its gentle current quite happily.

I have never really been a fan of Joel Edgerton as an actor, so him being the lead actor in this film wasn't really an encouraging sign for me. However, I can happily say that I thought he was superb in this. I don't think it would be unreasonable to call this his career best performance. He was brilliant. The way he was able to convey his character's hurt, his vulnerability, and his grief, all while presenting a quieter, gentler exterior. I cannot sing the man's praises enough, on this occasion.

Felicity Jones had fairly limited runtime, compared to Edgerton, but left an indelible impression on the film. She was wonderfully endearing and had instant, natural-feeling chemistry with her on-screen spouse. Equally, I thought the ever-tapentented William H. Macy provided a beautiful little performance in one of the film's most memorable supporting roles. I almost always have time for Macy, and he once again proved why he has been such a consistent presence in cinema for the last three decades. Mentions are also warranted for Kerry Condon and her pleasant but small performance, as well as Will Patton, whose narration was simply lovely to listen to.

Overall, despite my lack of interest initially, this became one of the biggest and most unexpected cinematic joys of the year for me. It was such a stunning and earnest piece of cinema, which had heart and emotion running right through its core, all channelled by its excellent leading actor, who turned in his best-ever display, in a role that suited him to the ground. If you watch one Netflix film this year, let it be this one - it was so worth it.

Pillion - A Review

By Ridley Coote

I love to watch something a little different every now and then, and this unusual romantic drama and comedy, which was the feature film directorial debut of Harry Lighton, was exactly that. I was quietly very excited for this film because it seemed to present an interesting look into the world of kink in the queer community, and felt like it would be an emotionally rich and stimulating experience.

I knew I was going to enjoy this film from its opening alone. The music used was very well picked, which turned out to apply to the entire soundtrack too - the whole film sounded great. I also thought the shot selection was wonderfully judicious. Some of the framing of the protagonist in particular was so smart and so effective in terms of storytelling. There was also a particular fade between two people's faces which was absolutely breathtaking. So much was said with just that one shot, and I absolutely adored it.

To that end, the film did a great job of using implied storytelling in general, allowing the audience to infer a lot of the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist through their acting - something I am a big advocate of, considering the amount of dumbed down content for 'second screen viewing' in mainstream media. The silences meant as much as the dialogue, which made the audience pay attention to those quiet moments just as much. I was so impressed by how well loneliness was depicted, especially during the winter scenes, which were some of the most pivotal in the whole film.

The way the relationship and power dynamics evolved was riveting to watch, because it was made to feel like the most important, intense, and intoxicating thing in the world. Watching the protagonist gain agency and assert boundaries felt so big and so satisfying because of the journey to get there. It's a film that hit on so many personal and emotional points; identity, expression, affirmation, and community, which was so beautiful to see play out, thanks to its tender execution, and the brilliant acting of its two male leads.

Speaking of which, I thought that the sensitivity and commitment of both lead actors played a huge part in this film's narrative impact. Harry Melling provided a career-defining turn as the timid and awkward Colin, and brought so much emotion to the film with just his eyes. He was endearing, he was funny, and so willing to be emotionally and physically vulnerable for the sake of the story - something that paid-off hugely.

Alexander Skarsgård also gave what was, in my opinion, his best performance to-date. I loved that his character was so much more than a one dimensional dominant biker, but, much like with Melling, the reason this was so apparent is, in-part, testament to Skarsgård's ability to convey so much without words. The way he presented vulnerability was very different to that of Melling and his character, but it was equally effective and interesting to break down and appreciate.

Overall, I thought this was a stunning and satisfyingly multifaceted film, which was easily one of my favourite cinema experiences of the year. It was rich in tenderness and vulnerability, it was beautiful and heartbreaking, and it was, at times, extremely funny. Few films have kept me as emotionally invested as this one did, particularly because of the superb performances of its two leading actors. I was so glad that this film played out the way that it did - a real highlight for independent cinema this year.

Five Nights At Freddy's 2 - A Review

By Ridley Coote

If you had asked me before this year if I would have gone to see the 'Five Nights At Freddy's' sequel at the cinema, I'd have said there was no chance, but my surprise enjoyment of that aforementioned first film convinced me to give this Emma Tammi directed follow-up a chance. Early reviews absolutely panned the film, which did make me a little nervous, but I wasn't dissuaded from going, again, because of my aforementioned enjoyment of the first film.

Much like the first film, this was not a film for the purists. Nothing about the individual aspects could really be called 'good', except for how some of the animatronics looked, which I admittedly quite liked. I did also enjoy the use of the classic 'FNAF' music for the opening and closing credits, but the rest of the soundtrack was only notable for how truly forgettable it was.

The screenplay was an absolute mess, full of lifeless secondary characters, ridiculous plot points, and a general lack of cohesive or effective writing. I think the story for the first film, which itself hadn't been great, was much better than this one, but, and there is a but, I still found myself having a legitimately good time. Whether it was the silly attempts at comedy, or that classic feeling of a film almost being 'so bad it's good', this had something going for it.

The likes of Josh Hutcherson, Elizabeth Lail, and Piper Rubio, all returned to reprise their roles, and delivered the same kind of mediocre acting that they had provided in the first film, albeit with slightly better chemistry this time. The film also featured, rather randomly, McKenna Grace, in a weirdly small and bizarre role, which, in fairness, she performed well, but it was odd seeing her be so underutilised. I should also at least briefly mention the likes of Matthew Lillard, Theodus Crane, Freddy Carter, Skeet Ulrich, and Megan Fox, for their various supporting roles, random though some of their casting was.

Overall, I think it would be fair to call this a bad film, by any stretch of technical or critical analysis. However, much like with the first film, I found myself enjoying it more than I expected. I honestly can't even fully say why, because I was acutely aware of how bad the film was whilst it was playing, but I was also smiling and laughing a lot, so it was doing something right. It even got an ovation when the credits rolled, albeit this was almost certainly some late-born 'Gen Z' teenage trend, having seen other reactions to the film online. Regardless, I had fun, even if it was really quite a poor film.

WWE Survivor Series: War Games 2025 - Review

By Ridley Coote

The 'Survivor Series' event has been a beloved staple of WWE premium live events for decades now, but the recent addition of the 'War Games' stipulation has revitalised it, making it an even more exciting and memorable event. I do miss the traditional tag matches, but I can't complain about having 'War Games' on the main roster. This year's matches were full of some of the best talent on the roster, and gave the show the potential to be one of the highlights of the year.

Usually, when a show has at least two big stipulation matches on a card, they bookend the show, and such was the case here, with the women's 'War Games' match starting the night. Choosing to begin with two all-time great rivals in Asuka and Charlotte Flair was a shrewd decision, and they gave the match a big fight feel immediately. With the face team holding the advantage, the match had a fairly atypical format, in that they had the upper hand for the bulk of the match. There were some fun spots before the main portion of the match began, but I expected the best moments to come once things began in earnest. Credit must go to Lash Legend, who looked great in her first main roster premium live event - she has so much potential to be a serious presence in the future. There was a frustrating botch, in which Flair mistimed a spot, making it look very awkward. However, the majority of the match went by very smoothly. Iyo Sky did her trademark trash can spot, which is always a highlight, and Becky Lynch's character work was very entertaining. I wish the main portion of the match had lasted a little longer, and maybe had involved slightly more big spots, but I still enjoyed the match we got.

The second match saw John Cena defend his newly won Intercontinental Championship against former champion, and current AAA Mega Champion, Dominik Mysterio, in what was Cena's last ever premium live event, with his retirement match taking place on 'Saturday Night's Main Event', which is shown on network television. There was one hell of a bamboozling, as Mysterio pulled off one of the most believable fake injury angles I've ever seen, so much so that I thought a genuine disaster had occurred. It did perhaps throw things off slightly, but once that moment passed, Mysterio and Cena kicked into the next gear, producing a very fun and creative match, which highlighted the sneaky tactics of the Eddie Guerrero inspired Dominik brilliantly. Cena was good value for money again, evidently up for not only making his penultimate career match as entertaining as possible, but making his much younger opponent look like a star in the process. The inevitable shenanigans added even more drama and unpredictability to the match, and honestly the whole match was thoroughly enjoyable. There was even a shocking ending to top it all off, which was maybe slightly overbooked, but was incredibly exciting and entertaining nonetheless.

Next up, it was Stephanie Vaquer's defence of the Women's World Championship against former friend turned enemy, and WWE Hall Of Famer, Nikki Bella. Since her return, Bella has been a little shaky in-ring, but her experience meant that I was sure she would produce a good performance on this big stage. I think the new-found aggression proved to be a good decision on her part, and it gave Vaquer a great foil for her first major title defence. The crowd was, unfortunately, all-but absolutely dead for the majority of the match, which irritated me, because I actually liked the match a lot. The two women played it smart, and utilised a more psychological approach to their match that really benefitted it. The only aspect of the match I didn't like, aside from the terrible crowd, was the slightly awkward way in which Bella sold the 'Devil's Kiss', but aside from that, this was a very solid title match, and the best Bella match since her return.

Ending the evening's action was the men's 'War Games' match, which saw two all-star teams, and Logan Paul, battle it out in what was sure to be a brutal, violent, and chaotic main event. I loved seeing CM Punk opening the match against the young stud Bron Breakker - it was a great opening, which only improved as more men joined the fray. Drew McIntyre's character was perfect for this kind of match, and his sadism was exactly what this kind of match needed. With such a chaotic match, there was bound to be blood and chaos, and that's exactly what happened. There was also a slightly scary landing for Bron Breakker, which clearly worried everyone a lot, but thankfully, he was fine. All the heels looked like monsters in this one, and I absolutely revelled in it. The mid-match yeeting was cringe-worthy, and both distracted and detracted from the match so much. Thankfully, that didn't last too long, and the match could get back to being a serious main event. Having Brock Lesnar and Roman Reigns come out last was the only correct decision, and made the match feel truly big time. The only thing I wasn't so keen on was the end, which felt a little jarring. The right team won, but the way it happened was really odd. It clearly confused the crowd as well, which didn't help. I think the moment was slightly botched - it looked like the timing was off, which only made it more awkward to watch. However, the vast majority of the match was very good.

Overall, I thought this was a good event hampered by a few brief but noticeable errors, which unfortunately stuck in the mind after the show had ended. With that said, there were so many positives to take from 'Survivor Series' this year, not least the star-elevating positions given to both Bron Breakker and Dominik Mysterio, two men who will both almost certainly be among the top stars in the next decade or so. The future is bright for WWE, not just in regards to their rising stars, but because the next premium live event, after December's 'Saturday Night's Main Event', is one of the best and most popular of the year; 'Royal Rumble'.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Next up, in December, will be the Christmas edition of the FIR magazine; 'X-02'. You can expect to find all sorts of seasonal articles to read and enjoy, including more iterations of features like 'Cinema Spotlight' and 'Hot Picks', as well as new inclusions from myself and others. We can't wait to share more interesting content with you, but in the meantime, Happy Halloween, stay safe, and we'll see you in December for more FilmsRidley fun!

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Want to support the FIR magazine? Well, whilst it is free, any donations to my KoFi would mean the world! Of course, there is no obligation to do so, and I am aware that there are far more important uses of your money, particularly these days. There are certainly other ways you can help FIR out, such as by sharing it with your friends and family! Socials for myself and the contributors for each issue will be shared below, so if you feel compelled to support us another way, a follow would more than do the trick! Thank you so much for taking the time to read this edition of the FIR magazine - it means more than I could ever put into words.

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