

Leo Goes Green

Sluggish and thuggish doesn't make us pay attention

THE 11TH HOUR: Written and directed by Leila Conners Petersen and Nadia Conners. Produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, Leila Conners Petersen, Chuck Castleberry and Brian Gerber. Music, Jean-Pascal Beintus, Eric Avery. Narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio. Warner Independent Pictures, 2007. PG. 91 minutes. ★★☆☆

A year and change after Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, along comes that film's kid brother — spunky, nicely animated, boasting a well-intentioned screen star and a hip soundtrack. *The 11th Hour* is produced and narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio, which, though he's not the film's director or writer (both those jobs are shared by Leila Conners Petersen and Nadia Conners), makes it seem like it's Leo's film. Earnest and solemn, DiCaprio crops up every so often between interviews with talking heads, stock footage of disasters and beautifully filmed landscapes from around the globe. He occasionally has some rough lines to trip through, but he holds up, stolid, strangely drained of charisma.

A lack of charisma seems to pervade this film, which, with its vital message, is tough

to be down on in theory but, in actuality, easy to dislike or be indifferent to. The problems begin at the start: A heavy-handed montage, cut like a horror film into speedy slices and slivers, leaps from hurricanes to fires to oil rigs to fetuses in the womb to sludgy rivers to industrial meat processing. Media-savvy eyes will tire of this before the filmmakers do: We have seen the images before, and seeing them put together like this just takes away their individual power. The result is effectively distressing, yet it feels uncomfortably manipulative — not an auspicious start.

The 11th Hour's thesis statement is simple: We are the problem, and we are the solution; we cannot separate ourselves from the nature we're rapidly destroying. The world will go on, with or without us. It's a sobering statement and one we hear in varying forms from the movie's many intelligent, articulate



experts, including Stephen Hawking, Mikhail Gorbachev and many less-recognizable but highly credentialed names. Clever animations illustrate key principles, and some of the film's footage is striking. But I found myself distracted at points by the soundtrack, which leans heavily on gorgeous, lush, dynamic music from Iceland's Sigur Rós and Scotland's Mogwai, among others. On the one hand, it's lovely to hear some good music in a documentary. On the other, it's almost cheating: You could play Sigur Rós over footage of me walking home from work, and suddenly my walk would become epic and fraught with meaning. This is music that can make a person weep with-

out any visual accompaniment. A little bit goes a long way; this amount gives *The 11th Hour* too much emotional baggage, distracting from the central theme.

And what of that theme? *The 11th Hour* is a film that will only succeed in disseminating its message if it's seen by the people least likely to see it. It is full of useful, factual, oft-repeated information about what's happening to the planet, and at its close, it does offer some much appreciated suggestions about green building and green living without devolving into a how-to handbook. But the filmmakers want to include everything that's going wrong, from the fate of the Arctic to the horrible decimation of the ocean's fish to the rise of asthma in schoolchildren, and while they clearly mean well, their film needs more focus. We know we're on the brink, and we're pretty certain about how we got there. But those among us who haven't been paying attention are not likely to begin with this film even if it does star that boy from *Titanic*. If it really is the eleventh hour — and it sure feels like it — the time for explaining how we got here is past. *The 11th Hour*, then, is an effective but overly familiar reminder that it's time to focus on what we do now. **EW**

The 11th Hour opens Friday, Sept. 14, at the Bijou.

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Brave One, The: Jodie Foster returns to ferocious form as a New York radio host who is attacked and nearly killed by a group of men who kill her fiancé (Naveen Andrews, from *Lost*). The experience leaves her shaken and transforms her into a vigilante, but at what personal cost? R. 122 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Daddy Day Camp: C'mon, Cuba Gooding Jr., don't you have an Oscar to live up to? Oh, never mind; just keep turning out claptrap like this sequel to *Daddy Day Care*. Now the daddies take the kids to camp! And things get out of control! *No way!* PG. 93 min. Movies 12.

Dragon Wars: The good: Dragons! In L.A.! The bad: The plot is a convoluted thing about magical powers, resurrected lovers and a dragon that will be able to ascend into heaven. But still ... dragons! In L.A.! Can it be better than *Reign of Fire*? PG13. 90 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Eleventh Hour, The: Leonardo DiCaprio narrates this well-intentioned but somewhat overly familiar film about the state of the earth's environment. It's tough to be too hard on such a vital topic, but the film tries to pack too much in and leaves audiences without much that's new and concrete. PG. 91 min. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Jesus Camp: Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady's Oscar-nominated documentary follows children at Kids on Fire summer camp, where they are taught to become part of the evangelical army of tomorrow. "A scary, sobering inside look at the attempts of an increasingly powerful group to erode the separation of church and state," said *The Washington Post*. PG13. 85 min. 7 pm Sept. 16, DIVA. Free.

Joni Mitchell: A rare solo TV appearance on piano, guitar and dulcimer from the BBC that's the only known video from Mitchell's *Blue* era. Not rated. Bijou LateNite.

Looking Into the Eye of Extinction: Wildlife conservation film explores the threat of extinction and the conservation efforts surrounding the wildlife of the Amazon river basin, the Galapagos Islands and the Andes. Filmmaker Ryan Killackey will introduce the film and give

a brief Q&A before the screening. 7 pm and 9 pm Sept. 15, Wildish Theater, Springfield. \$7, \$5 stu., sr., \$3 under 12, under 3 free.

Mr. Sean's Cartoon Club: Crazy, weird and old cartoons featuring Betty Boop, Felix, Superman and more. Noon-1:30 pm Sept. 16. Bijou. \$4.

Mr. Woodcock: This oft-delayed film involves a fellow (Seann William Scott) heading home to stop his mother (Susan Sarandon) from marrying his high school gym teacher (Billy Bob Thornton), who was, shall we say, no saint. PG13. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

No End in Sight: Charles Ferguson's searing, elegant documentary chronicles a timeline of failures surrounding the planning and management of the war in Iraq. Ferguson has placed news we've seen before into a precise timeline, filled in with fascinating interviews, that paints a damning portrait of ignorance and incompetence on the part of the Bush administration. Not rated. 102 min. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Net Hot American Summer: *Entertainment Weekly* called comedian David Wain's goofball take on the lives of summer camp counselors circa 1981 "A loving and meticulous re-creation of the last moment before American youth culture went permanently ironic." With Janeane Garofalo, Michael Showalter, Paul Rudd, Molly Shannon, David Hyde Pierce and Amy Poehler. R. 97 min. Bijou LateNite.

Films open the Friday following EW publication date unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at www.eugeneweekly.com

CONTINUING: **Balls of Fury:** Y'know, there are a couple of scenes in this movie's trailer that involve Christopher Walken and are actually kind of funny. The rest of it is a bunch of ball jokes. Plot? Super secret underground ... ping pong tournament! PG13. 90 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Becoming Jane: Anne Hathaway (*The Devil Wears Prada*) stars in this heavily imagined look at Jane Austen's early years — a love affair, an inspiration. It's

sweet and the cast is a delight, but the movie can't quite connect Jane's passions: her writing and her interest in dashing Tom Lefroy (a wonderful Jame McAvoy). PG13. 120 min. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆ (8/16)

Bourne Ultimatum, The: "I remember everything," says Matt Damon's Jason Bourne in this film's action-packed trailer. Director Paul Greengrass and the major players (Joan Allen, Julia Stiles) return to the series' satisfying third installment, which finds Bourne hunting down his past. PG13. 111 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆ (8/9)

Brothers Solomon, The: Will Arnett (*Arrested Development*) and Will Forte are two romantically and socially challenged brothers trying to fulfill their dying father's wish that one of them have a child. Directed by *Mr. Show's* Bob Odenkirk. R. VRC Stadium 15.

Death Sentence: Kevin Bacon stars as a man whose life is changed when he witnesses something horrible and then decides he'll go to any length to protect his family. Directed by James Wan, the creator of *Saw*. R. 110 min. Movies 12.

Evan Almighty: Steve Carrell takes the starring role in this sequel to *Bruce Almighty*. Now, God (Morgan Freeman) wants Evan (Carrell), a former newscaster turned Congressman, to build an ark. Boy, that's gonna involve a lot of critters. PG. 90 min. Movies 12.

1408: This adaptation of a Steven King short story, which stars John Cusack as a man alone in a horribly haunted hotel room, is getting surprisingly good reviews; *Entertainment Weekly* said it's "reassuringly old-school gothic." With Samuel L. Jackson, directed by Mikael Häfström. PG13. 94 min. Movies 12.

Hairspray: Based on John Waters' 1988 cult classic, *Hairspray* is about teenagers on a local Baltimore dance show — especially one short, plump, cheery girl who loves to dance. With John Travolta in drag. PG. 117 min. Cinemark. ★★☆☆ (7/26)

Halloween: Rob Zombie directs this remake of John Carpenter's 1978 film, but opts to take a peek into the past that created Michael Myers. R. 109 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix: The Ministry of Magic is in denial about the return of Lord Voldemort, Hogwarts get a nasty new teacher and Harry ... Harry's in one kind of trouble or another throughout the mostly successful and only slightly disappointing fifth HP film. It's not quite *Prisoner of Azkaban*, but it's getting there. PG13. 138 min. Cinemark. ★★☆☆ (7/19)

I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry: Adam Sandler and Kevin James star as a couple of firefighters who, for various bureaucratic insurance reasons, claim to be domestic partners — all fun and games until the news gets ahold of the story. I'm sure all related issues are dealt with thoughtfully. UM, right. PG13. 110 min. Movies 12.

Knocked Up: Judd Apatow follows *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* with a sweet yet still raunchy comedy about the unwanted pregnancy that occurs when up-and-coming journalist Alison (Katherine Heigl of *Grey's Anatomy*) has a one-night stand with slacker Ben (Seth Rogen). R. 129 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆ (6/7)

License to Wed: Robin Williams stars in this silly little summer fluff of a romantic comedy about love and marriage. With Mandy Moore and John Krasinski. PG13. 90 min. Movies 12.

Live Free or Die Hard: Justin Long — yes, he of the Mac ads — joins Bruce Willis for this fourth chapter in the Die Hard franchise, in which a baddie attacks the U.S.'s infrastructure over the 4th of July weekend. PG13. 130 min. Movies 12.

Mr. Bean's Holiday: Good old Mr. Bean (Rowan Atkinson)! You either adore him, or you find him not at all funny. Here, a French vacation turns out to be full of mishaps and mistaken identity. Is Mr. Bean a kidnaper, a filmmaker or neither? G. 87 minutes. Cinemark.

My Best Friend: Director Patrice Leconte leads Daniel Auteuil (*Caché*) and Dany Boon (*The Valet*) through a sometimes-slapstick, sometimes-sweet story of grown men — one a friendless gallery owner, one a friendly taxi driver — making friends. What sounds simple is mildly complicated and unexpectedly charming. In French with English subtitles. PG13. 94 min. Bijou. ★★☆☆ (9/6)

Nanny Diaries, The: Jersey girl Annie (Scarlett Johansson) is at odds with her mother as to what she should do with her life when an opportunity arises to become a nanny for a wealthy family on NYC's Upper East Side. Working for the very rich turns out not to be quite the escape from real life that she expected. With Laura Linney and Paul Giamatti. PG13. 106 min. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆ (8/30)

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End: Captain Jack and crew are back for the third — and what one might hope is the final — *Pirates* movie (which has something to do with saving Jack from the Land of the Dead and facing off with the Dutch East India Company). A warning to soda buyers: It's two hours and 48 minutes long. PG13. Movies 12.

Rush Hour 3: Did I forget this one when I made my list of this summer's needless sequels? Did I mention I blame director Brett Ratner for the murky mess that was last year's *X-Men 3*? Does it matter? Jackie Chan, Chris Tucker, questionable jokes and action humor: you know what you're getting. PG13. 90 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Shoot 'Em Up: Will it be an engrossing action piece, or all flash and no substance? Clive Owen stars in director Michael Davis' film about a "mysterious loner" who teams up with a stunning woman (Monica Bellucci) to protect a baby from an evil Paul Giamatti. R. 87 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Shrek the Third: When Shrek's father-in-law kicks the bucket, the ogre finds himself the reluctant king of Far Far Away. His only hope of getting out of the job? His wife's slacker cousin. PG. 92 min. Movies 12.

Simpsons Movie, The: Well, our Springfield didn't get the premiere, but in the film maybe we'll still see some hints that we are the *real* Simpsons Springfield? Still no idea what it's about, but does it matter? PG13. 87 min. Cinemark.

Stardust: Matthew Vaughn (*Layer Cake*) takes a firm and steady hand to the many plot threads of this adaptation of Neil Gaiman's novel. The result is wicked and charming, sweet and sly, with a stellar cast (Claire Danes, Michelle Pfeiffer,

Robert De Niro) and a superb sense of humor. Oh, the story? A young man promises a young lady he'll fetch her a falling star — but he's not the only one searching out the young woman who fell from the sky. PG13. 128 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆ (8/9)

Superbad: Judd Apatow and Seth Rogen both have fingers in this pie, as co-producer and co-writer, respectively. It's the story of two high school friends, Evan (Michael Cera, *Arrested Development*) and Seth (Jonah Hill), who are trying — well, in classic teen movie fashion, they're trying really hard to get laid. They're about to go off to college; what do you expect? VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆ (8/23)

Surf's Up: The young, talented, possibly misguided Shia LaBeouf voices Cody Maverick, a teenage penguin surfer entering his first pro competition. A documentary crew's filming his every move, which might — sort of — explain that "based on a true story" joke in the preview. PG. 85 min. Movies 12.

3:10 to Yuma: Russell Crowe and Christian Bale costar in this Western from director James Mangold (*Walk the Line*). Based on a short story by Elmore Leonard that was made into a film in 1957, the film follows a vicious outlaw (Crowe) and the Civil War vet (Bale) who's volunteered to get the thief to the train that'll take him to trial. R. 117 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. **See review this issue.**

Transformers: It wouldn't be summer without a Michael Bay film, right? Hot on the heels of those other '80s toys the Ninja Turtles, the Transformers arrive, bigger and flashier than ever. Earth, it seems, will be the battleground for the war between the Autobots and the Decepticons. With Shia LaBeouf (*Holes*) and Megan Fox. PG13. 144 min. Cinemark. **Waitress:** Keri Russell (*Felicity*) is a wonderful surprise in writer-director Adrienne Shelly's bittersweet small-town story about love, hope, pies — and finding strength where you least expect it. Shelly's perfectly cast last film is a beautiful balancing act of emotions. PG13. 107 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆ (5/24)

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