



6. ANOTHER YEAR

Mike Leigh's quietly satisfying, thoughtful *Another Year* spends a year in the life of an older married couple, Tom (Jim Broadbent) and Gerri (Ruth Sheen), around whom a gaggle of unhappy, unsatisfied singles rotates. Central among them, and to the film, is Mary (Lesley Manville), who never met a glass of wine she didn't like and who is perpetually unable to see how much she gets in her own way — though to be fair, her friends aren't so much helping her as keeping her company while she trips herself up. It's difficult to describe *Another Year* without making it sound reductive or moralistic: Own your shit and grow up happy! Change comes from within! But Leigh's film is far kinder than that, a character study that considers but doesn't attempt to answer the complicated question of why some people are so much happier than others. (2/3/11)

7. INSIDE JOB

Though I could do without the heartstring-tugging score, Charles Ferguson's *Inside Job* is an effective, furious takedown of those responsible for the 2008 financial crisis. Ferguson deftly distills complex explanations into bite-sized chunks of information, refusing to accept that what happened is too complicated for us ordinary folks to understand. While many key figures declined to be interviewed for the film, plenty of prevaricating, infuriating men offer non-answers to Ferguson's questions, and the film is often structured so that the evidence comes before the interview, meaning we're left watching people deny or evade truths Ferguson's already uncovered. It's enough to make you want to keep your savings in your mattress. (11/11/10)



8. INCEPTION

It's big. It's flashy. The score makes that blaring BWWWAAAH noise way too often. But the way Christopher Nolan deftly plays with dream logic — making it film logic, with roles assigned and parts carefully worked out, the trick being that you have to believe, or it doesn't work at all — gives *Inception* a hell of a kick. (Breakout roles for Tom Hardy and Joseph Gordon-Levitt don't hurt, either.) The elaborate effects and set pieces are immersive, massive, dream-scaled, but in the end, *Inception* asks the same thing of its audience as its dreamworld does of its characters: that we decide for ourselves what's real, and what really happened. (7/22/10)

9. TINY FURNITURE

It would be so easy to dislike Aurora (Lena Dunham), the twentysomething main character of *Tiny Furniture*. But I don't. Figuring out why I have a strange affection for both writer-director Dunham's inward-focused film and her mopey, aimless alter ego is part of the movie's appeal. Maybe it's Dunham's utter lack of vanity or self-protectiveness that makes *Tiny Furniture* work. Maybe it's that there are so few honest, non-man-obsessed stories about young women struggling as they grow up into themselves. Aurora's situation is inherently privileged; she has the luxury of wallowing, of wasting time and her mother's money trying to find herself. Her awareness of this is nearly invisible, but it's there, somehow, in Aurora's uncertainty, and in the way her comfortable life shapes, and is at odds with, the identity she's desperate to find. (1/20/11)



10. DOGTOOTH

This dark horse from Greece makes *Mother* look downright normal. Somewhere in the countryside, hidden behind fences and hedges, a peculiar family lives. Three siblings are under the thumb of their father, who gives them a daily vocabulary lesson that includes the wrong meanings for words. He teaches the family to bark like dogs to scare off "man-eating" cats; he brings in a security guard to have sex with the son. Why? Who knows? Why do the parents reward their children, who are at least in their late teens, with stickers, or keep them from any mention of the outside world? What is the point of their isolated, misshapen existence? Why is Giorgos Lanthimos' film, with its white walls, sterile lighting and casual violence, so effective at getting under my skin? Will it have the same effect on you? (*Dogtooth* didn't play in Eugene but is available on DVD.)

THE OTHER 10

Watch the quietly forceful Australian crime-family drama *Animal Kingdom* (9/9/10) back-to-back with David O. Russell's clichéd but powerful *The Fighter* (1/6/11) for a double feature in matriarchal dominance: Both Melissa Leo in *The Fighter* and Jacki Weaver in *Animal Kingdom* give intense, unforgettable performances as carefully controlling mothers with questionable ways of looking out for their own. The same is true of Kim Hye-ja in Bong Joon-ho's *Mother* (5/6/10), in which the mother of a slow-minded young man goes to great lengths to prove her son didn't commit a murder. Another controlling

parent is central in Darren Aronofsky's melodramatic *Black Swan* (12/23/10), as Barbara Hershey pushes and pulls at Natalie Portman's unstable ballerina. Tilda Swinton is a very different kind of mother in *I Am Love* (7/15/10), a rich, lush Italian film about a wealthy, elegant woman whose life is reshaped by newfound passions. Though Ewan McGregor is the star of Roman Polanski's flawed but intelligent thriller *The Ghost Writer*, the oft-underused Olivia Williams shines as the wife of a former British prime minister (a smug Pierce Brosnan). In Nicole Holofcener's funny, sharp, underrated *Please Give* (7/29/10), Catherine Keener plays a woman who's constantly trying to find ways to make up for the fact that she feels guilty about liking her comfortable New York life. You won't find

any women at all in Sebastian Junger and Tim Hetherington's documentary *Restrepo*, a quietly unforgettable take on the indelible effects of war on those who fight. While I didn't care as much for *Toy Story 3* as many people did, 2010 was nevertheless a superb year for animation, including the beautiful, mythic Irish tale *The Secret of Kells* (6/3/10), which begs to be seen on the big screen, where its intricate animation — inspired by the illuminated manuscript at the center of its story — can be fully appreciated. On the other end of the animation spectrum is the whimsical, peculiar *A Town Called Panic* (4/15/10), which follows its own breathless logic as it relates the adventures of three plastic figures who accidentally find themselves in the possession of far too many bricks.

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