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Ten must see films from 2011



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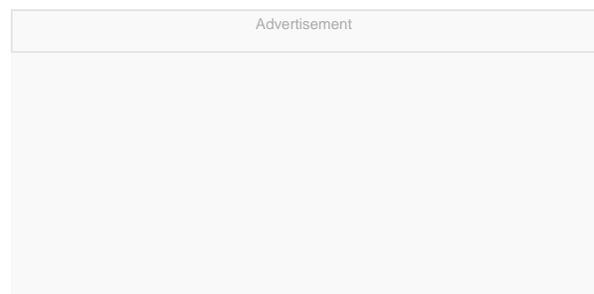
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Seeing all the great films from this year is an impossible task, as anyone who says they have is simply full of it. There would be no time to write about them, talk about them with friends and colleagues. It would just be endless hours alone screening films. So instead of upsetting backers of films I have been unable to see, it seemed more interesting to look at ten films across the spectrum of works done this year, from Hollywood blockbuster to independent masterpieces, that are worth plunking down hard earned dollars to see. In no particular order, ten flicks you should be sure to see as soon as you can.

[Beats, Rhymes, and Life: The Travels of A Tribe Called Quest](#)

Beats, Rhymes, and Life: The Travels of a Tribe Called Quest transcends being a music documentary, mining deeper emotional territory and looking into a story of four friends, four colleagues, and how they tried to navigate the difficult balance of success and personal happiness. The poignant and compelling narrative woven by Rapaport is not just for fans of ATCQ or hip hop, but for anyone looking for an exploration of humanness and discovering how to live in harmony with one another despite our differences. [My full review of the film can be seen here](#) and an [in depth interview with Rapaport](#) I was able to do can be found in that linked text. You can see the film now on DVD through most renters including [Netflix](#).



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[Drive](#)

Drive may have been the most cinematic film I have seen this year, using every tool in the filmmaker's arsenal to create a tense, rich, complex palette of emotions and themes within the intricate construct of the film. The film pays off the viewer from start to finish, from the building and discovery of elements of the narrative to the intense, unpredictable climax; it is amazing what happens when capable people are involved with all aspects of a film. [My full review of the film can be found here](#). The film is now playing in select theaters around the country, check [their website](#) for details. It can also be seen on DVD at the end of January.

[Give Up Tomorrow](#)

Easily the most moving and powerful film I saw this year, it deservedly won the [2011 TFF Heineken Audience Award](#), among a host of other awards. **Give Up Tomorrow** follows the story of 19-year-old culinary student Paco Larrañaga, who in 1997 was arrested for the kidnap, rape, and murder of two sisters on the provincial island of Cebu in the Philippines, even though there was overwhelming evidence of his innocence. This film has broken through the wall of audience and filmmaker in a way that will forever change how films are made, well, if the powers with the dollars have any sense at all. It was truly the most moving film I saw this year and one that everyone should make time to check out. [Check out their website](#) for screening locations and future plans for the film.

[Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows](#)

A comedic romp with Robert Downey Jr. through the shoes of master detective Sherlock Holmes goes above and beyond the first installment of the film quite honestly, taking on more action as well as an even more subtle sense of humor and timing. Fans of RDJ or the first film will be pleasantly surprised, as sequels these days have not been able to live up in most cases to the high standards, if there even were, set by the first film. The film is playing all over the country during this holiday season and is worth the price of admission, see it at the theater for sure. [Fandango](#) is a great option when you are in a rush and don't want to wait in line at the theater.

[Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol](#)

An all out action thrill ride that pumps adrenaline through your veins from the first frame, this latest incarnation of the **Mission: Impossible** series is the best one yet, and by a long way. Tom Cruise just fits this role like a glove, then blend in Jeremy Renner's formidable chops, Simon Pegg's deadpan delivery lightening the mood throughout the film, and the stunning Paula Patton, and you have an exciting night out at the theater without a lot of thinking involved, just a film to enjoy. The film just opened and is playing all over the country, you get out to see this one in the theater, as the scenes in Dubai have to be seen on the big screen.

[Bridesmaids](#)

Probably the funniest comedy of the year, **Bridesmaids** takes a fresh spin on the "raunch genre", coming from the perspective of the ladies this time, and they knock it out of the park. Kristen Wiig is a genius, not to mention easy on the eyes, working with a stellar cast to bring the laughs that continue until you are in physical pain from it. Your face, your stomach, and if you are not careful your neck, will be pummeled by line after line of comedy gold dropped by the cast of this film. The film is now out on DVD through a variety of outlets, check it out.

[The Trip](#)

A film by the always ahead of the curve Michael Winterbottom and starring comic savants Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon as themselves of sorts, blurring the line of reality like a Kerouac or Hunter S. Thompson book does, **The Trip** is a road movie, mixed in with comedy, and more serious dramatic elements in a potent blend that soared above my expectations. The action between Brydon and Coogan over who does the best Michael Caine impression makes this movie worth seeing just for that. But there is so much more, allowing us to look into ourselves and grow. The film is now able to be seen on DVD and On Demand viewing through the [IFC Channel](#). Also, [you can see my full review of the film here](#).

[turn me on goddammit \(få meg på, for faen\)](#)

Based upon a novel by Olaug Nilssen, **turn me on goddammit (få meg på, for faen)**, directed and written by Jannicke Systad Jacobsen in her fiction film debut, is the type of film I would love to see more of when covering festivals, needless to say at the multiplexes most everyone else goes for their film viewing. These are films from a female perspective, by a female, and moreover, an honest look at the confusion adolescent girls face, their struggles and thoughts, their search for meaning and connection. You can actually check out the film through [its website](#), but it also has been picked up for distribution in many regions around the globe and details should emerge soon on those dates, so check their website for that info also. [My full review of the film can be found here](#).

[An Ordinary Family](#)

The film takes the viewer into the world of the Biederman family, two brothers and one sister, one of the brothers, Seth, is gay, one, Thomas, is a priest. They are enjoying time together at the family vacation home, exploring their unique relationships along with their spouses or in Seth's case, his boyfriend's. **An Ordinary Family** takes no political position; instead, it simply explores the dynamics within a family who is struggling to accept each other and perhaps even themselves in an awkward, but warm and spectacularly comedic manner. The film is still on the festival circuit, and their [Facebook page](#) is an easy way to keep up with where it will be screening next. [My full review of the film can be seen here](#).

[Lotus Eaters](#)

Lotus Eaters playfully and with a deft touch finds that hazy,

confusing, conflicted, and complex place when drugs, a loss of sense of self, and a desire for more from life converge creating a vivid, insightful picture into modern hip culture. A truly energetic and insane romp that follows the stories of a group of young, hip, socially elite in London and on their travels, centering for the most part on the story of Alice (Antonia Campbell-Hughes), a struggling model who is distracted and looking for something else from life. From vodka baths, to ring tailed lemurs, this film will entertain, surprise, and enlighten its viewers. Check out the film's [Facebook page](#) for info on coming screenings, theatrical runs, and its DVD release. You can read [my full review of the film here](#) and my interview with [Director/Writer Alexandra McGuinness here](#).

There you go, some suggestions to check out, and I am sure there are many more films some of you will think should be on this list. That's why you can comment on the articles here. Let me know what you think and what you liked this year. Look for more about this topic and others over on my new website [ericshlapack.com](#). As always, you can receive the articles here directly as they are published by clicking on the "Subscribe" button.

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Eric Shlapack is a graduate of The Ohio State University having studied Film and English. Shlapack is an independent filmmaker who co-wrote...

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[Reid Rosefelt](#) · Brooklyn, New York

Eric,
"Turn Me On, Dammit!" (that's the new title) is opening in the US on March 30th through New Yorker Films. We have a Facebook page (check it out and please like!) and our website will be up soon.

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