

The Road: End of the World Hollywood Style!

Copyright 2009 Cape May Film Society. All Rights Reserved.

A Review by
Andrew Henry, Instructor
Tom Sims, Executive Director
Cape May Film Society
609-884-6700
capemayfilm@hotmail.com
www.capemayfilm.org

Brought to you by the New Jersey Film Review (www.njfilmreview.com)

The end of the world has never looked so fabulous! With the release of “2012” and “The Road,” Hollywood has again turned its attention to the end times for the late great planet Earth. Forget dramatic tragedies like “Titanic” (1997) or futuristic world angst like “Blade Runner” (1982) these films are about the granddaddy of them all. While most of us in the viewing audience would essentially be drowned by mega tsunamis or crushed by massive objects like the Christ Redeemer Statue in Rio de Janeiro, our leading actors get to work on troubles of their own.

This kind of film is indeed a more modern but hardly a new phenomenon. Even if you wanted to go further back from “I am Legend” (2007) or “The Day after Tomorrow” (2004), you could visit the “Mad Max” series, which started in 1979, or (if you want to wade through it) “Waterworld” (1995--sorry, always wanted to use that pun!). This week, Hollywood Henry focuses on the latest saga at world’s end: The Road.

“The Road” represents the latest adaptation from a novel by Cormac McCarthy. Last year McCarthy’s “No Country for Old Men” won over both audiences and critics alike. This film, based on the 2006 novel of the same name, follows an unnamed father and son as they struggle to survive in a post-apocalypse world—and what struggles they encounter.

Their journey is to travel the long road that leads to the coast, where presumably there will be food, water, shelter, and maybe other survivors. Along the way the land is barren, and between searching for resources and hiding from wandering cannibals, the father will stop at nothing to protect his son.

Viggo Mortensen, in a haunting performance, portrays the father with constant pain on his face. With every expression, he is scared, sad, and concerned, yet he tries to hide it from his son. We know this man has seen the worst of humanity, but still he will not let his son give up on the world.

Fans of the novel will enjoy the faithful translation to the screen. The book paints a bleak vision of the world, and this film commits to that vision. The director, John Hillcoat, was lucky enough to secure the filming location of the abandoned Pennsylvania Turnpike, a 13-mile stretch of road that has been unused since the 60s. The natural overgrowth and crumbling pavement give the film a very authentic feel.

Now, to say it as simply as possible, this is not exactly a “feel-good” movie. The world is bleak, some characters are despicable, and at times the hurdles never seem to end. But at the same time, there is something inspiring watching a man do anything he can to protect his family.