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# OUTSIDE THE FRAME



## More Bests and Worsts

I invited some of my highly respected colleagues at "The Phoenix" to send me their ten best lists (and worsts, if so inclined). Here are a few responses.

MICHAEL ATKINSON



### 1. My Winnipeg

Meta-oneiro maestro Guy Maddin's most personal launch into the timeless void, and probably his simplest, and perhaps his most moving. A single city hasn't received an ambivalent valentine this lovely and inventive since, well, maybe ever.

### 2. Ballast

Lance Hammer's Mississippi Delta debut brings the neo-neo-realist syntax of the Dardennes brothers home to roost, and makes you hold your breath. Couldn't be any finer.

### 3. Wendy & Lucy

Kelly Reichardt's crowning feature (a homeless girl, a dog, a small town in Oregon) is much lean-indie ado about nothing and, of course, nearly everything. Sneaks up on you like seizure.

### 4. Silent Light

Mexican troublemaker Carlos Reygadas dares to reinvent Dreyer, and Ordet, among Mexican Mennonites. Physically gorgeous, pensively quiet, and, after a week at MoMA in New York, coming to an arthouse near you.

### 5. Still Life

Jia Zhangke found the ultimate monolithic, life-changing metaphor for modern Chinese life in the Three Gorges Dam, and the vast millennia of history it's obliterating inch by rising-water inch.

### 6. Waltz with Bashir

The best Israeli film ever made? And a doc that's also an animated dream-film? And a direct address of the Sabra and Shatila massacres of 1982? And a cartoon that's unlike any you've ever seen? Incredibly.

### 7. Flight of the Red Balloon

Hou Hsiao-hsien goes to Paris, and brings essential Hou-ness with him. Who could complain?

### 8. The Wrestler

Both Darren Aronofsky and Mickey Rourke redeem themselves and save their souls with this bone-chilling slice of life; what they'll do next is less clear.

### 9. Synecdoche, New York

Maddening, unenjoyable, doggedly pure-hearted nihilism, tricked out with Kaufmanic structuralism but so nakedly lonesome it hurts. I swore I'd never sit through it again, but now, a few months later, I'm thinking I might.

### 10. My Blueberry Nights

Wong Kar-wai comes to America, too, and brings his essential Wongness with him. Where would we be without it? Again, the naysayers will be silenced and shamed in short order.

Runners-up, in order: Times and Winds, The Duchess of Langeais, WALL-E, Appaloosa, Che, Alexandra, Pineapple Express, Jellyfish, Milk, The Edge of Heaven, Boy A, My Father My Lord, Encounters at the End of the World, Snow Angels, Chop Shop, Stuff and Dough, In Bruges

Haven't seen yet: A Christmas Story

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### ABOUT THIS BLOG

Peter Keough tosses away all pretenses of objectivity, good taste and sanity and writes what he damn well pleases under the guise of a film blog.

Peter Keough

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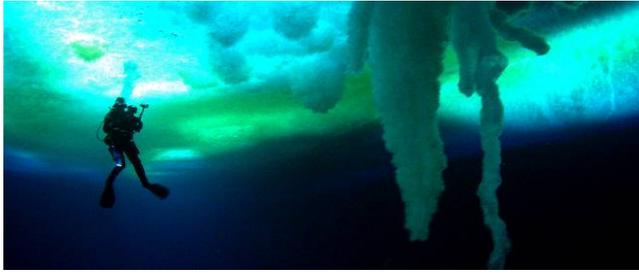
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## Best



## 1. Encounters at the End of the World

Werner Herzog makes another existential documentary like "Grizzly Man" about man and nature, this time in the frozen depths of the Antarctic Ocean.

## 2. Slumdog Millionaire

Danny Boyle tackles India's caste system, world wide capitalism, American pop and Bollywood in one seamless flow.

## 3. Waltz with Bashir

The animated account of an Israeli incursion into Beirut as a cathartic remembrance by the filmmaker is haunting.

## 4. The Visitor

Tom McCarthy ("The Station Agent") weaves together another affecting yarn about disparate lives tossed together.

## 5. Wall-E

Andrew Stanton ("Finding Nemo") gives us robot love and the best family entertainment of the year.

## 6. Milk

Great performances in this portrait of gay political mobilization. Important now more than ever because of Prop 8.

## 7. Let the Right One In

Forget "Twilight," this is the bloodsucking teen drama with teeth.

## 8. Man on Wire

A documentary about the man who tightroped walked between the Twin Towers. It's a veritable "How'd he do that?" reel.

## 9. The Pool

A subtle, haunting coming of age saga in India, that rewards as it builds.

## 10. The Bank Job

The year's best thriller.

## Worst

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## 1. In the Name of the King

Pointless Medieval drivel

## 2. One Missed Call

Just hang up.

## 3. The Ruins

Killer vines, creepy.

## 4. Prom Night

There will never be another Carrie.

## 5. The Spirit

A sinful rehash of "Sin City."

## GERALD PEARY



## BLOG NETWORK

## Outside The Frame

Rudd, Segel and Hamburg, part II 03-16-2009



#### 1. [The Pool](#)

This tremendously accomplished first feature by American documentarian, Chris ("American Movie") Smith, got one week this Fall at the Kendall. Well, grab a DVD of this disarming tale of two street kids in India who become obsessed by the empty swimming pool of a rich family. Subtle and thoughtful, "The Pool" is the anti-"Slumdog Millionaire," more "The White Balloon" or Satyajit Ray, steeped in Indian culture, than hyperkinetic, slumming Danny Boyle.

#### 2. [Milk](#)

It hardly ever happens, that a film this joyous, communal, beautifully realized is also (yawn!) politically correct. Thanks to filmmaker Gus Van Sant, star Sean Penn, and 2008's most committed ensemble — Emile Hirsch, James Franco, et. al. — for a heartfelt celebration of the late Harvey Milk, a true-life superhero.

#### 3. [Chris & Don: a Love Story](#)

Another fabulous gay-themed film, 2008's finest documentary is Guido Santi and Tina Mascara's emotional tale of the three-decade relationship of Cabaret scribe, Christopher Isherwood, and artist Don Bachardy, thirty years younger. The couple lived about LA, and their story is also the cultural history of gay Hollywood. Look quickly for the most unexpected home-movie clip: mystery writer Raymond Chandler paddling about in Isherwood's swimming pool.

#### 4. [Let the Right One In](#)

2008's best foreign film is this Swedish horror movie about the deep, doomed relationship of a lonely young boy and an equally melancholy, desperate female vampire. Properly frightening, "Let the Right Thing" is also tender and genuinely poetic, the most adult horror film in years. What next from filmmaker, Tomas Alfredson, a discovery?

#### 5. [Waltz with Bashir](#)

If only "Wall-E," superb in its first half hour, hadn't turned cute and sentimental! "Waltz with Bashir" never falters, and this graphic memoir-in-motion is 2008's most successful animated work. It's also a courageous political film, in which the filmmaker-narrator, Ari Folman, an ex-soldier, gradually implicates himself in the most horrible deeds, when, in 1982, the Israel military occupied Lebanon.

#### 6. [My Father My Lord](#)

Two films from Israel in my top ten! Set in a Hasidic community in Jerusalem, David Volach's miniaturist parable of religious Jewish life has Old Testament resonance. A prideful rabbi and his wife take their beloved only son for a holiday trip to the Dead Sea, with deadly results. An intensely spiritual movie, whether you are devoutly secular, or a Moses freak.

#### 7. [W](#)

Oliver Stone's best-realized film in twenty years, with Josh Brolin a revelatory George W., delivering 2008's finest acting performance. Not a ditsy caricature! Are you one those who believe the real Bush, Jr., should be condemned to a lifetime of chowing dogfood in a Guantanamo cage? I am. So it's some kind of miracle of Stone storytelling that I was enraptured by the life story of our loathsome prick President.

#### 8. [Trouble the Water](#)

Hurricane Katrina has precipitated an inspired sub-genre of documentaries: "Camp Katrina," "Axe in the Attic," "When the Levees Broke." Swimming to the top is Tia Lessin and Carl Deal's "Trouble the Water," with its vivid, amazing maelstrom-in-your-face home movies of the dire floodings, and the heaven-made rap songs of Kimberly Rivers Roberts, the movie's never-say-die, African-American protagonist.

#### 9. [In Bruges](#)

An old-fashioned gangland neo-noir, with an unusual Belgian locale, and a zesty script by Irish playwright Martin McDonagh, who also, a first-time helmer, provided the deft direction. The hit-man cast is likewise great, especially big-bodied, gunsel-with-a-heart-of-gold, Brendan Gleeson, 2008's Best Supporting Actor.

#### 10. [Our Disappeared](#)

2008 was another banner year for excellent Boston documentaries. I can name a half-dozen of them, all intelligent, high-minded works. Juan Mandelbaum's "Our Disappeared" is at the top of the list for its unflinching reopening of Argentina's dirty war on the left during the 1970s, when thousands of people were murdered, "disappeared," including a charming ex-girlfriend of the filmmaker. The most chilling moment in a 2008 film: Henry Kissinger, there on the spot in Buenos Aires, blithely endorsing the killing-fields military government.

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