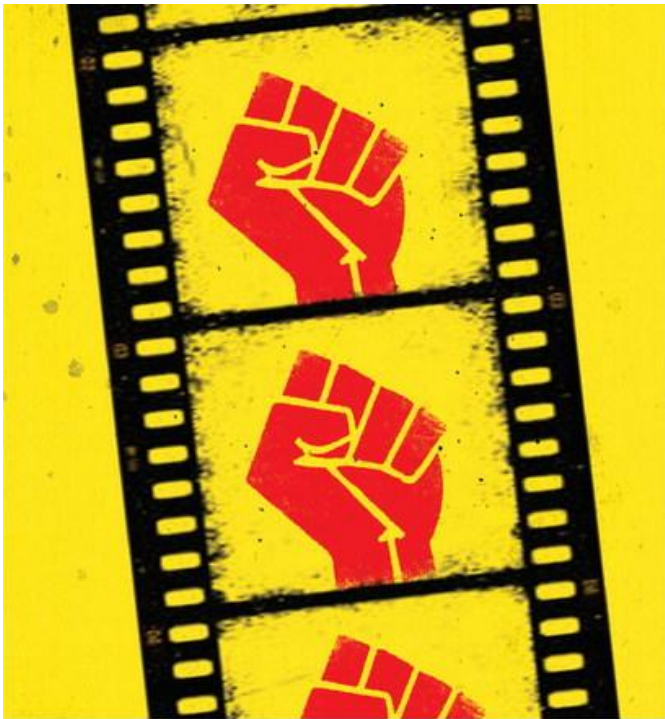


Today's movies should be excoriated, not celebrated

For the sake of your sanity, see fewer films

[Washington Times](#), By Don Feder, March 16, 2026



Last evening, at the 98th annual Academy Awards ceremony, Hollywood did what it does best: celebrate itself.

Between predictable outbursts of Trump derangement syndrome, the motion picture industry showcased its artistic achievements.

Jack the Ripper probably considered the mutilated corpses he left behind artistic too.

Movies have a huge impact on our lives. They have the power that the written word once had in shaping the values of society, especially for the young. We watch them, quote them, rate them and anticipate new releases.

Cinema can exalt or degrade. It can educate or obfuscate. It can inspire or alienate. It can make us more thoughtful or less sensitive.

On the whole, modern movies are a parade of sadism, eroticism and despair. Often, it seems today's films are produced by mental patients with cameras.

Hollywood offers an endless array of romantic vampires, humorous zombie hunters, extraterrestrials (of both the "Alien" and "E.T." variety), end-of-the-world scenarios, sadistic killers and revenge fantasies. They are occasionally amusing, but more often are excuses for gratuitous sex, blood and brain matter splattered across the screen and portraits of life in the gutter.

Those that touch on politics are paeans to political correctness based on the premise that businessmen, Republicans, police and military personnel are evil, that traditional religion is oppressive and delusional and that liberal dogma, such as man-made climate change, is incontrovertible truth.

Whereas films of an earlier era celebrated faith, family and patriotism, today's do their best to debunk them.

Scientists are venerated as saviors of humanity, while businessmen are portrayed as so driven by the pursuit of profit that they are blind to any other consideration. In the “Jurassic Park” franchise, the businessman always gets eaten by a dinosaur in the end as punishment for his greed.

In an inversion of reality, women are strong and resolute, while men are the masculine equivalent of damsels in distress. In action films, women always have well-honed kickboxing skills. Charlton Heston once told me that nothing comes out of Hollywood that hasn’t been approved by feminists.

If you wonder why a recent Fox News poll shows that 53% of those younger than 30 favor socialism, look no further than movies. Youths are indoctrinated by cinema more than any other medium. How much time does the average adolescent spend in school compared with staring at a screen?

Hollywood’s principal product is nihilism, the idea that human life is the result of a random collision of molecules and existence is meaningless. That Hollywood is high on hopelessness is understandable. Look at the lives of those who make movies.

Compare the degree of addiction, alcoholism and mental illness among the general population with entertainment industry insiders. We allow them to instruct the young on values.

No major studio could make a movie like the 1946 Jimmy Stewart classic, “It’s A Wonderful Life,” whose message of hope is articulated by an angel: “Strange, isn’t it? Each man’s life touches so many other lives. When he isn’t around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?” Occasionally, gems are floating in the sewage, movies such as “Darkest Hour,” “The King’s Speech” and “The Boys in the Boat.”

They are increasingly rare and almost always set safely in the past. Two actors who died in the past year symbolized what Hollywood used to be. Gene Hackman starred in one of the best sports movies of all time, “Hoosiers,” which showcases tenacity, endurance and integrity. Robert Duvall won an Oscar for “Tender Mercies,” about a down-on his-luck country singer who is redeemed by honest hard work and love. It also includes a positive portrayal of religion, exceedingly rare in cinema today.

The descent from “Shane” (1953), about a man with an inflexible code of honor, to “Shame” (2011), about a man without honor addicted to anonymous sex, was gradual. The stages included film noir of the 1940s and ’50s, anti-war movies of the ’70s (such as

“The Deer Hunter” and “Platoon”) and exposes of the supposed hypocrisy of middle-class life (such as “The Graduate” and “American Beauty”).

Cinema does more to shape public attitudes than all of the revisionist history, political posturing, media manipulation and product advertising combined.

Instead of uplifting, cinema of the 21st century is depressing and disgusting.

Americans spend an estimated \$225 billion annually on mental health treatment and services. They would be better off seeing fewer films instead.

Don Feder is a columnist with The Washington Times