

Entertainment: The 10 Most Redeeming Films of 2009

The Oscars are still a few weeks away, but most publications and critics—not to mention The Golden Globes—have long since picked their top movies of 2009. So now it's our turn.

This week we feature our 10 Most Redeeming Films of 2009. What do we mean by "redeeming"? We mean movies that include stories of redemption—sometimes blatantly, sometimes less so. Several of our films have characters who are redeemers themselves; all of them have characters who experience redemption to some degree—some quite clearly, some more subtly. Some are "feel-good" movies that leave a smile on your face; some are a bit more uncomfortable to watch. But the redemptive element is there in all of these films.



1. Up

directed by Pete Docter

It's got talking dogs piloting fighter planes and a house that floats to South America on the strength of a thousand balloons, but the most outrageous thing about *Up*? It's a summer blockbuster that's head-over-heels for the joys of marriage. Here lifelong commitment isn't a burden; it's an adventure.—*Josh Hurst*



2. The Blind Side

directed by John Lee Hancock

The Touhys, a well-to-do white family, can't ignore the needs of a homeless African-American boy. Instead of just lending a hand, they make him family. This real-life story of NFL player Michael Oher shows a great example of Christian compassion. We can't save the world, but we can love the ones God puts in our path.—*Camerin Courtney*



3. Invictus

directed by Clint Eastwood

This is much more than just another sports movie or "another Clint Eastwood awards season movie." It's a beautiful portrait of forgiveness and a model for how reconciliation can happen in reality, and how politics can employ things like sports and poetry in the service of national renewal.—*Brett McCracken*



4. **The Road**

directed John Hillcoat

Despite the bleak and sometimes terrifying post-apocalyptic milieu, this film—based on the book by Cormac McCarthy—stands out from other recent end-times flicks in its tenacious, audacious insistence on hope in the midst of darkness. Plus it's one of the most loving father-son relationships ever depicted on the big screen.—*Mark Moring*



5. **The Soloist**

directed by Joe Wright

This true tale of the unlikely relationship between a newspaper columnist and a musically gifted, mentally ill homeless man is a testament to the power of friendship. There are no easy answers here and the homeless problem among the mentally ill is clearly epidemic, but for *both* of these men, care and companionship are transformative.—*Lisa Cockrel*



6. **Where the Wild Things Are**

directed by Spike Jonze

Jonze reimagines Maurice Sendak's tale of high-spirited rebellion as a meditation on childhood insecurity in a messy world in which nothing—families, forests, even the Sun—lasts forever. *Wild Things* knows both a child's drowning sense of trying to hold together a broken family and the comfort of a mother's embrace, a calm center in a storm of uncertainty.—*Steven D. Greydanus*



7. **District 9**

directed by Neil Blomkamp

Using aliens and spaceships, *District 9* actually gives new perspective on humans—their ugliness, racism, and greedy self-preservation. Perhaps because it shows a realistically dark world, we can see what shines. And because the main character is a complex mash-up of good and evil, his ultimate redemptive choice is powerful.—*Todd Hertz*



8. **The Hurt Locker**

directed by Kathryn Bigelow

A group of soldiers spend their days in combat and their nights shooting it out in video games; they see violence as macho and cool, but we see it as a deadly addiction. A lot of war movies turn our hearts to

anger, but this one fills us with compassion for the people whose lives are caught in the crossfire.—*Josh Hurst*



9. Julie & Julia

directed by Nora Ephron

It's rare to see happy marriages portrayed in Hollywood—after all, no tension is boring. In contrast, *Julie & Julia* presents us with not one, but two marriages in which the husbands and wives genuinely love one another and stand ready to support, encourage, and laugh together. A feast, indeed.—*Alissa Wilkinson*



10. Up in the Air

directed by Jason Reitman

The core characters may not always behave honorably, but that's the point of this cautionary parable about investing more in selfish pursuits than in relationships. How sadly ironic that Ryan Bingham so skillfully helps others find hope and meaning in unemployment, yet can't find any in his own cocoon—though there's hope even for him.—*Russ*

Breimeier