

Movies

From Page 7B

hadn't been doing it this way for so long, is this the way we'd begin if we were starting today? Like our use of oil. You could ask the same question if the automobile was being invented today. Would we really be going oil?"

Hollywood is giving a fresh start to familiar titles and characters. Among them: the animated sequel "Happy Feet Two," with Elijah Wood's tap-dancing penguin coping with fatherhood issues; "Puss in Boots," an animated "Shrek" spinoff chronicling the early adventures of Antonio Banderas' gutsy cat; "The Muppets," the first big-screen outing in more than a decade for the beloved puppet gang; "Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked!," with the talking rodents stranded on a remote island; "The Thing," a prequel to the 1982 horror tale about Antarctic researchers terrorized by an organism that replicates human forms; and "Footloose," with newcomer Kenny Wormald as a youth rebelling against a town's ban on dancing.

"Footloose" director Craig Brewer was 13 when he saw the 1984 original. It was a seminal movie for Brewer, whose credits include the acclaimed "Hustle & Flow," and it bothered him when the remake was announced and people asked, "why would you want to do some tripe like 'Footloose'?"

"Are you kidding? 'Footloose' rocked my world. It really rocked my world," Brewer said. "I made it for a new generation, but I'm a filmmaker because of 'Footloose.' I think I'm actually a better man because of 'Footloose.'"

Peter Jackson shares similar childhood fondness for "Tintin," on which "The Lord of the Rings" filmmaker is a producer. New Zealander Jackson said that Belgian writer Herge's stories of intrepid young reporter Tintin are as popular there as they are in Europe.

But like most Americans, Spielberg never heard of Tintin until he was in his 30s, only discovering Herge's storybooks after French critics compared the character to Indiana Jones when 1981's "Raiders of the Lost Ark" came out.

"Indiana Jones is a chiseled character and I guess has a different kind of tenacity," said Spielberg, whose film stars Jamie Bell in a performance-capture role as Tintin, with computer animation providing the final look of the characters. "Tintin is much more of a Boy Scout. He's a reporter, but he begins by reporting a story that is always about a mystery that needs to be solved or a puzzle that needs solving, and he winds up becoming the story. You're not supposed to do that, I think, in journalism. You're not supposed to become the story."

Spielberg also directs the live action "War Horse," which follows the travels of a horse that journeys from rural England through the battlefields of Europe during World War I.

Other films for the fall and holidays include "Tower Heist," with Ben Stiller and Eddie Murphy orchestrating a revenge raid on a swindling tycoon; "Arthur Christmas," an animated adventure about a youth (voiced by James McAvoy) who delves into Santa's high-tech operation; "Real Steel," starring Hugh Jackman as an ex-fighter training a robot boxer in a world where machines have taken over in the ring; "In Time," featuring Justin Timberlake on the run in a future where people scramble for time allotments to stay alive; "Immortals," with Henry Cavill and Freida Pinto in a clash of ancient Greek gods and heroes; and "The Big Year," casting Steve Martin, Jack Black and Owen Wilson as rivals in a bird-watching competition.

Also, "Dream House," starring Daniel Craig and Rachel Weisz as a couple whose new home holds terrible secrets; "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close," with Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock in a drama about a boy convinced that his father left a final message before his death in the Sept. 11 attacks; "New Year's Eve," an ensemble tale set on the last night of the year that features Halle Berry, Robert De Niro, Sarah Jessica Parker, Jessica Biel and Hilary Swank; "The Sitter," with Jonah Hill as the world's worst babysitter; "Young Adult," starring Charlize Theron as a writer reconnecting with hometown classmates; and "Contagion," tracing a deadly virus as it sweeps around the globe.

Directed by Steven Soderbergh, "Contagion" has an all-star ensemble led by Matt Damon, Kate Winslet, Gwyneth Paltrow, Laurence Fishburne, Marion Cotillard and Jude Law. Shunning Hollywood conventions, Soderbergh aimed for a fact-based thriller that would authentically capture how authori-

ties and the general public might respond to a viral threat.

"The more realistic it is, the scarier it is, and we just spent a lot of time not only on the science, but sort of analyzing interpersonal behavior in these kinds of situations," Soderbergh said. "It was a challenge to try and avoid the things that were kind of movie tropes, and yet keep it entertaining and keep the thing sort of moving along."

While Soderbergh wants to put audiences on alert, the Muppets just want to put on a show.

"The Muppets" features Jason Segel and Amy Adams as a couple helping to reunite Kermit, Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear and their friends for a telethon to save the

Muppet theater from the clutches of an evil oilman (Chris Cooper).

Also a co-writer of the movie, Segel said that much as he loves his R-rated comedies, he's always been drawn to the wholesome message of the Muppets.

"I have a real affinity for things that are good, that are nice and are teaching kids to be kind to each other," Segel said. "It's really easy to get a laugh making fun of somebody, and I think too readily people rely on that. And the Muppets never did. Their whole message is about kindness."

O'Donnell: No Hard Feelings For CNN's Morgan

NEW YORK (AP) — Former U.S. Senate candidate Christine O'Donnell said Thursday she has no hard feelings toward CNN's Piers Morgan after walking off his show, but has declined an invitation to return.

The Delaware Republican, invited to appear on Morgan's prime-time show Wednesday to promote her new book, became angry after Morgan asked whether or not she supported gay marriage. She said he was "borderline being a bit rude" and said she wanted to talk about topics in the book. "Troublemaker: Let's Do What It Takes to Make America Great Again."

Morgan pressed on, asking her what she felt about the "don't ask,

don't tell" policy toward gays and lesbians in the U.S. military, and O'Donnell didn't want to talk about it.

Morgan said he didn't think he was being rude. "I think I'm being charming and respectful," he said. Someone said off-camera to O'Donnell that it was "time to go," and she took off her microphone and left. Morgan later said it was his first walk-out in 25 years of conducting interviews.

Before the question about gay marriage, Morgan had asked O'Donnell "Do you still think masturbation is wrong?", "Are you still a supporter of total abstinence?" and "Have you committed lust in your heart?"

"If you watch the full interview, you'll see I was more than a good sport with his prior inappropriate and double-standard line of questions," O'Donnell said in a statement Thursday. "We had already gone over our time limit and were late for a Women's National Republican Club speech being shown on C-SPAN. No hard feelings and I wish Piers all the best in his future endeavors."

CNN invited O'Donnell back on Morgan's show Thursday, but she declined. Joseph Rinaldi, a spokesman for her publisher, said she was already booked with other events.

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