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A Look Back On A Sweet Movie Year

With The Academy Awards Looming, The P&D's Nathan Johnson Lists The 2012 Films That Made Him Laugh, Cry And Squeal

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Be honest. I fooled you. Come on, I know you thought year-end list season was over and the only list you'd have to read about these days was the elusive Yankton County tax list.

Well, my film list is important. It's the most important. And I didn't want you to miss it among the lists of "Everything That Is Less Important Than NATHAN'S FILM LIST."

With the Oscars approaching Feb. 24, it's a perfect excuse for me to look back on the year in film that was 2012. It was a good one.

Let's begin with my personal best picture nominees:

10. "Beyond the Black Rainbow" — Imagine throwing together some Stanley Kubrick, David Cronenberg and David Lynch, along with an awesome Moog synthesizer soundtrack, and you might get this Canadian film that is heavy on mood and light on plot but absolutely mesmerizing. Fun fact: It was made in large part with DVD residuals from the movie, "Tombstone."

9. "Django Unchained" — I vastly preferred Quentin Tarantino's Spaghetti Western revenge fantasy to his last film, "Inglourious Basterds." I loved that he even makes room for the original Django, actor Franco Nero.

8. "Kill List" — This film takes the aging hitman genre, the domestic drama genre and the horror genre to gloomy and tense new heights. This would have made a much better sequel to "The Wicker Man" than the terrible "The Wicker Tree."

7. "Cloud Atlas" — This movie is perhaps the most beautiful visualization I've seen of a symphony. All the parts fit together, and it's up to you to keep up with them. Beautiful and unfairly maligned by some critics.

6. "The Comedy" — Warning: This is not a comedy. Rather, it's an endurance test with a character who may really not have any redeeming qualities. But darn if I didn't find myself watching it two times in 24 hours and pondering it for some time later. Director Rick Alverson is a real talent.

5. "Killing Them Softly" — Ostensibly, this is a film about crime. But it's actually a story about how America is not a country. It's just a business. Better pay up before Brad Pitt comes to collect.

4. "The Master" — You had me at (director) Paul Thomas Anderson. Say no more.

3. "Once Upon a Time in Anatolia" — In this story, the aftermath of a violent act is drawn out to absurd lengths. But in those long, lingering moments we learn much about humanity and the power of a small act of mercy.

2. "The Kid with a Bike" — Perhaps the simplest but most moving movie I saw all year. It doesn't stray far from the title, but to see "the kid" grow is a wonderful thing. All in a film's work for the Belgian directing team, the Dardenne brothers.

1. "Moonrise Kingdom" — Such a complete mythical world. It's like something my brother, cousins and I would dream up — or at least want to dream up — as children. I've seen "Moonrise Kingdom" three times now, and I

may be ready to declare it my favorite Wes Anderson film, which is saying quite a lot.

BEST DOCUMENTARIES:

- 10. "Jiro Dreams of Sushi" — I thought I loved sushi. I've got nothing on Jiro.
- 9. "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth" —

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TOP: Michael Rogers is a sinister, reptilian scientist in "Beyond the Black Rainbow." (Magnet Releasing) MIDDLE: Scout Master Ward (played by Edward Norton) leads a group of scouts in the magical "Moonrise Kingdom." (Focus Features) BOTTOM: "The Kid with a Bike" scored big at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011 when it won the Grand Prix. It finally got a U.S. release in 2012. (Courtesy Photo)



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