

# Good year for independent films

2004 was not a banner year in conventional film. The biggest commercial successes were studio remakes and sequels and vapid stuff aimed at children and adolescents.

It was a good year for independent film, as *The Passion of the Christ* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* raked in the dough after shocking and polarizing viewing audiences all over the world.

Documentaries came on strong, from *The Fog of War* to *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster* and *Control Room* about the Aljazeera TV network.

Foreign films were, in general, more interesting than Hollywood's offerings, *Facing Windows*, *A Very Long Engagement*, *Shaolin Soccer* and *The Grudge*. But good news is that my starting point list for best is far longer than that of the worst and, after much consideration, I present the top and bottom picks, without apology.

Yes, I know there are lots of others I could have picked, but here you have it.



Anne Brodie

On Movies

## BEST OF 2004

**Vera Drake** - a nearly perfect film in which life is played for real. Stupendous



work by Imelda Staunton who plays a lovable psychopath.

**The Aviator** - glorious fun and games with psychological elements. That Howard Hughes!

**Sideways** - a tonic to watch and experience. Regular folks doing regular things over a glass of red. Or white. But no merlot!

**City of God** - a sobering look at life in developing nations and the untouchables, whose daily lives are superhuman struggles.

**The Fog of War** - American war-monger turned apologist Robert McNamara details American military aggression as though it was a disease.

**The Passion of the Christ**

- the bravest film on the books.

**The Incredibles** - middle-aged crazy and middle-aged fun.

**Collateral** - zoomin' Cruise through a long, long, riveting night in LA.

**Runners-Up:** *Ray*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Stage Beauty*, *Open Water*, *The Life Aquatic*, *Maria Full of Grace*, *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*, *We Don't Live Here Anymore*, *P.S., In Good Company*.

## WORST OF 2004

**Fat Albert** - I drove 30 minutes in a blizzard for this?

**Alexander** - a weird, hallucinatory world in which the screenwriter and director are at large without



leave. Too dusty.

**Christmas with the Kranks** - such a disappointment for John Grisham and

his first crack at comedy.

**Laws of Attraction** - a criminal misuse of Julianne Moore's talents and Pierce Brosnan's native wit. Officer!

**Stepford Wives** - Nicole Kidman turned down some sweet roles for this misguided remake. I loved her clothes.

**Head in the Clouds** - that this exists at all is a disappointment. Vanity project for lead actors who happen to be dating. Tight close-ups of beautiful people not enough.

**Dawn of the Dead** - grindingly dull, an insult to all zombies.

**Closer** - Don't get me started.

**Godsend** - D.G.M.S.

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