

Yardeni Research, Inc.



**A Serious Man (+)** is the latest offbeat flick from Joel and Ethan Coen. It's very funny. The protagonist is a professor of mathematics, a serious subject that focuses on the meaning of numbers and seeks proofs to explain their relationships. The movie is about the meaning of life and our relationships with one another and with God. The Coens seem to conclude that the only certainty is the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle: If you know where an electron is, you don't know how fast it is going. If you know how fast it is going, you don't know where it is. In Hollywood, they don't believe in universal truths. Everything is relative.

**Amelia (+)** is a movie that ends badly for obvious reasons. Amelia Earhart ran out of fuel and luck over the Pacific on July 2, 1937. She was a risk taker. She followed the lead of her promoter husband in leveraging her fame as a female flyer by endorsing all sorts of branded merchandise. She defended her crass materialism by saying she needed the money to finance her adventures in the air. Wall Street's high flyers also take lots of risks to finance their over-the-top lifestyles. However, when they run out of luck, the government is there to refuel them.

**An Education (+ +)** is a tough movie to watch if you have a teenage daughter. Don't let her go off to Paris with an older guy, even if he claims that his auntie will chaperone. However, the young leading lady is played to perfection by Carey Mulligan.

**Angels & Demons (+)** must have been an entertaining movie because it didn't seem to be 138 minutes long. It was a better movie than "The Da Vinci Code." This time, Tom Hanks wasn't quite as comatose playing the lead role of symbologist Robert Langdon. Nevertheless, the anti-matter stuff in a jar with two electromagnets powered by a battery was ridiculous. So was the chopper and parachute scene.

**Chéri (- -)** shows that Michelle Pfeiffer is aging beautifully. The screenplay is based on a 1920 novel by Colette about the end of a six-year affair between an aging retired courtesan, Léa, and a pampered young man, Chéri. Colette divorced Henri in 1924 after a much talked-about affair with her stepson, Bertrand de Jouvenel, who was a famous French philosopher, political economist, and futurist. The movie is dull all around. It is badly filmed. The dialogue is lame. However, Michelle is aging beautifully.

**Doubt (+ + +)** features outstanding performances by Meryl Streep and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Streep plays a stern Catholic nun who is the very strict principal of a Catholic school. She has no doubt about the character of the priest played by Hoffman.

**Frost/Nixon (+ + +)** is a truly fascinating movie about David Frost's interview with Richard Nixon. Frank Langella's portrayal of Nixon is outstanding and should win him the Oscar. Frost was hoping to get an apology from Nixon for his criminal behavior. Nixon obfuscated and easily hit all of Frost's softballs out of the park. Nixon lost the game when Frost started tossing a couple of hardballs as the interview was almost over. Nixon then lamented, "I let down my friends. I let down the country. I let down our system of government and dreams of all those young people that ought to get into government. . . . My political life is over." A similarly startling admission was provided by Alan Greenspan last year on October 22 before a Congressional committee: "I found a flaw in the model that I perceived is the critical functioning structure that defines how the world works, so to speak." He added, "That's precisely the reason I was shocked, because I had been going for 40 years or more with very considerable evidence that it was working exceptionally well."

**Inglourious Basterds (+ +)** is another amusement ride provided by Quentin Tarantino. If you enjoyed "Kill Bill," which I did, you'll probably like this movie too, which could be subtitled, "Kill Adolf." Stealing the show is a really manic performance by Christoph Waltz as a Nazi SS colonel.

**Julie & Julia (+ +)** is a fun movie with Meryl Streep clearly having a great time playing Julia Child. Amy Adams plays Julie Powell, who wrote a popular blog about her experience of cooking all of the recipes in Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking." The fun is interrupted briefly by the federal government (of course), which was cooking up communist conspiracy charges against American citizens.

**Law Abiding Citizen (+)** is a movie about a vigilante played by Gerard Butler. It's a genre flick with some clever twists and turns. It's also very violent, unlike the Bond Vigilantes, who've been remarkably tame of late. That could change.

**Merry Gentleman (+)** is a slow paced film about a suicidal hit man, a fat cop, a psycho cop, and his abused wife. Michael Keaton, who directed the film, also plays the killer, who isn't such a bad guy after all despite his profession. The movie is about ordinary people brought together by a few unusual circumstances. It's a bit off-beat, but entertaining.

**Pirate Radio (+ +)** is good fun with lots of great Rock & Roll songs from the early 1960s. The good guys are the radio pirates, i.e., entrepreneurs who broadcast the banned music from ships anchored in international waters off the coast of England. The bad guys were the government officials who banned them.

**Public Enemies (+ + +)** features Johnny Depp playing John Dillinger, the infamous depression-era bank robber. The gangster was a media sensation at a time when stealing from banks was viewed by some of the public as a good thing. Today, the banks and other financial institutions are stealing from the public. Among the biggest heists of all times are the Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Merrill Lynch, AIG, and GM swindles. The July issue of Vanity Fair has a cover story about Johnny Depp. The August issue includes an article by Michael Lewis about Joseph Cassano, the former head of AIG's rogue Financial Products unit. Cassano is no John Dillinger, but he certainly did a lot more damage. In the article, Lewis noted that New York attorney general Andrew Cuomo said he might investigate why AIG paid Goldman \$12.9 billion to cover the massive bets against US subprime mortgages that had been made with AIG. I, for one, would like to know why Goldman Sachs and other Wall Street firms were allowed to abscond with so much of the rescue money that AIG received from the government.

**Revolutionary Road (+)** is about working in the city and living in the suburbs during the 1950s. I don't work in the city any more. But I do live in the suburbs. I didn't realize how miserable people must be living out here until I saw the movie, which is a bit on the hysterical side. I would like to thank the Academy for the Oscar for best original movie reviews by an investment strategist.

**Star Trek (++)** is the first prequel of the enduring tale of the Starship Enterprise and its multi-galaxy crew. I'm sure there will be sequels to this prequel. If you are a Trekkie, you won't be disappointed. The latest movie stays true to the TV show and is very well cast. The story line is fairly conventional stuff with black holes sucking up planets the way that bad loans are sucking up bank capital. We Earthlings should continue to overcome evil doers and the recession. Let's repeat Spock's mantra, "Live long and prosper." Maureen Dowd, in her 5/9 NYT column, sees a similarity between our President and Spock. I don't see it.

**State of Play (+)** with Russell Crowe is entertaining, though it has a leftist agenda. Once again Hollywood is patriotically warning us about a right-wing conspiracy. This time, a corporation called Pointcorp is conspiring to have Congress privatize homeland security. This would amount to a \$40bn windfall for the company run by retired American military personal, i.e., "mercenaries." In the real world, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano met with the American Legion on Friday, April 24, to apologize for a report written by her agency on potential right-wing extremism among veterans of the war in Iraq. Napolitano blamed one of her agency's analysts for prematurely sending out the intelligence assessment to law enforcement. The report says veterans returning from Iraq or Afghanistan could be susceptible to right-wing recruiters or commit lone acts of violence.

**Sunshine Cleaning (+)** is a bit like a sequel to "Little Miss Sunshine." Indeed, it has Alan Arkin playing the same grumpy grandpa role in both to a sweet, but offbeat grandchild. Life is tough, but there are opportunities in cleaning up crime scenes. Little Miss Sunshine grows up and starts a new business called Sunshine Cleaning. Despite the severe recession she prospers as the murder rate soars in Albuquerque.

**Taken (+ +)** is one of the best action-packed thrillers I have seen in a long time. It really kept me on the edge of my seat. Liam Neeson was just as good at playing the action hero as Bruce Willis in the "Die Hard" movies. The world is full of corrupt humans. Among the worst are the traffickers in female slaves. Why is the most intelligent species on Earth also the most depraved?

**Taking of Pelham 123 (-)** is bad, though not awful. The subway hijacker is played by John Travolta, who has become a caricature of himself. Instead of a standard Middle Eastern terrorist, he plays a homicidal maniac has-been from Wall Street. The fallen Masters of the Universe have become Hollywood's new villains.

**Taking Woodstock (+)** reminds me of all the fun that I missed when I didn't go to the Woodstock Festival during August 15-18, 1969. I was entering my sophomore year in college at that time, and I wasn't into rock concerts and drugs. Most of the crowd also missed the festival because the police closed the New York State Thruway as a result of the traffic jam. Apparently, many of the hippies camped out along the way and took LSD to hallucinate that they were at Woodstock. Some of them may be in Washington now, and still hallucinating.

**The Blind Side (+ +)** is based on the remarkable story of Michael Oher, the offensive tackle who was just drafted by the Baltimore Ravens. Sandra Bullock finally has a serious role, and performs it purposefully as the rich white lady from Memphis who "adopts" Michael.

**The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (+ +)** features Brad Pitt reprising Tom Hanks playing the lead role in "Forrest Gump." Both movies are worth seeing because of the fine performances by these two outstanding actors. The plots are similar. Both follow the lives of charming, but eccentric characters who don't fit into our society. So they provide a unique perspective on the meaning of life.

**The Hurt Locker (+ + +)** is a really interesting and gripping movie about an American bomb squad in Iraq. A Vietnam vet recently told me that war is really a high as long as you don't get killed or maimed. This movie is probably about as close as you can get to understanding this without actually experiencing the real thing.

**The Informant! (+ +)** is a really fun and funny movie about price fixing by agribusiness giant ADM. The scheme cost consumers millions of dollars. Matt Damon does a great job of playing Mark Whitacre, who worked in a high-level position within the agricultural company and was an informant for the FBI. Whitacre was a very odd fellow with bipolar issues. So he naturally tried to have it both ways. He actually thought he might get promoted to CEO by ratting on his colleagues.

**The Invention of Lying (+)** attacks religion in a clever and humorous fashion. It should have been titled, "The Invention of God." It is similar to Bill Maher's "Religulous." Maher's movie was like a Michael Moore documentary, while "Lying" is more like a dating movie in which the atheist finds true love. Apparently, Hollywood is turning against God, as well as the ethics and morals promoted by religion. That's not surprising given how quickly many of Hollywood's elite jumped to defend Roman Polanski.

**The Messenger (+ +)** is a grim and finely acted movie about two soldiers tasked with personally informing families when their loved ones have been killed in Iraq or Afghanistan. Ben Foster and Woody Harrelson provide intense performances as the messengers from the Army's Casualty Notification service.

**The Wrestler (+)** confirms that the sport is fake. However, the combatants still manage to get hurt and to bleed to satisfy the blood lust of their fans. It's all very gross. Mickey Rourke makes a great career comeback, though I'm not sure that he can do much more than play the part of an aging wrestler.

**Valkyrie** (+) and **Defiance** (+ +) make for a good double feature about the attempt to kill Adolph Hitler and the horror he unleashed on European Jews. The first film is about the failed assassination. The second is about the remarkable struggle of more than 1,000 Jewish men, woman, and children hunted by their Nazi persecutors to hide and survive in a forest in Belarus. Tom Cruise was fairly convincing as the German general with the briefcase bomb. Daniel Craig was defiant as the group's real-life hero, Tuvia Bielski.

**Copyright (c) Yardeni Research, Inc. 2009.** All rights reserved. The information contained herein has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, but is not necessarily complete and its accuracy cannot be guaranteed. No representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to the fairness, accuracy, completeness, or correctness of the information and opinions contained herein. The views and the other information provided are subject to change without notice. This report and the others posted on [www.yardeni.com](http://www.yardeni.com) are issued without regard to the specific investment objectives, financial situation, or particular needs of any specific recipient and are not to be construed as a solicitation or an offer to buy or sell any securities or related financial instruments. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future results. Company fundamentals and earnings may be mentioned occasionally, but should not be construed as a recommendation to buy, sell, or hold the company's stock. Predictions, forecasts, estimates for any and all markets should not be construed as recommendations to buy, sell, or hold any security--including mutual funds, futures contracts, and exchange traded funds, or any similar instruments.

The text, images, and other materials contained or displayed on any Yardeni Research, Inc. product, service, report, email or website are proprietary to Yardeni Research, Inc. and constitute valuable intellectual property. No material from any part of [www.yardeni.com](http://www.yardeni.com) may be downloaded, transmitted, broadcast, transferred, assigned, reproduced or in any other way used or otherwise disseminated in any form to any person or entity, without the explicit written consent of Yardeni Research, Inc. All unauthorized reproduction or other use of material from Yardeni Research, Inc. shall be deemed willful infringement(s) of this copyright and other proprietary and intellectual property rights, including but not limited to, rights of privacy. Yardeni Research, Inc. expressly reserves all rights in connection with its intellectual property, including without limitation the right to block the transfer of its products and services and/or to track usage thereof, through electronic tracking technology, and all other lawful means, now known or hereafter devised. Yardeni Research, Inc. reserves the right, without further notice, to pursue to the fullest extent allowed by the law any and all criminal and civil remedies for the violation of its rights.

The recipient should check any email and any attachments for the presence of viruses. Yardeni Research, Inc. accepts no liability for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this company's emails or website. Additional information available on request.