

Dr. Ed's Movie Reviews

2025

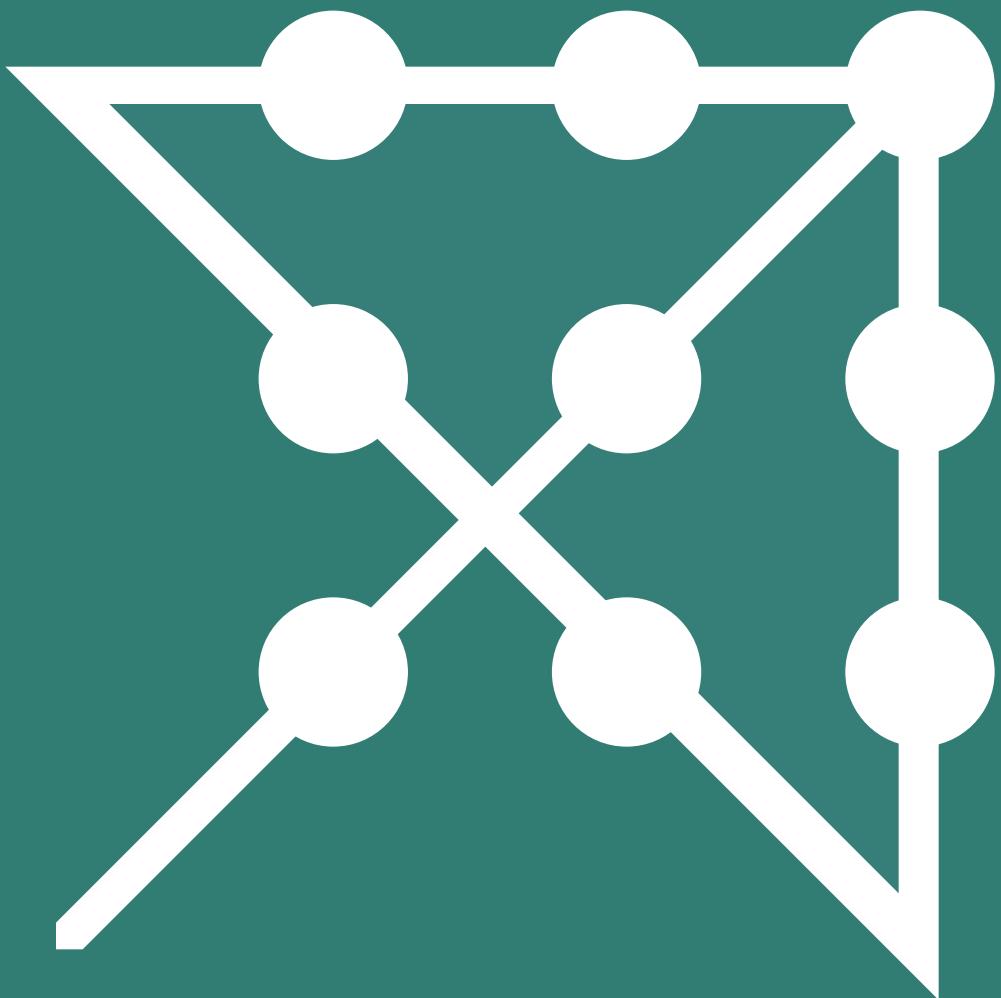
Yardeni Research, Inc.

Dr. Edward Yardeni

516-972-7683

eyardeni@yardeni.com

Please visit our sites at
www.yardeni.com
blog.yardeni.com



thinking outside the box

“A Complete Unknown” (++) is a 2024 musical drama about Bob Dylan, starring Timothée Chalamet. Lots of Dylan’s great songs are featured, with Chalamet doing a good job of singing them. Dylan comes across as self-absorbed and obsessed with his privacy. He has a couple of girlfriends in the film, including Joan Baez. Both women are frustrated that he doesn’t share more about himself with them. He comes across as socially awkward and a complete unknown. However, he does relate well to Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Johnny Cash.

“American Primeval” (++) is a Netflix series that has been condemned by the LDS Church because it depicts Brigham Young, the founder of the Utah-based Mormon faith, as an unscrupulous and violent fanatic. The series certainly isn’t a docudrama. Instead, it is a reminder of the violence of the Wild West with massacres aplenty, especially by the pioneers against Native American Indians. No one is disputing that aspect of the series. The series is beautifully filmed, constantly reminding us of the harmony and peacefulness of nature that was so often disturbed by all the violence of the Wild West.

“Audrey’s Children” (++) is an inspiring 2025 biopic that shines a light on the remarkable life and work of Dr Audrey Evans. Set mostly in 1969, the British physician became a pioneer in pediatric oncology at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). She faced sexism, institutional resistance, and the obstacles of medical conventions. Still, she pushed forward innovations: creating a staging system for neuroblastoma (a childhood cancer), experimenting with combination chemotherapy, and advocating for families of young cancer patients by helping to found what became the first Ronald McDonald House.

“Blitz” (+) stars Saoirse Ronan as a mother of a young boy who is evacuated to the British countryside when the Germans bombed London during World War II. He jumps off the train, determined to return home. Along the way he dodges several harrowing perils attributable to the blitz. There are plenty of scenes that recreate the devastation caused by the bombardment. But the story line and the acting aren’t compelling.

“Companion” (++) is a very entertaining 2025 movie about the not-too-distant future. It’s about a weekend getaway to a remote lakeside house. A few of the characters are murdered. Some but not all of the perpetrators are in it for the money. Others are just trying to stay alive. It’s a fun and funny plot about humans and humanoids.

“Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale” (+) 2025, is the final movie to end a wonderful TV series. Although each character’s storyline is wrapped up with a satisfying ending, there is no plot to speak of. Still, it’s nice to see all these characters again and listen to the iconic soundtrack. I will miss Carson most of all.

“Eddington” (++) is a very quirky 2025 movie starring Joaquin Phoenix, who is a very quirky actor. He does a great job acting as the sheriff of a small town in New Mexico. His life changes forever when he decides to run as mayor. It’s a fun satire set in the Covid period, when many of us almost lost our minds. The sheriff must contend with face-mask disputes and anti-cop-no-justice-no-peace demonstrators in his little town, as well as his conspiracy-loving mother-in-law. ANTIFA and BLM are thrown into the mix. The film is characteristic of the stressed-out local-yokels genre pioneered by the Coen brothers.

“Eden” (+++) is a remarkable 2024 film based on the extraordinary memoirs of Margaret Wittmer (played by Sydney Sweeney). Ron Howard’s latest film is a stranger-than-fiction survival thriller that’s like Lord of the Flies with adults rather than children. It blows away the utopian notion that life was better and simpler when we lived closer to nature. It turns out that the Noble Savage was just a savage doing whatever it takes to find food and survive. This is the film’s Darwinian insight for philosophers seeking the meaning of life, as does Dr Friedrich Ritter (played by Jude Law) in this almost unbelievable tale.

“Eileen” (—) is a boring 2023 movie about a deranged young lady who works at a boys’ corrections facility. She becomes infatuated with a new female psychologist played by Anne Hathaway. The relationship leads to a crime. Watch the first 30 minutes and the last 15 minutes. Everything in between is a waste of time.

“Frankenstein” (+) is Guillermo del Toro’s 2025 remake of the 1931 classic, with Jacob Elordi playing the role of the monster rather than Boris Karloff. The original was better because he was scarier and more likable, at the same time. The latest version is very stylized with lots of CGI (i.e., computer-generated imagery). It is also long, slow, and boring. It was much easier to feel sorry for the original monster than for the new reincarnation. Maybe there will be a remake of “The Bride of Frankenstein” that’s more interesting.

“Grizzly Man” (+++) is a 2005 documentary by Werner Herzog about the life and tragic death of Timothy Treadwell. He was a grizzly bear activist who spent his summers in Alaska communing with these dangerous animals. He filmed them and his interactions with them and showed his videos during presentations at schools focused on the need to protect the bears from civilization. His obsession led to his death.

“Happy Face” (++) is a 2025 Paramount+ series about the chilling true story of Melissa Moore, daughter of serial killer Keith Jesperson, the “Happy Face Killer” (played by Dennis Quaid). This eight-episode drama shifts focus from the killer’s crimes to the ripple effects on his family, with a fictional twist about a ninth victim. Quaid’s creepy charisma steals scenes, but Ashford’s emotional depth as Melissa carries the show. Solid performances make it interesting to watch, though the invented subplot feels forced. It is a compelling watch for true-crime fans, since it fits right in with the serial-killer genre.

“House of Guinness” (+++) is a 2025 British-Irish historical drama. Set in 1860s Dublin, the series dramatizes the Guinness family’s struggle to preserve their brewing empire amid political upheaval and moral crusades. The storytelling is rich in period detail. The cast is excellent, especially James Norton’s portrayal of Sean Rafferty, the family’s fixer. In sum, it’s a compelling docudrama best consumed with a pint or two of Guinness.

“How To Make Millions Before Grandma Dies” (++) is a 2024 Thai comedy drama about life and death and families. Mengju is the mother of three adult children. She is diagnosed with late-stage colorectal cancer. Her three children suddenly come to visit her more often now that they are thinking about their inheritance. Her grandson, a university dropout, moves in with her to curry favor. The cast does a great job of portraying a contentious family that is probably similar to many other families with mixed emotions regarding their immediate relatives.

“I’m Still Here” (++) is a 2024 Brazilian docudrama about the Paiva family’s strength during the 1970s military dictatorship in Brazil. Fernanda Torres nails it as Eunice Paiva, a mom thrust into chaos after her husband, a former politician, gets snatched by the regime. Dictatorships are deadly. They kill their opponents and terrorize their citizens. Here in the US, partisanship has reached the point where Democrats and Republicans are accusing each other of being existential threats to our democracy. Fortunately, our constitutional system of checks and balances continues to work against extremists on both sides.

“Mothers’ Instinct” (++) stars Anne Hathaway and Jessica Chastain as neighborly mothers with sons who are the same age and best friends. When one of the boys dies in a terrible accident, the friendship of the two mothers is strained. More deaths are ahead as the plot thickens and suspicions mount. One of the mothers is a psycho, but which one? The film (and its musical score) is an homage to the directing style of Alfred Hitchcock. The two leading ladies deliver superlative performances.

“Nowhere Special” (+) is a sad movie about John, a 34-year-old window washer whose wife has abandoned him and their three-year-old son. John is sick and has only a few months to live. So he must find the perfect family to adopt his young son. It’s a terrible situation, but John rises to the occasion for the sake of his son.

“Outrageous” (+++) is a 2025 British historical series about the outrageous Mitford sisters. It is the true story of six sisters and one brother. They were the privileged offspring of a nobleman and lived on a big estate during their childhoods. As adults during the 1930s, they became politicized, with a couple of the sisters turning into Nazi sympathizers who actually befriended Adolph Hitler. One of them married the head of the British Union of Fascists. Another one of the sisters was a communist sympathizer. Today, our societies in the US and UK have become very partisan. It’s not the first time that’s happened, as this very interesting series demonstrates.

“Paradise” (–) is a 2025 Netflix series about a Secret Service agent who investigates the murder of the President of the United States, which occurs in a peaceful community of 25,000 people. It is a bit reminiscent of “The Truman Show” and “Pleasantville.” It is mildly entertaining, but none of the characters are particularly interesting.

“SAS: Rogue Heroes” (++) is a 2022 British historical series about the exploits of the British Army Special Air Service (SAS) during the Western Desert Campaign of World War II and the subsequent Allied invasion of Italy. Some of the characters are based on the actual commandos who fought in those campaigns. They were certainly a rogue group of heroes, with lots of success at weakening German and Italian forces so that the regular Allied armies could follow up and defeat them. It’s a fast-paced story with lots of good acting.

“September 5” (++) is a 2024 docudrama thriller about the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre of Israeli athletes from the perspective of the ABC Sports reporters as they admirably rose to the occasion and covered the terrible events. It is a harrowing reminder of the fact that jihadist terrorists have been terrorizing all too many countries for all too long. By staging this attack in Germany, the Black September terrorists meant to send a signal that they remained committed to killing Jews, as did the Nazis in World War II. The brutality of the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israeli civilians including men, women, and children was also aimed to be a reminder of the Holocaust. The world remains a dangerous place for all too many innocent civilians.

“Sovereign” (++) is a disturbing 2025 crime thriller about a father and his homeschooled son who align themselves with an antigovernment ideology. It is based on the events surrounding the 2010 West Memphis police shooting. The father makes a living by hosting seminars to downtrodden folks, pitching his “don’t tread on me” philosophy. The cast is excellent, especially Nick Offerman, who plays the father.

“The Children Act” (+) Emma Thompson stars as a brilliant and widely admired judge presiding in a London court. She specializes in cases involving children. She has committed all her energies to her job to the detriment of her marriage. Her latest case involves a teenager who is dying from leukemia. The hospital he is in wants to provide him with blood transfusions to save his life. His Mormon parents prohibit his doctors from doing so. The court case soon affects the judge’s personal life.

“The Four Seasons” (++) is a 2025 Netflix series and modern-day remake of the 1981 film of the same name written by, directed by, and starring Alan Alda (who also makes a brief appearance in the series). It’s about three couples who have a tradition of taking quarterly vacations together. Things get complicated when one of the couples divorces. It’s a bit like the TV series “Friends” but with a middle-aged cast of characters, with more water under the bridge. The solid ensemble of actors includes Tina Fey and Steve Carell.

“The Gilded Age” (++) is an American television drama series set in the period from about the late 1870s to the late 1890s, which occurred between the Reconstruction Era and the Progressive Era. It was created and written by Julian Fellowes, who was also behind the British hit series, “Downton Abbey.” Both series were inspired by the British “Upstairs, Downstairs” series that aired from 1971 to 1975. The latest series draws heavily on the Vanderbilt family for inspiration, particularly the characters of the Russells. While the Russells are a fictional family, their story arc, especially Bertha Russell’s, mirrors the real-life rise of Alva Vanderbilt and her family within New York society during the Gilded Age. It’s all very interesting and fun to watch.

“The Life of Chuck” (+++) is a unique film, made in 2024, about the life of an ordinary man named “Charles Krantz.” It is about the meaning of life, death, and dancing. Everyone’s life can be extraordinary if we live it to the fullest and cherish our moments with our families. The cast is excellent, and the dancing is great too.

“The Narrow Road to the Deep North” (+) is a 2025 Australian drama miniseries. It follows the life of a fellow named “Dorriko Evans” during three periods. Just before he is deployed to fight in World War II in Southeast Asia, he gets engaged and has an affair with his uncle’s wife. Then he spends much of the war as a medic in a horrible Japanese prisoner-of-war labor camp building a railroad through Burma. The series also examines his reflections on his life many years later. It is sometimes too realistic during his internment. However, it is an interesting reflection on life based on one man’s experiences.

“The Substance” (---) is a horrible movie starring Demi Moore as an aging TV celebrity with her own very popular exercise show. She learns that the network’s president intends to replace her with a younger and curvier performer. She takes a black-market drug that replicates her genes and produces a younger and fitter version of herself and gets her job back. It turns out she has made a deal with the devil that ends with the spilling of lots of blood. So the movie is a bit like mixing “The Picture of Dorian Grey” and “Carrie.” If you like horror films, you might enjoy this horrible one..

“The White Lotus, Season 3” (-) has a 90% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, which describes it as “a sharp social satire following the exploits of various guests and employees of the fictional White Lotus resort chain, whose stay becomes affected by their various dysfunctions.” This latest season of HBO’s hit series is set in Thailand, which is very beautiful. However, the season is overrated; it’s pretentious and purports to uncover important philosophical insights from the whacky behavior of a bunch of whacky characters. It’s actually a bit of a bore.

“The Woman In Cabin 10” (—), 2025, is a very unthrilling thriller. It stars Keira Knightley, who does her best with the flimsy film plot. The real star of the show is the amazing yacht that functions as the set of this murder mystery. So who is the murderer? It isn’t everyone on board, as might be expected if Agatha Christie wrote the script. It also isn’t anyone on the crew working below deck. The likely villain is easy to identify all too early in this who-done-it.

“Untamed” (+) is a 2025 Netflix miniseries about a murder mystery set in Yosemite National Park. A federal agent, assigned to solve crimes in the national parks, is on the case. He has his own personal demons that might be affecting his judgment in solving the who-done-it. The plot is dark and convoluted. However, Yosemite is very bright and beautifully filmed.

“Woman of the Hour” (+) is another serial killer movie based on a true story. Too bad there is no shortage of films of this genre. This one is about Rodney Alcala, who appeared in 1978 on the television show “The Dating Game.” He was captured in 1979 and identified as a serial killer for murdering numerous women and girls. Anna Kendrick is the director and stars in the movie. Beware of strangers taking your picture and striking up a conversation. Evil may lurk behind that charming veneer.

“Words of War” (+++) is a 2025 biographical drama about the life and career of the late Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya. She was assassinated in 2006. The presumption is that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the hit because she reported on his nefarious activities and branded him as Russia’s number-one terrorist. The film portrays her courageous fight to report the truth about Putin’s crimes in the face of intimidation and violence. “Words of War” is a tribute to Politkovskaya and all journalists who report the news in dangerous environments.

“Your Friends & Neighbors” (+) is a TV series starring John Hamm as Andrew Cooper (“Coop”). Coop loses his lucrative job at a hedge fund after he loses his wife to a professional basketball star. He desperately needs cash to pay his bills. He turns to burglary, stealing from his neighbors’ homes when they aren’t home. It’s entertaining but too preachy about the meaninglessness of living in a wealthy suburban community, especially if the alternative lifestyle presented involves robbing your friends and neighbors to remain there.

“Zero Day” (-) stars Robert De Niro as former US President George Mullen, who is tasked with heading a commission to investigate a cyber-attack that kills thousands of Americans. It is a who-done-it Netflix series. De Niro seems to be bored by the plot. That’s because it is boring and predictable, mostly because it is inane. The problem with conspiracy movies is that they are competing with all too many conspiracy theories swirling around on social media. So it is hard for screenwriters to come up with an original conspiracy.