

1. ***The Only Girl in the Orchestra*** Dir. Molly O'Brien ©2023 35 min. Won the Documentary Short Film Oscar. Orin O'Brien (1935-), a double bassist, was the first woman to join the NY Philharmonic. She retired in 2021 after 55 years. She still teaches. I liked the scenes in her NYC apartment with her private pupils, and with her niece (the director). Netflix
2. ***Nuremberg*** Dir. James Vanderbilt ©2025 148 min. Russell Crowe plays Herman Göring. Rami Malek plays the army psychiatrist tasked with suicide watch, assessing fitness to stand trial—e.g. is the amnesiac lying, & getting insights that might aid the prosecution—each defendant had a lawyer. Sir David Maxwell Fyfe (Richard E. Grant) cross-examined Göring more effectively than the US prosecutor Robert Jackson (Michael Shannon). I saw this movie in a theater, and felt my afternoon so well-spent that I topped the outing off with a milkshake afterwards across the street.
3. ***Carville: Winning is Everything*** Dir. Matt Tyrnauer ©2024 98 min. Bounces between footage from the 1992 campaign—James Carville ran Bill Clinton's "war room"—and his continuing career as a political consultant. James and his wife Mary Matalin (they were married in 1993—she was his counterpart in the George H. W. Bush campaign)—deplore today's polarization. We get a peek into their relationship. James (b. 1944) exercises by "hotel running" in halls while traveling. I like his drawl. Donna Brazile is a talking head. George Stephanopoulos looks so young in 1992.
4. ***The War Room*** Dirs. Chris Hegedus & D.A. Pennebaker ©1993 96 min. 96% on Rotten Tomatoes. Political history.
5. ***Becoming Katharine Graham*** Dir. Teddy Konhardt ©2025 92 min. Lots of archival video of Kay Graham (1917-2001), Publisher of the Washington Post 1963-1979, and CEO until 1991. Her memoir, ***Personal History*** ©1998, won a Pulitzer. She hired Ben Bradlee as Editor. During Watergate Nixon revoked WaPo's TV and radio licenses. Kay Graham is a pioneer, taking over her late husband's business. Well, Aunt Mona did that in 1961. Both women's children were still in school. Don Graham and his sister Lally, David Remnick, Gloria Steinem and Warren Buffett are interviewed. Prime Video
6. ***Lilly*** Dir. Rachel Feldman ©2025 93 min. Starring Patricia Clarkson as Lilly Ledbetter (1938-2024). An equal pay fight that reached the Supreme Court. Lilly lost, but Congress fixed the technicality in 2009, & Obama signed it. Prime Video
7. ***September 5*** Dir. Tim Fehlbaum ©2025 94 min. Germany. Dramatizes, from the perspective of the ABC Sports crew, the Munich Olympics massacre of 1972. Leonie Benesch plays the only one on the team who spoke German. Library DVD
8. ***Sally*** Dir. Cristina Costantini ©2025 103 min. Documentary about Sally Ride (1951-2012), America's first woman in space. After NASA, Sally and her partner Tam O'Shaughnessy ran an educational foundation to encourage girls in STEM fields. Sally's family are interviewed and we hear from Tam, who got permission from Sally to out her in her obit. Hulu
9. ***Life According to Sam*** Dirs. Sean Fine & Andrea Nix ©2013 94 min. Sam Berns (1997-2014) was born in Foxborough MA with progeria, a rare disease that causes premature aging. His mother, a doctor, devoted herself to working for ProgeriaResearch.org, newly set up by her sister, a lawyer. The foundation identified the mutation, and a promising drug from among those already approved by the FDA for something else. The excruciatingly slow process of getting the drug approved for use by progeria patients is shown. Interspersed with that race, we see video footage of Sam's development. He had *wonderful* parenting and I admired his schooling. I loved Sam. In the DVD Extras, I was able to see the TEDX talk Sam delivered a few months before he died of a heart attack. Millions have viewed it. Library DVD
10. ***The Remarkable Life of Ibelin*** Dir. Benjamin Ree ©2024 104 min. Norway. Documents the life of Mats Steen (1989-2014), who was born with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. His parents thought he spent too much time on his computer, but they let him do it because so many other pleasures were closed to him. After finishing H.S. he moved to his own apartment. He was in a motorized wheelchair, and he had aides. He participated in an interactive game called *World of Warcraft*, and he had a blog. The documentary shows Mats and his family in home movies. His parents and sister only got his password after his death. They think Mats purposely left it for them. They posted news of Mats' death to his contacts. They were flabbergasted at all the responses that poured back about how wonderful Mats was. Mats' friends knew him as his avatar, Ibelin, and also via his blog & emails. Some of them, especially a young woman from Holland, wanted to meet him in person or on Zoom, but he always declined. A Danish mother who is in this documentary had been despondent over her inability to connect with her autistic son. Mats helped her, and eventually told her about his own predicament. "You are the only one who knows." She encouraged Mats to open up in his blog, and near the end he did. Five of Mats' online friends came to his funeral. Mats' father spoke movingly that the saddest thing for him and his wife had been that Mats would never experience being in love, friendships, & contributing to the larger community. "Only in this last week did we become aware that he *had* done *all* of that for the past 8 years! I even learned that Mats was something of a womanizer. As a father I am *very* proud of him." The film did a great job of conveying to a non-player the world of role-playing. Netflix
11. ***Say Nothing*** Created by Joshua Zetumer ©2024 9 episodes, multiple directors. The mini-series grabbed me in a way the 2018 book by Patrick Radden Keefe did not. It is about the Price sisters, Dolours (1950-2013) and Marian (Lola Petticrew and Hazel Doupe), Gerry Adams (Josh Finan), Brendan Hughes (Anthony Boyle), and the abduction of Mrs. McConville, mother of 10, by the IRA during the Troubles. I learned the Old Bailey bombing happened March 8, 1973 (the day my father died). The McConville siblings were still seeking their mother's remains 36 years later. Aunt Bridie is played by Eileen Walsh. Maxine Peake plays the older Dolours, Helen Behan the older Marian. Well cast. Hulu
12. ***Lee*** Dir. Ellen Kuras ©2023 117 min. Kate Winslet plays storied war photographer Lee Miller (1907-1977). Josh O'Connor plays her adult son Antony Penrose interviewing her about her life, which, in this movie, starts and ends with WWII, except for a cursory summary of Lee's unhappy last 30 years. Andy Samberg as David E. Scherman, fellow war correspondent, Alexander Skarsgård as Roland Penrose, and Andrea Riesborough as Audrey Withers, British Vogue Editor. Hulu
13. ***Suncoast*** Dir. Laura Chinn ©2024 109 min. Based on the director's adolescence. Doris (Nico Parker) has a rocky relationship with her single mother (Laura Linney). Doris's brother is dying in the same nursing home at the same time as Terri Schiavo. One of the "Don't pull the plug on Terri" demonstrators (Woody Harrelson) teaches Doris to drive. Hulu

14. **Famous Last Words** Producers Brad Falchuk (the interviewer) and Mikkel Bondesen ©2025 55 min. An interview with Jane Goodall DBE (1934-October 2025), filmed by robot cameras in March 2025 with only Jane and Brad present, with the understanding that it would only be aired after Jane's death. So she's even more frank than usual. Netflix
15. **Confessions of a Good Samaritan** Dir. Penny Lane ©2023 105 min. In her mid-30s the filmmaker started thinking about donating a kidney altruistically. She finally did it at age 41. Her motive was not to film the process, but she did film it. She interviewed other donors, a transplant surgeon who found his true vocation, and recipients. A good friend of the Coopers, whom I know too, had a kidney transplant last year. We learn the history of US law and bioethics w.r.t. transplants. Kidneys from live donors are best. The first successful kidney transplant was done in 1954 between identical twins. Netflix
16. **The Penguin Lessons** Dir. Peter Cattaneo (*The Full Monty*) ©2024 110 min. Based on the 2015 memoir by Tom Michel about his stint in 1975 teaching English at a posh boarding school in Argentina. With Steve Coogan as Tom and Sir Jonathan Pryce as the headmaster. It was a time when people were disappeared off the streets. Amusing *and* serious. Library DVD
17. **Blue Moon** Dir. Richard Linklater ©2025 100 min. In the opening scene Lorenz Hart (Ethan Hawke) is shown drunk in the gutter in the rain. We are told he died 4 days later at age 48. Then "*7 months earlier*" there's a scene of Hart leaving the opening night of *Oklahoma!* early with a catty remark. The rest of the film is set in the bar at Sardis, spotlight on Hart. He blathers on to E.B. White about a mouse in his apartment he's named *Stuart*. White makes a note as Hart moves on to gossip with the Margaret Qualley character. Hart buttonholes Richard Rodgers (Andrew Scott), ignoring Oscar Hammerstein. I loved the caricatures of famous patrons on the wall. The piano player knew one Rodgers and Hart song, "Blue Moon." When the credits rolled I was surprised by how many other famous numbers had been on the soundtrack.
18. **Atsuko Okatsuka: Father** Dir. Ryan Harper Gray ©2025 62 min. Talk about personality! Technically a 1-woman comedienne concert. Atsuko's movement around the stage is like a dance. She tells us about her life. I laughed at the content and the presentation. Atsuko (b. 1988) is half Taiwanese, half Japanese, "which makes me Korean." As a child she overstayed her US tourist visa and was undocumented for 7 yrs. She speaks of being called by Ira Glass for "This American Life." She and her Anglo husband have schizophrenic mothers in common. She reconnects with her father in Japan. Hulu
19. **Parallel Mothers** Dir. Pedro Almodovar ©2021 120 min. Subtitles. Two women give birth to daughters at the same maternity hospital on the same day, a terrified teen and a thrilled 40 yr-old. They keep in touch. There's a DNA thread, and a thread about forensic anthropology—digging up and identifying victims from the Spanish Civil War. Library DVD
20. **Thelma** Dir. Josh Margolin ©2024 99 min. June Squibb is in the title role. Thelma's 24-yr-old grandson, Danny (Fred Hechinger) has not yet found his calling so the family has assigned him to keep tabs on Thelma who lives alone. Parker Posey plays Thelma's daughter. The movie got a bit much for me when Danny and his parents just missed Thelma and Ben (Richard Roundtree) at the recharging station, but otherwise well done on the theme of a 93-yr-old getting scammed. Hulu
21. **Blitz** Dir. Steve McQueen ©2024 120 min. Starring Saoirse Ronan as Rita, single mother of 9-yr-old George (Elliot Heffernan). Paul Weller plays Rita's piano-playing father, with whom Rita and George live in Stepney. It's 1940. George resists being evacuated, but Rita, a defense worker, puts him on the train. An hour out of London, George jumps off the train. There ensue Dickensian ups and downs. Issa, a blackout warden from Nigeria, takes George under his wing. But then Issa is killed in the line of duty. Scenes of Londoners sheltering in tube stations. Eventually George gets home, only to find it bombed out and his grandfather dead. But his mother isn't. I like movies set in England in WWII. George's father, Marcus, was from Grenada. We see a flashback of his courtship with Rita. An old-fashioned movie. Apple TV+
22. **Small Things Like These** Dir. Tim Millants 98 min. Very faithful to the wonderful book by Claire Keegan (on my 2023 book list). I liked the book better, but this is a quality film. The movie has a cold, dark feel. Stars Cillian Murphy, Emily Watson and Eileen Walsh. The movie made it obvious that the nun's Christmas envelope was a bribe. Prime Video
23. **The Piano Lesson** Dir. Malcolm Washington Jackson ©2024 125 min. Based on the play by August Wilson set in the 1930s. It stars John David Washington, Samuel L Jackson, and Danielle Deadwyler. An opening scene flashes back to a 4th of July 1911 piano heist. The piano had likenesses of the thieves' enslaved ancestors carved into it. I tired of the repetitive standoff between Berniece and her brother about selling their heirloom piano or keeping it. Willie wanted to buy land. The parts I enjoyed most were those with music and dancing. There's barely a piano lesson, though. Great casting. Netflix
24. **The Great Dictator** Dir. Charlie Chaplin ©1940 125 minutes. Glad I finally caught up with this. Slapstick is not my thing, but I did laugh aloud a couple of times. I read that Hitler laughed too—in a private screening. The movie was banned to the public in Nazi-controlled countries. Ireland banned it too, not wanting to annoy Germany. Hollywood ditto, so Chaplin funded it himself. It was Chaplin's first talkie, and his biggest hit. The Jewish barber's service in WWI satirizes war. The next two decades are quickly dispatched in headlines. Then comes Adenoid Hynkel, Herr Garbitsch, etc. Prime Video
25. **Doc** Developed by Barbie Kligman ©2025 10-part miniseries. Dr. Amy Larson (Molly Parker) was the Chief when she lost the most recent 8 years of her memory. I like hospital dramas. With Omar Metwally, Scott Wolf, and Amirah Vann. It actually happened in Italy in 2013 that a doctor lost 12 years of recent memory due to a brain injury. Netflix
26. **Hedda** Dir. Nia DaCosta ©2025 107 min. It's set in the 50s in a mansion that no professor could afford. The sex, race or sexual orientation of some of the characters in Ibsen's play are altered, but it's recognizable. There's a jazz band. In a full review in the Oct. 27 *NYer* Richard Brody lauds Tessa Thompson's performance as Hedda. I was more impressed by Nina Hoss as Eileen Lovberg. Imogen Poots as Thea was outstanding too. Hedda is a diabolical manipulator. Prime Video
27. **Monsoon Wedding** Dir. Mira Nair (Zohran Mamdani's mother) ©2001 113 min. Dramatizes a joyful (well there's a bit of angst) 4-day Punjabi wedding in Delhi. Lots of color, music and dancing. The wedding planner P.K. Dubey (Vijay Raaz) woos the servant girl. Closed captioning (CC) needed--3 languages are spoken. I then watched a Charlie Rose interview with Mira Nair. She used some family members. I noticed an Ishaan Nair plays the bride's young brother Varun. YouTube