

It's The End Of The World As We Know It... And I Feel Fine

Every few years, it seems that people are worried about an Armageddon date. They chose some sort of date based on something and promptly report it to the media as the date the world will end. Nine years ago now, it was Y2K – do you remember how many people built shelters, stockpiled canned food and emergency supplies? I was due to have my first child as the 'millennium baby', and I was worried something catastrophic would happen; at the very least, the lights would go out in the hospital or something. My daughter arrived a few weeks early though, on December 21, 1999, so we were at home safe and sound to ring in the new year – and surprise, surprise, nothing happened. So it's not a shocker that people have pinpointed a new date for the Apocalypse; this time it's based upon an ancient Mayan calendar – well, some scholars' interpretation of it anyway. What will you be doing in 2012? According to some people, you should live 2011 to its fullest, because that's all we're going to get! The following article is from cnn.com and was written by A. Pawlowski.

Just as "Y2K" and its batch of predictions about the year 2000 have become a distant memory, here comes "Twenty-twelve."

The sun shines through the door of the Seven Dolls Temple, in the Maya ruins of Dzibilchaltun in Mexico.

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Fueled by a crop of books, Web sites with countdown clocks, and claims about ancient timekeepers, interest is growing in what some see as the dawn of a new era, and others as an expiration date for Earth: December 21, 2012.

The date marks the end of a 5,126-year cycle on the Long Count

calendar developed by the Maya, the ancient civilization known for its advanced understanding of astronomy and for the great cities it left behind in Mexico and Central America.

(Some scholars believe the cycle ends a bit later – on December 23, 2012.)

Speculation in some circles about whether the Maya chose this particular time because they thought something ominous would happen has sparked a number of doomsday theories.

The hype also has mainstream Maya scholars shaking their heads.

“There’s going to be a whole generation of people who, when they think of the Maya, think of 2012, and to me that’s just criminal,” said David Stuart, director of the Mesoamerica Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

“There is no serious scholar who puts any stock in the idea that the Maya said anything meaningful about 2012.”

But take the fact that December 21, 2012, coincides with the winter solstice, add claims the Maya picked the time period because it also marks an alignment of the sun with the center of the Milky Way galaxy, and you have the makings of an online sensation.

Long Count 101

- The Long Count calendar was one of several created by the ancient Maya.

- It consists of the following units of time:

kin = one day

uinal = 20 days

tun = 360 days (18 uinal)

katun = 7,200 days (20 tun)

baktun = 144,000 days (20 katun)

- The calendar shows the number of days elapsed since the beginning date: August 13, 3114 B.C. (some scholars think the date is actually August 11, 3114 B.C.)

- The dates are written as numbers separated by periods in the following order:

(baktun).(katun).(tun).(uinal).(kin)

- July 20, 1969 – the date of the first moon landing – would be written as: 12.17.15.17.0

- December 21, 2012, would be written as 13.0.0.0.0 and the day after that as 0.0.0.0.1

Source: Howstuffworks.com

Type “2012” into an Internet search engine and you’ll find survival guides, survival schools, predictions and “official stuff” to wear, including T-shirts with slogans such as “2012 The End” and “Doomsday 2012.”

Theories about what might happen range from solar storms triggering volcano eruptions to a polar reversal that will make the Earth spin in the opposite direction.

If you think all of this would make a great sci-fi disaster movie, Hollywood is already one step ahead.

“2012,” a special-effects flick starring John Cusack and directed by Roland Emmerich, of “The Day After Tomorrow” fame, is scheduled to be released this fall. The trailer shows a monk running to a bell tower on a mountaintop to sound the alarm as a huge wall of water washes over what appear to be the peaks of the Himalayas.

‘Promoting a hoax’

One barometer of the interest in 2012 may be the “Ask an Astrobiologist” section of NASA’s Web site, where senior

scientist David Morrison answers questions from the public. On a recent visit, more than half of the inquiries on the most popular list were related to 2012.

"The purveyors of doom are promoting a hoax," Morrison wrote earlier this month in response to a question from a person who expressed fear about the date.

A scholar who has studied the Maya for 35 years said there is nothing ominous about 2012, despite the hype surrounding claims to the contrary.

"I think that the popular books... about what the Maya say is going to happen are really fabricated on the basis of very little evidence," said Anthony Aveni, a professor of astronomy, anthropology and Native American studies at Colgate University.

Aveni and Stuart are both writing their own books explaining the Mayan calendar and 2012, but Stuart said he's pessimistic that people will be interested in the real story when so many other books are making sensational claims.

Dozens of titles about 2012 have been published and more are scheduled to go on sale in the coming months. Current offerings include "Apocalypse 2012," in which author Lawrence Joseph outlines "terrible possibilities," such as the potential for natural disaster.

But Joseph admits he doesn't think the world is going to end.

"I do, however, believe that 2012 will prove to be... a very dramatic and probably transformative year," Joseph said.

The author acknowledged he's worried his book's title might scare people, but said he wanted to alert the public about possible dangers ahead.

He added that his publisher controls the book's title, though he had no issue with the final choice.

"If it had been called 'Serious Threats 2012' or 'Profound Considerations for 2012,' it would have never gotten published," Joseph said.

Growing interest

Another author said the doom and gloom approach is a great misunderstanding of 2012.

"The trendy doomsday people... should be treated for what they are: under-informed opportunists and alarmists who will move onto other things in 2013," said John Major Jenkins, whose books include "Galactic Alignment" and who describes himself as a self-taught independent Maya scholar.

Jenkins said that cycle endings were all about transformation and renewal – not catastrophe – for the Maya. He also makes the case that the period they chose coincides with an alignment of the December solstice sun with the center of the Milky Way, as viewed from Earth.

"Two thousand years ago the Maya believed that the world would be going through a great transformation when this alignment happened," Jenkins said.

But Aveni said there is no evidence that the Maya cared about this concept of the Milky Way, adding that the galactic center was not defined until the 1950s.

"What you have here is a modern age influence [and] modern concepts trying to garb the ancient Maya in modern clothing, and it just doesn't wash for me," Aveni said.

Meanwhile, he and other scholars are bracing for growing interest as the date approaches.

"The whole year leading up to it is going to be just crazy, I'm sorry to say," Stuart said.

"I just think it's sad, it really just frustrates me. People

are really misunderstanding this really cool culture by focusing on this 2012 thing. It means more about us than it does about the Maya."

The Happening

We went to see the newest [M. Night Shyamalan](#) movie last night – The Happening starring [Mark Wahlberg](#) and [Zooey Deschanel](#). It's an end-of-the-world type movie, but what sets this one apart from the others is that neither the audience nor the characters in the movie know what is happening to the population and why. People just start acting strange – it begins in parks, where crowds of people freeze in their tracks, and then they begin to slowly and methodically commit suicide. It's really creepy! I especially liked how little gore and there was and how tame the violence was, especially by today's standards and with all the death that was occurring in the movie. Before we went, I had read some bad reviews about it, but I didn't find it boring in the slightest as some of the reviews suggested. It was a gripping, intense, and interesting movie, not to mention effectively eerie. I don't want to give too much away, so all I will say is that I was hoping for more of a resolve and explanation at the end, but since I've seen other M. Night Shyamalan movies, I was also expecting even less closure than we received. He writes, directs, and produces his own movies; they are usually thought-provoking suspense films, often laced with twists – I recommend [The Village](#), [Unbreakable](#), and [The Sixth Sense](#) to try a few. Overall, I would say it was a really good doomsday-TYPE movie. Please don't think it compares to the movie called [Doomsday](#) – one of the most awful I've ever seen. But The Happening has an interesting premise, and it achieves fright without overdoing the gore, which is unusual for scary

movies in this day and age. My one problem with the movie is Mark Wahlberg's acting – at times it's just awful! I don't know why he was cast in this movie, but at least he doesn't ruin it. Zooey Deschanel is good – didn't even see any glimpse of her character from [Elf](#) -and [John Leguizamo](#) has a strong performance as well. It is 90 minutes well-spent!

I am Legend

I betcha you're thinking, wow, she thinks highly of herself... I am Legend, geez... but no, I was just realizing how it's been a REALLY long time since I've reviewed a movie! Part of it is because we aren't watching nearly as many, just been pretty busy lately. With the time change, it stays light out until 8, so we like to take family walks after dinner. By the time the kids get settled after that though, there hasn't been any time for movies, so we've been watching old episodes of [The Office](#) instead... not that there's anything wrong with that, it's been fun, but I just haven't seen many movies lately. The other night, we did manage to pop in "[I am Legend](#)", an end-of-the-world movie starring [Will Smith](#). It chronicles the story of the very last man on Earth (well, kinda) as he strives to find a cure for the virus that is responsible for exterminating mankind. I said he's *kinda* the last man on Earth because he co-exists with these creatures who used to be humans, until the virus turned them into creepy, maniacal, flesh-devouring beasts. Luckily for Smith, they can only come out at night because light proves fatal to them, so he spends his days collecting samples and information to study and do experiments in his lab at night, hoping to find a cure for the virus, a virus that interestingly mutated from what humans originally believed was a cure for cancer.

The movie was entertaining, though I have to admit when I first starting watching it, I had a bit of "[Doomsday](#)" dread – see my previous post of the same name about one horrible movie – if you dare. However, "I am Legend" ended up only sharing generic end-of-civilization-as-we-know-it characteristics with the movie "Doomsday", thank goodness for that. Speaking of end-of-the-world movies, the creatures in "I am Legend" also reminded me a bit of the ravaging monsters in "[28 Weeks Later](#)", but in a genre like this, I guess it's difficult to be entirelyly unique.

It might seem lonely being the last man on Earth, but Will Smith's character does have a faithful companion, a dog named Sam. I'm going to risk a minor spoiler here so I can tell you what I really liked about their relationship. In a moment of weakness, Will Smith is cradling his strong dog buddy Sam, and we learn that the dog's name is actually Samantha. The symbolism here is very well done and notably appreciated – you'll have to see the movie to get it, even though I probably just spoiled that part for you – oops.

Overall, as I said, it was entertaining to watch, and pretty creepy at times. The overuse of computer animation was annoying to say the least. There were lots of animals in the film – beasts roam the deserted shell of what's left of New York City – but they were all computer animated. I agree with the person who reviewed the movie on [imdb.com](#), I can live with the animals being computer generated, but the virus-addled humanesque beasts, now THAT was BEYOND annoying! They could be pretty scary at times, but it was probably due to the snarling noises more than the way they looked. During most of the action scenes involving the creatures, the computer animation was horribly fake-looking and even laughable, which of course takes away from the mood of a film such as this.

If you like the mankind-is-extinct type of movies or are a Will Smith fan, I think you should see this movie. The best parts were the scenes of him roaming a deserted New York City

– those were pretty cool to see. But if you're the type of person who doesn't like the hopelessness or loneliness one might feel when imagining the end of the world, not to mention watching frightening creatures unleash terror and violence, skip "I am Legend" and go for "[The Fresh Prince of Bel Air](#)" instead – classic Will Smith the whole family can enjoy!