

the Circuit

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The Benedictine Raven football team gets pumped up before their victorious game against William Penn. Story By Aaron Lewis inside. Picture by Maria St.Germain

15th Annual Convocation welcomes new Ravens

Jack Figge
The Circuit

On August 28, the Raven Class of 2026 gathered around the ornate Benedictine “B” logo located in front of Haverty Center. The distinct red and black beanies stood out as they prepared to take a class picture.

Three hours later, cheers erupted from the freshman class as they removed their beanies after a morning dedicated to welcoming the freshman class through the March of Light, Mass of the Holy Spirit, and Convocation featuring legendary Notre Dame College football coach Lou Holtz’s keynote address.

Since early in Benedictine’s history, the school has celebrated an annual Mass of the Holy Spirit asking for intercession in the new school year. Fifteen years ago, administrators decided to add a convocation ceremony to officially kick off the school year and welcome the new freshmen into the Benedictine family.

For the first week of college the freshmen participate in the longstanding beanie week tradition. During the week, all the freshmen are presented with a beanie which they are expected to wear in public.

Peter Smith, freshman, found that beanie week provided him many opportunities to meet his fellow classmates and gain familiarity with the campus.

“Beanie week is a great tradi-

tion that helped me to remember that I am not alone in this new experience,” Smith said.

After having a class picture taken around the logo outside of Haverty, the freshman class prayed a Memorare together and was blessed by campus chaplain Fr. Ryan Richardson.

While the choir sang Marian hymns, the freshmen were led by two banners of the Virgin Mary up the Raven Walk during the March of Light procession. Freshman carried and placed a candle at Mary’s Grotto, asking for the intercession of Our Lady over the next four years.

Grace Cowan, freshman, joined her class in the March of Light and was deeply moved by the experience.

“I thought the March of Light was a really beautiful way to start off our four years, to dedicate these years to Mary,” Cowan said. “It was special to do it as a class, being able to start our journey together.”

Walking from the grotto to the Abbey, the freshman class attended the all-school Mass celebrated by Abbot James Albers ’94 O.S.B. Fr. Adam Wilczak ’07, from the Diocese of Kansas City, Kansas, was the alumni guest homilist at this year’s Mass.

During Mass, freshman, such as Matthew Cleary, were moved by the testimony of Wilczak and the experience of participating in Mass with the entire freshman class.

“It is a really important thing to center ourselves and our academic year ahead on the Eucharist,” said Cleary. “(The Mass of the Holy Spirit) allowed us to put the importance of the Eucharist at the front of our mind and thereby putting everything else in its right place.”

During his homily, Fr. Wilczak discussed how the Holy Spirit is at work in a student’s life and implored the students to use their next four years wisely.

“Spending some time in prayer, I felt called to try to focus on the use of the Spirit in our lives,” Wilczak said. “The fact that He is always there to guide us and to not underestimate the beauty of these four years here Benedictine College was a message I hoped to leave the students.”

Following Mass, the Convocation ceremony was held in the Nolan Gymnasium. Students heard from President Stephen Minnis, Kimberly Shankman, academic dean, and the keynote speaker Lou Holtz.

This was the second time that Lou Holtz had been invited to give the Convocation keynote address, the first being in 2007. Former Notre Dame football coach and sports commentator Holtz was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2020. Holtz was one of the first donors for the construction of Mary’s Grotto and established an endowed scholarship in his name.

“The first time I came here, the people were so friendly and present,



Lou Holtz, speaks to gathered freshman.

it has just been great every time that I have been back,” Holtz said in an interview after Convocation. “I love the students and I love the school’s philosophy.”

Approaching the podium to thunderous applause, Holtz captivated the audience with his strong rhetoric. He presented listeners with three ideas that would lead to success in college and after. Beyond the practical advice, Holtz provided many laughs and personal stories from his life experience.

Julianna Bryan, freshman, was the 2022 recipient of the Lou Holtz



Julianna Bryan, receives scholarship from Lou Holtz and President Minnis.
Photos by Jessie Sonnen

endowment scholarship.

“I thought his speech was very inspiring, it was one of the most inspiring talks that I have heard,” Bryan said. “He was so simple, but then so deep in so many ways.”

The ceremony concluded with President Minnis briefly speaking to the freshman class and announcing the end of Beanie Week. With a loud cheer, the freshman took off their beanies and proceeded onto the door and into the new school year.

Expert panel explores Biden’s student loan forgiveness

Sydney Wilkinson
Managing Editor

The Constitutional Fellows put on a panel with Tony Tanking, Dr. Anthony Crifasi, Dr. John Settich, and Dr. James Young to help educate students on the student debt forgiveness plan announced by President Biden on August 24. The panel took place on September 6 in the McAllister Board Room.

The panel began with 10 minute speeches from each panelist on the topic before opening the floor to questions from the students. The first panelist to speak was Tony Tanking who works in the Financial Aid office. He gave a more factual speech on what the plan is and how Benedictine College students could take advantage of it.

“The loan forgiveness is for the individual who took the loan,” Tanking said.

Loans that were taken out prior to June 30, 2022, are eligible for forgive-



Tony Tanking, Director of Financial aid, speaks at panel.
Photo by Sydney Wilkinson

ness. Tanking explained how a student can fill out an application for loan forgiveness sometime in early October on the website studentaid.gov.

Those who fill out an application are eligible for up to \$10,000 forgiven if they make less than \$125,000 per year as an individual. If the applicant is married or the head of a household, they are eligible if their earnings are less than \$250,000 per year. Those

who have been awarded a Pell Grant are eligible for loan forgiveness up to \$20,000.

One point that Tanking made sure to get across is that the individual does not get to choose what loans get forgiven. That is left up to the Department of Education and the federal government.

The next speaker was Dr. Anthony Crifasi, who is a professor in philosophy. His speech focused on the ethics of the plan.

Crifasi talked about how this plan could be a moral dilemma based on the fact that it can become easier to justify taking out more loans if a percentage of loans you already have will be forgiven. However, Crifasi also didn’t want people not to take advantage of the opportunity.

“I want the people eligible to benefit from this loan forgiveness,” Crifasi said.

The next speaker was Dr. John Settich, a political science professor, who brought up a very important question.

“Why is college so expensive?” Settich asked.

The answer to this question has many parts. However, Settich brings a very good point in his answer.

“In my view as a policy analyst, there is one principle reason the charges are so much higher even after the costed dollar calculations,” Settich said. “Loans and scholarships and discounts have fogged the true price of college for several generations of American college students.”

A variety of different factors go into this statement. One main factor that Settich brought up was the probability that a student may not graduate in four years, or even six years. However, the student will still have thousands of dollars in student loans to pay back even if they do not graduate.

“Families choose colleges that match their preferences, and yet they should calculate the cost of student loan debt,” Settich said.

The final panelist was Dr. James Young, an economics professor.

“Let me start with just giving you the typical economic justification for government support of education, especially higher education,” Young said. “There is this idea called positive externality that for some sort of extra social benefit being made that you as a student may not think about when deciding to come to college.”

A student receives the incentive to go to college through loan support, however, many factors can come into play that turn this support into a negative thing. The first being that drop-outs tend to be at a disadvantage when paying back student loans. The second is that your income after college can put you at a disadvantage when paying back student loans. The third point is that many people are concerned about possible inflation this policy might cause.

If you are interested in learning more about the student debt forgiveness plan, visit studentaid.gov or the fact sheet located on whitehouse.gov.

Sports

the Circuit



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Raven Sports

Family Weekend
2022

Women's Volleyball
VS Peru State
Sep 23 @ 7 p.m.

Womens Volleyball
VS Graceland
Sep 24 @11 p.m.

Raven Football VS
Graceland
Sep 24 @1 p.m.

Womens Soccer VS
Graceland
Sep 24 @5 p.m.

Mens Soccer VS
Graceland
Sep 24 @7 p.m.

Football open season with victory over Statesmen

By Aaron Lewis
The Circuit

The Raven football team took to the field for the first time this season on Aug. 27 against the visiting William Penn University Statesmen. The Ravens were victorious with a final score of 34-14.

The Ravens started the game by putting points on the board early with an interception returned 78 yards for a touchdown by senior defensive back Joel Mewis. The Ravens would go on a run by scoring 24 unanswered points throughout the next quarter and a half.

On the offensive side of the ball the Ravens were led by sophomore wide receiver

Jacob Gathright. Gathright finished off an impressive and efficient day with three catches for 103 yards and two touchdowns.

"The practices leading into the game had prepared me. During the game it was time for me to execute everything we've been practicing. When I saw the safety drop on the first touchdown I knew it was over," Gathright said.

Supporting Gathright through the air was senior quarterback Garrett Kettle who ended his season debut going 23-34 for 261 passing yards and three touchdowns.

"I felt like our kids came out ready to go. There was a lot of unknown with them

running a new offense and a new defense, the kids handled it pretty well. Winning the turnover battle was a big deal and we ended up being plus three there," Head Coach Joel Osborn said.

The Raven defense had four turnovers, two fumble recoveries and two interceptions but none bigger than the pick six by Mewis on the opening drive.

Coach Osborn and the Ravens look to build on a strong first game and continue their success throughout the 2022 campaign.



Top right: Derrick Overstreet carries the ball past opposing players. Bottom left: Zyon Mathis leads team onto the field with American Flag. Bottom right: Raven Football team lines up against William Penn. Photos by Maria St. Germain

Women's soccer veterans lead team to overwhelming victory

Brooklynn Wozny
The Circuit



The Raven Women's Soccer Team returned home, Aug. 31, and put up a win against the University of St. Mary. The Ravens are currently ranked No. 22 in the nation.

The Ravens ended the night with a 5-0 victory with goals scored by Rachel Beffa, Kortney Koc, Riley Degner, Madalynn Gill, and Emily Shepherd.

The Ravens have a lot of talent and familiar faces from returners as they lost only three starters from last season.

Senior Captain Hailey White believes that this team is very experienced going into the season and will continue to work hard to push out many more victories.

"After losing in the first round of nationals last year, we all have a fire within us and we are determined this year to make it past the first round and push each other every day, not only in athletics, but in personal growth too," White said.

The team started preparing for the season in early August with two a day practices. They competed in their first game at home on Aug. 22 with a 2-1 victory over Midland University.



"We had a pretty intense press with two-a-days to get ready, but once the freshman moved in we really focused on integrating them into the team while fine tuning the details

in order to be the best we can be," White said.

The Ravens will resume action at home on Saturday Sept. 10 against Concordia College.



Top left: Annie Hoog receives a pass. Top right: Faith Lewis takes free kick. Left: Madison Smith leaps with joy in celebration with her team. Bottom left: The Ravens sing the National Anthem before a game. Bottom right: Annie Hooge dribbles the ball down the field.



Sports gambling legalized in Kansas

Domonic Susanka
The Circuit

Get ready Benedictine, sports betting is coming to Kansas. What do students need to know before becoming involved, what opportunities are now available, and what downsides could result?

Gambling has been a part of the sports world for decades, but has particularly picked up speed recently

with the ever increasing popularity of online and mobile based bets, giving fans the chance to invest in any sport in any place.

Starting Thursday, Sept. 1, bets on sporting events such as NCAA football, NFL, and the upcoming MLB playoffs can be placed at various casinos in Kansas, for example the Hollywood Casino in Kansas City.

Along with the casinos

fans are also now able to use mobile betting platforms Fanduel, Draftkings, and Caesars Sportsbooks being some of the most popular.

With the legalization coming to Kansas, for newcomers to the sports gambling scene, many of the top apps and online platforms offer deals and risk-free options for the first use.

An important thing to

know and remember, is that gambling is still only legal if you are 21 years of age.

Gambling is a very controversial and dangerous field. Some of the dangers to be aware of before you begin sports gambling, is it becoming too time consuming, becoming too invested, and of course the ever present danger of addiction.

It is important to always

be aware of the dangers, but gambling for many people increases the entertainment and enjoyment of sports, it also when done responsibly provides a cheap hobby with a chance to make some money.

These are all things to be aware of if you are interested in becoming involved in the sports betting world in Kansas starting Sept. 1.

Community

Students take action to support the pro-life community on campus

**Emma Lundholm and
Regan Getman**
The Circuit

Benedictine students find ways to form community and show their support for the pro-life movement, whether that be independently or side by side through Ravens Respect Life.

Angel Delgadillo, freshman, found his own way to support fellow freshman at Benedictine, Grace Hartsock. Delgadillo collected various signatures from people around campus on a poster he made for Hartsock while also explaining her story.

Last month Hartsock was door knocking with Students for Life Action in the Kansas City area alongside other student volunteers in support of the Value Them Both amendment. She came across a woman that did not seem supportive of the initiative, but politely turned Hartsock away.

"As I was turning around to leave, her adult daughter came out of the house yelling and cursing at me. She got in my face and continued to scream as I walked down their driveway, and violently shoved me in the chest and hit me on the head," Hartsock said.

Hartsock was surprised by the poster when Delgadillo gave it to her.

"I can't express how touched I am by the support I've received from Benedictine students like Angel, especially those who created and signed the poster or reached out to me on social media," Hartsock said.

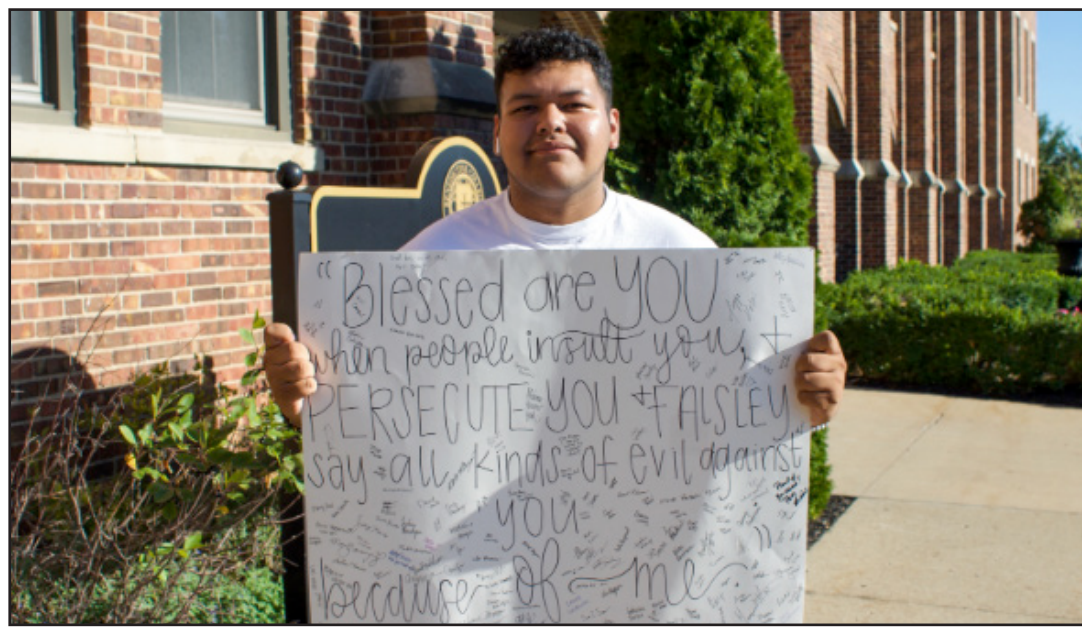
The poster symbolizes the strong values of coming together as a community and standing with a fellow Raven, which is the true Benedictine way.

"It serves as a reminder to me of how strong and supportive the pro-life community is, and that we will be rewarded one day for standing up for life when we are faced with violence or injustice," Hartsock said.

We asked Delgadillo why he decided to stand with Hartsock.

"I just know if I were involved in that same situation, I'd want someone to do this for me as well," Delgadillo said.

Students were not the only ones showing their support, President Minnis also got the chance to put his signature on the poster for Hartsock as well. The same passion for the movement is found in the Ravens



Angel Delgadillo shows the poster he made for Grace Hartsock at Benedictine College on Monday, Aug. 4, 2022. Gestures are a huge part of who Delgadillo is and he knew it would mean a lot to Hartsock if someone did something for her.

Respect Life club.

Abby Barrett, a member of Ravens Respect Life, understands the importance of every person's part in the battle to protect innocent life. When it came to the Value Them Both Amendment, Barrett was able to cast her vote.

"I voted because of the morality of the Amendment on the ballot. The issue is one of life

& death, good & evil, humanity & inhumanity, barbarity & opportunity," Barrett said.

Although the results of the election resulted in Kansas being a state that protects the right to abortion, there is still a need for people to be brave and stand up for their beliefs.

"The battle continues, as it always does, against the evil one whose work was most re-

cently seen on Aug. 2" Barrett said.

Benedictine College is a place for people to live their pro-life beliefs freely and safely. However, it takes the power of community provided here at Benedictine and the courage to venture outside of comfort and challenge others to confront truth.

"Prayer & honest education

about the founding & continuation of the World's Largest Executioner (Planned Parenthood) are crucial in winning this fight," Barrett explains.

Joe Hogan, President of Ravens Respect Life, strives to provide opportunities for club members to serve pregnant mothers and offer support in many ways.

"Ravens Respect Life is very active on campus! We lead prayer trips down to the abortion clinic in Kansas City, bring in exciting speakers, get involved in pro-life canvassing, train our members to defend their beliefs, are increasing support for pregnant mothers on campus and in Kansas, and more!" Hogan said.

For those interested in getting involved with the Ravens Respect Life club,

"Joining is as easy as attending our club events and outreach opportunities. We have an email list and a GroupMe. If you wish to join, email bcrrl@benedictine.edu!" Hogan said.

The Ravens Respect Life club will be announcing their theme this year at the kickoff meeting on Sept. 7.

Raven Hunger Coalition feeds Atchison community

Delaney Griem
Managing Editor

The Skip-a-meal initiative is a 38-year long program that provides a good and healthy meal to those who need it most in the Atchison community. This is most often to poor elderly, disabled, or homes with children.

Jack Niederee, President of the Hunger Coalition, recalls a specific moment that moved him while giving meals to the community. A father of four stopped him to tell him how thankful he was for the meals. He was working overtime shifts to help pay for the engine fix for the family minivan that had broken down.

"He said not only did the meals help him save for that, but also it brought his kids joy, because they were excited when the volunteers delivered the sacks," Niederee said.

The initiative originally started back in the early 80's to raise money for a mission trip. The Raven community quickly realized that this semester long program could be used to benefit the Atchison community in a greater way. Today over 250 students are giving their meals to others.

Alainna Kezele is a Senior at Benedictine College and

has been participating in the program for the past four years. She continues to commit to this sacrifice because of the good it brings to those less fortunate.

community," Kezele said.

The Hunger Coalition does more than just ask for people to give up their Wednesday meals. They also package and

"The experience is humbling. When I go, I am reminded of how we are all Gods people. I encourage everyone to take time to deliver meals"

-Engelbert

"I encourage other students to join this program because it builds the Benedictine community as well as the Atchison

deliver the meals every week. As well as this they have a huge role in social justice week in the spring semester.

Hunger Co works with Uplift KC, which is an independently funded homeless ministry organization in Kansas City. They occasionally send volunteers to help.

This program is more than just giving up one meal a week. Volunteers including students, staff, and faculty assemble and deliver sack lunches on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. The faculty and staff continue their duties when the student body is away from campus. This program also involves working with Aramark, who supports their initiative.

Senior Allison Engelbert spoke about her eye-opening experience while delivering meals.

"You live in a bubble on campus, but when I went to deliver these meals, I realized how many of the community members are living below the poverty line," Engelbert said.

If you are looking for a way to give back to the community, join the Hunger Coalition. They do the meal packing on Fridays from 3-4 p.m. in the cafeteria, and on Saturdays they send out volunteers on routes to different families beginning at 9:30 a.m.

First Friday Downtown Atchison brings community together

Christian Schieman
Managing Editor

From May to October, local businesses of Atchison come together to put on First Friday Downtown Atchison; a monthly event with games, food, and local vendors.

Because Atchison is a small town, First Friday events give store owners an opportunity to reach more people and attract business.

Angela Harris-Spurlock, co-owner of antique store Backroad Atlas shared how

First Friday helps her business.

"We get people downtown; it's not something we usually get. The community knows that there's open businesses downtown and they see not only the antique part, but also the snow cone part, so that's how it helps—it gets people down here," Harris-Spurlock said.

First Friday also attracts small businesses. Vendors are allowed to set up tents and display their products, fundraising materials, and food.

Small business owner Kristy



Sumpter discussed what she loves most about the monthly event.

"It's just a really nice event to be in town. I'm from Atchison, and it's just nice to see everybody from town and people that I know. It's a nice little event for just a couple of hours," Sumpter said.

Sumpter runs an earring and t-shirt business called Joyful Rose Designs. She elaborated on how vendors benefit from participating in First Fridays.

"The girl that runs it makes

sure that it's free for everyone to come out and do, so it's really great to not have to pay a vendor fee. It makes a huge difference when you're a small business," Sumpter said.

However, the event is not just for vendors and shop-owners. People like to bring their old-fashioned cars to First Friday's as well. Crowds admire the cars as they eat food and socialize with townsfolk.

Art Brant likes to bring his 1941 Willys car to First Fridays. He most enjoys socializ-

ing with others.

"A lot of people are interested in cars, and we meet new people who are interested that you haven't seen before. I've had this car that's two years old, I've got another one that's 17 years old, and I've brought it for years," Brant said.

There will be one more First Friday this year held on the first Friday of October from 6-8 p.m.



Top left: Youth Bulldogs Cheer members fundraising at First Friday. Top right: Vintage automobiles lined the streets as the sun went down. Right: Live music rang out from instruments as people browsed the shops of Downtown Atchison. Photos by Leila Almanza



Voices

2022 Summer Movie Recap

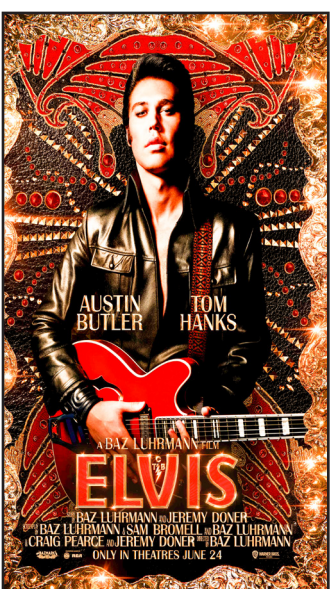
Will Proski
The Circuit



Pulled from [imdb.com](#)

The final entry in the latest phase of Marvel movies sees Thor on the exact same journey of self-discovery he's been going on for his previous three standalone movies. What is most frustrating about it is that it has a good set-up for Thor's character to go in an interesting direction with Gorr the God Butcher, played by Christian Bale, but the movie completely squanders it in favor of comedy that is on par with SNL on its worst days.

I know that the Marvel franchise has its widespread appeal to most audiences, but it has worn thin on me for the few years, and *Thor: Love and Thunder* felt like the final nail in the coffin. In place of a story is everything that bugs me about all of the Marvel movies on full display and cranked up to the max; lack of tension, the over-abundance of CGI that makes the world feel completely artificial, jokes that amount to little more than puns and quips, a slight variation on the same story being told again and again, it's all here. It's a completely unlikeable movie, I would call it the worst movie of the year so far.



Pulled from [imdb.com](#)

As a bit of a Baz Luhrmann hater, I went into *Elvis* not expecting to like it, but his opulent, flashy, overstimulating style was perfect for the subject matter in a way that has never worked for me before. The energy in *Elvis* is palpable and thrilling, making the nearly two hour and forty-minute runtime fly by like ninety minutes.

While falling into a lot of the pitfalls that music biopics typically fall into, like clunky storytelling due to a need to condense the artist's entire life or career into a feature length movie, *Elvis* remains consistent throughout thanks to the focus on Elvis Presley's relationship with his cartoonish, evil manager Tom Parker, played by an insanely over-the-top Tom Hanks. It's a very enjoyable,

exhilarating movie.



Pulled from [imdb.com](#)

Remember how I said *Thor: Love and Thunder* was the worst movie of the year? I was lying. Like a lot of lazy legacy-sequels, *Jurassic World Dominion* has nothing new to offer aside from bringing back old cast members and recognizable iconography, but it is so much worse here than in any other I have ever seen.

Jurassic World Dominion is the antithesis of everything I love so much about not only Jurassic Park, but movies in general. There is not a single ounce of passion or creativity in *Dominion*. This entire new trilogy, but this and *Fallen Kingdom* especially, has more in common with the *Fast and Furious* franchise than it does with Jurassic Park. Spielberg's film was not an action movie. It was a science fiction movie that was more interested in exploring the ethics of bringing back dinosaurs from extinction and turning nature into a spectacle to be gawked at, as well as the capitalistic motivations behind the park, and how that mindset led to corners being cut and lives being lost. Where that theme is at the very core of Jurassic Park, it is nothing more than a sloppy paint job on the Jurassic World trilogy. It's a flashy, green screen spectacle with nightmarishly nauseating, implausible, physics-defying, never-ending action scenes one after the other until the movie's boilerplate "script" comes to an end. There's no story being told, just excuses for action scenes with dinosaurs to happen. It's a hollow product with nothing but a cynical, money-hungry studio behind it.

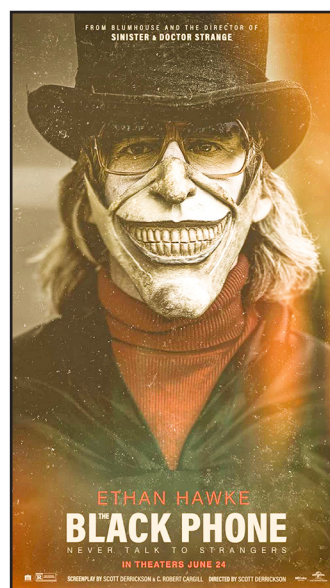


Pulled from [imdb.com](#)

In complete contrast to Jurassic World, in terms of legacy-sequels to iconic movies, this joins *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Blade Runner 2049* as the new gold standard for that type

of movie. I watched the original film a few months ago and I really didn't understand what people liked about it, and it put me off watching the sequel. When I finally saw *Top Gun: Maverick*, I got everything that I think people get out of the original movie out of it, and it absolutely blew me away.

Top Gun: Maverick is basically a perfect, shining example of how ambitious and impressive blockbuster filmmaking can be at its best. Unlike the first movie, this one actually has a story and a plot. Sure, the plot is thin and the dialogue sounds like it was written by a thirteen-year-old, but it gets the job done, giving each of the characters enough to work with, with satisfying payoffs for all the major players in the story. The real star of the show is the aerial scenes, and the filmmaking on display here is like nothing else I've ever seen. Even the scenes where the team is just practicing for their mission and there is no enemy threat feel way more exhilarating and action packed than most action movies where the characters are in explicit danger, which should give you a good idea of how tense the movie is when the characters do have to pull off the mission. Not only is *Top Gun: Maverick* better in every way than its predecessor, it made me care about what was happening and made me feel warm, nostalgic feelings for a movie that I didn't care for at all, which is feat. I'll take the cheesy sincerity of *Top Gun: Maverick* over the sarcasm and forced wit of Thor any day. Scientology be damned, Tom Cruise can make a movie.



Pulled from [imdb.com](#)

2022 has been a solid year for the horror genre, giving us a wide variety of the different kinds of horror movies. With *The Black Phone*, director Scott Derrickson gives us a solid, entertaining, Stephen King-reminiscent supernatural horror/thriller. It's a good example of a movie about being trapped in a scary situation and watching the characters try to problem-solve their way out of it. A convention of the horror genre is a supernatural antagonist hunting human protagonists, but *The Black Phone* subverts that trope, giving the victims the supernatural abilities where the antagonist is just a regular person. This helps the film stay focused on what matters, making sure it never gets bogged down in explaining what the deal is with a demon or evil entity; the kids are psychic, and that's all you need to know. It's never given any further explanation or reasoning, which is perfect for keeping things ambiguous and up to interpretation.

The Black Phone has some acting and writing problems, some of the logistics fall apart under scrutiny, but

it's nothing that ruined the experience of watching it. It's a great movie to watch in October, as well as recommend to people who generally don't watch a lot of horror movies or don't like them, unlike the next film I will talk about.



Pulled from [imdb.com](#)

Where *The Black Phone* is on the more accessible side of horror genre, Alex Garland's third film *Men* is on the complete opposite side of the spectrum. Psychological horror can be difficult to get into, and this is no exception. *Men* is a movie that is not for everyone, especially if you're squeamish. It has some of the gnarliest body-horror I've seen in recent years. The film is divisive and controversial, some even calling it exploitative, but I think that the non-literal and absurdist lens that *Men* uses prevents it from ever feeling like the film is distasteful regarding its subject matter. So, if surrealism and absurdism in horror movies intrigues you, *Men* is the fantasy-horror movie for you. The film follows a woman named Harper going on a trip to a village in the country to get away from life following a tragedy, and the strange and horrifying encounters she has with men along the way.

Like Garland's previous work *Ex Machina* and *Annihilation*, *Men* is beautifully shot and edited, possibly the best-looking horror movie to come out since *The Lighthouse*. Like that film, the simplicity of the story allows for endless amounts of themes and allegory, from nature and ancient mythology to gender dynamics. Even if you hate the film, there is enough subtext and interpretable messaging to keep you thinking about it for weeks. Again, *Men* is a movie that is not for everyone, I certainly wouldn't recommend it to my grandma, but check it out if you have the stomach for absurd fantasy body-horror that would make David Cronenberg jealous.



Pulled from [imdb.com](#)

Saved the best for last. Right in the middle of the horror spectrum in between *The Black Phone* and *Men*, *Nope* is one of the best summer blockbusters to come out in years, if not the best. It feels like a natural, 21st century extension of the type of adventure/horror that Steven Spielberg popularized with *Jaws* and *Jurassic Park*; it's thrilling, clever, funny, terrifying, and most importantly for a blockbuster, it's ambitious. It's everything that blockbuster filmmaking has not been ever since the theater system has been dominated by Disney. Everything about *Nope* radiates charisma and creativity, from the cast and the cinematography to the twist on the "UFO on a farm" story that is so clever I'm stunned it hasn't been done before. The way the ranch is shot is gorgeous, the wide-open spaces surrounded by desert hills, feeling fully immersive in a world where a UFO could be lurking in the clouds at any given moment.

Like *Top Gun: Maverick*, this is a film that is meant to be seen on the biggest screen possible, and Jordan Peele's balance of blockbuster filmmaking with his own style is perfectly seamless. The film is packed with Jordan Peele's signature social commentary, re-incorporations, visual storytelling and distinct character-writing, making *Nope* one of the most memorable and rewatchable movies of the year, and for me, Peele's best work to date and the best movie of the summer.

Movies to look out for Fall 2022

Don't Worry Darling

Sep 23

Starring

Florence Pugh,
Harry Styles
Chris Pine

Hocus Pocus 2

Sep 30

Starring

Bette Midler
Sarah Jessica Parker
Kathy Najimy

Devotion

Oct 14

Starring

Jonathan Majors
Glen Powell

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