

It's the end of the world ... and we'll pay 12 dollars to watch it

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Comedies are to recessions what apocalyptic films are to global warming. Ice caps are melting, the world's leaders stomp into Copenhagen in December to hammer out a carbon solution, and suddenly there's an abundance of armageddon scenarios playing out on movie screens (including this season's "2012" and "The Road"). So why do we love to watch our end-of-world nightmares played out on the big screen?

"Apocalyptic anxieties go in cycles," asserts professor Richard Landes of Boston University, a scholar in millennial movements. He adds that the proliferation of these films accelerates before dates that have doomsday significance. "In terms of potential for apocalyptic projection, 2012 is a pretty good date, the best date since 2000," he says.

The film "2012" is tied to the ancient Mayan calendar, which stops at the year 2012. The film seizes on a number of possibilities that have been predicted for hundreds of years, such as celestial bodies colliding with the Earth, or a massive flood, much like the biblical story of Noah's ark. But producer for "2012," Harald Kloser, says these disaster films also tap into anxieties about global warming.

"Obviously, we live in very uncertain times. And if you look ahead, you don't have to be a genius to know that we can't continue living like we do for very much longer," says Kloser. "Also, the economy crashed in a massive way, so I think there's a sense of old ways coming to an end."

Quoted:

"I think people enjoy the process of putting themselves through that [doomsday] scenario and seeing how they would react to it from a safe distance. You come out of the theater and you feel grateful to be alive, grateful that that stuff isn't happening to you. You appreciate every little thing."

— **Nick Wechsler**, producer on "The Road," based on the post-apocalyptic world in the Cormac McCarthy novel, on why our "imminent doom" is such a thrill to watch in theaters.

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