

## **‘Don’t Look Up’ looks at humanity through a darkly comedic mirror**

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
Friday, 07 January 2022 04:59

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Rating: ««««

out of «««««

Running Time: 138 minutes

**This feature is currently streaming on Netflix.**

Making a comedy about the possible end of the world is no easy task. Despite this less-than-amusing scenario, a few have used these fears to humorous effect, including Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 classic, “Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.” Admittedly, the new film “Don’t Look Up” isn’t as sharp or cutting as that cinematic classic. However, much of what is presented onscreen does feel eerily accurate and there is enough effective satire and commentary here and there to make one laugh and send a chill down the spine.

This tale begins with Michigan State University doctoral student Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence) discovering an immense comet hurtling toward Earth. When she informs instructor Dr. Randall Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio), about her finding and they follow the projected path of the enormous rock, they discover that the rock is on a collision course with the planet, and will hit in six months. The pair team with NASA’s Dr. Teddy Oglethorpe (Rob Morgan) to warn U.S. President Orlean (Meryl Streep) and her son, Chief of Staff Jason Orlean (Jonah Hill), about the imminent threat.

Sadly, the White House isn’t interested in addressing the problem, so the pair embark on a

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media tour, meeting with talk show hosts like Brie Evantree (Cate Blanchett). Things don't go as planned on that front either, leaving the protagonists frustrated as they try to alert everyone about this potential end-of-the-world scenario.

Over the course of the running time, the protagonists have bizarre experiences with not only the government, but also media outlets, tech giants CEOs like Peter Isherwell (Mark Rylance) and even the disbelieving general public. No one is free from criticism in this satire, and all camps respond to the threat in selfish ways. President Orlean is only interested if it serves her political purposes, while Isherwell sees a business opportunity in the comet itself. The media is obsessed with ratings and generating click-bait fluff for viewers (some of whom ultimately refuse to believe in the existence of the comet).

There's plenty of amusing material, especially when the leads try to deal with television media and how to present themselves to the public. And Dr. Mindy's slow corruption by fame also offers some laughs. Jason Orlean is an entertainingly nasty and dim assistant, while Isherwell has a great running gag about algorithms and how he and his team already know how everyone around will ultimately die (which has a nice payoff much later in the feature). There's also a funny little bit from Dibinsky about the bafflingly greedy behavior of a general with whom she interacts.

There's also an enjoyable and very grim gag near the end of the movie that features some of the world's most popular brands and franchises.

The insane scenario and surreal reactions by various factions provides plenty of dark comedic fodder, but it also causes a little bit of an issue, especially as more and more characters are dropped into the proceedings.

The movie is so full of characters and factions that many stars don't get the onscreen time or focus that they deserve. This film is in such a rush to poke fun at humanity in general that characters appear briefly and broadly. Additionally, some of the jokes are bluntly delivered. A more focused and directed attack on fewer targets may have resulted in a slightly sharper and zippier movie.

Still, despite its exaggerated characters and heavy approach, it doesn't feel all that far removed

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from reality. The screenplay does make a strong point that the world is currently in shambles and that most of us, to some degree, bear a least some responsibility. “Don’t Look Up” paints a dark scenario and won’t win any points for subtlety. The modern world isn’t understated and the movie ultimately delivers enough laughs to make a disturbing and potentially apocalyptic scenario amusing (at least, at times) to witness.

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