

NICK DENT'S TOP PICKS



1 INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS

★★★★

The Coen Brothers' droll dramatic comedy charts the misadventures of a struggling folk singer (Oscar Isaac) in the early 1960s.

2 HER

★★★★

The chemistry is electric in the futuristic romance between a lonesome loser (Joaquin Phoenix) and a sultry-voiced computer operating system (Scarlett Johansson).



3 FROZEN

★★★★★
Escape the summer heat with the sparkling new Disney princess movie, based on Hans Christian Andersen's tale *The Snow Queen*.

4 THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY

★★★★

Ben Stiller is a daydream believer breaking free from his humdrum existence in an inspirational comedy directed by Stiller himself.

5 THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG

★★★★

With elves, a dragon, great action and better pacing, the second *Hobbit* stands head and shoulders above the first.

Jonah joins Wolf pack



Shedding the endearing persona, Jonah Hill bares his teeth (among other things) in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, writes **Tiffany Bakker**

In *The Wolf of Wall Street*, Jonah Hill may give one of the standout performances of an already impressive career, but he reckons he'll be more remembered in the film for sporting a prosthetic penis.

"The first instinct was for everyone on set to laugh," Hill says of the scene that sees his character not-so-discreetly fondle himself at a party.

"For the extras it's meant to be really funny, but for the main characters, it's supposed to be inappropriate and disturbing. So I had to tell everyone that while their first instinct was to laugh, I had to take it very seriously so we got the right response."

When we meet at a hotel on New York's Central Park, Hill is friendly enough, if not a little shy. He's no longer the doughy comic of yore, nor does he cut quite as slim a figure as he did a few years back when he showed off a shockingly dramatic weight loss. Rather, he

seems to have found a happy medium, a place he's also found in his career, becoming just as well known for drama as for comedies



such as *Superbad*. On Friday he was nominated for an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, a three-hour symphony of excess, drugs, sex, and features such bad behaviour (the objectification of women is jaw-dropping), that it occasionally makes for uncomfortable viewing.

(Directed by Martin Scorsese, it has elements of a financial world-*Goodfellas* about it.) It's also a true story. Based on the memoir of disgraced stockbroker Jordan Belfort (played by Leonardo DiCaprio), whose company Stratton Oakmont gleefully rips off anyone and everyone purely to fund an increasingly greedy and lavish lifestyle; one which includes helicopters, yachts, New York estates, endless prostitutes, and mountains and mountains of cocaine.

In the film, Hill plays Donnie Azoff (a composite of a few characters in the Belfort's book), second in command at Stratton Oakmont.

"He's an entertaining person,

but he's messed up," Hill says.

That's an understatement; in fact, Donnie is even more revolting than Belfort, who at least regretted his crimes.

"Jordan (Belfort) told me that some people (at Stratton Oakmont) actually enjoyed hurting people," Hill says, adding that he wanted to play the role as "this is someone I recognised in society, and I felt he was what was wrong with certain elements — someone with no morality".

Hill admits he found Donnie's unabashed repulsiveness difficult, and says that he would leave the set at the end of the day feeling bad for what he'd had to do.

"It was the first character I've played that I didn't see any part of myself in," he says. "All the characters I'd played, I thought were maybe flawed in one way, but they had a good heart. I didn't think Donnie had a good heart — I didn't think he was a good person."

(Hill reckons he even managed to take a life lesson out of *The Wolf of Wall Street*

— to lead a "more balanced life" without excess "of any kind").

One of the criticisms levelled at the film is that it is apathetic to Belfort's crimes and behaviour. (Belfort was sentenced to a meagre four years in prison, and only ended up serving 22 months.)

Hill is bullish about the fact that the film is "a cautionary tale" and about "how our country works if you're wealthy, and if you do terrible things to get wealthy, it can still buy you out of a lot of problems".

"It's an incredibly unapologetic film," he adds. "It's just telling a story honestly because it's being dishonest by changing it. If you're telling *The Wolf of Wall Street* and you make this movie totally tame, you're not being honest. This is what happened. We're not condoning it."

Hill grew up in Los Angeles, the son of a costume designer and accountant (his dad was a tour accountant for Guns'n'Roses). His brother, Jordan, is a Hollywood agent (and recently landed in hot water for marrying Clint Eastwood's daughter Francesca during a drunken night out in Las Vegas).

As a kid, Hill was obsessed with Bill Murray, Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor and Steve Martin. "A lot of those '70s, '80s comedies were anti-authority, and I enjoyed that."

He wanted to be a writer, but took acting classes to learn how to talk to actors.

"I got way more positive reinforcement for acting than I ever got for anything else in my life, so I was like, OK, if people are saying I should do this, then maybe I should do this, and I really liked doing this."