



THE FINAL CUT

How movies tackle a most difficult subject

Given that it's a non-negotiable, milestone event in everyone's life, it's not surprising that death is frequently explored in movies. What is perhaps surprising is the thematic breadth the subject can take. For every flat-out weepie like *Terms of Endearment* and *The Fault in Our Stars*, there are ribald comedies like *Beetlejuice*, *An American Werewolf in London* and *Death Becomes Her*. And there are titles like *Ghost* and *The Sixth Sense* - heck, Ingmar Bergman's towering *The Seventh Seal* from 1957 - plumbing death's unfathomable mysteries via elements of fantasy.

If there's one thing linking all movies about death, though, it's the concept that life is precious, every moment an incalculable gift. Two new, forthcoming films join the canon making that point, albeit in suitably different ways. The gentle drama *Living* finds great English actor Bill Nighy (73 on Dec. 12) as a '50s-era civil servant living a rigidly proscribed, workaday life, until a terminal diagnosis propels him to unlock meaning from his beige existence while he still can.

A remake of Akira Kurosawa's seminal *Ikiru* from 1952 - with a screenplay by 68-year-old

Nobel Prize-winning novelist Kazuo Ishiguro, no less - *Living* is a tender-hearted reminder that work is no substitute for existential joy. Also, that passion trumps bureaucracy every time. It's in theatres Jan. 13.

At the other end of the spectrum is *Spoiler Alert*, in theatres nationwide Dec. 16. In addition to exploring the impact of death on a madly in-love couple (see also *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Ghost*, *P.S. I Love You*), *Spoiler Alert* fits neatly into the newly minted and very welcome category of gay rom com, which includes last fall's delightful *Bros*.

An adaptation of Michael Ausiello's 2017 memoir *Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies*, which chronicled the author's

photographer-husband's death due to cancer, *Spoiler Alert* was written for the screen by well-known sex columnist Dan Savage, 58, alongside David Marshall Grant, 67. It stars *Big Bang Theory*'s Jim Parsons, 49, and Sally Field, 76.

Astute readers will note that director Michael Showalter, 52, is on very familiar ground here, having helmed 2017's acclaimed *The Big Sick*. Showalter also co-wrote and directed the fabulously oddball 2015 comedy *Hello, My Name Is Doris*, starring the incomparable, aforementioned Field. As in life, connections forged in the movies sometimes last forever. And like the movies, they help distract us from the grievous reality we all face. —Kim Hughes



Spoiler Alert*'s Ben Aldridge, Jim Parsons, Sally Field and Bill Irwin; (above) Bill Nighy in *Living

