

# Franchise Times®

The News and Information Source for Franchising

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## TWISTED TALE

HOW A FORMER  
STREET URCHIN  
BLEW THE ROOF OFF  
THE PRETZEL BIZ

WHERE'S THE BUN?  
FAST-FEEDERS DO  
BATTLE OVER BREAD

6 ROCKSTARS OF  
CHARITABLE GIVING  
SHARE SAGE ADVICE

CAN SENTINEL CAPITAL  
SPEND \$1 BILLION WISELY?



Real Pretzels. Real Opportunity

# Passions

## For attorney, films and franchising are one and the same

*What do the movies have to do with franchising? For our guest columnist, who's also a raving film fan, the connections are everywhere. Here's his take on the best of 2013, complete with your own popcorn, below.*

By Matthew Kreutzer

**M**y primary passion in life (besides franchising, of course) is movies. In 2013, I saw more than 200 films. My personal favorite movies of 2013 have something in common with the best franchises: They all find ways to connect with their core audiences in a way that drives loyalty.

Here's my list of the best, along with musings about their connection to franchising.

### Personal connections

Some of the hottest new franchises, like "build your own" pizza restaurants and sculpt/paint studios, are successful because they personally engage customers. Similarly, "All Is Lost" was able to engage its audience more directly than any other film of 2013.

Robert Redford plays a man alone on a yacht in the middle of the ocean, left to battle a chance accident and the elements using only his wits and the few supplies he has on hand.

What I loved about this movie is you learn almost nothing through dialogue. You, the viewer, are forced to watch actively for clues to decide why the man is out there alone. You question his actions, and are forced to consider how you would respond to the challenges thrown his way. As a result, every viewer's understanding of the movie is guided by his or her own experiences.

### Feeling like family

A time-tested method of reaching consumers is to make them feel like they are family. Customers are loyal to businesses that make them feel appreciated. The next two films on my list, "Starbuck" and "Nebraska," reflect this same idea.

"Starbuck" tells the story of David

Wozniak (Patrick Huard), a ne'er-do-well 40-something with a good heart. David discovers, due to a mix-up at a fertility center, that he has more than 500 biological children. The children sue the center to learn his identity, while David learns more about them and acts as a "guardian angel" to each of his kids.

"Starbuck" is a comedy about what it means to be human: It's about connection, love, loyalty, friendship, belonging, and, most of all, family. While it's touching and heartfelt, it's also easily one of the funniest movies of the year. I challenge you to watch this movie and not get choked up by the ending, which is profoundly sweet without being artificial or cloying.

In "Nebraska," A cantankerous elderly man (Bruce Dern) receives a come-on solicitation in the mail from a marketing company informing him that he "may have won \$1 million," and he immediately starts hitchhiking to the company's head office in Nebraska to claim his prize. After first trying unsuccessfully to talk his dad out of the misguided mission, his son (Will Forte) decides to drive him there, hoping he can use the trip to bond with his father. The road trip takes the pair home town, where he crosses swords with

his family, friends and former business partner.

"Nebraska," a film that looks both lovely and stark in black-and-white, is another home run by director Alexander Payne ("Sideways" and "The Descendants"). The cast is memorable, featuring a number of first-time actors that add to the authenticity of the movie; everyone has someone like "Uncle Ray" or "Aunt Betty" in their own family, and their living room feels like our own. Like the other movies on my list this year, "Nebraska" is about loyalty, family and the bonds that tie us together.

### Familiar faces

The franchise companies that have been with us longest continue to thrive because they appeal to our need for familiarity. We return to these businesses over and over because we know what to expect from them and they rarely disappoint us. Very few film franchises have the same staying power; one of the best movies of the year is a sequel featuring characters that viewers have grown to love.

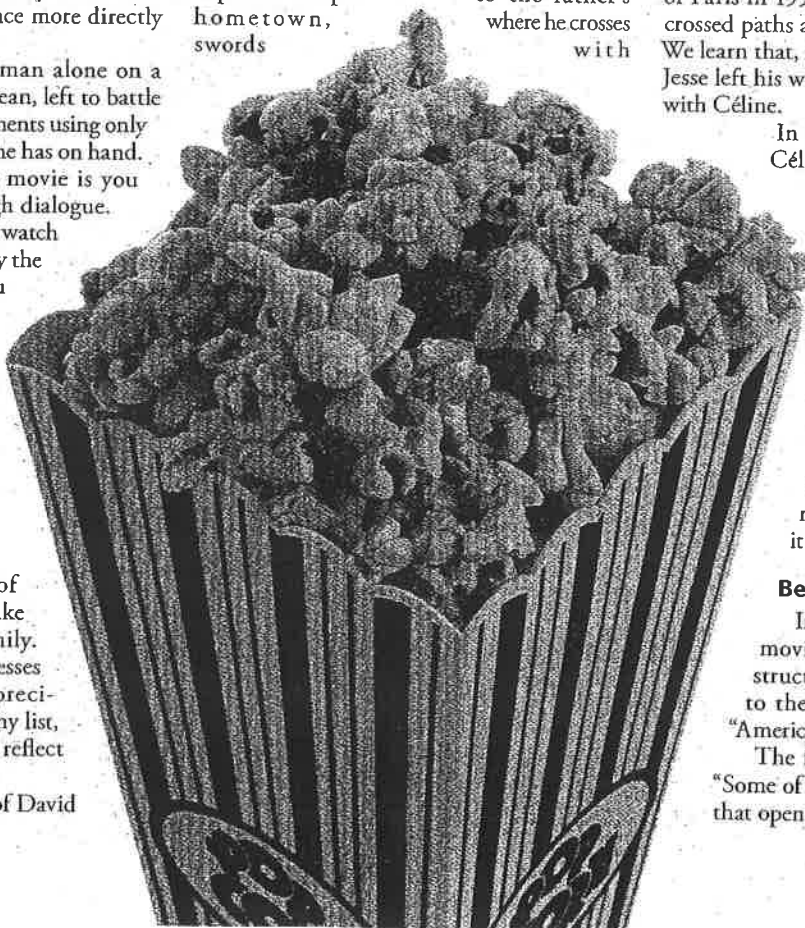
In "Before Midnight," we catch up with Jesse and Céline (Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy), the two lovers that met first on a train outside of Paris in 1995's "Before Sunrise" and then crossed paths again in 2004's "Before Sunset." We learn that, in the time since the last movie, Jesse left his wife and moved to Europe to be with Céline.

In the first two movies, Jesse and Céline, who were not yet together, were still idealizing one another. In this movie, they are facing the reality of living together and feeling the pull of conflicting priorities. Loving someone from afar is easy; sharing your life with them is hard. And, because we've grown with them over the past two decades, their pain hurts us, too. "Before Midnight" is the rare film that feels so real that it aches.

### Better construction

In film and in franchising, those movies or businesses that are constructed better than the others rise to the top. The best film of 2013, "American Hustle," proves this point.

The film begins with a statement: "Some of this actually happened." With that opening salvo, we begin a rollicking





journey of crime, con men, politicians, government agents, lies and betrayal that explores the blurred lines between right and wrong.

Based on the FBI ABSCAM operation of the late 1970s and early 1980s, "American Hustle" tells the story of con artists Irving Rosenfeld and Sydney Prosser (Christian Bale and Amy Adams) who are used by FBI agent Richie DiMaso (Bradley Cooper) to lure elected officials into accepting bribes—so that the Bureau could capture it all on videotape. A string of politicians are ensnared by the trap and convicted; but the film asks the question: In a game of deceit, who is the real villain?

"American Hustle" is an example of first-

class filmmaking. The ensemble cast (rounded out by Jennifer Lawrence and Jeremy Renner) inhabits the characters and breathes life into the history. The story is well-constructed and laced with observations about loyalty, relationships and the human condition that are both wry and apt, leading to some of the best comedic scenes of any film this year.

### **Universal stories**

While my favorites of the year were not the most financially successful movies, they all did one thing incredibly well: They told stories that were both universal and personal in a compelling way. By focusing on quality storytelling,

these films succeeded by connecting with audiences.

In this way, good movies are like good franchise systems. Those chains with products and services that connect with customers are the most successful because they are able to get front and center with their audiences—even those who aren't wearing their 3D glasses. **FT**

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