

THE AGE OF STUPID

Written and Directed by: Franny Armstrong

Produced by: Lizzie Gillet

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*Adrienne Harrison**

Set in 2055, “The Age of Stupid” uses a unique hybrid of fantasy and reality to deliver a stark message: if our current society does not modify its habits, the devastating effects of climate change will most assuredly bring the demise of the world as we know it. Peter Postletwaite (*Usual Suspects*) plays an archivist who has preserved much of humanity's greatest achievements in a structure built in the North Pole. It is evident that a quasi-apocolyptic event occurred in recent history, and as he reviews footage taken from 2005 to 2008, he provides commentary on the various clues we received from mother nature that our continued abuse of her resources were unsustainable. As he clicks on video clips from real people around the world, the audience sees the issue of climate change from varying perspectives. On the one hand, the audience follows the life of a wealthy Indian entrepreneur who endeavors to bring the first low-cost airline to India in his efforts to eradicate poverty by providing jobs to people in a region. Juxtaposed against his position is a British couple who launched a campaign to build more wind mills in England and who declined an invitation to ski with friends in France because of the environmental effects of flying. The movie examines the complexity of relationships between corporations, citizens and the environment, and it is clear that categorizing “bad guys” vs. “good guys” would amount to an incomplete assessment of the situation. Such is the case with an ex-Shell employee who gave 30 years of his life to off-shore drilling research. While many people perceive this activity to be amongst the driving causes of climate change, he saw his employment and employer as being very conscientious about environmental issues and diligent in searching for ways to have less of an impact. In a bitter irony, he lost everything to Hurricane Katrina, whose devastating effects may have been caused in part by the unnatural drilling activities of companies like Shell.

The audience learns about the story of a young woman who lives in a small town in Nigeria that is also home to a Shell operation. The movie discusses the “resource curse” - the paradox that places with the richest natural resources are usually subject to abject poverty.

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The movie attributes this paradox to the presence of multi-national companies who do not live up to their promises of providing infrastructure to the community in exchange for them establishing a presence. The archivist also clicks on the video of an Iraqi refugee family who moved to Jordan in order to avoid the war. Through the perspective of two young children, the audience sees the ravages of war. One of the children says that if he were to meet an American, he would kill them for having killed his father, and through the director's depiction of the U.S.'s goals of obtaining oil as the lone rationale for war, even as an American, the child's feelings become very understandable.

One of the biggest takeaways from the movie is the notion that human beings do not seem evolutionarily equipped to perceive dangers that are not in the immediate future. Actions taken now to prevent climate change will have an effect on the world in roughly 30 years. It is this lag in time, the movie asserts, that causes the biggest mental disconnect for humans and is why climate change is only an issue of immediacy for a small portion of the global population.

Unlike *An Inconvenient Truth*, *The Age of Stupid* conveys its message about the impact of global warming and climate change without overuse of statistics and fear-mongering. It evokes emotions without sensationalism. Through the stories of people around the world, the viewer is left to determine how much (or little) they accept of what they have seen. While the movie asserts that consumerism is at the heart of the crisis, individuals must determine how they will attempt to curb their habits in order to preserve our earth. If you want to see a thought-provoking yet entertaining film, *The Age of Stupid* is a superb choice.