

RYAN BYRNE

Humanity: An insight

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Humanity: An Insight

This show's purpose is to highlight humanity's innate ability to survive and better ourselves. Human nature has been an area of curiosity for a long time as someone suffering with Schizoid Personality Disorder and Antisocial Personality Disorder. The themes I am going to explore are all going to be tied into the isolation people are experiencing due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

This show is important now more than ever. At the time of writing, we're facing a pandemic that's worse than anything humanity has seen since the Spanish Flu in the 1920s. This show is all about showing how humanity can adapt, and even become better in the face of a crisis.

Below are the five themes which I intend on discussing through my analysis of my chosen films:

- 1) Is Humanity Doomed? – Many see humanity as a plague on the planet. We've destroyed a massive amount of the earth in service of greed and overconsumption. With greed, wrath and envy fuelling the destruction of the earth, not to mention the way humans have been known to treat each other, can humanity be saved? Or are we too broken?
- 2) Can Humanity Really Change? – The old adage goes "a leopard can't change its spots", but this has been a topic of debate for centuries. If man can't change then there's every chance he's doomed. I aim to explore if this change is, in fact, possible.
- 3) The Impact of Isolation – Isolation from society as we know it is happening at the time of writing, and people of all age are being affected in ways that will be explored throughout my work.
- 4) Humanity's Ability to Survive – Humankind has seen multiple crises, with some being natural such as pandemics, and others being man-made disasters like the great depression. As a species we survived everything thus far, but will we survive a pandemic that's left
- 5) Isolation and Mental Illness – Mental illnesses like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or a Personality Disorder can be difficult to live with even without being in lockdown.

We'll explore how the isolation of lockdown might affect those suffering with mental illness.

Is Humanity Doomed?

At present, people all over the world are on lockdown, and in the UK the Covid-19 crisis has already cost thousands of lives (Gov.uk, 2020). With such a potentially fatal and easily transmissible disease, it makes no logical sense for humans to break lockdown to go drinking with friends in a park. Yet, a Sky News article shows that hundreds of people were breaking lockdown rules in a park in London. It's completely illogical and self-destructive to take such a potentially lethal risk, and yet hundreds of people took the risk just to enjoy a day out in the sun with friends (Sky News, 2020). To avert any risk and follow the lockdown rules one simply needs to be idle, and in the words of Kierkegaard "Far from idleness being the root of all evil, it is rather the only true good" (Kierkegaard, 1946, p24).

Can Man Really Change?

Can a leopard really change its spots, or are kidding ourselves? Whether it be changing a bad habit, or changing a person's core behaviour, this question has been a topic of debate for some time. Dr Linda Sapadin wrote in an article that it's more than possible to change, even core behaviours, but it requires a massive level of commitment. (Sapadin, 2018)

The Impact of Isolation

Isolation is a lot more damaging to people than it's given credit for. It's so much more damaging, in fact, that it's capable of physical harm in equal measure to psychological. A common side effect of isolation is loneliness. According to Douglas Nemecek MD "Loneliness has the same impact on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, making it even more dangerous than obesity," (Tate, 2005).

Human's Ability to Survive

Television shows and films often portray someone overcoming great adversity. Tolstoy once said "There is something in the human spirit that will survive and prevail, there is a tiny and brilliant light burning in the heart of man that will not go out no matter how dark the world

becomes” (Coenn, 2014). Humans have found ways to survive natural disasters as well as man made crises, which is poignantly illustrated by Tolstoy.

Isolation and Mental Illness

The ability to cope with the stress of isolation can be difficult to maintain, even for those who haven’t got a mental illness to contend with. For those who have got mental illnesses to deal with on top of isolation, it can be much harder. For example, someone who has PTSD or a personality disorder that requires attention or social interaction to appease, the inability to go out to see people or have people come to visit can be difficult and even damaging. An illustration of this point can be seen as a symptom of Dependent Personality Disorder is feeling “needy, 'weak' and unable to make decisions or function day-to-day without help or support from others”. (Mind.org.uk, 2020)



Main Film: Derren Brown Apocalypse

Derren Brown’s Apocalypse is a television special where Derren had designed a guided psychological experiment on a man with poor behaviour and attitude, not to mention selfish. It was designed to see if a guided psychological scenario could help create lasting change in the man. The guided scenario involved a viral pandemic in a surreal situation in between real life (Covid-19), and a zombie outbreak.

Although the overriding theme for this exhibition is an insight into humanity within the context of isolation, another explicit theme mentioned that this artwork shows is the impact of isolation. Using isolation from actual society throughout the guided psychological

scenario to give the subject the best chance of believing the scenario going on around him, it gives the man the best chance to see a successful outcome at the end.

At the end of the guided scenario, the subject seems to have seen core changes in how he behaves, and it seems to have alleviated all of the selfishness the subject was once known for. The subject changing in the way that he has also lends itself to another theme of whether humanity really can change. The positive psychological outcome of Derren Brown's Apocalypse could itself be considered art.



[I Am Legend](#)

From the directing mind of Francis Lawrence comes I Am Legend. Robert Neville (Will Smith) is a man alone in the opening scenes, and from the looks of things he has been that way for a while. Although alone, he is not completely without a companion as he is got a dog to keep him company. The isolation doesn't seem to break Robert Neville as he continues work on a vaccine for the plague of zombie that befell Manhattan, bereft anyone but himself to benefit from it.

This film lends itself to the question, is humanity doomed? The answer, is subjective. For all the greed and corruption that may or may not one day burn down civilization as we know it, humanity will arguably live on through sheer power of will and goodness at our cores. The theme of isolation is apparent in the earlier stages of the film, and even when there are two additions to Neville's life, that still makes three people cut off from any societal norms.



Seven Pounds

Seven Pounds is a film about mystery, love and tragedy, but it isn't about the usual type of isolation. An often-underestimated form of isolation is the walls that some of us compulsively put up around ourselves, and the protagonist of Seven Pounds is no different. IRS agent Ben Thomas is a man that can often be seen with his walls up, not wanting to get close to anyone. It's only toward the end of the film we find out why.

This film helps to answer the question, is humanity doomed? The answer has to be no, based on humanity's capacity for selflessness in the face of not only dying, but by one's own hand. It also gives another perspective to the question; can humanity really change? He went from a man of typical nature, being focused heavily on himself and his family, to being focused on helping other people.

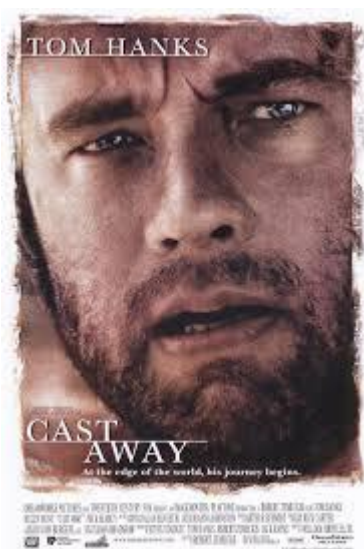


127 Hours

127 Hours is a film chronicling the terrifying ordeal undergone by Aron Ralston (James Franco) where a climber managed to fall and pin his arm under a giant boulder and was

trapped with no one knowing where he was and no way to get that information out to anyone. He told no one where he was and was out in the middle of nowhere, faced with an impossible decision as to whether to perform a field amputation to save himself.

This film is the embodiment of humanity's ability to survive. No matter how bad the situation, humans always tend to adapt and survive. The film may come to mind for some when the adage "cut off the arm to save the body", even if the amputation referenced in the film is a partial amputation.

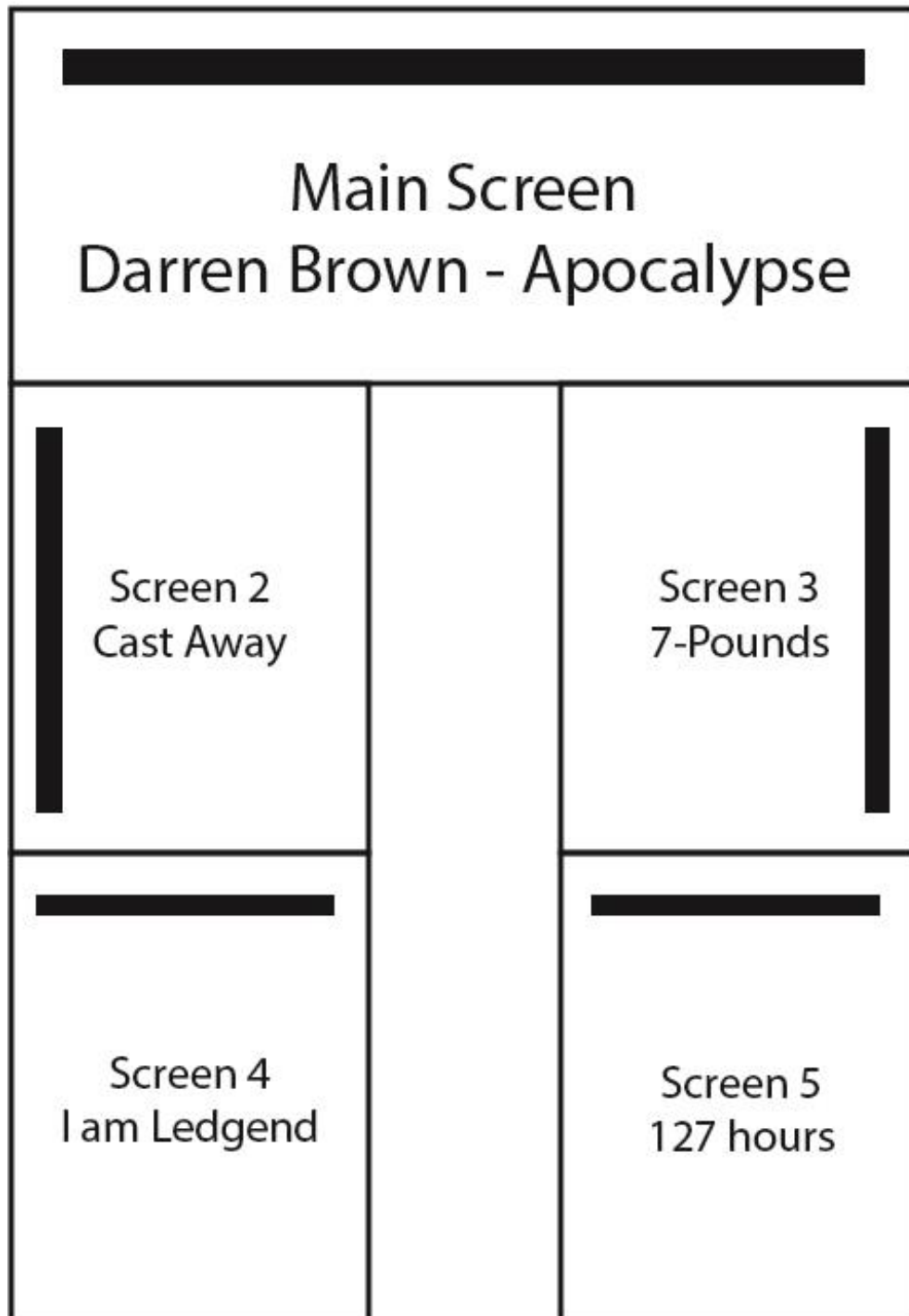


Castaway

Castaway follows Chuck Noland (Tom Hanks) as he navigates the survival of a plane crash and floating ashore a deserted island. Throughout the film, it's clear to see that there was some psychological scarring, not just from the crash, but from the isolation. To cope with the lack of human contact, Chuck drew a face on Wilson, something that became the most iconic volleyball in the history of film.

It could be argued that this film makes it clear that isolation can do a large amount of damage to the human psyche, giving some credibility to the argument that isolation doesn't just aggravate mental illness, but can actually cause mental illness.

Floor Plan



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