Episode Book

EPISODE #6063

Ten True-Story Films for Daniel: Platforms, Newsrooms, and a Man Living in a Toy Shop

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SYNOPSIS

A follow-up to the documentary picks: ten feature films from 2025 and 2026, nearly all based on true stories, chosen for someone who cares about platforms, media, power and warm absurdity, and who has no time for war films or more true crime. Aaron Sorkin's The Social Reckoning and Robert Pattinson's Primetime are in cinemas now; September 5 and Dead Man's Wire turn live television disasters into newsroom films; The Wizard of the Kremlin is the information-warfare pick; and Song Sung Blue, Bob Trevino Likes It, Roofman and I Swear bring the true stories that are too odd to make up. Plus what to watch for: Guadagnino's OpenAI film Artificial, and Nathan Fielder's Elizabeth Holmes documentary.

DANIEL'S PROMPT (Summary)



Daniel

Ten true-story feature films from 2025-2026 matched to Daniel's interests, written by hand as a follow-up to the documentary recommendations

TRANSCRIPT



Corn

Welcome to My Weird Prompts. I'm Corn, and today is a sequel. Earlier today we picked ten documentaries for Daniel, and he liked them enough to send a follow-up. Same idea, but feature films this time. Movies from this year or last year, picked around his interests, and heavy on true stories.



Herman

And I'm Herman Poppleberry. One quick disclosure first, because it matters for this one. Our usual pipeline didn't write this script. Claude wrote it by hand, working from a research pass done today, the seventeenth of October, twenty twenty-six. Where to watch is for the US unless we say otherwise. Daniel watches from Jerusalem with a VPN, so treat the platforms as a starting point, not a promise.



Corn

And we know the rules, because they're written down. True stories and real events, yes. Technology, media, intelligence, how institutions actually work, yes. War films, no. Anything grim from the Second World War, absolutely not. Period costume dramas, no. And true crime is on a strict ration, because every streaming service has spent five years turning every murder in America into an eight-part series.



Herman

Which made this list harder than the documentaries. Most of the true-story films from the last two years are war films, historical dramas, music biopics or true crime. Take those out and you're left with a much smaller and much weirder pile. Which, honestly, is the pile Daniel would want anyway.



Corn

Let's start with the two films that are in cinemas right now, because they're the most on-brand for him. They're also the hardest to watch from Jerusalem.



Herman

Pick one is The Social Reckoning. Aaron Sorkin wrote and directed it, and it's openly a companion piece to The Social Network. Fifteen years later, Sorkin has gone back to Facebook. This time the hero isn't a founder in a hoodie. She's a product manager with a stack of internal documents.



Corn

Frances Haugen.



Herman

Frances Haugen, played by Mikey Madison. She was the Facebook engineer who copied thousands of pages of the company's own internal research and took them to Jeff Horwitz at the Wall Street Journal. That became the Facebook Files. Jeremy Allen White plays Horwitz, and Jeremy Strong plays Mark Zuckerberg.



Corn

Jeremy Strong as Zuckerberg is the kind of casting that tells you exactly what the film thinks of him.



Herman

It went wide on October ninth through Sony. And I'll be straight about the reception, because it's mixed. Rotten Tomatoes has it at fifty-five percent from critics, and audiences are kinder at seventy-two. It opened well below forecasts.



Corn

So why is it on the list?



Herman

Because it's the most Daniel-shaped premise of the year. The show keeps returning to the same question: what does a platform know about its own harms, and what does it do with that knowledge? This film is about the gap between what the company's researchers



Herman (continued)

found and what the company said in public. Even if the Sorkin dialogue gets a bit pleased with itself, the documents it's built on are real.



Corn

And the true-story label needs a footnote. It's billed as inspired by a true story. It's a dramatisation, with invented scenes and compressed timelines. It isn't a deposition.



Herman

Where to watch: cinemas only right now. Streaming is expected to land on Netflix eventually, but no date has been announced.



Corn

Pick two, and the critics liked this one more. Primetime.



Herman

Lance Oppenheim directed it. He made the documentary Some Kind of Heaven, and this is his first fiction feature. Robert Pattinson plays Chris Hansen in a film about how Dateline NBC built To Catch a Predator in the mid two thousands.



Corn

Robert Pattinson as Chris Hansen is somehow both completely wrong and completely right.



Herman

Critics agree with the right half. It's at eighty-six percent from more than two hundred reviews, and A twenty-four opened it in second place at the box office on September twenty-fifth.



Corn

Now, Daniel's true-crime rule. This one is about predators, so why doesn't it break it?



Herman

Because the film isn't really about the crimes. It's about television. It's about a news division discovering that a sting operation makes great ratings, and then quietly reorganising its ethics around the ratings. The question isn't who did it. The question is, who is this show actually for, and at what point did journalism turn into entertainment that happens to involve the police?



Corn

Which is a media-ethics film wearing a true-crime costume.



Herman

And there's a true-story wrinkle on top. The real Chris Hansen has publicly called the film a complete work of fiction and talked about legal action. So you get to watch a film about whether television distorts reality, while the man it's about says the film distorts reality.



Corn

That's the wavy, what-is-even-true territory Daniel loves.



Herman

Where to watch: cinemas now. One report says digital rental starts in early November, but I couldn't confirm that, and HBO Max should follow sometime next year.



Corn

Okay, now some he can actually press play on tonight. Pick three. September Five.



Herman

Tim Fehlbaum directed it, with Peter Sarsgaard and John Magaro. This one needs a careful pitch, because the premise sounds like something Daniel avoids. It's about the nineteen seventy-two Munich Olympics, when Palestinian militants took the Israeli team hostage.



Corn

Which is a historical tragedy, with an Israeli angle, from more than fifty years ago. On paper it breaks two rules at once.



Herman

On paper. But the whole film is set inside a television control room. It follows the ABC Sports crew, a team of sports broadcasters who suddenly find themselves covering a hostage crisis live to hundreds of millions of people. And they're making it up as they go: what can we show, what should we show, are we confirming facts or just repeating rumours, and are we giving the attackers information through our own broadcast?



Corn

So it's a film about a newsroom making decisions in real time, not a film about the attack.



Herman

Exactly that. You never leave the building. And the decisions those producers made in about twenty hours became part of how live television news still works. It was nominated for the Oscar for original screenplay. It's at ninety-two percent on Rotten Tomatoes.



Corn

Where?



Herman

Paramount Plus, and Prime Video in some regions.



Corn

Pick four is another one about a live broadcast going wrong. Dead Man's Wire.



Herman

Gus Van Sant directed it, with Bill Skarsgård, Colman Domingo and Al Pacino. In Indianapolis in nineteen seventy-seven, a man named Tony Kiritsis believed his mortgage company had cheated him out of a property deal. So he walked into the mortgage broker's office and wired a shotgun to the back of the broker's neck, with the wire tied to the trigger and to himself.



Corn

That's a horrifying sentence that somehow becomes a comedy.



Herman

Darkly comic is the right description. Because what follows is a sixty-three-hour standoff that turns into a media circus. Kiritsis does live interviews. A local radio host becomes part of the negotiation. And by the end, a man holding a hostage at gunpoint has become a folk hero to a lot of viewers, because everybody hates their mortgage company.



Corn

So is it true crime?



Herman

Technically, there's a crime. But nobody is being murdered in a basement for eight episodes. It's about how a grievance turns into a broadcast, and how the broadcast turns the man holding the gun into a celebrity. It's ninety-one percent on Rotten Tomatoes, and it's on Netflix.



Corn

Let's change lanes, because I can feel us drifting toward Herman's favourite subject, which is television being bad.



Herman

Television is fine. It's the incentives.



Corn

Pick five. The Wizard of the Kremlin.



Herman

This is the information-warfare pick. Olivier Assayas directed it, Emmanuel Carrère co-wrote it, and Paul Dano plays Vadim Baranov, a former theatre director who becomes Vladimir Putin's political strategist. Jude Law plays Putin.



Corn

Jude Law as Putin is another one of those casting choices.



Herman

The film covers Russia from the chaos of the nineties onward. How you manufacture a strongman, how you stage politics as theatre, and how you build the propaganda machinery that eventually points outward at the rest of the world.



Corn

Is it a true story?



Herman

This is the one with the biggest asterisk. It's adapted from a novel by Giuliano da Empoli, and Baranov is a fictional character. But he's very obviously inspired by Vladislav Surkov, the real Kremlin strategist who spent years running Russian domestic politics like a piece of experimental theatre. So it's fiction built tightly around real people and a real system.



Corn

And the reception?



Herman

Weak, honestly. Forty-four percent on Rotten Tomatoes, and Metacritic fifty-six. Critics found it long and talky. But for someone who reads about Russian political technology for fun, long and talky may be exactly right. Where to watch is unconfirmed. Aggregators list it for rent on Prime Video and Apple, but I couldn't confirm that on the streaming listings themselves.



Corn

Pick six. Daniel works in tech, so we need one about a founder.



Herman

Swiped. Lily James plays Whitney Wolfe Herd, from her time at Tinder through her sexual harassment lawsuit against the company to founding Bumble. It came out on Hulu in September twenty twenty-five.



Corn

And I sense another asterisk.



Herman

Two. First, reviews are poor. Forty-four percent. Second, it's unauthorised. Wolfe Herd's lawyer reportedly tried to stop the production. So you're watching a version of her life she didn't sign off on.



Corn

So why include it?



Herman

Because it's the only released founder drama about Silicon Valley from the last two years that I could find. That's actually a finding in itself. The big tech films are all in the queue for later this year: The Social Reckoning, Artificial, which we'll get to. Swiped is the one you can watch tonight on Hulu, and it's a decent case study in how dating apps turned loneliness into a revenue model. Go in with low expectations.



Corn

Now, Daniel also loves warm absurdity. Nathan for You, Karl Pilkington, people committing completely to something ridiculous. So the back half of the list leans that way.



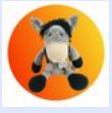
Herman

Pick seven. Song Sung Blue. Hugh Jackman and Kate Hudson play Mike and Claire Sardina, two struggling working musicians in Milwaukee who form a Neil Diamond tribute act called Lightning and Thunder.



Corn

That is a real band name.



Herman

Lightning and Thunder is real. Their story was first told in a two thousand and eight documentary of the same name, by Greg Kohs, and the film is based on that. Two people who have nothing much going for them commit completely to Neil Diamond, they become locally beloved, and then life gets in the way, quite badly. It's sweet and sad at the same time.



Corn

Seventy-seven percent with critics, and ninety-seven percent with audiences, which is one of the biggest gaps I've seen.



Herman

Audiences want to see Hugh Jackman sing Sweet Caroline in a sparkly shirt. And so should Daniel. It's on Netflix.



Corn

Pick eight, and I think this is the best hidden gem on the list. Bob Trevino Likes It.



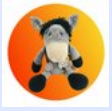
Herman

Tracie Laymon wrote and directed it, based on her own life. Barbie Ferreira plays a young woman with a difficult, neglectful father named Bob Trevino. She goes looking for him on Facebook and accidentally connects with a different Bob Trevino. A stranger, played by John Leguizamo, who is kind, lonely, and has his own griefs.



Corn

And instead of saying wrong Bob, sorry, they become friends.



Herman

He becomes the father figure she never had. It's about the internet doing something accidentally kind, which is rare enough to be newsworthy. It won both the grand jury prize and the audience award at South by Southwest, and it's at ninety-five percent on Rotten Tomatoes.



Corn

The true story label here is soft. It's semi-autobiographical and loosely inspired. But the core thing really happened. A mistaken friend request turned into a real relationship.



Herman

It's on Hulu. If Daniel only watches one film from this list on a Friday night, I'd make it this one.



Corn

Pick nine. Roofman. And this is where we test the true-crime rule one last time.



Herman

Channing Tatum plays Jeffrey Manchester, a former Army reservist who robbed a string of McDonald's restaurants by cutting holes in the roof and dropping in. That's the Roofman nickname. After he broke out of prison, he hid for months inside a Toys R Us, living in the store, building himself a little apartment behind the bike display, and watching security footage at night.



Corn

I want to be clear that this is real.



Herman

It's real. He also volunteered at a local church and started dating someone, under a false name, while technically living inside a toy shop. Derek Cianfrance directed it, with Kirsten Dunst and Peter Dinklage. It's eighty-seven percent.



Corn

It's a caper, not a procedural. Nobody is dead, the police aren't the point, and it's mostly about a man whose problem-solving skills are completely misapplied.



Herman

Which is a very My Weird Prompts kind of person. It's on Paramount Plus and Prime Video.



Corn

And pick ten. I Swear.



Herman

Kirk Jones directed it, and Robert Aramayo plays John Davidson, a Scottish man who grew up with severe Tourette's syndrome in the nineteen eighties, at a time when almost nobody understood the condition. He was punished at school, misread by everyone around him, and eventually became one of the best-known campaigners for understanding the condition in Britain.



Corn

Aramayo won the BAFTA for best actor for it, which surprised a lot of people.



Herman

And it fits a thread that runs through a lot of Daniel's prompts, which is neurodivergence, and how a whole system can misread a brain that simply works differently. It's not a misery film, either. It's funny, because Davidson is funny, and the film is on his side. It came to Netflix in the US on August twenty-second.



Corn

That's ten. Two honourable mentions, and then something to watch for.



Herman

Honourable mention one. Nonnas, on Netflix. Vince Vaughn plays Joe Scaravella, a real man in Staten Island who opened a restaurant where the cooks are real grandmothers from different countries. It's lovely and very low stakes.



Corn

Honourable mention two. The Lost Bus, on Apple TV Plus. Paul Greengrass directed it, with Matthew McConaughey as a school bus driver getting twenty-two children out of the Camp Fire in Paradise, California, in twenty eighteen. It's a tense one, but it's the



Corn (continued)

infrastructure pick: what happens when a town's evacuation plan meets a fire that moves faster than the plan assumed.



Herman

And now the watch-for list, because two of the films Daniel is most likely to want aren't available yet.



Corn

Artificial.



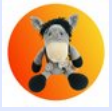
Herman

Artificial. Luca Guadagnino's film about the OpenAI boardroom crisis in November twenty twenty-three, when the board fired Sam Altman and then, within about five days, he was back. Andrew Garfield plays Altman, Yura Borisov plays Ilya Sutskever, and Monica Barbaro plays Mira Murati.



Corn

That is the most Daniel film ever made, and it isn't out.



Herman

It premiered at the New York Film Festival earlier this month, and early reviews are strong. Neon has it in select US cinemas on Christmas Day, expanding in January. Amazon was originally going to release it, then dropped it, and Neon picked it up in June. Which is a little corporate drama about a film about a corporate drama.



Corn

And the second one isn't technically a feature film, but we'd be failing Daniel if we didn't mention it.



Herman

You Can See Everything. A twenty twenty-six A twenty-four documentary about Elizabeth Holmes in the thirty-four days before she reported to prison, co-directed by Lance Oppenheim, the Primetime director, and Nathan Fielder.



Corn

Nathan Fielder. The Nathan for You Nathan Fielder.



Herman

The same. And it mixes real footage with staged scenes, including Amanda Seyfried, who played Holmes in The Dropout. So it's a documentary that openly stages parts of itself, about a woman whose entire career was staging things. It opened in US cinemas yesterday, October sixteenth.



Corn

Fraudsters are on Daniel's rationed list.



Herman

They are. But Nathan Fielder making a film about the line between performance and reality is not a fraudster documentary. It's a Daniel documentary that happens to have a fraudster in it.



Hilbert

Can I say something.



Corn

Hilbert. You're not booked for this one.



Hilbert

Nobody books me, Corn. I'm the producer. I'm always here. I just wanted to flag that you've recommended a film about a man who lived secretly inside a toy shop, and you said, and I wrote it down, that it's a very My Weird Prompts kind of person.



Herman

It was a compliment.



Hilbert

I lived in the back of an electronics shop on Jaffa Road for six weeks in two thousand and nine. Not secretly. The owner knew. He just didn't know it was me specifically, because I'd told him it was my cousin. I built a perfectly good sleeping area out of the boxes from forty-two inch televisions. Nobody's making a film about that.



Corn

Because you didn't rob anyone.



Hilbert

I fixed their stock-room lighting, Corn. For free. That's the opposite of robbing. And I would like it noted that Channing Tatum gets a movie for hiding behind bicycles, and I get a strongly worded letter about the cardboard. That's all.



Herman

Noted. We'll file it with the projector.



Hilbert

The projector is a separate matter.



Corn

So, to sum up. If Daniel wants to watch something tonight, Bob Trevino Likes It on Hulu or September Five on Paramount Plus. If he's happy to go to the cinema, Primetime first, The Social Reckoning second. And in his calendar for Christmas, Artificial.



Herman

And the bigger pattern is the same as with the documentaries. The true stories Daniel actually cares about, the ones about platforms and media and power, are mostly still in cinemas or not out yet. Hollywood has only just started making films about the tech industry as a political force, rather than as a backdrop for a genius in a hoodie.



Corn

Which suggests that next year's version of this list will be much easier to write.



Herman

And much harder to watch without arguing about it.



Corn

That's the episode. Daniel, tell us which one you watch first. This has been My Weird Prompts. Find us at myweirdprompts dot com.



Herman

See you soon.