

# Film Review:

## The Age of Stupid (2009)

by Franny Armstrong.

Reviewed by Hannah L. Mowat

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The year is 2055. Most of London is under water. Sydney is in flames. Las Vegas is being gently swallowed by the desert. The Archivist (Pete Postlethwaite) lives alone, surrounded by priceless creations of humanity, artefacts and petrified remnants of a natural world now too hostile to nurture life. He sits before a virtual screen and rifles through genuine newsreel clips, wondering why and how we failed to put in the measures that would limit global warming to below two degrees Celsius, the official target specified by the International Panel on Climate Change. As a climate campaigner and activist in an industrialised country, I can empathise with his frustration. It is hard to help people 'get' why climate change is the biggest challenge the human species has ever faced. Until catastrophe is on our doorsteps – in the West, I mean, since climate change is already a daily reality for many countries in the global South – we are nonchalant of the change that awaits us. In a society where what we consume is a measure of what we think of as happiness, we blind ourselves wilfully to what is in store for us. What *The Age of Stupid* does so devastatingly well is tear away the blinkers, revealing a glimpse of what human activity, yours and mine, will unleash if we do nothing.

If we fail to cap global warming at two degrees, we face accelerating warming and runaway climate change whose effect no scientist on earth can accurately predict, though it will undoubtedly involve



rising sea levels, desertification, 250 million climate refugees by 2050, closed borders and wars. *The Age of Stupid's* visual representation of what climate change could mean is probably pretty accurate, and that is what is so shocking. It provides the stimulus we need to get people to act. To *Act Now*.

It is interesting to analyse people's reactions as they leave the screening and find themselves in the auditorium. I have been to six screenings and there are recurring expressions, recurring energies and ambiances that are striking. Tears and anger are common reactions, either out of helplessness (I didn't know it was this bad! What can I do to help?), or frustration (this confirms what I know we should be doing, but why aren't the politicians and society reacting?) But for a film about climate change, what strikes me most, given its almost continual assault on our collective consciences, is that people come out fighting – not hopeless, but resolute. It appeals to our innate sense of humanity – the feeling that we will strive against all odds until the very end, and not give up.

Franny Armstrong, director and head 'campaigner' of this film, says something in an interview with the *Guardian* newspaper that strikes a chord. In response to the question: 'Doesn't it scare you that it's our generation that's going to have to turn around climate change?' she replies: 'No, I'm extremely excited and inspired that we have got something to do. Everyone before us didn't know about it, and everyone after us, well, it'll be too late, and that responsibility is so precious. We have a unique mission that no-one else can do.' So what are we waiting for?

To support the incredible work of this film, that has a budget of -150,000 pounds and buy a copy for you, your friends and your pets, visit: [www.ageofstupid.net](http://www.ageofstupid.net)

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