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The most significant cultural works of the decade

Recapping the most significant cultural achievements of the past decade

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December 29, 2009

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This decade's singular moment in culture could just as easily have been a **YouTube** video as it might have been a book, a film, an album or an opera. Such judgment calls are a matter of perspective, for one thing, and certainly it's too soon to tell what ultimately will rate as the artistic triumph of the '00s.

And yet, the Tribune's critics were asked to make that very declaration last week in Live! and the selections they made were genre-spanning. The following is what our critics selected as the most significant pieces of culture from 2000 through 2009.

'The Wire' Premiere date: June 2, 2002

Excerpt from Tribune review: "If you have only one hour a week for television, give it to 'The Wire.' ... It's a masterpiece. ... Like any good, meaty novel, 'The Wire' requires you to pay attention, but the attention paid to these Baltimore stories is more than amply rewarded with gripping storytelling and un-showy acting by a crackerjack ensemble cast."

-- Maureen Ryan, Sept. 7, 2006

Postscript: Though not dominated by name actors, "The Wire's" Idris Elba (Russell "Stringer" Bell) went on to co-star in action flick "**RocknRolla**" with **Gerard Butler** and thriller "**Obsessed**" with **Beyonce**, and also took a high-profile, guest-starring turn on **NBC's** "The Office."

Online: YouTube Founding date: February 2005 (the first video was posted in April)

Excerpt from Tribune review: "It's been more than a little breathtaking watching YouTube gain heat, light and speed as it streaks across the Internet. By making it easy for people to upload their own videos and search and play others', the site has unleashed demand that nobody else quite understood existed. ... (But) far too much of the YouTube content, especially the most popular content, flirts with someone else's copyright. ... (Solve that problem,) then YouTube can try to figure out what it will do when the novelty wears off."

-- **Steve Johnson**, Sept. 22, 2006

Postscript: The most-viewed viral video of all time, according to Web tracking firm Visible Measures, is rapper **Soulja Boy** Tell'em's "Crank That," with more than 621 million views (the figure was last updated in November) -- many, if not most of those hits, presumably coming from YouTube versions of the clip.

Radiohead, 'In Rainbows' Release date: Oct. 10, 2007

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Excerpt from Tribune review: "The band's desire to reclaim the album from rogue file-sharing networks is understandable. Like all of Radiohead's albums, 'In Rainbows' was meant to be listened to as whole, in sequence. The 10 songs create a loose narrative about intimacy, its allure and its traps. They explore humanity's essential contradiction: the desire to be loved, no matter what the cost, no matter how painful the heartbreak. For a band often accused of being cryptic, that's about as direct and universal as Radiohead has ever gotten." -- Greg Kot, Oct. 14, 2007

Postscript: Even though the music was available for any price (including free) on the band's Web site for two months, "In Rainbows" went on to sell more than 3 million copies worldwide.

Others Classical: Conductor **Daniel Barenboim** leaves the Chicago Symphony after more than a decade at the helm.

-- John von Rhein

Book: "**Harry Potter** and the Order of the Phoenix"

-- Julia Keller

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-- Mark Caro

Jazz: **Vijay Iyer**, 'Tragicomic' **Release date:** April 22, 2008

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