

'Tenet' Stuck in Limbo

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3-4 minutes

Chaim Gartenberg of *The Verge* makes the case that Christopher Nolan should release his new film, *Tenet*, online:

Put simply, this attitude is dangerous and will put lives at risk. While there's still a lot we don't know about how COVID-19 spreads, it's apparent that spending long amounts of time indoors in close proximity with other people is a major contributing factor. And movie theaters — with close-together seats, circulating air conditioning, guests removing masks to munch on popcorn, and lengthy films — seem to fit that bill perfectly. Everything we know about COVID-19 tells us that the kind of wide-release cultural event Nolan wants will lead to more cases, more hospitalizations, and more deaths.

Tenet is undoubtedly important to Warner Bros., Nolan, and theater chains — I really want to see it, too — but it's important to remember that it's just a movie. A movie that isn't worth risking your life or anyone else's to go to a theater until the United States has a far better handle on containing the virus than we do right now.

Obviously, it's a [compelling](#) argument. I believe there's almost no way Nolan agrees to it, but I think the flip side of Gartenberg's message is equally true. By giving up his quixotic crusade to get *Tenet* in theaters this year, Nolan would send a message that we need to continue to take COVID-19 very, very seriously until it's truly under control. It would be the symbolic equivalent of wearing a mask in every photo op. You know, [like Bane](#). And now, even reluctantly, like the President. Leading by example.

Given [his love of cinema](#) in particular, I'm guessing Nolan will instead wait until 2021 to release *Tenet*, if he has to. And I do think he might have to. Because even if we get COVID somewhat under control this year, how many people are realistically going to step foot in a movie theater? I know I'm not. [And I love movie theaters](#). It's just not worth the risk. Again, *obviously*.

And so again, Nolan should recognize the state of [Limbo](#) *Tenet* is in and turn the negative into a powerful positive. Release the film online. Help keep people at home. I'm not saying he has to go streaming, he could do iTunes and sell it for \$20 a pop. Hell, even *more* if he wishes. People will pay. So many people. Have you looked at iTunes movies recently (yes, it's [still](#) called iTunes movies)? It's [a pretty sparse situation](#) with regard to marquee new films. Maybe Apple or one of the other companies that runs the rental platforms could even subsidize some of the *Tenet* release just to keep the lights on at those stores?

This may not fully square the theatrical box office circle — though we all know how well *Trolls* did thanks to [AMC's reaction to it](#) — but this shouldn't be about the money at this point, and I don't think it is. [Nolan feels](#) as if [he's holding](#) the entire cinematic industry [on his back](#). But this isn't the time for that. There are bigger things at stake. As a wise Nolan character [once said](#): "But as a symbol.."