



8/6 2 ANTIVIRAL SCI/FI/HORROR
\$3 MILL 789 SCREENS NR 108 MINUTES

**Syd March (X-MEN: FIRST CLASS)
Malcolm McDowell (A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, POUND OF
FLESH, HALLOWEEN, I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD)**

Inspired by a particularly nasty case of the flu he came down with in film school, Cronenberg hit upon the ingeniously out-there concept of a free market for famous people's germs. As an indictment of a star-struck population already addicted to celebrity Twitter feeds and sex tapes, the message couldn't be plainer or more literal: Our media-obsessed culture is seriously sick.

The viewer's guide to this distasteful world of corporatized disease exchange is Syd March (Caleb Landry Jones, "X-Men: First Class"), an employee at the white-walled Lucas Clinic, where customers pay large sums to be infected with, say, a herpes simplex virus harvested from the latest hot young starlet. In order to maintain a competitive edge, the Lucas Clinic practices its own form of copy protection, altering each specimen to be non-contagious. Syd, however, has found a secret way around these measures and runs a black-market sideline in live viruses, which he smuggles out of HQ in his own body. For him, catching someone else's cold isn't an occupational hazard but a daily necessity.

But the operation backfires when he injects himself with a rare specimen extracted from celebrity Hannah Geist (Sarah Gadon). The disease takes hold far too quickly, and when news breaks of Hannah's untimely death, Syd realizes he has only a little time left, during which he is continually ambushed by rivals and collectors who covet his fatal affliction, never mind that it causes him to develop unsightly lesions and vomit chocolate-colored blood all over Arvinder Grewal's chillingly sterile production design.

Gradually establishing its ground rules in deadpan fashion, the script eventually reveals, consciously or not, a certain structural resemblance to the elder Cronenberg's **VIDEODROME**. Like that prescient 1983 splatter classic, "Antiviral" takes aim at an industry equipped to service ever baser and more twisted human needs, bringing down the system through the violent rebellion of a disgruntled, self-contaminated drone. The perpetually scowling Jones isn't the most charismatic protagonist here and doesn't need to be; no one in this pathetic simulacrum of the future is worth rooting for or emulating.



Whatever creative genes he may have inherited, Brandon Cronenberg has his own distinct flair for the grotesque. Among the weirder images and innovations here are a butcher shop that sells what appear to be cuts of meat replicated from celebrity tissue; a TV network that beams out updates 24-7 on stars' body parts, with an emphasis on crotch photos and colonoscopy footage; a doctor (Malcolm McDowell, quite at home in this bizarro universe) with skin grafts from four different people on one arm; and recurring images of needles being stuck in all manner of imaginative and unwelcome places.

With its flat, detached tone and fixed camera setups, the pic consistently opts for grisly dark comedy over horror-thriller tension, a strategy that does pay off with a certain gruesome logic in the film's nightmarish final image.

There is no question that all fans of **HANSEL & GRETEL, SAW, A HAUNTED HOUSE, THE COLLECTOR, MAMA, SILENT HOUSE, EVIL DEAD, ZOMBIE LAND,** and **UNDERWORLD 4** will love this.



8/6 2 MUD DRAMA

\$21 MILL BO 968 SCREENS PG-13 130 MINUTES

**Matthew McConaughey (MAGIC MIKE, THE LINCOLN LAWYER, SURFER DUDE, WE ARE MARSHALL, FAILURE TO LAUNCH, U-571)
Reese Witherspoon (WATER FOR ELEPHANTS, WALK THE LINE, THIS MEANS WAR, LEGALLY BLONDE 2)**

Framed from the p.o.v. of two foolhardy Arkansas teens, 14-year-old Ellis (Tye Sheridan) and best friend Neckbone (Jacob Lofland), "Mud" poses as a mere adolescent adventure tale but explores a rich vein of grown-up concerns, exploring codes of honor, love and family too solid to be shaken by modernizing forces. With trouble brewing at home, Ellis dares his less assertive sidekick to accompany him to an island where rumors tell of a boat stranded high in the trees by the latest flood.

One of those symbolic gestures of youthful independence, the trip takes the boys beyond the boundaries sanctioned by Ellis' parents (Ray McKinnon and Sarah Paulson) and Neckbone's uncle Galen (Michael Shannon) — which would be exciting enough, even without the surprise discovery that an outlaw calling himself Mud (McConaughey) has made camp in the wrecked ship. Though everything from police roadblocks to menacing bounty hunters suggest that Mud means trouble, the two boys put unwavering trust in his far-fetched stories, with Ellis especially taken with the idea that this redneck Romeo's past and future crimes are all born out of love for a gal named Juniper (Witherspoon).

Sending Ellis back into town Mud cautions, "You gotta watch an unofficial mantra for the savvy doubt Nichols could have told the the plot here is secondary to the David Wingo's subtle score easing film patiently witnesses Ellis' growing makes his clumsy first steps toward to defend a high-school girl's honor, food and supplies for Mud, and so Sheridan makes an especially strong intensity to propel the story through its 130-minute running time but also a sensitivity that reads as unjaded by the world around him — a world fully steeped in the texture of its Arkansas Delta environs without needing to inject the sort of picturesque cutaways d.p. Adam Stone contributed to David Gordon Green's early pics. That tangible sense of place owes largely to the contributions of Green's longtime production designer, Richard A. Wright, as adept at building houses on water as he is putting boats in trees.

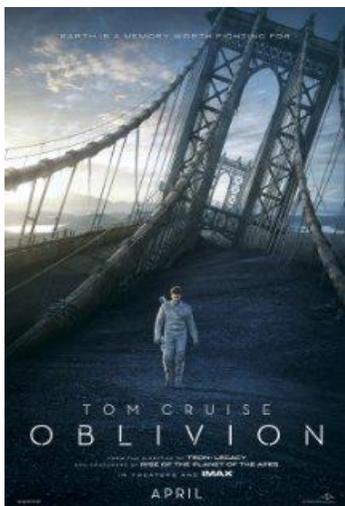


with a message for his lady friend, yourself," and those words serve as young man's growing self-reliance. No exact same story in half the time, but gradual transformation afoot. With auds into the rhythm of the locale, the disillusionment with adults, even as he becoming one: punching out a senior secretly defying his parents to nick forth.

impression, possessing not only the samurai Matthew Petrosky to bridge the claustrophobia of "civilization" with open-air footage shot either on water or at the remote island hideout. Out there, Mud plays king of the hill, a figure of great mystery to the two boys. Driven by oddball superstitions and his one-track determination to reunite with his true love, Mud comes across as an almost feral figure, benefitting greatly from that itchy unpredictability only McConaughey can bring. However blandly drawn Juniper feels by contrast, Witherspoon is just soulful enough to undermine the male characters' oft-repeated distrust of women — exhortations rendered, like so much else in Nichols' script, with a poetically heightened twist on the regional vernacular.

Though the film occasionally grants us access to conversations the boys can't hear, MUD clearly unfolds from Ellis' perspective — an elegant, intuitive-to-follow style matched by the way adult auds discover information at the same time Ellis does, while calling upon their own life experience to anticipate certain disappointments he is too naive to foresee.

This is quite an engaging movie. A bit different from the norm and very well acted. Fans of **KILLING THEM SOFTLY, DEAD MAN DOWN, A GOOD DAY TO DIE HARD, SINISTER, LIBERAL ARTS, BERNIE, BEING FLYNN, GONE** and **TRANCE** will enjoy it.



8/6 1 OBLIVION ACTION

\$88 MILL BO 3798 SCREENS PG-13 134 MINUTES

Tom Cruise (COCKTAIL, TOP GUN, RAIN MAN, THE COLOR OF MONEY, EYES WIDE SHUT)

Morgan Freeman (UNFORGIVEN, DRIVING MISS DAISY, THE BUCKET LIST, THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES)

It's the year 2077, six decades after the people of Earth fought and vanquished an evil race of space invaders called Scavengers. But victory has come at a great cost. The planet is now an uninhabitable post-nuclear wasteland, and Jack (Cruise) is one of the last men still stationed on Earth, a fighter pilot/technician assigned to fend off stray Scavengers and repair the powerful drones overseeing a massive hydroelectric energy project necessary for the survival of the human species. It all looks and sounds a bit like a

live-action remake of "Wall-E," right down to the way the protagonist, spurred by natural curiosity and an unexpected love interest, finds himself on a dangerous unauthorized mission.

Until now, Jack has worked effectively enough with Vika (Andrea Riseborough), who guides his repair jobs with cool, formidable efficiency from the glassy confines of their high-tech home base (referred to as the Skytower, though it might as well be called the iPad). But unlike his partner, Jack is a dreamer and a bit of a poet, someone who can't help reminiscing about the past or questioning everyone's future. Haunted by pre-apocalyptic visions of a beautiful mystery woman (Olga Kurylenko), he can't quite grasp why humanity, having won the war, has decided to permanently abandon its native planet for an uncertain future in space.

As he steers his sleek, pod-like aircraft over a landscape of eerie, desolate beauty, dotted with craters and



radiation zones as well as lush, unspoiled lakes and valleys, Jack can't quite shake the feeling that all is not as it appears to be, despite the chipper directives coming from the mothership (represented by a crackling TV image of Melissa Leo, boasting a deceptively sweet Southern drawl). Indeed, the audience will likely have a clear sense of what's going on long before scribes Karl Gajdusek and Michael DeBruyn (working from a 2005 short story that Kosinski later developed into a graphic novel) get around to spelling things out; suffice to say the title refers to more than just the physical aftermath of Earth's cataclysmic destruction.

This patient narrative strategy works well enough until Jack's big questions finally start to yield answers – many of them delivered, as answers so often are, by the sage presence of Morgan Freeman – and the story's underlying thinness and predictability gradually become apparent. The superficial cleverness of the plotting, with its elements of amnesia, self-delusion and impossible yearning, at times gestures in the direction of a Christopher Nolan brainteaser (as does the surging score by French band M83, which sounds like electrified Hans Zimmer). But the lack of comparable rigor, ingenuity and procedural detail is naggingly evident, as is the almost feel-good manner in which the story explains away some of its morally troubling implications.

If "Tron: Legacy" offered up an eye-popping playground with more videogame potential than human interest, **OBLIVION**, despite similarly immersive environs, provides greater moment-to-moment dramatic involvement. Cruise combines his usual physical agility and daredevil stuntwork with one of his more affable characters in a while, a high-flying dreamer trying to figure out mankind's place in this brave new world.



The action sequences are terrific and all fans of **ANOTHER DAY TO DIE HARD, IDENTITY THIEF, JACK REACHER, BROKEN CITY, SNITCH, PARKER, and ZERO DARK THIRTY** will love this one too.



8/6 2 THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES THRILLER
 \$22 MILL BO 1587 SCREENS R 140 MINUTES

Ryan Gosling (GANGSTER SQUAD, THE NOTEBOOK, DRIVE, CRAZY STUPID LOVE)
Eva Mendes (GHOST RIDER, THE WOMEN, CLEANER, FAST FIVE, HITCH, TRAINING DAY)
Bradley Cooper (SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK, THE HANGOVER, THE A TEAM, VALENTINE’S DAY, LIMITLESS)

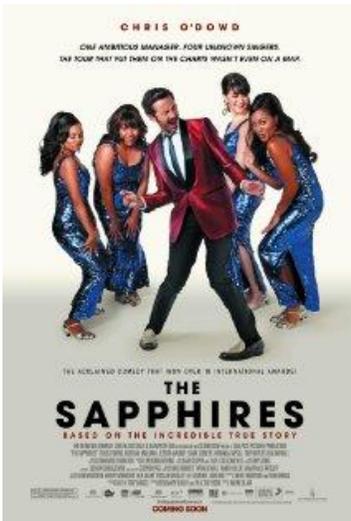
This movie aggressively feigns poetic authority, though you wouldn’t know it exactly from the opening crotch-level view of Ryan Gosling’s six pack, a liberally inked slab of muscle that probably isn’t intended as the presumably metaphysical terrain of the film’s title. Faceless to us at first, Gosling’s Luke jabs a knife into a wall before sliding on his sleeveless shirt and marching toward the steel cage where he and two other motorcycle daredevils will enthrall an excited crowd at an amusement park.

To be fair, the film’s fixation on Gosling’s masculine aura is apt insofar as the story grows into a tone poem about male identity and father-son relationships. The film passes by as a series of fragments, airy articulations of, first, Gosling’s layabout to take care of the child he never knew he fathered with a waitress, Romina (Mendes), then as a rookie police officer and future district attorney’s (Bradley Cooper) struggle to reconcile his sense of right and wrong with his bald-faced professional ambition, and finally as a collision between two teenaged inheritors (Dane DeHaan and Emory Cohen) of their respective father’s sins. Throughout, director Cianfrance fast-forwards through the deep stuff—the compulsion that draws Romina to the amusement park, the marital strain that must have led Avery (Cooper) and Jennifer (Rose Byrne) to divorce—so as to give prominence to the (melo)drama of the characters stumbling upon their shared histories.



The whole film is a climax of distilling the lives of its characters to their tensest moments: Luke heisting banks to support his newborn; Avery ratting out the corrupt cops in his force; their sons, oblivious to how their paterfamilias are linked, flirting with disaster in and out of school as they circle each other like boxers. It’s a daisy chain of physical and emotional violence that sacrifices emotional specificity to often-purple marriages of sight and sound; indeed, there are more dimensions to the pool of blood that flows from one character’s fractured skull than there are to Luke’s compulsion to rob more banks than are obviously necessary to buy his baby boy a crib.

This is a fast paced ride that will keep all that liked **JACK REACHER, A GOOD DAY TO DIE HARD, BROKEN CITY, GANGSTER SQUAD, RED DAWN** and **DJANGO UNCHAINED** having lots of fun.



8/6 3 THE SAPPHIRES MUSICAL DRAMA
 \$3 MILL BO 227 SCREENS PG-13 109 MINUTES

Chris O’Dowd (TV’s MOONE BOY, GIRLS, DINNER FOR SCHMUCKS, FRIENDS WITH KIDS)
Deborah Mailman (TV’S THE SECRET LIFE OF US, THE ALICE, RABBIT PROOF FENCE)

“Ninety percent of all recorded music is shite,” opines Chris O’Dowd’s feckless band manager in Australian helmer Wayne Blair’s spirited debut feature. ” “The other 10% is soul.” Working with Keith Thompson, Aboriginal actor-writer Tony Briggs has retooled his 2004 stage play for the screen, in turn adapting his own family history: His mother, Laurel Robinson, was the lead singer of an all-Aboriginal female soul quartet that bucked

racial prejudice to tour Vietnam in the late 1960s, entertaining troops. Their names and much else have been changed, but *THE SAPPHIRES* retains the story's distinct cultural and ethnic context.

A pre-credits prologue offers a rough précis of the abuse and persecution endured by indigenous Australians through the 1960s and 1970s. Lest we fear things are going to get too didactic, however, an early exchange between sparring sister act Gail (Mailman) and Cynthia (Miranda Tapsell) sets a more playful tone: "It's because we're black!" Gail moans when a bus cruises right past them at the stop. "No, stupid," comes Cynthia's reply. "It's because we're ugly."



The sisters are on their way to a local talent show, where their sweetly harmonized rendition of a Merle Haggard chestnut handily outclasses the competition, but fails to win over the racist judges. One man who is impressed, however, is the contest's disengaged Irish emcee, Dave (O'Dowd), an alcoholic would-be music promoter presumably led to rural Australia by the same inscrutable forces that brought the actor's incongruously accented cop to Milwaukee in last year's *BRIDESMAIDS*.

When teen sister Julie (Jessica Mauboy) — the standout voice of the troupe, but prevented from performing by her protective parents — pleads with Dave to secure them an audition for a gig entertaining U.S. Marines in Vietnam, it's not immediately clear why he accepts — or, indeed, why she thinks he's the man for the job in the first place. Similarly, it takes scarcely a snap of the fingers for Julie's disapproving folks to come around, for the girls to recruit long-estranged half-caste cousin Kay (Shari Sebbens) as a fourth member, and for Dave to convince the skeptical Gail that their calling lies in racy Motown music, as opposed to sleepy country ditties.

One or two montages later, the Sapphires (a hasty replacement for their less catchy original moniker, the Cummeraganja Songbirds) have evolved into a slick, Supremes-y collective, with the prettier, more vocally striking Julie having replaced Gail as front woman. As they hit the Southeast Asia circuit with an immediate bang, the narrative becomes scrappier: Kay takes up with a klutzy American pilot, Julie is courted by a big-league talent agent, and the mutually wary Dave and Gail begin to fall in love.

This is fun. Great cast, great music and a great story. Fans of **THE COMMITMENTS**, **DREAM GIRLS**, **ONCE**, **ROCK OF AGES**, **SPARKLE**, **PITCH PERFECT**, **STEP UP 3**, and **JOYFUL NOISE** will love it.



8/13 1 THE BIG WEDDING COMEDY
\$22 MILL BO 2633 SCREENS R 89 MINUTES

Robert DeNiro (THE FAN, MEAN STREETS, RAGING BULL, MEET THE FOCKERS, GOODFELLAS)
Diane Keaton (ANNIE HALL, BABY MOM, THE GODFATHER II, SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE)

THE BIG WEDDING has something to offend everyone. Paying lip service to the complexities of family life while spinning its narrative wheels like a mud-stuck truck, delivering stale platitudes via characters that have more in common with advertising mascots than actual human beings. Alejandro (Ben Barnes) and Missy (Amanda Seyfried) have known each other since grade school and, after a year of courting, are ready to tie the knot. Adopted at a young age by Don (DeNiro) and Ellie (Keaton), Al has always stayed in touch with his biological mother, Madonna (Patricia Rae), a devout Catholic who vowed to never leave her native Colombia, but who's made an

exception out of love for her son. Terrified of offending her puritanical beliefs, Al convinces his adopted parents—more than a decade divorced—to resume their marriage for the wedding ceremony, and it takes more than a little suspension of disbelief to buy the fact that no one thought of this potential snafu until mere hours beforehand. Subplots involving infertility, alcoholism, adult virginity, and infidelity are haphazardly juggled against this background, with a dearth of comedic sensibility further underscoring film's abject condescension.

An early scene in which a priest played by Robin Williams casually condemns unbaptized children to hell is indicative of the film's whitewashed humor. The issues that divide us (as a nation, as a family, etc.) are trotted out for easy laughs, never examined past their red-button shock value. Worse yet are the intended guffaws milked from Missy's unsavory parents, who can barely hide their horror at the prospect of having biracial grandchildren. Still, we learn that bigots are not necessarily bad people.

Some laughs here and a message. The cast will help to attract those that liked **PARENTAL GUIDANCE, THE GUILT TRIP, PEOPLE LIKE US, 21 AND OVER, JACK REACHER, SAVE THE DATE** and **BACHELORETTE**.



8/13 3 THE COMPANY YOU KEEP DRAMA
\$6 MILL 807 SCREENS R 121 MINUTES

Robert Redford (SNEAKERS, ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, THE ELECTRIC HORSEMAN, THE STING)

Chris Cooper (AMERICAN BEAUTY, THE COMPANY MAN, THE TOWN, REMEMBER ME, JARHEAD, THE HORSE WHISPERER)

Susan Sarandon (ATLANTIC CITY, ARBITRAGE, THELMA AND LOUISE, BULL DURHAM)

A quick opening montage explains for the benefit of those under 40 what the Weather Underground was: a terrorist network committed to the violent overthrow of the U.S. government that broke away in the late 1960s from radical but pacifist org, Students for a Democratic Society. Skillfully faked fictional footage woven in with real archival material

recounts how several Weathermen went into hiding after killing a security guard during a bank robbery in Michigan.

In contempo upstate New York, housewife Sharon Solarz (Sarandon), one of those involved in the ill-fated Michigan robbery, turns herself in to the FBI after nearly 30 years of living under a false identity. Ambitious young reporter Ben Shepard (LaBeouf) starts digging around the story, and turns up evidence that local nice-guy lawyer and recently widowed single parent Jim Grant (Redford) was also part of Solarz's cell back in the day. Old photos of Redford, sporting a Sundance Kid moustache, and Sarandon in her ingenue phase are cunningly photo shopped to make mugshots for Most Wanted posters, coyly evoking the thesp's glory days as pin-ups.

Deftly shaking off surveillance by FBI field officers (Terrence Howard, Anna Kendrick), Grant deposits his young daughter Isabel (Jacqueline Evancho) with his brother Daniel (Cooper) for safekeeping, and hits the road. His mission is to track down former g.f. Mimi (Christie), the cell's most passionate firebrand, who unlike Jim and nearly all the others never settled down and went straight. On hearing via the underground network that Jim's looking for her, she wistfully recalls to her current beau (Sam Elliott) that's she's walked away from six different lives over the years, an experience that's seemingly left her hardened and unsentimental.

While nostalgia is otherwise generally the order of the day here, it's not entirely filtered through rose-colored granny glasses, and the pic's colorful, almost-wastefully impressive cast limns a sociologically convincing rogue's gallery of reformed revolutionaries — some turned organic farmer, like the one played by Stephen Root (refreshingly cast against usual nerdy type); or university professor (Richard Jenkins), putting Franz Fanon on the reading list; or small businessman, like Nick Nolte's cleaned-up acid casualty. The last, a brief but memorable turn, harks pleasingly back to Nolte's blasted 'Nam vet in **WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN**.

The film has a great cast telling the story in a way that will please all fans of **ARBITRAGE, ZERO DARK THIRTY, ARGO, COSMOPOLIS, HOPE SPRINGS, SAFE HOUSE, THE HUNTER, BEING FLYNN, GONE**, and **J. EDGAR**.





8/13 **3** EMPEROR DRAMA

\$4 MILL BO 413 SCREENS PG-13 115 MINUTES

Tommy Lee Jones (LINCOLN, COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER, THE FUGITIVE, NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN, MEN IN BLACK III, COBB, NATURAL BORN KILLERS)

Matthew Fox (TV'S THE PRISONER and LOST, ALEX CROSS, VANTAGE POINT)

Peter Webber's historical drama *Emperor* is blunt about its stylistic ambitions while at the same time failing to meet them, and the effect is one of sad ineffectuality. "Let's show 'em some good old-fashioned American swagger," General Douglas

MacArthur (Tommy Lee Jones) says early in the film, completing the show of bravado with his famous aviators and prodigious pipe.

The historical moment at the film's center seems ripe with political intrigue. The film is based on the true story of Bonner Fellers (Fox), an army official dispatched to Japan on the heels of World War II to assist the American occupation led by MacArthur. The latter charges Fellers, a phenom of psychological warfare, with determining the culpability of Emperor Hirohito for Japan's war crimes. The film turns a behemoth of a task into a serving platter for flashbacks to happier days with a willowy Japanese schoolteacher (Eriko Hatsune) that appear at the most predictable moments (cues include dreamy grins and faraway looks), and for inelegant homilies about the country's many "shades of gray" and cultural ambiguities. Given the zeal with which the film announces its theme of cultural and moral complexity, one would expect to be surprised and refreshed and it does come close.

Good cast will help it to appeal to those that liked **KILLING THEM SOFTLY, THE BAY, THE PAPERBOY, KILLER JOE, SAFE, RAID: THE REDEMPTION, THE HUNTER, GONE** and **THE CONSPIRATOR**.



8/13 **1** EPIC FAMILY

\$102 MILL BO 3894 SCREENS PG 102 MINUTES

VOICED BY Pitbull, Beyonce, Steven Tyler, Amanda Seyfried

Many viewers may leave this movie pondering the relevance of the title, as the traditional epic's vast, sweeping feel is absent here, despite the big, big detail that M.K. must save her pint-sized pals to keep Earth's ecosystem working. But if the title were simply meant to convey the hugeness of *Epic's* beauty, that'd make it apt enough. Astonishing in 3D, but likely just as fetching without, the film is a major aesthetic triumph for Blue Sky Studios, who brought in Chris Wedge, helmer of their own *Ice Age* and *Robots*, to direct. It begins by drawing you in through a foreground, middleground, and background of verdant trees, before lightning-fast hummingbirds and crows dart into the frame, each bird carrying a good or evil soldier on its back. Thrown from his steed, Nod (Josh Hutcherson), a fledgling forest warrior, surfs his way across branches like Disney's Tarzan, but with the stunning sharpness of Sam Worthington's blue-skinned Na'vi infiltrator. After outmaneuvering their archrivals (one of whom, modeled after a shark, falls from his blackbird, and lands, with a transgressive splat, on a car windshield), the do-gooders, led by Ronin (Colin Farrell), return to their woody headquarters, where Queen Tara (Beyoncé Knowles), a Mother Nature of sorts, awaits.

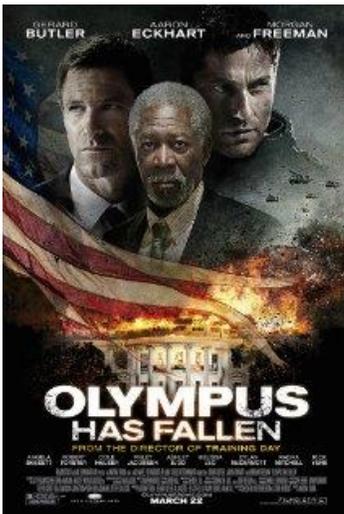
Hiring Beyoncé to voice the queen of the forest is just as sneer-inducing as hiring Pitbull to voice a Jabba the Hutt-like thug (or, while we're talking musicians, tapping Steven Tyler to voice a chubby cross between Dorothy's Wizard and Alice's Caterpillar), but neither of those choices, nor Danny Elfman's oft-excessive score, can diminish the grand variety of marvelous moments on screen. Traveling to a pond to choose a pod that will spawn her heir, Queen Tara is carried by a flock of dragonflies in a leaf-like ship, which gorgeously unfolds into a water lily when it hits the pond's surface. Tara's chambers are shielded by ferns that unfurl skyward with eye-popping glory, and her whole kingdom is a miniature Munchkinland of talking mushrooms, flowers, and insects, two of whom, Mub (Aziz Ansari) and Grub (Chris

O'Dowd), provide comic relief—and, graciously, aren't token blacks. Even the villains' lair is a feast for the eyes—a kind of elephant graveyard where everyone wears bone-and-carcass armor, and bats and drones swarm out of caverns like the orcs from *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

It's nice to see the two most crucial characters, Queen Tara and M.K., be female, and another plus is a small handful of laugh-out-loud jokes, such as when a flower tells her worried dandelion gal pal to "get a hold of [herself]," shaking her until her feathery seeds go flying around the room. But the funniest gag is Ozzie, M.K.'s blind, three-legged, lovable pug, whose comedy can be appreciated in strictly visual terms. And that's the thing with **EPIC** It's something close to an animated masterpiece.



Fans of **BRAVE**, **MADAGASCAR 3**, **ICE AGE**, **CARS 2**, **HAPPY FEET 2**, **WRECK IT RALPH**, **ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET EARTH**, and **HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA** will love it.



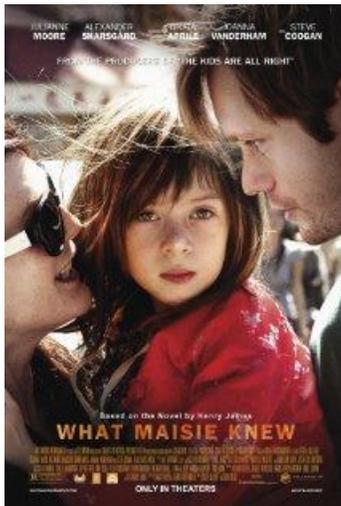
8/13 1 OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN ACTION
\$98 MILL 3106 SCREENS R 120 MINUTES

Morgan Freeman (MILLION DOLLAR BABY, UNFORGIVEN, STREET SMART, THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION, DRIVING MISS DAISY)
Gerard Butler (300, LAW ABIDING CITIZEN, CHASING MAVERICKS, PLAYING FOR KEEPS, MACHINE GUN PREACHER)
Aaron Eckhart (THE DARK KNIGHT, PAYCHECK, THE MISSING, BATTLE LAS ANGELES, THE RUM DIARY)
Melissa Leo (FLIGHT, WHY STOP NOW, THE FIGHTER, WELCOME TO THE RILEY'S)

Former secret service agent Mike Banning (Gerard Butler), sequestered in a desk job with the Treasury Department six months after narrowly saving President Benjamin Asher (Aaron Eckhart) at the expense of First Lady Margaret Asher (Ashley Judd), glances out of his window to see a full-scale White House siege in process, taking it as a call to arms and a return to action despite his exile. Everything up until this point—from the maudlin tragedy which opens the film to the prosaic exposition which follows—has closely followed the house style of director Antoine Fuqua, whose particular brand of "gritty" self-seriousness is well-suited to thriller material this beige, and the action to come seems ready to merely follow the expected motions. But then the film suddenly pivots: A 15-minute blitzkrieg on the White House lawn, in which ostensible tourists become terrorists and garbage trucks transform into impromptu assault vehicles, takes the action from sober efficiency to an almost gonzo blockbuster spectacle, loaded with the sort of exaggeratedly stylized gunplay one expects from an early John Woo movie. It's not quite parodic (it stops short of the cartoon physics and noir-riffing zingers of last year's widely underrated *Lockout*), but it nevertheless becomes, from this point forward, a refreshingly self-aware genre exercise, embellishing its exploitative qualities and mostly discarding the rest.

This gently mocking impulse is never more apparent than when the action enters the locked-down White House and Butler, clearly in on the joke, fully adopts the John McClane persona on which his character is pretty obviously based. *Olympus Has Fallen* is the rare case of a film which succeeds simply by virtue of tracing the outline of a better movie: Of the great many films since 1988 to follow the reliable "Die Hard on a ____" template, from *Speed* to *Under Siege*, *Olympus Has Fallen* embraces it the most wholly, lifting not only the fundamentals of the premise (terrorists seize a valuable building with hostages, unaware that the quintessential One Man Who Can Stop Them remains on the premises), but even specific sequences from the source material. Some minor references seem like distant echoes of a work whose presence is deeply embedded in the genre's canon; others are bought up wholesale and delivered with a wink. The most blatant citation, and perhaps not coincidentally the highlight of the film, finds Butler's lone gunman sardonically trading barbs with terrorist leader Kang (Rick Yune) over two-way radio, and it practically plays out as an outright reenactment of one of *Die Hard's* most iconic scenes—though in this iteration the hero has a different catchphrase with which to sign off: "Let's play a game of Fuck Off. You go first."

Amusing one-liners and lightly comic touches abound, and *Olympus Has Fallen*, certainly aware of their appeal, happily luxuriates in their self-styled inanity. Morgan Freeman and Robert Forster, playing presidential stand-ins in a *Dr. Strangelove*-esque War Room, ham it up grandly while barking out important-sounding orders, with Forster in particular making splendid use of the script's many instances of "fuck." Told at one memorable juncture by Butler that "this ain't gonna be a cakewalk" because "these sonuvabitches are fuckin' tough," Forster explains that he has "the fuckin' toughest guys in the world," a great action-flick exchange typical of the film's idea of dialogue. In cases like this, simply recognizing the ridiculousness inherent in the genre and exaggerating that quality rather than attempting to suppress it elevates the film above the bulk of its dour and wholly self-serious contemporaries—including literally every one of Fuqua's earlier films, whose urban grit lacked even a whiff of levity or self-awareness—and it makes *Olympus Has Fallen*, oddly enough, truer to the spirit of the original *Die Hard* than any of the official sequels. Part of the appeal of the formula has always been watching a kind of looseness of action and comedy within a dramatic system that's tightly controlled, and the later *Die Hard* films tend to fail when they rely too heavily on one side of that equation, feeling overdetermined when they should feel casual and seeming to meander when they should be taut. It's a tricky balance that this movie somehow stumbles into getting right.



8/13 3 WHAT MAISIE KNEW DRAMA
\$3 MILL 356 SCREENS R 99 MINUTES

Steve Coogan (RUBY SPARKS, OUR IDIOT BROTHER, THE OTHER GUYS, WHAT GOES UP)

Julianne Moore (THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT, CRAZY STUPID LOVE, 6 SOULS, ELEKTRA LUX, BEING FLYNN)

Watching an innocent little girl suffer nonstop neglect and subtle forms of emotional abuse is no one's idea of easy entertainment, and while the film provides sufficient dramatic modulation for the better part of two hours, it doesn't cushion the blow. Scribes Carroll Cartwright and Nancy Doyné approximate the intimate child's perspective James achieved on the page by placing Maisie (Aprile) in every scene, continually reminding the viewer of

the invisible trauma being inflicted by two thoughtless individuals on the person most deserving of their care and attention.

The conflict initially manifests itself as two muffled voices arguing in the background while Maisie quietly does her homework. In short order, her parents, fiery-tempered rock musician Susanna (Moore) and perpetually distracted art dealer Beale (Coogan), have divorced, leaving their soft-spoken, well-behaved daughter to drift between their respective Manhattan apartments. Each parent wants custody for all the wrong reasons, as it soon becomes infuriatingly clear that, despite their superficial expressions of affection, they're more interested in using Maisie as a weapon against each other than in serving her best interests.

Focusing on small, mundane life moments and interactions (forgotten pick-ups at school, early drop-offs at the other parent's apartment), McGehee and Siegel carefully dramatize the countless acts of selfishness that gradually bring about Maisie's understanding of and profound disillusionment with her situation. In the story's trickiest development Beale marries Maisie's fetching nanny, Margo (Joanna Vanderham), and almost in retaliation, Susanna weds one of her groupies, handsome bartender Lincoln (Alexander Skarsgard).

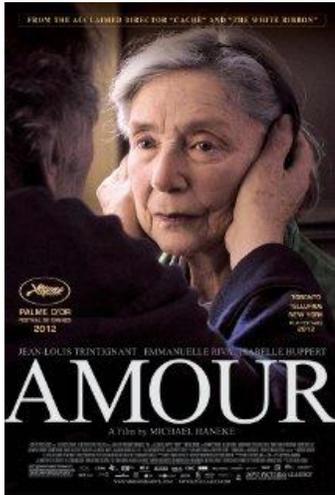
This turns out to be fortunate for Maisie, as Margo and Lincoln prove infinitely more involved, concerned and willing to spend time with the girl, something that becomes increasingly necessary as career obligations call Susanna and Beale out of town. As for Moore and Coogan, they're sadly all too believable as parents who not only despise each other but are utterly self-absorbed and intoxicated with the particular vices of the modern era. Beale, who has the least



involvement in his daughter's life to begin with, at one point simply falls off the map. It's Susanna, trying to convince Maisie and herself that she's a good mother, who arguably winds up doing the greater damage, and Moore acts with a white-hot fury that sends waves of resentment and self-pity flying in all directions.

If Aprile's Maisie seems a bit too angelic — she never throws tantrums or answers back, and she cries only once, quietly — this remarkable young actress nonetheless manages to convey in every close-up the painful, premature knowledge described by the title.

A very deep and emotional film that will be adored by those that liked **MIDNIGHT IN PARIS, DARLING COMPANION, BLUE LIKE JAZZ, BERNIE, THE ORANGES, THE DETAILS, THE ICE STORM.**



8/20 2 AMOUR DRAMA

\$7 MILL BO 338 SCREENS PG-13 127 MINUTES

Emmanuelle Riva (EROS THERAPY, THE GREAT ALIBI, CAN'T SAY NO)

Jean Louis Trintignant (A SELF MADE HERO, SEE HOW THEY FALL, THOSE WHO LOVE ME CAN TAKE THE TRAIN)

With the exception of a single early scene in which retired music teachers Georges (Jean-Louis Trintignant) and Anne (Emmanuelle Riva) attend the concert of a former pupil, **AMOUR** takes place entirely within the protective cocoon of their Parisian apartment, where the couple lives comfortably surrounded by books, music and other signs of cultural refinement. From the startling opening shot, director Haneke indicates where things are headed, as police break down the door to find Anne's corpse laid out in bed, her head wreathed in flowers, the odor of her passing thick in the air.

Did she commit suicide? Did her husband ease her out of her suffering? Though society may view either option as criminal, the film views their fight as a matter of domestic heroism as both characters face the challenges of aging together with varying degrees of patience and nobility. By the time the film reveals the circumstances of Anne's passing, audiences have already witnessed the full trajectory of her deterioration, none of it more painful than that first attack, over morning tea, when a momentary lapse of recognition interrupts the pleasantly attentive dynamic between two soul mates. Proceeding in that spirit, the two leads strip themselves of their stardom, delivering subtle, unshowy performances in which every glance conveys both how deeply they care for one another and the mounting pain that Anne's illness brings to their relationship. Even minor disagreements demand immediate apologies, as Trintignant shows admirable, unflinching devotion throughout, while Riva impresses with such quiet nobility at the outset that subsequent obstacles to her mobility and speech seem all the more unfair.

After that first stroke, Anne returns from the hospital, her right side partly paralyzed. Trintignant, who found frailty in seemingly tough characters for most of his career, does the opposite here: Georges may be weakened by age, but his commitment to Anne is so strong, he puts aside his discomfort to assist her. It's not easy for him to lift her, and yet, their short, shuffling embrace from her wheelchair to the nearest seat looks almost like a dance. As her condition worsens, Georges is every bit as attentive assisting her with the toilet, food and bed, honoring Anne's wish that she never go back to the hospital.

Though this decision worries their almost-60-year-old daughter, Eva (Isabelle Huppert), Georges has reason to reject her interference. Like the former student (French pianist Alexandre Tharaud) who drops by during his next trip to Paris, Eva expresses concern only after hearing news of Anne's stroke, but is otherwise too busy with her own music career to check in with her parents.

This film is so well acted and such a beautiful story that it will attract fans of **GINGER AND ROSA, QUARTET, THE BEST EXOTIC HOTEL, THE IMPOSSIBLE, THE INTOUCHABLES, LINCOLN, LIFE OF PI** and **TO ROME WITH LOVE.**





8/20 2 SCARY MOVIE 5 COMEDY/HORROR
\$32 MILL BO 3406 SCREENS PG-13 86 MINUTES

Ashley Tisdale (TV's SONS OF ANARCHY, PHINEAS AND HERB, RAISING HOPE)

Charlie Sheen (PLATOON, MAJOR LEAGUE, WALL STREET, DUE DATE, TERMINAL VELOCITY)

Realistically, as long as there are horror movies, this series could go on forever. And why not? Like horror movies themselves, they're cheap to produce, easy to cast and pretty much write themselves, once you establish an anything-for-a-joke vibe with a lot of scatological humor and bonks to the head. The producers of "Scary 5" seemed to have gone into the project asking the question, "How much pain can we inflict on poor Simon Rex?"

Although the ads make "Scary 5" look like a send-up of "Paranormal Activity," the movie takes bigger shots at this year's "Mama," as well as random jabs at "Black Swan," "Rise of the Planet of the Apes," "Inception" and "Insidious." The people who made the movie could give a rip if any of the bits coalesce, so expect lots of bouncing from joke to joke with minimal amount of payoff.

Most of the series' regulars have moved on to bigger and better things (Ashley Tisdale stands in for Anna Faris this time, who is remarkably game when it comes to poop-based humor), but you gotta hand it to "Scary 5" for striking while the iron is hot. One entire scene is a parody of the new "Evil Dead," and that movie came out last week, for Pete's sake.

Still, too much of the movie settles for stupid when it ought to be stupid/funny. It's much funnier than "A Haunted House," which was another "Paranormal Activity" parody, but both movies still tell a lot of the same dumb jokes. The only difference is instead of lazy references to miscreants like Charlie Sheen and Lindsey Lohan, "Scary 5" actually got the two to participate in the ribbing.

It's a fun series meant to kill a bit of time and have a laugh or three. You will enjoy it if you enjoyed **THE CALL, HANSEL & GRETEL, THE HOST, DARK SKIES, PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 4,** and **CABIN IN THE WOODS.** Just enjoy it for what it is.



8/20 3 SHADOW DANCER DRAMA
\$2 MILL BO 121 SCREENS R 101 MINUTES

Clive Owen (CHILDREN OF MEN, SIN CITY, CLOSER, KILLER ELITE, TRUST)

Andrea Riseborough (WELCOME TO THE PUNCH, W.E., NEVER LET ME GO, BRIGHTON ROCK)

The drama of a young mother's act of betrayal during the last days of the Irish Troubles comes together with measured intelligence and artfully apportioned suspense in "Shadow Dancer." British director James Marsh's highly disciplined filmmaking costs this slow-burning IRA thriller a bit of narrative drive, and its taut but methodical accretion of details and revelations will play best to attentive viewers. But there is much here to savor, starting with a fine performance by Andrea Riseborough, which should stand the

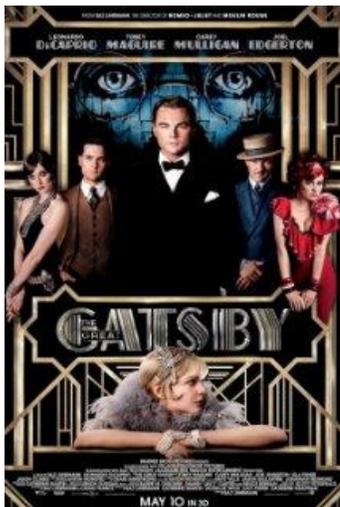
classy production in good stead in prestige festival slots and art-house berths at home and offshore.

A child growing up against the violent upheaval of 1970s Belfast, Northern Ireland, young Collette McVeigh (Maria Laird) sends her brother Sean (Ben Smyth) out to buy cigarettes for their father, a request she will regret for a lifetime when the boy is fatally shot during an exchange of fire between British and Irish forces.

The traumatic experience has the effect of radicalizing Collette, as becomes clear after a quick fast-forward to 1993. She's now played by Riseborough, whose coolly grave expression brings a disquieting chill to a tense, near-wordless sequence in which Collette plants a bomb in a London subway station. But the authorities are on to her; the situation is quickly defused and Collette arrested, at which point MI5 officer Mac (Owen) offers her the chance to become a mole for British intelligence. Initially stubborn and defiant, Collette consents when faced with the prospect of being separated from her young son. She and Mac arrange to meet once a week along the Belfast coast, where she will supply details about the activities of her other two brothers, Gerry (Aidan Gillen) and Connor (Domhnall Gleeson), both high-ranking officers in the IRA. Not long after Collette's return, Connor enlists her to participate in the assassination of a top Northern Irish police detective, providing her with the first test of her loyalties. Complicating the situation still further, Mac is determined to protect his young turncoat and her child, but encounters resistance from an icy superior (Gillian Anderson) who clearly has her own highly classified priorities.



A good cast and story will help this film attract those that liked **DEAD MAN DOWN, ERASED, END OF WATCH, GINGER AND ROSA, UPSIDE DOWN, STAND UP GUYS, THE DETAILS** and **THE BAY**.



8/27 1 THE GREAT GATSBY DRAMA
 \$141 mill 3550 screens **PG-13** 142 MINUTES

Leonardo DiCaprio (A BRONX TALE, TITANIC, GANGSTERS OF NEW YORK, INCEPTION, THE AVIATOR, SHUTTER ISLAND, DJANGO UNCHAINED, BODY OF LIES)
Tobey Maguire (SPIDER MAN, SEABISCUIT, SPIDERMAN 2, WONDER BOYS, PLEASANTVILLE, THE CIDER HOUSE RULES)

Fitzgerald's story in this excellent remake is that of Nick Carraway (Maguire), the young Midwesterner who moves to the big city and immediately gets swept up in Gatsby's (DiCaprio) world, where glamour and tragedy inevitably walk hand in hand through an extravagantly lit Prohibition-era wonderland. There's a sense of unreality to Luhrmann's

vision, heightened by its attempt to reveal necessary truths that are impossible to represent accurately without the use of fantasy. The film operates in a lucid dream, sense-making while also keeping us slightly unhinged, an impression not helped along by the overt garishness of Gatsby's castle, reminiscent of a Disney set, or Nick's hovel next door, which seems air-lifted from the Shire. The magic is in the purely Luhrmann-esque moments, those which exist outside of the narrative: After witnessing a scene at the Buchanans' house in which Daisy's husband, Tom (Joel Edgerton), encourages caution while navigating the upcoming submersion of the white race, we cringe as we realize he's in the intimate company of his mostly black staff; but then later on, while riding in Gatsby's car over the Queensborough Bridge, Nick is entranced by an open convertible full of extravagantly dressed African-American merrymakers holding drinks and laughing as they're ushered into the city, their white driver crammed into a corner while countless bottles of champagne cool over ice in the front seat, the driver's necessary and functional service always a secondary concern to the celebration at hand. An impossible party, not the least because of the inextricable realities of race and class at this point in American history—but then again, Luhrmann's parties all feel impossible. The harsh idiocy of Tom's worldview is contrasted magically and evocatively in a slow-motion fugue over the East River, Luhrmann's mode reminiscent here of the language of music videos, all style and metaphor, the narrative gleefully buried in subtext.

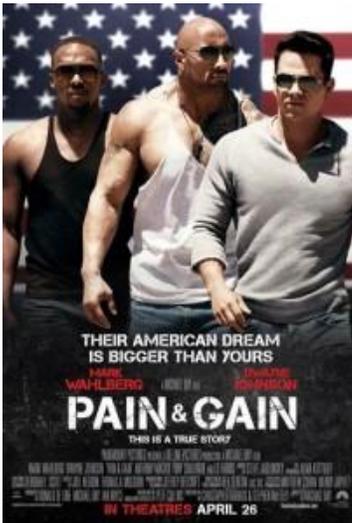
At one point during Gatsby's storytelling, desperate for Nick to believe his origin story (one of many presented in the film, rewriting himself just as his country has and does), he waves his hand in the air and simultaneously launches a shooting star into the night sky, a metaphor literalizing itself to accompany the story he's telling about the particularly American myth of upward mobility, the idea of making something from nothing. Here we have the leisurely summoning of grandiosity, a fantastic grandiosity within which is buried a



smaller, quieter morality tale. Because is this not the story of how the American dream, as it was once dreamed, is impossible? Perhaps Luhrmann is too in love with Gatsby to realize that the two men dream in equal excess and with equal measures of heightened triumph and dramatic failure, both of them imagining a world much more lush and more full of possibility than the one the rest of us see, thus rendering them unable to make fully tangible their overtly bombastic visions. And both men eventually suffer the inevitable hangover we would expect after such a fantastic buzz.

But aren't we all also Nick Carraway, both at the party and outside of it at once, gazing up from the darkening streets through yellow windows behind which lurk all kinds of human secrets, but then only seeing ourselves staring back? By the end, Luhrmann's audience is made to feel like someone who wakes up the morning after a bender and feels vaguely apologetic about possible infractions which might have occurred the night before, even when all they were doing was accepting the rules of engagement. But Luhrmann's **THE GREAT GATSBY** is, in the end, a party worth going to—or sneaking into, since Gatsby only rarely sends out invitations, deciding instead just to assume you'll show up anyway. The party is tastefully decorated, fully in possession of the "chemical madness" Nick both respects and fears: the performances, especially those of DiCaprio and Mulligan, match Luhrmann's 3D camera in their larger-than-lifeness; and the soundtrack, highlighted by a Lana Del Rey song that perfectly accentuates a montage during which Gatsby finally shows Daisy the house he's ostensibly built for her, is a powerful statement, both purposely irreverent and at the same time pitch-perfect. The green light at the end of the Daisy's dock is a trancelike beacon from the start, the pendulum that hypnotizes Gatsby and, in turn, the audience, and lets us fall helplessly into Luhrmann's world. But it's too bad the party ever has to end, because when the final revelers stumble down the great lawn and back out into the harsh morning, all that's left behind is everything that still needs to be cleaned up.

Fine acting and a great retelling of a compelling story will appeal to all that loved **42, FLIGHT, LINCOLN, PROMISED LAND, SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK, LIFE OF PI, THE MASTER, THE SESSIONS, LOOPER, TED,** and **ARBITRAGE.**



8/27 1 PAIN AND GAIN ACTION/COMEDY
\$51 MILL BO 3307 SCREENS R 130 MINUTES

Mark Wahlberg (BOOGIE NIGHTS, CONTRABAND, DATE NIGHT, THE OTHER GUYS, THE DEPARTED, INVINCIBLE)

Dwayne Johnson (JOURNEY 2, TOOTH FAIRY, SNITCH, GI JOE RETALIATION, FAST FIVE)

Ed Harris (MAN ON A LEDGE, A BEAUTIFUL MIND, CLEANER, GONE BABY GONE, A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE)

Truth is definitely stranger than fiction. Based on actual events, this movie is the story of 3 body builders and their misadventures in pulling off the perfect crime. Daniel Lugo (Wahlberg) is a man with a dream. His dream is to be rich and is willing to go to any

lengths to achieve that dream. From October 1994 to June 1995, Daniel and two of his body building co-worker/friends, Adrian Doorbal (Anthony Mackie) and Paul Doyle (Johnson) team up to kidnap one of their gym's members Victor Kershaw (Tony Shalhoub) steal his fortune and life because he's an unlikeable douchebag. Kershaw is an unlikable person, treating most people he encounters like garbage, but is a shrewd businessman. Daniel wants his life, so he comes up with this harebrained scheme to kidnap Kershaw, get him to sign over all his money and possessions and then get rid of him somehow.

Unfortunately for Daniel and crew, Victor Kershaw is a very, very stubborn man. When the kidnapping finally happens, after several mis-attempts, their plans almost work. Victor was supposed to die after he signed over his possessions, but since the men aren't the brightest people, he was left for dead, leaving a witness to the alleged crimes. The ornery man Victor is gets nowhere with the police, not only for his charming personality but for his wild kidnapping tale of ninjas, sex toys and dry cleaning torture chamber. Not knowing where to turn, he enlists the help of retired private investigator, Ed DuBois (Harris), who out of pity takes his case. He takes a glance at the details but just as he's about to drop the case, a detail red flags him and takes the case.

Meanwhile, the three stooges of kidnapping are living the high life, embracing their riches and excessive lifestyle to the fullest. It's just a matter of time before the money runs out, and they get itchy for another job. Will the next job be their last or will they be able to continue the crime spree for the good life?

This is a fun film to watch with a good cast that will entertain all that liked **A GOOD DAY TO DIE HARD**, **CONTRABAND**, **STAND UP GUYS**, **THE REF**, **JACK REACHER**, **PARKER**, **THE LAST STAND**, and **TED**.

