

### 3/2 (SATURDAY) 1 TWILIGHT: BREAKING DAWN 2

FANTASY

\$248 MILL BO 4070 SCREENS PG-13 115 MINUTES

**Kristen Stewart (TWILIGHT, SNOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMAN, THE RUNAWAYS, THE YELLOW HANDKERCHIEF)**  
**Robert Pattinson (TWILIGHT, COSMOPOLIS, WATER FOR ELEPHANTS, REMEMBER ME)**  
**Taylor Lautner (TWILIGHT, VALENTINE'S DAY, CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2)**

Immortality becomes you," Volturi leader Aro (Michael Sheen) hisses to red-irised Bella Swan (Stewart), who's at last surrendered her body and soul to toothy hubby Edward Cullen (Pattinson), vowing to be his bloodthirsty missus to infinity and beyond. Long before it's uttered, on the brink of a climax more riveting than anything this series ever seemed capable of, the sentiment is greatly felt here as vampirism looks real good on Stewart, in regard to both her alabaster beauty and feral performance skills.

Shacked up with Edward's family while getting used to her newfound gifts, which include warp speed and hyper-keen senses, Bella is instructed to feign humanness when her in-the-dark dad (Billy Burke) comes to visit, told by Alice (Ashley Greene) to breathe, blink, and slouch like a mortal. It's tough work for Bella, as lo and behold, the promise of forever has knocked the hunched-over torpor out of the young-adult world's queen of angst, who can now dispatch mountain lions, exert animalistic rage, and leap tall cliffs in a single bound. It's plenty refreshing to see Stewart come to life as the undead, and the movie itself is uncommonly animated.



This latest and last in an exciting series has more character depth and plot line than the previous one. The appeal will be huge for all that liked **TAKEN 2, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, EXPENDABLES 2, MEN IN BLACK 3, X-MEN, PROMETHEUS,** and **THE HUNGER GAMES.**



### 3/5 2 THE BAY HORROR/SCI/FI/THRILLER

\$93,000 BO 89 SCREENS R 85 MINUTES

**Kristen Connolly (THE CABIN IN THE WOODS, MEET DAVE, THE HAPPENING)**

**Christopher Denham (SHUTTER ISLAND, DUPLICITY, CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR)**

**THE BAY** which is about ready for wide distribution, is Barry Levinson's most engaged and entertaining movie since **WAG THE DOG**, which isn't to say that he's given up his irksome predilection for a certain bullish type of liberalism. Levinson's latest is aesthetically adventurous, if not terribly original, using a mockumentary conceit and employing an assemblage of various types of footage (video from cell phones and security cameras, B-roll from news reports, digital news cams, and so on) to create a supposedly realistic vision of ecological horror and bureaucratic indifference run amok. If nothing else, the overgrown, mutant isopods that chow down on the innards of the residents of a small coastal town off the Chesapeake Bay are more genuinely unsettling than the paranormal hissy fits found in **THE POSSESSION.**

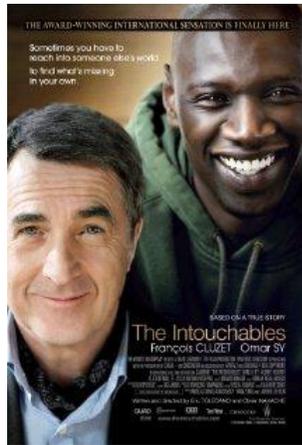
Created in lieu of an abandoned documentary on the dire environmental conditions of the Chesapeake Bay, which is essentially 40% dead thanks to various contaminants, Levinson's radical

abstraction centers on the grisly events that unfold over a July 4th celebration, with a young newswoman's (Kether Donohue) coverage of the events—and her subsequent Skype interview—serving as the story's anchor. At different points in town, teenagers are devoured in barely 10 feet of water, isopods rip through faces, stomachs, and limbs in the middle of the street, and the local hospital is overrun by cases of what seem to be violent blood blisters. Night-cam footage of an eco-blogger suggests that the mutation of the isopods is from a mixture of chemical waste and chicken droppings seeping into the bay, unregulated due to a seemingly amiable yet uncaring mayor (Frank Deal).



At once impassioned and wholly manipulative, *The Bay* is a ruminative worst-case scenario as genre piece, less interested in the implications of its aesthetic means in terms of the future of filmmaking than in creating a "realistic" vision of a severe nightmare scenario. Suffering is paramount over any sense of satire and, naturally, the government has a hand in covering up crucial data from doctors, nurses, scientists, and police officers who only want to help. It relies on the same unfairly cynical concept that many "issue" films are built on, that the indulgent corruption of certain government officials would naturally lead them to adopt a tone of bottom-line heartlessness if the dreadful outcome of such actions threatened to reveal their base greed and ignorance to a voting public. As honest and realistic as its depiction may be, *The Bay* is bitter and condescending. In terms of sheer horror, it's legitimately scary and concise, but its filmmakers' earnest ambitions to craft a call to arms render the underlying, disturbing facts as believable as Sharktopus.

Fans of **HOUSE AT THE END OF THE STREET**, **APPARITION**, **REC 3**, **DARK TIDE**, **CARNAGE**, **CONTAGION**, **SCREAM 4** and **HANNA**.



**3/5 3 THE INTOUCHABLES COMEDY**  
**\$11 MILL BO 207 SCREENS R 112 MINUTES**

**Francois Cluzet (TELL NO ONE, JANIS AND JOHN, LITTLE WHITE LIES, ONE FOR THE ROAD)**  
**Omar Sy (MIC MACS, SAFARI, DON'T LIE TOO HARD)**

Fabulously wealthy Philippe ( Cluzet) was in a paragliding accident some years earlier and can't move from the neck down. His wife has died; his adopted daughter, Elisa (Alba Gaia Bellugi), is a snot-nosed teen; and his staff keeps him coddled in an upper-class cocoon.

But Philippe goes through caretakers like water. Applying for the new opening is Driss ( Sy), a guy just out of the slammer after a six-month stint for robbery; he only turns up because he needs a signature on the rejection slip to make him eligible for unemployment benefits. To the surprise of personal secretary Magalie (Audrey Fleurot), Philippe hires the lanky, unflappable Driss, knowing he'll be entertained if nothing else.

Driss' infectious bonhomie makes him indispensable to Philippe, encouraging him in romance and generally blowing fresh air into the stolid household with his crude but warm-hearted manners. In fact, Driss is treated as nothing but a performing of such a term), teaching the stuck-up replacing Vivaldi with "Boogie moves on the dance floor. It's painful to performer, in a role barely removed entertaining the master while about class and race.



The laughs are there albeit a story is interesting and the cast really **ARBITRAGE**, **A SEPARATION**, **GUARD** will find much to enjoy here.

monkey (with all the racist associations white folk how to get "down" by Wonderland" and showing off his see Sy, a joyfully charismatic from the jolly house slave of yore, embodying all the usual stereotypes

bit un pc for most viewers. Still, the quite good. Fans of **KILLER JOE**, **LAWLESS**, **RED LIGHTS** and **THE**



**3/5 1 RED DAWN (REMAKE) ACTION**  
\$46 MILL BO 2968 SCREENS PG-13 95 MINUTES

**Chris Hemsworth (THE CABIN IN THE WOODS, STAR TREK, THOR, A PERFECT GETAWAY)**  
**Isabelle Lucas (IMMORTALS, A HEARTBREAK AWAY, DAYBREAKERS, THE WEDDING PARTY)**

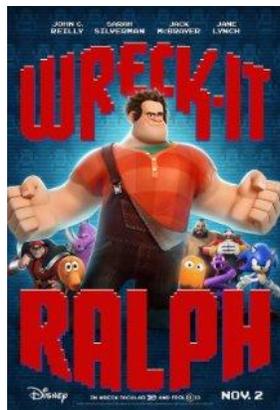
Dan Bradley's feeds the warrior fantasies of adolescent boys with a testosterone-heavy tale of a war free of moral complications—one in which Americans are blameless civilians, defending their homes from armed invaders. The setting this time is Washington state, but the guerilla uprising is still led by a pack of kids, most of them football players or cheerleaders from the local high school. The country behind the attack isn't Russia, but North Korea, which sends in paratroopers like so many dandelion spores to blanket the Spokane sky



This is foremost a story about boys: fathers and sons to some extent, but mostly brothers. Jed Eckert (Hemsworth) came back from Iraq just in time to shepherd his little brother, Matt (Josh Peck), and a few of their friends to safety in the family cabin after the invasion. In one of too many montages, he puts them through a sort of boot camp, turning them into lean, mean, fighting machines with ludicrous ease. The one exception is Matt, who chafes under his brother's leadership, angry at Jed for abandoning him after their mother died. Hemsworth gracefully handles his end of the labored subplot, but Peck buckles under its weight. For practically the entire movie, he wears a scowl that's clearly intended to signal manly determination, though it more accurately resembles the pains of gastritis.

When the Koreans invade, explosions knock over some of the toys in Matt's bedroom, which is the closest we get to subtlety in a movie whose points are mostly scored with macho mantras, like the benediction Matt gets from his father (Brett Cullen) after his Wolverines lose a football game just before all hell breaks loose. "I'm proud of you, son," says Dad. "You did your best, and that's all that really counts." As one of the teens succinctly puts it: "Dude, we're *living* Call of Duty. And it sucks."

The action is pretty intense and the story more plausible than when the first one was made. The appeal will be very strong to all that liked **FLIGHT, ALEX CROSS, END OF WATCH, KILLER JOE, TED, LAWLESS, MEN IN BLACK 3, SAVAGES**, and **THE HUNGER GAMES**.



**3/5 1 WRECK-IT-RALPH**  
FAMILY \$150 MILL 3752 SCREENS PG 101 MINUTES

Ralph, voiced by John C. Reilly, offers a cherry to his friends —

Disney's **WRECK-IT-RALPH** has so much creativity and cleverness that it becomes almost hampered by its far-flung ideas. The plot begins simple enough, but when new characters and story twists emerge, the movie teeters on that fine line between overzealous and overcrowded.

Ralph (voiced by John C. Reilly) is a bad guy with a good heart. He's a character stuck in an arcade video game, and his sole purpose in life is to wreck buildings, just so the hero of the game can rebuild them again. At night, when the arcade kids have gone home and the game's characters can let loose in their electronic land, Ralph finds himself ostracized from the good guys, including Fix-It Felix (voiced by Jack McBrayer). Ralph lives in the dump with a blanket of bricks to keep him warm. His so-called colleagues have parties in a swanky penthouse, while the man with the incredibly large fists is relegated to lonesomeness.

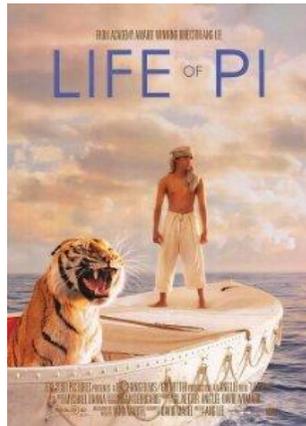
When Ralph decides to change his future and win a video game medal (an unthinkable act for a bad guy), the entire arcade universe is thrown off-kilter. There's rumors of him going "Turbo," or rogue. The script, written by Phil Johnston and Jennifer Lee, is better than most children's fare beyond clever and much nowadays. The writers, plus director Rich Moore, obviously have a great affinity for all the ins and outs of the retro video game world. You'll see present and accounted for, and Pac-Man. There's one scene (perhaps the film's funniest) where Ralph attends a "Bad Guy" group meeting that's similar to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Zombies bump elbows with Satan, and all of the baddies feel sorry for themselves. Hilarity incarnate.



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The voice acting is exquisite, especially from Lynch and Tudy (who sounds like a clown with a lot of sugar). There's never a time when a smile leaves one's face. This movie makes a strong case for best animated feature of the year. It has so much going for it that there's too much to enjoy. But a bounty of delights is always better than a lackluster effort. Bravo for too much good stuff!

All fans of **PARANORMAN**, **RIO**, **HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA**, **FRANKENWEENIE**, **ICE AGE: CONTINENTAL DRIFT**, **MADAGASCAR 3**, **LORAX**, and **HUGO** will love this one too.



**3/5 1 LIFE OF PI ADVENTURE**  
**\$97 MILL BO 2904 SCREENS PG 127 MINUTES**

**Suraj Sharma (TV'S MADE IN HOLLYWOOD AND STARLITE)**  
**Gerard Depardieu (POTICHE, DUMAS, IN THE BEGINNING, 36<sup>TH</sup> PRECINCT)**

A literal crouching tiger is merely one of many visual wonders in Ang Lee's LIFE OF PI a gently transporting work of all-ages entertainment that melds a harrowing high-seas adventure with a dreamy meditation on the very nature of storytelling. Summoning the most advanced digital-filmmaking technology to deliver the most old-fashioned kind of audience satisfaction, this exquisitely beautiful adaptation of Yann Martel's castaway saga has a sui generis quality that's never less than beguiling, even if its fable-like construction and impeccable artistry come up a bit short in terms of truly gripping, elemental drama.

The visual lushness is apparent from the opening shots of Pondicherry, India, a former French colony where Santosh Patel (Adil Hussain) and his wife (Tabu) operate a zoo. The younger of their two sons is Piscine (played by Gautam Belur and Ayush Tandon at ages 5 and 11, respectively), a bright, curious child whose sense of mischief is tempered by his unusual reverence for God.

The humorous highlights of the boy's upbringing -- how he wisely shortens his name to Pi and becomes a devout Hindu, Christian and Muslim -- are recounted by his middle-aged, modern-day counterpart (Irrfan Khan). Dreamlike dissolves help ease the script's shifts between past and present, which feel clunky and prosaic even as they lay the groundwork for the slippery metaphysical questions that will arise later.

Having decided to sell the zoo and move to Canada, the Patels find themselves, along with a few remaining animals, aboard a Japanese freighter that swiftly capsizes in a thunderstorm, leaving 17-year-old Pi (Suraj Sharma) the sole human survivor as he manages to climb into a lifeboat.



It's an astonishing sequence, rendered all the more so by the lucidity of the direction; rather than resorting to herky-jerky lensing and editing, Lee uses relatively long takes, smooth cuts and seamlessly integrated f/x to navigate the viewer through the action. Even as the waves heave and roll (to especially fearsome effect in 3D), the film finds room for isolated moments of haunting poetry, such as the sight of the ship's ghostly white lights descending into the abyss.

Once the storm retreats, Pi realizes a few zoo denizens have made it onto the lifeboat, although the food chain soon dictates that the only remaining animal onboard is a ferocious 450-pound Bengal tiger, incongruously named Richard Parker. Pi realizes he's going to have to tame the tiger, a thinly veiled metaphor for his own inner beast, and as the days stretch into weeks and months, the relationship between

these two unlikely companions shifts movingly, and almost imperceptibly, from mutual wariness into something as close to love as the laws of interspecies friendship can allow.

The visuals are stunning and the story absolutely absorbing with a very new and young cast. Fans of **CLOUD ATLAS**, **TRANSYLVANIA HOTEL**, **BRAVE**, **MAGIC OF BELLE ISLE**, **LORAX**, **WE BOUGHT A ZOO** and **HOP**.



### 3/5 3 CALIFORNIA SOLO DRAMA NR 95 MINUTES

**Robert Carlyle (THE FULL MONTY, 28 WEEKS LATER, ERAGON, FORMULA 51)**

**Alexia Rasmussen (OUR IDIOT BROTHER, LOSERS TAKE ALL, TANNER HALL, THE QUEEN OF GREENWICH VILLAGE)**

A former rock 'n' roller withers on the vine. Robert Carlyle turns in a committed performance as Lachlan, an alcoholic and guilt-ridden Scottish guitarist who's hung up his axe to work on a Southern California organic farm.

Given plenty of space here for bluster, monologues and hard drinking, even Carlyle can't manage to make the burnout that is Lachlan more than a barely likable (and mostly annoying) case of self-destruction in action. Lachlan's inability, or unwillingness, to correct his ways, combined with his second-fiddle (or guitar in this case) role in long-forgotten Brit grunge-era band the Cranks, makes him a quintessential Little Man, but one without much depth or compelling interest.

This is a major problem for what's fundamentally a character study, starting with sylvan days in the fields of Robinson Farms, just north of Los Angeles, where Lachlan works farming and then selling his produce at various farmers' markets. In his off time, he hosts a podcast titled "Flameouts," about famous musicians who died too soon, but his favorite recreational activity is boozing it up at the local bar. After one such night, he's arrested on a DUI.

Despite his green-card status -- Lachlan says he practically feels like an American citizen -- he learns that this arrest, combined with an old warrant for possession of pot when he was touring with the Cranks, could compel U.S. immigration services to deport him back to the U.K. With virtually nothing saved in the bank, Lachlan can hardly afford his attorneys, whom he feels aren't helping him much anyway.

In an attempt to procure cash, Lachlan visits the Cranks' former manager, Wendell (a well-cast Michael Des Barres), who spurns him, reminding him that it was Lachlan who was responsible for the death of his brother, the band's gifted lead vocalist-guitarist. In such scenes, Lewy's script is less attuned to the way rock 'n' rollers talk, and more concerned with pressing character and story details in as direct a fashion as possible.

While Carlyle's Lachlan, charming with his thick brogue and longish sandy locks, conveys the look and demeanor of an aging rocker fallen on hard times, his character is perilously close to a cliché, though Lewy fortunately avoids having Lachlan suddenly turn over a new leaf. Ultimately, though, when confronted by key people from his past on the eve of what appears like certain deportation, Lachlan gets a contrived opportunity at redemption.

This is a little movie that will attract those that liked **ROCK OF AGES**, **BANDSLAM**, **THE ROCKER**, **ONCE**, and **STEP UP REVOLUTION**.





**3/12 3 HITCHCOCK DRAMA**  
 \$6 MILL BO 561 SCREENS PG-13 98 MINUTES

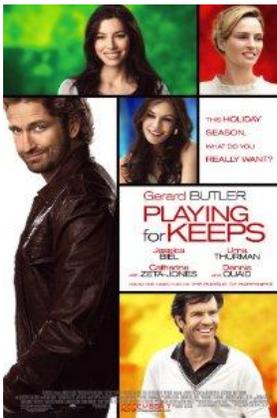
**Anthony Hopkins (SILENCE OF THE LAMBS, AMISTAD, MEET JOE BLACK, 360, THE RITE)**  
**Helen Mirren (ARTHUR (REMAKE,) THE DEBT, THE TEMPTRESS, GOSFORD PARK)**  
**Scarlett Johansson (LOST IN TRANSLATION, THE BLACK DAHLIA, WE BOUGHT A ZOO, IRON MAN 2)**  
**Jessica Biel (TOTAL RECALL (REMAKE), CELLULAR, THE RULES OF ATTRACTION, ULEE'S GOLD)**

Following the 1959 success of **NORTH BY NORTHWEST** Hitchcock ( Hopkins), annoyed by press coverage suggesting he should quit while he's ahead, decides to tackle something bold and different: an adaptation of Robert Bloch's suspense novel **PSYCHO** (or, as pronounced in the helmer's British drawl, "Psy-choowww"). Bloch's sordid tale of transvestism, incest and matricide strikes almost everyone as a tasteless choice of material for a world-class director, and when Paramount head Barney Balaban (Richard Portnow) refuses to finance the picture, Hitch opts to pony up the relatively low \$800,000 budget himself, in exchange for a cut of the profits.

Despite her own reservations, especially when they're forced to mortgage the house, Alma ( Mirren), always her husband's closest confidante and often uncredited collaborator, lends him her customarily wry support. At the same time, she seeks another creative outlet fine-tuning a screenplay by longtime friend Whitfield Cook (Danny Huston), baldly depicted here as a cad with more charisma than talent.

Considerable time is spent addressing the director's strained relations with actress Vera Miles ( Biel) and his tender rapport with his new star, Janet Leigh ( Johansson), who fondly notes that, whatever Hitch's flaws, "compared to Orson Welles, he's a sweetheart." By contrast, Anthony Perkins (James D'Arcy) gets just a few fidgety lines and a coy, smirking reference to the actor's sexuality, and the film only glancingly acknowledges key contributors such as scribe Joseph Stefano (Ralph Macchio) and title designer/pictorial consultant Saul Bass (Wallace Langham). Cinephiles and academics may take issue with numerous other omissions (one never catches even a glimpse of the Universal lot's Bates Motel set, for example).

The cast does quite a job at recreating what must have been pretty stressful times. Hopkins, with his makeup, looks very much the part and his acting skills bring it home. A dense film appealing to those that liked **THE SESSIONS, 127 HOURS, ANNA KARENINA, THE MASTER, YOUR SISTER'S SISTER, BLUE LIKE JAZZ, THE IRON LADY** and the **KING'S SPEECH**.



**3/12 2 PLAYING FOR KEEPS COMEDY**  
 \$14 MILL BO 2986 SCREENS PG-13 105 MINUTES

**Gerard Butler (300, PS I LOVE YOU, SHATTERED, NIM'S ISLAND, GUILTY HEARTS)**  
**Jessica Biel ( VALENTINE'S DAY, THE A-TEAM, THE TALL MAN, TOTAL RECALL (2011)**  
**Catherine Zeta-Jones (ROCK OF AGES, THE REBOUND, CHICAGO, INTOLERABLE CRUELTY)**  
**Dennis Quaid ( SILVERADO, THE ROOKIE, THE BIG EASY, THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW, SOUL SURFER)**

An opening sequence uses cleverly degraded faux-video footage to show studly George Dryer (Butler) at the mid-'90s height of his soccer career. Several years later, he's living in a Virginia suburb, struggling to make the rent and attempting to re-establish a connection with his former wife, Stacie (Biel), and their young son, Lewis (Noah Lomax).

Stacie, who's about to remarry, has made peace with George, and encourages him to spend time with his son. Conveniently enough, Lewis' soccer team needs a coach, and his deadbeat dad fits the bill perfectly. Too perfectly: George proves popular not just with the kids, but with their single and/or unhappily married moms, who just can't get enough of the tousle-haired athlete and his irresistible accent.

Butler, playing his second athletic father figure of the season (after "Chasing Mavericks"), is solid enough, and gets to speak with his native brogue, though his scruffy, mildly charming meathead routine is starting to wear thin. It's Biel who almost singlehandedly elevates the picture to a realm of honest feeling: Providing a classy corrective to her ill-served distaff co-stars, the actress makes her character smart, tough, yet still achingly vulnerable, signaling years of long-suffering backstory with her eyes alone. Biel is so good that, when the time inevitably comes for Stacie to choose between the two men in her life, one yearns for her to consider herself first.



This is a nice little movie that will play well for those that liked **HIT AND RUN, TED, PITCH PERFECT, THE WATCH, THAT'S MY BOY, FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY** and **THE LUCKY ONE**.



**3/12 1 RISE OF THE GUARDIANS FAMILY**  
**\$100 MILL BO 3672 SCREENS PG 97 MINUTES**

Based on the Guardians of Childhood book series by William Joyce, **RISE OF THE GUARDIANS** has none of those premises so simple and brilliant as to induce a why-didn't-I-think-of-that smack to the head. The idea is that famous figures from children's lore all exist and work together to protect kids from harm. These appointed "guardians" are Santa Claus (Alec Baldwin), the Easter Bunny (Hugh Jackman), the Tooth Fairy (Isla Fisher) and the Sandman, who is mute. Leading them all is "Manny," the Man in the Moon, who appears to them as, well, the moon. When Pitch, the Bogeyman (Jude Law) invades Santa's castle and reveals his plans to spread fear around the world, Manny decides to recruit a new team member, and summons Jack Frost (Chris Pine) for the job.

Frost is portrayed as an amiable teen slacker (complete with hoodie), who's spent the 300-odd years of his existence just tooling around the world having fun and causing icy mischief. His problem is that since not enough children of the world believe in him, they also can't see him, unlike the rest of the guardians, so he's led something of a lonely and purposeless existence.

The unconventional design of the guardians makes for a lot of the film's charm. In a nod to Saint Nick's European origins, Santa is patterned after a scimitar-wielding Russian Cossack, complete with accent. The Tooth Fairy is a luminous, multicolored hummingbird hybrid. The Easter Bunny is a pugnacious scrapper from the Outback. Sandman is impish and childlike, but brimming with power in the guise of the magical golden sand he uses to communicate as well as to create happy dreams. Pitch is the simplest of the figures, dressed in basic black, with a hawk nose and yellow eyes that convey menace without being too scary for the intended audience. As the bogeyman invades and sabotages the various guardians' realms we also get to see how their operations run: who's really in charge of making Santa's toys (it's not who you think), how your teeth get out from under your pillow, etc. There's a lot of creativity on display, and like most modern animation, it truly looks like a storybook come to life, full of warmth, deep colors and sparkles.



**RISE OF THE GUARDIANS** is definitely fun, and definitely worthy of a holiday outing to the theater. Congrats, DreamWorks, Santa just brought you a bump in your average. Fans of **HOP, RINGO, HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA, ICE AGE, HAPPY FEET, UP, CARS**, and **BRAVE** will adore this one too.



### 3/12 3 THIS MUST BE THE PLACE DRAMA

\$350,000 15 SCREENS R 118 MINUTES

**Sean Penn (MYSTIC RIVER, I AM SAM, SWEET AND LOWDOWN, THE GAME, CARLITO'S WAY, STATE OF GRACE)**

**Frances McDormand (FARGO, NORTH COUNTRY, LAUREL CANYON, PRIMAL FEAR)**

**Judd Hirsch (INDEPENDENCE DAY, TV'S TAXI and NUMBERS, A BEAUTIFUL MIND, SERPICO)**

Paolo Sorrentino's coolness credentials are well established, but he's earned the right to be considered "cool" in an entirely different way with "This Must Be the Place," a film that brims with warmth, humanity and respect in ways one doesn't often find in the work of coolmeisters like David Lynch and Quentin Tarantino. Quirky, hilarious and moving, Sorrentino's first English-lingo production is a road trip of stunning scope yet deep intimacy, featuring an aged rock star-turned-Nazi hunter played by Sean Penn at his transformative best.

Penn's Cheyenne is a relic of the '80s, a man whose brain seems fried from too much heroin and booze, who suffers from sciatica and moves with the stiffness of an arthritic zombie. Wise investments mean he doesn't have to worry about money and he lives in a Dublin mansion with his wife of 35 years, Jane (McDormand). Befitting her name, Jane is uncomplicated, down-to-earth, real.

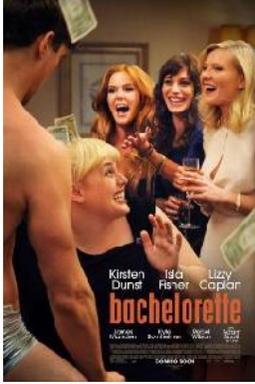
He's more complex, aware of his limitations as a pop star yet unable to move on, guilt-ridden over the double suicide of two brothers who took the Gothic despair in Cheyenne's lyrics to their extreme, and insecure about his father's love. The latter forms the pic's jumping-off point when Cheyenne heads to New York upon learning that his father, a Jewish Orthodox Holocaust survivor he hasn't spoken to in 30 years, is by cousin Richard (Liron Levo) that down Aloise Lange (Heinz Lieven), Cheyenne decides to continue the Alamogordo, N.M.



Like all great directors who captures the physical location as in keeping with the genre he also be included (playing the man who patented wheels on suitcases -- how's that for extratextual symbolism?).. He gets it, just as he gets the Holocaust's omnipresence in the lives of those affected (contrasting Penn's unlikely hunter with Judd Hirsch as a famed Nazi tracker), revealing the tragedy without dwelling on the horror.

All the acting is strong, from McDormand's warm, straight-thinking companion to Eve Hewson as an Irish teenage fan and friend of Cheyenne's coping with a sense of abandonment. There's even an extraordinary concert scene that'll have auds scratching their heads at how it's done.

The pic may baffle but is certain to generate massive highbrow press and long-term cult status as it tells a very compelling story. Fans of **THE SESSIONS, KILLING THEM SOFTLY, COSMOPOLIS, LIBERAL ARTS, BLUE LIKE JAZZ, THE DEBT, PIRATE RADIO, BLUE VALENTINE**, and **NOWHERE BOY** will appreciate this one a lot.



**3/19 2 BACHELORETTE COMEDY**  
\$700,000 BOX OFFICE 83 SCREENS R 187 minutes

**Kristin Dunst (SPIDER MAN 1, 2 and 3, MONA LISA SMILE, WAG THE DOG, SMALL SOLDIERS)**

**Lizzy Caplan (HOT TUB TIME MACHINE, CLOVERFIELD, LOVE IS THE DRUG, MEAN GIRLS)**

There's a little trend out there among new brides called "Trash the Dress," wherein the just-married missus hires a photographer to shoot an addendum for her wedding album, documenting the symbolic and oft-outlandish destruction of her lily-white gown. In this movie, the latest naughty-girl comedy to walk down the aisle paved by **BRIDESMAIDS**, this concept of desecrating the ultimate icon of womanhood is perfectly utilized as a motif, with the hallowed dress of bride-to-be Becky (Rebel Wilson) tagging along for every wedding's-eve misdeed of bridesmaids Regan (Dunst), Gena (Caplan), and Katie (Isla Fisher). In a single night, after being unwittingly torn in half by the trio, the plus-size garment is bled on, tainted with semen, tossed amid curbside trash, and even used as a feminine wipe by an off-duty stripper. Its repair serves as the motivator of the ladies' wild evening (which fast descends into a swirl of sex, drugs, and painful self-assessment), and it emerges as a multitasking metaphor, stained to reflect the savagery of woman's inhumanity to woman and functioning as a spiritual stand-in for Becky, the fat one of the four whose post-high school goodness karmically spares her the after-hours misery.

This nearly pitch-black comedy is better than its tiresome use of '90s pop references, no matter how much they illuminate what the gals bonded over back in the day. And given the strength of the howl-worthy stunts and perversions that dominate the third act, it's a little unforgivable that the film is so content to elicit mere chuckles through much of the first two. But what smoothly pilots the viewer through the movie's peaks and valleys is its fabulous triple-threat of leading ladies, each of whom brings unique and vivid life to a keenly written archetype. Playing the type-A maid of honor who's most unnerved that the "ugly friend" is tying the knot first, Dunst has never embodied such a deliciously efficient bitch, and she epitomizes the film's frenemy themes, making it wholly believable that Regan loves and hates Becky in equal measure. As a bohemian brunette whose introspection has stunted her growth and prolonged her drug use (she smuggles a baby-powder bottle full of cocaine to the festivities), Caplan offers a wealth of self-indulgent cynicism that's probably most indicative of her character's generation. And best in show is most definitely Fisher, whose laugh riot of a party girl spikes the movie with



some much-needed comic extremism.

With the R-rated comedy having passed the novelty of its resurgence to become something mindlessly recycled, it's harder and harder to find something that's foul-mouthed and also worthwhile. Headland's bad-behavior romp remains scaldingly distinct thanks to its cutting insights into modern female relationships, which seem increasingly complicated and bafflingly contradictory. The developments that Regan, Gena, and Katie undergo may seem a wee bit tidy, but the mess of feelings they have about Becky and themselves is anything but. In the thick of trying to

salvage that ever-violated wedding dress, resentment toward the bride is coupled with a palpable, collective self-loathing—all the more reason to get those damned spots out.

A fun outing that will please all that liked **HERE COMES THE BOOM, THE VOW, FOR A GOOD TIME CALL, NEW YEAR'S EVE, THIS MEANS WAR, THE FIVE YEAR ENGAGEMENT, and CRAZY STUPID LOVE.**



**3/19 3 PRICE CHECK COMEDY**  
\$15,456 25 SCREENS NR 92 MINUTES

**Eric Mabiuis (TV'S UGLY BETTY, THE L WORD, CSI MIAMI)**  
**Parker Posey (TV'S THE GOOD WIFE, NEW GIRL, PARKS AND RECREATION)**

**PRICE CHECK**, a new film by writer-director Michael Walker, is being billed as a comedy about the "high price of a middle-class life." It stars Eric Mabiuis (*Ugly Betty*) as Pete Cozy, a husband and father who works a 9-to-5 gig in the pricing department of a midsize supermarket chain. It's not the most glamorous of jobs, but it's almost enough to support his wife, Sara (Annie Parisse), and their young son. Though the bills are piling up, Pete and Sara make due with what they have. (And don't pick up the phone when the creditors call.)

Things change for Pete when he gets a new boss—the power-hungry, highly strung, Maalox-guzzling Susan Felders, played by the entertaining Parker Posey. Susan's not afraid to make big changes to make their company a bigger player in the corporate grocery store game. She taps Pete—because of his economics degree from Dartmouth—to step up and help her implement these changes.

At first, Pete's not sure about Susan and checks in with old contacts in the music business (marketing indie bands was what he really wanted to do after college). But he and Sara are enjoying the increased income, so he throws himself into work. With more money comes more problems, and Pete is forced to spend more time at work and less time at home. He finds himself attracted to power, his new title, and, not surprisingly, his boss.



On paper, Pete is conflicted, torn between being a businessman and family man, but Mabiuis doesn't have the gravitas to turn into a soul-searching Ryan Bingham (George Clooney in *Up in the Air*) or even a Gordon Gecko-lite (*Wall Street*). Mabiuis' Pete is a milquetoast middle manager who barely registers any emotion at all—even when he's promoted to VP or cheats on his wife. Posey does her best with the material at hand, presenting a ball-busting female boss who makes costumes mandatory for the office Halloween party, crashes a nursery school costume party dressed as a sexy Pocahontas and throws the men she sleeps with under the corporate bus.

An OK film that will attract those that liked **BUTTER, WHY STOP NOW, THE WORDS, FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY, THIS MEANS WAR** and **DAMSELS IN DISTRESS**.



**3/19 1 THE HOBBIT FAMILY**  
\$290 MILL BO 4100 SCREENS PG-13 169 MINUTES

Peter Jackson's adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's **LORD OF THE RINGS** trilogy was as memorable for the initial gale-force sigh of relief it elicited from fans as for all the lucre, awards and merchandise that followed. After all, thanks to Jackson, Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, cast and crew, the world that was brought to life, the themes that were introduced and the story that was told was closer to the letter and spirit of the source material than anyone would have thought possible. Not surprisingly, the news that Jackson would be taking over the directing reins from Guillermo del Toro for *LotR*'s precursor, **THE HOBBIT**, fans rejoiced—Middle Earth

would stay the same!

And it has, pretty much. For many, this will provide a welcome return to the lands of New Zealand, Middle Earth. Though some may quibble over a lack of tonal and thematic distinction between the respective source material (heroically epic *LotR* versus the more whimsical, fairy tale-ish (**HOBBIT**)), the Oscar-winning production design of Jackson and crew is refreshingly consistent. From the first few strains of Howard Shore's soundtrack, it's good to be back.

Plenty of familiar faces await—Frodo (Elijah Wood) and Old Bilbo (Ian Holm) via cameo; Galadriel (Cate Blanchett), Saruman (Christopher Lee) and Elrond (Hugo Weaving) for potentially lengthier roles in the sequels; and of course, Ian McKellen's Gandalf, here for an extended stay. Joining them are Martin Freeman as a young Bilbo and thirteen actors, mostly unrecognizable beneath the dwarf-ness of it all (which should at least help avoid any pesky type-casting).



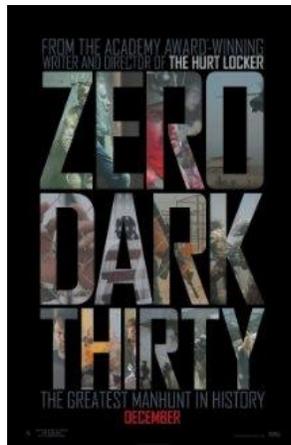
Much as with *LotR*, the casting is a strength. As the diffident Bilbo, Freeman seems immediately familiar and comfortable in the role. Richard Armitage brings an authority and somber presence to the role of Thorin Oakenshield that is crucial to the story that will follow. The rest of the company are distinguishable enough in dialogue and appearance to ensure an audience will know them by look and behavior, if not name, by film's end.

More importantly, this first installment allays another fear unique to this second delving into Tolkien's world. Unlike the *LotR* trilogy, in which the original material of three large books was condensed down to fit into three (still very long) films, **THE HOBBIT** is a small book with smaller themes being stretched to three. Instead of worrying about what or who would be left out (oh, Tom Bombadil!) with *The Hobbit*, it's a question of "What will they add?" Initially, at least, the "filler" is pretty filling. An opening sequence providing the back story of the dwarven kingdom of Erebor's rise and fall is riveting, as is a flashback to Thorin's battlefield bravery during a failed attempt to re-occupy Moria. (All in all, it was a rough few years for dwarvenkind.)

The CGI is convincing in its more sedate moments—the scenery enhancement, the trolls, Gollum's cave—but becomes less so the more frantic the pace. (The less said about Radagast the Brown and his sled of little bunny foo foos, the better.)

That said, the bothersome aspects of **THE HOBBIT** won't overwhelm the thrill felt by many (maybe most?) of finally seeing some of the fantasy genre's most iconic scenes brought to life. The initial meal at Bilbo's, the troll encounter, and, of course, Bilbo's first, fateful meeting with Andy Serkis' exquisitely realized Gollum—they are worth the price of admission.

Fans of **LORD OF THE RINGS**, **HARRY POTTER**, **HOP**, **RANGO**, **THE MUPPETS**, **SPY KIDS**, **DIARY OF A WIMPY KID** and **STAR WARS** will just love this one to death.



### 3/19 1 ZERO DARK THIRTY THRILLER

\$60 MILL BO 2946 R 157 MINUTES

**Jessica Chastain (THE HELP, TREE OF LIFE, STOLEN, TAKE SHELTER, THE DEBT)**

**Mark Strong (THE GUARD, THE EAGLE, TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY, ROBIN HOOD, KICK-ASS)**

**Kyle Chandler (TV'S FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS, SUPER 8, THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, MULHOLLAND FALLS)**

**James Gandolfini (HBO'S THE SOPRANO'S, THE MEXICAN, GET SHORTY, CRIMSON TIDE, 8MM, A CIVIL ACTION)**

Opportunely held for release until after the presidential election had played out, "Zero Dark Thirty" arrives shrouded in nearly as much mystery as bin Laden's whereabouts before news broke that a team of Navy Seals had successfully terminated his life on May 2, 2011. The title, military-speak for half-past midnight, refers to the Al Qaeda leader's time of death, theoretically promising a flashy first-hand account of the raid itself. But Bigelow and Boal reduce the spectacular assault on bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, to the last half-hour in order to dedicate the rest of the film to the lesser-known backstory.

By forcing partisan politics into the wings (President George W. Bush goes entirely unseen, while auds' only glimpse of President Obama is during a 2008 campaign interview), the filmmakers effectively give gender politics the whole stage: The pic presents the highest-profile U.S. military success in recent memory as the work of a single woman, "Maya" (Jessica Chastain), inspired by a real CIA analyst Boal discovered during his research, and presented here as the only government official convinced that bin Laden wasn't "hiding in some cave" (Bush's words), but somewhere she could find him.

Stepping up from a year busy with supporting roles, Chastain may at first seem an unusual choice for the lead. But she shows she has the chops to embody the pic's iron-nerved protag, holding her own in the testosterone-thick world of CIA black sites and top-level Washington boardrooms. She first appears as

witness to a military interrogation in which a colleague resorts to extreme measures to force information from an Al Qaeda money handler (Reda Kateb). Compared with her wild-eyed cowboy of a colleague, Dan (Jason Clarke), Maya's body language suggests a little girl, clearly uncomfortable with the waterboarding and sexual humiliation that were common practice in the morally hazy

The film opens with audio of a terrified victim of the World Trade Center attack playing over a black screen and uses the emotional power that clip dredges up to fuel everything that follows.

The result is neither particularly entertaining nor especially artful, as the filmmakers take a lean, "All the President's Men"-style approach to dramatizing an investigation that took nearly a decade to bear fruit. But Boal has clearly constructed this as a more journalistic alternative to a generic gung-ho approach. The script's blood runs thick with observational detail and military jargon, skipping forward years at a time between scenes to focus on one of two types of incident.

The first concerns the slow but steady progress in Maya's investigation, which hinges on her conviction that any clues they can discover about bin Laden's courier will eventually lead them back to UBL (the military acronym for bin Laden) himself. The second type involves an ongoing series of terrorist attacks that continue to claim lives as long as bin Laden goes free (never mind that they will not stop once he's dead). Bigelow keeps her audience on its toes by alternating between the two, allowing virtually no room for subplots or superfluous character baggage beyond what's needed for the task at hand.

With its handheld camerawork, naturalistic lighting and dialogue-drowning sound design (especially heavy on ambient helicopters), the film reflects the latest fashion in cinematic realism, compromised only slightly by the bare-minimum mood setting from Alexandre Desplat's Middle East-inflected score. Chastain's presence reminds us we're watching a movie, and yet, this slight degree of self-consciousness serves to reinforce the point that it's a woman pushing the process forward.

Maya may not be made of the same stuff as her male colleagues, but that's essential to the operation's success. While those around her equivocate and refuse to take action, she sticks to her guns and keeps track, in dry-erase marker, of the bureaucratic delays since they've located bin Laden.

Finally, when the off-camera Obama Maya stares down a pair of cocky Navy and tells them in no uncertain terms that B.S. Only then does Bigelow offer a construction of the raid on bin Laden's is to behold, it lacks both the detail of memoir "No Easy Day" and the visceral



Seals (Chris Pratt and Joel Edgerton) she has no patience for their macho what they paid to see: a re-compound. Virtuoso as the sequence Matt Bissonette's bestselling insider immediacy of this year's earlier well as the satisfaction of seeing the the U.S. government).

Dramatically speaking, the raid feels almost anti-climactic -- an epilogue to a personal crusade that ends the moment Maya is taken seriously. Still, considering how seldom female storytellers have been given a chance to operate on this scale, it's fair to let Bigelow overturn narrative expectations to some degree. The ultra-professional result may be easier to respect than enjoy, but there's no denying its power, both as a credible reimagining of what went down and a welcome example of distaff resolve prevailing in an arena traditionally dominated by men.

The power of this film will be loved by all that liked **THERE MUST BE BLOOD, ARGO, COMPANY MEN, LOOPER, SAVING PRIVATE RYAN, THE KING'S SPEECH, TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY, and THE GUARD.** An across the board must see movie.



**3/19 1 LES MISERABLES MUSICAL/DRAMA**  
**\$138 MILL BO 2927 SCREENS PG-13 158 MINUTES**

**Hugh Jackaman (X-MEN Series, BUTTER, REAL STEEL, PRESTIGE)**

**Russell Crowe (A BEAUTIFUL MIND, GLADIATOR, 3:10 TO YUMA, THE INSIDER, MYSTERY ALASKA)**

**Anne Hathaway (BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN, LOVE AND OTHER DRUGS, VALENTINE'S DAY)**

The long-running musical (first performed in Paris in 1980) from which this film is based is a sung-through production containing almost no spoken dialogue. The challenge is that with the story and lyrics unchangeable, Director Tom Hooper's decisions on tone and scale are crucial in making us care about the characters, especially since this material easily slips into grandiloquence. Does Hooper want the visuals to serve the characters, or do the characters just get us from one epic, Oscar-baiting set piece to the next? The answer is both. His big idea is the minutes-long, uninterrupted take, shot in close-up. He tries this early-on for "What Have I Done?", where a humbled Valjean ( Jackman), given mercy by the kindly Bishop Myriel (Colm Wilkinson), decides to turn his life around. The director returns to the motif when fired factory worker and shamed single mother Fantine ( Hathaway) laments her hopeless future in the musical's signature song, "I Dreamed a Dream." Some may argue that Hooper's reliance on close-ups betrays his roots in British TV, but really it provides the audience with an intimate view of the characters they cannot get when experiencing the work by novel or musical, its two most popular forms to date.

No matter how he shoots the songs—the best numbers are the rousing "At the End of the Day," the mischievous "Master of the House" and the thrilling "One Day More"—they're so magnificent that your spirits will be inflamed, or at least sparked. Among this extremely well-chosen cast, Jackman, is astonishing as Valjean, a parole-jumper hiding out with the priests and peasants of 19th century France. Jackman works both sides of Valjean's physical and spiritual transformation: at the outset, upon release from the prison where's he spent almost 20 years for stealing bread, his eyes are hollow and his visage long and low. By the end, he is fuller, greyer, distinguished and tired, having kept his promises while being stalked by the very Catholic themes of sacrifice and salvation. As Fantine, Hathaway is breathtakingly raw, almost to the point of being too theatrical. Still, her supernatural ability to project focus and passion convinces us that Valjean would dedicate his life to caring for Fantine's daughter, Cossette (Amanda Seyfried, singing in a thin, birdlike vibrato), the key act of charity that sends him towards spiritual redemption.

Hooper cleverly required the actors to perform their songs live on-set and the finished film contains no lip synching or post-production vocal enhancements. This significant choice pays off almost subconsciously. For Russell Crowe, who plays Valjean's relentless pursuer Inspector Javert, singing live is nothing new. He has fronted numerous rock bands, although that's a long way from the more formal, demanding style required of him here. Within this new context, Crowe's huskier voice is a completely workable counterpoint to the angelic falsettos and unabashed emotionality of the other characters and, thank goodness, he can firmly hold a note. What works less is Crowe's rather one-note reading of the character. In Crowe's Javert is simply a Terminator bent on capturing Valjean, and by the time his fealty to the law gives way to the fatal realization that he's been shown mercy he could never return, it's too tight a turn for the character.

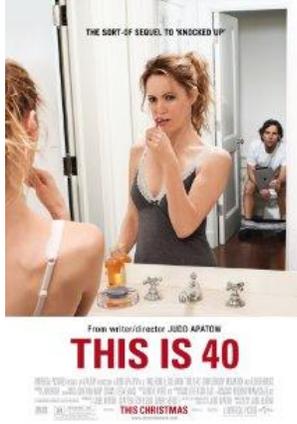


What's often lost when concentrating on the more mainstream (read: romantic) aspects of the story is that **LES MISERABLE** is a political work about justice, morally, legally and financially. Hooper's desire to create a timeless film requires he takes the story's progressive politics at face value—he doesn't dare suggest the June Rebellion of 1832 that occupies the last third of the movie has any relevance to the socio-economic struggles of today. The critical player here is Marius (played by Eddie Redmayne in an absolutely revelatory performance), who straddles the two primary storylines that comprise the movie's homestretch: the Rebellion and the fate of Fantine's daughter Cosette.



In 2011, the London-born actor raised some eyebrows playing opposite Michelle Williams in **MY WEEK WITH MARILYN**. Seeing him here, with his boyish, freckled, imperfect face, delivering "Empty Chairs at Empty Tables" is to see an actor fully arrive from relatively nowhere—it's thrilling. Also notable is Samantha Barks as Éponine, an unknown who holds her own against a high-powered cast that includes Sacha Baron Cohen and Helena Bonham Carter, who gift the film some much-needed jokes in their roles as dastardly inn-keepers.

This worshipful, and inspiring film is built to please. It's built to reignite the coals of the devout and steamroll the uninitiated. The cast is quite good and the film will have very strong appeal to all that liked **LINCOLN**, **ARGO**, **FLIGHT**, **THE MASTER**, **END OF WATCH**, **TO ROME WITH LOVE**, **THE BEST EXOTIC HOTEL** and **MOONRISE KINGDOM**.



3/22 1 THIS IS 40 COMEDY  
\$67 MILL BO 2931 SCREENS R 134 MINUTES

**Leslie Mann ( THE CHANGE UP, KNOCKED UP, RIO, THE 40 YEAR OLD VIRGIN)**

**John Lithgow ( TERMS OF ENDEARMENT, CLIFF HANGER, RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, LEAP YEAR)**

**Megan Fox (FRIENDS WITH KIDS, TRANSFORMERS, JENNIFER'S BODY)**

**Albert Brooks ( MEAN STREETS, BROADCAST NEWS, MODERN ROMANCE, LOST IN AMERICA)**

Judd Apatow's instincts have rarely been sharper, wiser or more relatable than in "This Is 40," an acutely perceptive, emotionally generous laffer about the joys and frustrations of marriage and middle age. Boasting the empathy, texture and underlying seriousness that have characterized the filmmaker's output, this warts-and-all family portrait is anchored by splendid turns from Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann, reprising their already full-bodied supporting roles from "Knocked Up." Although a more mature work than its 2007 predecessor in every sense, "This" is still a bracingly ribald, foul-mouthed affair that will score as a year-end crowdpleaser and home-format favorite.

From its candidly observed first scene, in which a hot-and-heavy lovemaking session suddenly goes south, the picture wastes little time getting audiences on an intimate basis with its characters and the indignities of midlife, middle-class malaise. These include another scene of coitus interruptus, a his-and-hers montage of invasive medical exams, and numerous casual discussions of flatulence and bowel movements; it's the stuff of any number of raunchy comedies, but played here in a manner that not only elicits laughs, but also strips away everyone's defenses to probe the soft, vulnerable places underneath.

Debbie, who insists on telling others she's still 38, impulsively initiates a household self-improvement plan: no more cigarettes for her, no more junk food for Pete, and much less time spent on the Internet for everyone. This last restriction doesn't sit well with their Facebook-obsessed daughter, Sadie (Maude Apatow), who, at the difficult age of 13, finds herself increasingly at odds with her parents and her 8-year-old sister, Charlotte (Iris Apatow).

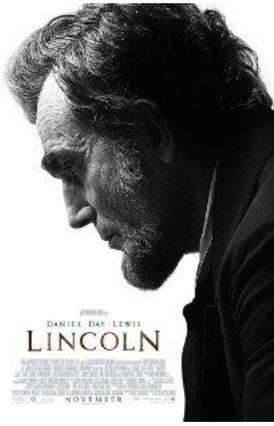
The universal pressures of raising kids right, eating well, exercising regularly, keeping the house tidy, maintaining sexual passion and weathering the distractions of the technology age prove remarkably fertile subject matter for a comedy, and Apatow takes his portrait of marital strain one step further by delving into the family's finances. Debbie, who owns a clothing store, suspects one of her employees (Megan Fox) is stealing from the till, while Pete, who runs a record label, has a habit of signing critically respected, commercially hopeless acts. It doesn't help that he can't stop lending money to his freeloading father, Larry (Albert Brooks).

As accessible as Pete and Debbie are as characters, they also benefit from Apatow's distinct verbal acumen, swearing like sailors, often reverting to self-shielding sarcasm, and defending their singular pop-culture tastes with die-hard enthusiasm. Rudd layers his good-guy demeanor with a sardonic edge that can ignite, when provoked, into full-blown rage. Mann, meanwhile, shows a quicksilver brilliance in a role that reveals strong reserves of compassion and complexity beneath a testy, impatient surface; when Debbie makes an alarming discovery halfway through the picture, the wordless play of inchoate emotions on the actress' face is something to see.

The ensemble is studded with superb supporting players, many of them Apatow alums: Melissa McCarthy as another kid's belligerent mom (yielding some of the funniest end-credits outtakes in recent memory); Jason Segel as Debbie's smug personal trainer; and Chris O'Dowd as Pete's lazy assistant. Fox comes off surprisingly well, locating unexpected pathos beneath her supermodel veneer. Yet the standout is Brooks, infuriating and lovable as Pete's mooch of a dad; the stark contrast between loquacious Larry and Debbie's distant, politely WASPish dad (a fine John Lithgow) feels a bit tidy, but the performances are so good it scarcely matters.



This is a nicely acted film telling a story that will appeal to all that liked **CELESTE AND JESSE FOREVER, HIT AND RUN, HOPE SPRINGS, MEN IN BLACK 3, VALENTINE'S DAY, THE CAMPAIGN, FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY** and **THE VOW**.



**3/26 1 LINCOLN DRAMA**

**\$163 MILL BO 2293 SCREENS PG-13 150 MINUTES**

**Daniel Day-Lewis (MY LEFT FOOT, THE BOXER, THERE WILL BE BLOOD)**

**Sally Field (MRS. DOUBTFIRE, NORMA RAE, ABSENCE OF MALICE, STEEL MAGNOLIAS, PUNCHLINE)**

**David Strathairn (THE RIVER, EIGHT MEN OUT, THE WHISTLE BLOWER, WE ARE MARSHALL)**

**Joseph Gordon-Levitt (PREMIUM RUSH, INCEPTION, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES)**

**Tommy Lee Jones (THE FUGITIVE, MEN IN BLACK 3, COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER, HOPE SPRINGS)**

Liberally adapted from Doris Kearns Goodwin's 2005 book "Team of Rivals," Tony Kushner's script dramatizes the behind-the-scenes story of the wheeling and dealing required to pass the 13th Amendment -- undoubtedly the legacy for which Lincoln hoped to be remembered, not realizing how compelling audiences would find every aspect of his private life 144 years later.

Emphasizing talk over action, Kushner concentrates on Lincoln's strategy of forcing an unpopular and recently defeated policy through a lame-duck House of Representatives. Enlisting three buffoonish vote-buyers (James Spader, John Hawkes and Tim Blake Nelson), the executive doesn't hesitate to exploit his immense powers, which extend to offering cushy government jobs, pardons and other presidential privileges to those willing to embrace his position.

This is politics as it is really played, yet few writers have found a way to make it as compelling as Kushner does here. That success owes in part to the extensive character-actor ensemble Spielberg and casting director Avy Kaufman have enlisted, repaying them with dramatic roles for not only Lincoln's entire cabinet (most prominently David Strathairn as Secretary of State William Seward), but more than a dozen key allies and opponents of the 13th Amendment, including Lee Pace as a showboating Democrat, Michael Stuhlbarg as a conscience-conflicted swing voter and David Costabile as the doubting Thomas among Lincoln's closest supporters.



Despite occasional digressions into spectacular but artificial-looking Civil War battlefields, the action is rowdiest on the floor of Congress, where Republican representative Thaddeus Stevens (Tommy Lee Jones) trades scathing barbs with such ideological rivals as George Pendleton (Peter McRobbie, who more closely resembles frown-creased portraits of the real-life Stevens than Jones does). Though the film inevitably deals with Lincoln's assassination, notably played offscreen, the climax comes during the Congressional vote itself, in which Spielberg allows the names of history's heroes to ring out the way he previously did those saved on Schindler's list. Even more effective is the way Kushner integrates the full text of the Gettysburg Address and the 13th Amendment into the body of the film.

Still, since audiences inevitably prefer personal intrigue to the inner workings of politics, Kushner laces "Lincoln" with details about first lady "Molly" (Sally Field), as Abe called his wife, Mary, and sons Tad (Gulliver McGrath) and Robert (Joseph Gordon Levitt), who withdraws from Harvard in order to enlist in the Union army, despite his father's adamant demands to the contrary. Still, these human-interest scenes seem to get in the way of the story at hand, offering valuable, intimate glimpses of the Lincolns as seldom seen before, yet inorganic to the abolition of slavery -- save one powerful scene, when Mary, having already lost one son and loathe to watch Robert perish in the Civil War, publicly threatens her husband, "If you fail to acquire the necessary votes, woe unto you, you will have to answer to me." Spielberg and Kushner hold this truth to be self-evident: that behind every powerful man is a woman pushing him toward greatness.

Such crushing grief falls instead to Field, whose long-suffering Mary endured debilitating migraines and deep depression after the death of their son Willie, but also scandalously overspent in her efforts to outfit the White House -- and herself -- to a level she felt befitting the first family. Curiously, Mary was a decade Abraham's junior, though Field is actually a decade older than Day-Lewis, creating an odd, almost maternal dynamic between the two actors.

Meanwhile, Day-Lewis plays Lincoln as a physically awkward but not unhandsome figure, gentle with his children, uncomfortable with ceremony (his disdain of calfskin gloves becomes a running joke), and firm

when needed with colleagues who could not always see the wisdom in the man some considered "the capitulating compromiser." This Lincoln is a lover of theatre and avid raconteur who easily quotes from Shakespeare and scripture, a man who problem-solves via storytelling. Perhaps that explains the staginess of "Lincoln's" telling, right down to the creak of the boards under the great orator's feet and d.p. Janusz Kaminski's conservative framing, which recalls either classic prosceniums or heavily shadowed Renaissance paintings. Though incongruous with the psychological realism that Kushner, through elevated dialogue, aims to achieve, this iconic style suits such a beloved persona.

And yet, Lincoln's life takes a backseat to the ideological battle between two opposing ideas -- an end to slavery, or an end to war. The result looks as much like a Natural History Museum diorama as it sounds: a respectful but waxy re-creation that feels somehow awe-inspiring yet chillingly lifeless to behold, the great exception being Jones'

This is an incredible film from all points of view and will be a huge hit with all that loved **THE AVENGERS, LOOPER, TAKEN 2, SKYFALL, ARGO, SAFE HOUSE, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, and THE HUNGER GAMES.**



### 3/26 1 PARENTAL GUIDANCE COMEDY

\$63 MILL BO 3206 SCREEN PG 104 minutes

**Billy Crystal (WHEN HARRY MET SALLY, CITY SLICKERS, ANALYZE THIS)**

**Bette Midler (THE ROSE, DOWN AND OUT IN BEVERLY HILLS, SCENES FROM A MALL, STELLA)**

**Marisa Tomei (MY COUSIN VINNIE, THE WRESTLER, CRAZY STUPID LOVE, THE LINCOLN LAWYER)**

Billy Crystal stars as Artie Decker, a sports announcer for a minor league baseball team who still has aspirations to work with the San Francisco Giants. Reality comes crashing down, however, when he is fired from his job by a boss who tells him that he needs to get with the times and make use of Facebook and Twitter. Artie's complete lack of understanding of these social platforms leads to one of the movie's funniest scenes, illustrating that Artie now lives in a world he can sadly no longer compete with.

Fast forward a few months later, when Artie and his wife Diane (Midler) decide to travel to Atlanta to babysit their three grand kids when the parents take a much needed vacation. Their daughter Alice (Tomei) and her husband Phil (Tom Everett Scott) live in a technologically advanced home with that automated female voice alerting its occupants to when the front door is open. Looking at this house with its myriad of computer screens and solar panels, we already know that Artie and Diane are going to be in trouble.



Things get off to an uneasy start as Artie gives his grandchildren super soakers, and the youngest takes aim at his crotch and makes it look like Artie wet his pants. We have all seen this before, but things get better very quickly as we start to see how these three kids are unique in their own ways.

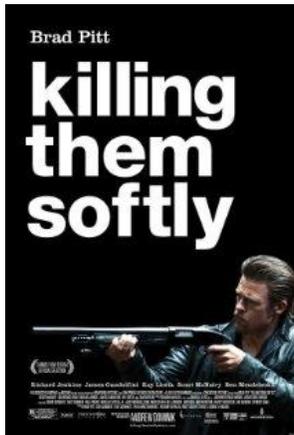
The young actors cast as the kids are a large part of the film's success, and they all manage to hold their own with established movie stars like Crystal and Midler.

Kyle Harrison Breitkopf plays Barker, the youngest child of the bunch, and he shares crack comic timing with Crystal in scenes where he is trapped in his car seat. The negotiations between these two are cheerfully amusing, and Breitkopf deserves credit for not making Barker the usual annoying brat that occupies movies like these days.

But the most impressive of the bunch is Joshua Rush who plays the middle child, Turner. Having to deal with a stutter that makes him the easy target of bullies, he wins us over because we can see in his eyes

that things will get better for him, and we love it when they do. The moments he shares with Crystal are especially sweet, especially when Crystal introduces him to one of baseball history's greatest moments. This leads to a great scene towards the movie's end that may have you teary-eyed with joy.

The whole cast works very well in this endearing family comedy. A fine respite from so many animated films, this one is very easy to take and will have strong appeal for all that liked **HERE COMES THE BOOM**, **HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA**, **BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD**, **BRAVE**, **MEN IN BLACK 3**, **DIARY OF A WIMPY KID**, and **HOP**.



**3/26 2 KILLING THEM SOFTLY DRAMA**  
\$16 MILL BO 2145 SCREENS R 97 MINUTES

**Brad Pitt (THELMA AND LOUISE, BURN AFTER READING, MONEY BALL, LEGENDS OF THE FALL, THE FIGHT CLUB)**  
**Richard Jenkins (THE VISITOR, HALL PASS, LET ME IN, LIBERAL ARTS)**

**James Gandolfini (TV'S SOPRANOS, THE MEXICAN, RAY LIOTTA (GOODFELLAS, FIELD OF DREAMS, CHARLIE ST. CLOUD, DATE NIGHT, WILD HOGS, BLOW)**

It begins with the setup for a particularly pathetic crime, as pudgy midlevel crook Johnny Amato (Vincent Curatola) taps ratty up-and-comer Frankie (Scoot McNairy) to rob a card game run by mob hustler Markie (Ray Liotta). To Johnny's chagrin, Frankie foolishly chooses perpetually strung-out loser Russell (Ben Mendelsohn) as his partner. These two dumb kids proceed to hold up the game and make off with the mob's stash, in one of the few sequences that delivers a jolt of tightly coiled suspense, albeit stemming more from the culprits' bumbling incompetence than from anything else.

"You know they're gonna kill ya?" Markie murmurs to Russell mid-heist, a look of genuine sympathy on his face. The movie goes on to glumly prove his point, as his higher-ups bring in their smooth, reliable and unfailingly pragmatic enforcer, Jackie Cogan (Pitt), to wipe out those responsible. When suspicion falls on Markie, Pitt becomes the very picture of a reluctant assassin, one who kills strictly out of professional obligation and often hires others to do the dirty work. "I like to kill 'em softly -- from a distance," he says, summing up the joyless efficiency with which he goes about his job.

Retaining the pungent, Elmore Leonard-esque tang of Higgins' dialogue, yet rendering it tighter and more comprehensible for the screen, Dominik's loquacious screenplay employs a stop-and-go rhythm, dominated by lengthy, two-character exchanges punctuated by potent spasms of violence. Not even a routine beating can be dished out without copious amounts of planning, hedging, negotiating, arguing and cussing beforehand, the goombah equivalent of bureaucratic red tape. When the attacks do arrive, they're amply foreshadowed, alternately sped up or slowed down for heightened dramatic impact, yet drained of anything that might be mistaken for a rush of pleasure.

Certainly not for all tastes, especially those of straight-up action fans, the picture's restraint places a considerable burden on the actors to maintain interest, which they shoulder impressively. A couple of them get great, tongue-in-cheek entrances; Pitt's Jackie, sporting shades and slicked-back hair, packs just a hint of a strut as he strides into the frame backed by Johnny Cash's "The Man Comes Around." James Gandolfini, amusingly disagreeable as a hitman who's let his taste for booze and prostitutes ruin his killer instincts, is introduced getting off a plane like a shlub attending a sales convention.

Everything about this film works so nicely that you will be pulled in to the story and very engaged with the characters. Fans of **ARGO**, **TAKEN 2**, **LAWLESS**, **KILLER JOE**, **SAVAGES**, **THE DEBT**, **THE SAFE HOUSE**, and **THE LINCOLN LAWYER** will all like this one.





**3/26 3 THE COLLECTION HORROR/THRILLER**  
**\$7 MILL BO 1403 SCREENS R 85 MINUTES**

**Josh Stewart (TV'S CRIMINAL MINDS, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, LAW ABIDING CITIZEN, THE COLLECTOR)**  
**Emma Fitzpatrick (THE SOCIAL NETWORK, TV'S CSI NY)**

Picking up where **THE COLLECTOR** left off **THE COLLECTION** establishes an anonymous urban locale terrorized by a psycho killer with no method to his madness. Without the luxury of the first film's slow-burn opening act, the sequel leans on pre-existing iconography to build tension: the Collector's black mask obscuring everything but his beady eyes and predatory mouth; the red trunk he uses to "collect" a lone survivor of each massacre; an ominous tripwire connected to something sharp and lethal. Once filmmakers (and "Saw" sequel alums) Marcus Dunstan and Patrick Melton hurriedly introduce new protagonist Elena (fitzpatrick), it's off to the races for nonstop, nonsensical brutality.

Elena and pals head to a secret underground club (the password is "nevermore," natch) where the Collector waits in the shadows with a plan to orchestrate mass murder. In what should be one of the film's standout set pieces, dozens of clubgoers are simultaneously slaughtered by a massive combine-harvester blade rigged to descend from the ceiling. But the sequence is little more than a jumble of frenetically cut-together close-ups, and the first of many examples of the film's "more is more" philosophy coming into conflict with the constraints of a low budget.

While Elena is dragged off to the villain's secret lair, the pic reintroduces the first film's scrappy survivor, Arkin (Josh Stewart), who manages to break free only to be recruited by Elena's mysterious protector, Lucello (Lee Tergesen). Lucello has assembled a team to hunt down the Collector and rescue Elena, and they need Arkin's help. But this time he's on the Collector's home turf: The rundown Hotel Argento (wink, wink), a more elaborate version of the booby-trapped mansion from part one.



The cast is fine for this outing and the story and gore will have strong appeal to all that liked **SILENT HILL: REVELATION, THE MAN WITH THE IRON FISTS, IMMORTALS, THE BOURNE LEGACY, THE COLLECTOR, THE POSSESSION, CABIN IN THE WOODS,** and **BATTLESHIP.**