



5/6 3 THE ART OF THE STEAL COMEDY
 \$3 MILL 674 SCREENS R 90 MINUTES

Kurt Russell (THE THING, ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, BACK DRAFT, THE BEST OF TIMES, SWING SHIFT)
Jay Baruchel (THIS IS THE END, COSMOPOLIS, FANBOYS, HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON)

With a cheekily surrealist flair to match its zany, in-on-the-joke cast, Jonathan Sobol's *The Art of the Steal* functions better as a comedy than as a thriller. The actors' comedic timing at times makes it endearing in its awkwardness; there's a weird pleasure in listening to Kurt Russell, as the gruff and savvy ringleader of a team of art forgers, lose track of his own metaphors mid-ramble and sheepishly mumble

himself silent. His character's name, by the way, is Crunch Calhoun, and the absurdity of that moniker is indicative of the film's overall spirit of irreverence. Calhoun's co-conspirators are buffoonish and error-prone, quick to make fun of themselves and each other, which makes for a watchable group dynamic even when the script isn't doing the actors many favors. Jay Baruchel, as Calhoun's new-to-the-game assistant, takes his character's incompetence to delirious heights in a very funny border-control sequence (three words: "*Witness, the musical*"), while Matt Dillon, as Calhoun's aggressive younger brother, spits out lines like "Wear a suit, you look like a slutty elf" with giddy relish.



The plot may be thin but the energy of the cast and the fun they seem to have will carry the film along and have strong appeal to those that liked **GRUDGE MATCH, THE LAST STAND, LAST VEGAS, THE FAMILY, ESCAPE PLAN, DELIVERY MAN** and **HANGOVER 3**.



5/6 3 STILL MINE DRAMA
 \$3 MILL BO 959 SCREENS PG-13 102 MINUTES

James Cromwell (SECRETARIAT, L.A. CONFIDENTIAL, BABE, THE LONGEST YARD, THE SUM OF ALL FEARS)
Genevieve Bujold (YOU CAN THANK ME LATER, COMA, MURDER BY DECREE, THE MODERNS)

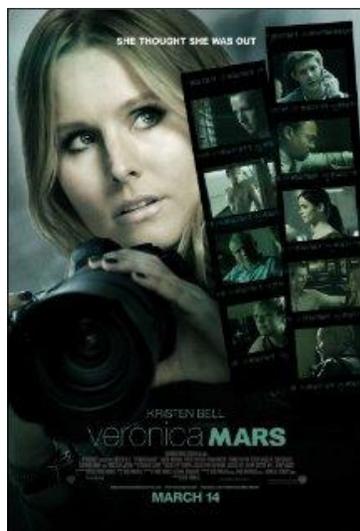
Juxtaposing the seemingly arbitrary workings of official bureaucracy with folksy good sense and old-fashioned know-how, Michael McGowan's film follows the efforts of stubborn old cuss

Craig Morrison (Cromwell) to build a new house on his rural property for the benefit of his Alzheimer's-stricken wife, Irene (Bujold), while continually running afoul of the local zoning board—a touch of Kafka transplanted to maritime Canada.

As far as films about couples dealing with the female partner losing her mind go, *this movie* is lighter in scope focusing on an unmodulated grimness whose lack of ebb and flow mirror the mule-like determination of Craig to always do things his way. There's little drama in that man deflecting the efforts of his children to move his wife into a home since he's so completely inflexible. The only real conflict is between Craig and the local zoning board, an entity for which he only has contempt, but whose dictates he's nonetheless forced to comply with at the risk of having his house-in-progress bulldozed by the town.

Craig's first run-in with the local bureaucracy occurs early on in the film when one of the buyers of his farm-grown fruits informs him that he can no longer patronize him because his product isn't stored in regulation coolers. That's just a warm-up, though, for the zoning board that instantly gives our man fits. Using the building methods his father taught him, Craig has no use for the types of certifications that the board requires, frequently butting heads with their most prevalent representative who insists on such outrageous measures as Craig actually having a blueprint for the house he's building. Our man's homespun wisdom can only hold off this slimy representative for so long, and soon he's being hauled into court on contempt charges.

The film depicts the problems Craig is faced with pretty accurately as we go for the ride with city planning and all of the other issues we all have when faced with the problems the guy has. Fans of **PHILOMENA, THE BOOK THEIR, HOPE SPRINGS, NEBRASKA, WHAT MAIZIE KNEW**, and **QUARTET** will find pleasure with this movie.



5/6 3 VERONICA MARS DRAMA
\$7 MILL BO 892 SCREENS PG-13 107 MINUTES

Kristen Bell (TV—GOSSIP GIRL, PARKS AND RECREATION—FILM—MOVIE 43, FROZEN, HIT AND RUN, LIFEGUARD)
Jason Dohring (TV—VERONICA MARS, RINGER, CSA)

A busy opening sequence provides context for newcomers while summarizing Veronica's (Kristen Bell) activities since the events of the show. Having just finished law school, she's living in New York with milquetoast boyfriend Stosh "Piz" Piznarski (Chris Lowell) and about to bag a position at a prestigious law firm. When news arrives that volatile former flame Logan Echolls (Jason Dohring) is a suspect in the killing of his pop-star girlfriend, she rushes home to Neptune, eager to set things

straight. As with the show, the film's strengths are tied to the characters, their relationships and interactions, and their respective roles in the vividly realized culture of Neptune. The old dynamics are quickly rekindled and the crisp, witty dialogue flies back and forth with abandon. Nearly every major character from the show is worked into the story with minimal contrivance, including Veronica's father, Keith (Enrico Colantoni), whose relationship to his daughter is one of the most affecting depictions of the parent-child bond—a fine-tuned balance of mutual respect, adoration, and protectiveness—that television and, now, the movies have ever seen.

While the interpersonal dynamics are undoubtedly familiar, Thomas never loses sight of the fact that his characters are now adults. The youthful energy is undercut by a new sense of gravitas, born of

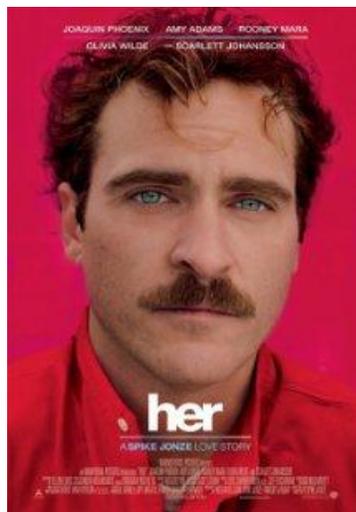
age and experience. The central mystery becomes an excuse to engage deeply with the characters' ambitions and motivations, to wrestle with Veronica's troubling predilection for endangering stable relationships and career prospects to investigate murders with her rage-filled ex-boyfriend. On the show, the concept of a teenaged private eye was never just a cute gimmick; there were attempts to address the knotty question of why a relatively sheltered and much-loved young woman would keep throwing herself into life-threatening situations.



Here, Veronica's self-destructiveness is front and center, its inherent misguidedness articulated frequently by her father and manifested often in the (sometimes shocking) ways in which she endangers herself and those around her by callously provoking violence and legal repercussions from multiple quarters.

The rudimentary visual standards of the series have been upgraded for the big screen, the tony, neo-noir aesthetic adding sensuous dimension to hitherto thematic darkness. That said, this is a movie that works best for the previously initiated. Most of the character beats and dramatic flourishes would be less impactful divorced from three seasons of history. Only an aficionado would grasp the import of, say, the smoldering gazes exchanged by Veronica and the broken, lovelorn Logan (springboard for a decade of fan fiction), the ongoing jokes about the high mortality rate of Neptune High graduates or the history behind the class warfare that bubbles over behind the murder plot. *Veronica Mars* is everything its devoted angel investors could have hoped for—a return to the qualities that made its television incarnation so compulsively watchable, but with added depth and scale to keep it from feeling like a

This is a fun film that will appeal to the fans of the TV series as well as shows like **HEROES**, **TRUE BLOOD** and **BATES MOTEL**.



5/13 1 HER COMEDY

\$28 MILL BO 2367 SCREENS R 126 MINUTES

Joaquin Phoenix (WALK THE LINE, GLADIATOR, 8MM, BUFFALO SOLDIERS, TO DIE FOR)

Amy Adams (AMERICAN HUSTLE, LEAP YEAR, JULIE & JULIA, CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR)

In Spike Jonze's remarkable film, Los Angeles doesn't play itself, and neither does love. A gene splice of America's second largest city and Shanghai, the film's location, like the clothes the story's characters wear and the furniture that decorates their homes, suggests neither yesterday, today, nor tomorrow. Everything, including identity, has the feel of simulation. People here do not work between floors, yet they're still caught between spaces, psychic and otherwise, and if they don't have to literally

escape into fantasy worlds to cope with trauma, it's only because they live in a world where technology has so thoroughly mediated and shaped human interaction that their real lives are already the stuff of fantasy. Sound familiar?

This story of a man, Theodore (Phoenix), who works for BeautifulWrittenLetters.com, where he articulates for lovers old and new the emotions they're unable to, and who falls in love with an artificially intelligent operating system, "Samantha" (Scarlett Johansson), may sound too flimsy to sustain an entire movie, as well as rife with cynical tendencies, but Jonze has proven time again that frivolity and condescension aren't in his vernacular. As in his great music video for Björk's "Triumph of the Heart," a poetic rumination on the nature of affection and dependency, *Her* is a screwball surrealist comedy that

asks us to laugh at an unconventional romance while also disarming us with the realization that its fantasy scenario isn't too far from our present reality. Jonze understands all the comforts allowed by our increasing dependency on our own technological advancements, as well as all the feelings of loneliness and alienation that arise from this relationship. With great sadness, this strikingly ephemeral satire regards the way we've become tethered to technology as being possibly past a point of no return, but with intense curiosity, it also asks us to never forget that we're still very much alive.



Asked to explain by his co-worker, Paul (Chris Pratt), what he most loves about Samantha, Theodore can only answer in the abstract, understanding as if for the first time that his OS is some elusive object of desire. As Samantha seems to acquire consciousness, some might say agency, he begins to push her away, perhaps how he did his future ex-wife, Catherine (Rooney Mara), and his fundamental inability to love a woman, whether she comes in human or binary form, is exposed. And as if on cue, when Samantha reveals her fondness for another OS, modeled after the philosopher Alan Watts, and inexplicably shuts down, he misses her, and his pathetic anxiety feels no different than that of a social-media obsessive freaking out at the sight of a "Twitter is over capacity" page.

There's a great line in the film about none of us being the same as we were a minute ago, which points to the angst one might feel upon realizing that machines are evolving faster than humankind itself, and reveals our nostalgia for a time that was less cluttered with technology and sites like Facebook. And Jonze amusingly conveys how that nostalgia seems hard-wired into our technology, even giving new resonance to the term "motherboard" in two wonderful scenes: in one, a quick question about Theodore's relationship to his mother is all that Samantha, whose boot-screen icon is, tellingly, a Möbius strip, needs to program herself to his liking; in another, one of Theodore's closest friends, Amy (Amy Adams), a wannabe documentarian working on a film about sleep that would make Andy Warhol proud, plays a game that revolves around rewarding the player for being a good mother.

Throughout this incredibly funny and moving whatsit, Jonze articulates how our modern age struggles with sex and, by extension, mortality through emotional transference, which has become, like the way a heartbroken Amy describes love, and how one might diagnose our reliance on social media, as a kind of "socially acceptable insanity."

This film will surely entertain all that liked **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY, 12 YEARS A SLAVE, ENOUGH SAID, MUD, THE HEAT** and **SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK**.



5/13 2 I, FRANKENSTEIN SCI/FI
 \$22 MILL BO 1965 SCREENS PG-13 92 MINUTES

Aaron Eckhart (THE RUM DIARY, THE MISSING, PAYCHECK, OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN, ERASED)
Bill Nighy (WRATH OF THE TITANS, LOVE ACTUALLY, THE WORLD'S END, ABOUT TIME)

When mad scientist Victor Frankenstein originally built his monster he gathered bits and pieces from wherever he could find them and cobbled them together

With this, director Stuart Beattie seems to have done pretty much the same thing, cannibalising the Underworld films to the extent of recruiting Bill Nighy as the villain and ram-raiding everything from Van Helsing to Reign of Fire.

At least he's got Aaron Eckhart on board to lend a little gravitas to Adam, the name bestowed on Frankenstein's monster by Leonore (Miranda Otto), leader of the Gargoyles, a shape-shifting clan at war with the rival Demons for hundreds of years while mere mortals remain totally oblivious.

After killing his creator Dr Frankenstein, Adam's been wandering the earth for a couple of centuries before being recruited by the Gargoyles as a reluctant ally in the fight against the Demons, led by Nighy's aristocratic, tea-slurping psycho Mr Wessex. However, the Demons also want to get their hands on the DIY manual that details how Frankenstein created his monster...so they can apply the same know-how to an army of corpses waiting to be re-animated.



Set in the present day, this impresses visually - gargoyles soaring down from the spires of their eyrie in a mid-town gothic cathedral and Demons combusting in a shower of sparks making it a fun film for those that enjoyed **THE GRANDMASTER, ESCAPE PLAN, ENDER'S GAME, RUNNER RUNNER, RUSH, RED DAWN, RIDDICK, THE HULK, and REDS 2.**



5/13 2 THAT AWKWARD MOMENT COMEDY
 \$27 MILL BO 2047 SCREENS R 94 MINUTES

Zac Efron (17 AGAIN, PARKLAND, LIBERAL ARTS, CHARLIE ST. CLOUD, NEW YEAR'S EVE)

Michael B. Jordan (TV'S FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS, PARENTHOOD---FILM FRUITVALE STATION, CHRONICLE, RED TAILS)

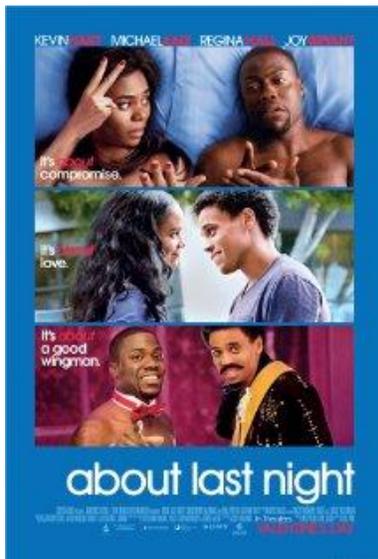
After mistaking a posh "dress-up" party for a jokey costume bash, Jason (Efron) shows up to almost-girlfriend Ellie's apartment with a foot-long

dildo dangling out of his open fly. Jason's embarrassment eventually subsides, and he even wins the favor of Ellie's pro-bro dad (Joseph Adams), but not before his mock schlong takes a rest in Mom's (Tina Benko) martini glass. Earlier in the film, Jason coaches buddy Daniel (Miles Teller) on how to pee horizontally when they both endure extended erections after taking too much Viagra. And when he comes home early one night, Mikey (Michael B. Jordan), Jason and Daniel's roommate, whose junk is orange because he masturbated with self-tanner, catches Jason mid-intercourse with buddy Alana (Addison Timlin).



We know where *That Awkward Moment* is headed, but commonality of plot is low on the movie's liabilities list. It's as easily overlooked as this collective misstep by Efron, Teller, and Jordan, who each seem above what likely felt like a daily, on-set circle-jerk. It's believable enough that cut-from-marble Jason, overcompensatory goofball Daniel, and sad-eyed sweetheart Mikey could charm the pants off a lot of people in their respective ways. But the film never makes them feel deserving of their conquests, not even when they deign to ditch the lothario lifestyle. As Jason and Daniel come to the dual epiphany that their pact is bogus and relationships are badass, their exchange is less about knowing their girlfriends' needs than it is about concocting more means to ends. While planning what to say to seal the deals with their trophy gals, they've merely narrowed the paths in their play-the-field mindsets. Not a bad thing but it does make it harder to maintain a serious relationship. It's fun though just to keep trying sometimes.

There's plenty of raunch and roll here that will satisfy guy's fantasies of what it's like out there. The women are all attractive and everyone has fun. So too will those that liked **THE HUNGER GAMES**, **GRAVITY**, **DELIVERY MAN**, **AMERICAN HUSTLE**, **THE WORLD'S END**, **WARM BODIES**, **SAFE HAVEN** and **LABOR DAY**.



5/20 1 ABOUT LAST NIGHT COMEDY
\$49 MILL BO 2578 SCREENS R 100 MINUTES

Kevin Hart (RIDE ALONG, GRUDGE MATCH, THIS IS THE END, THINK LIKE A MAN, THE FIVE YEAR ENGAGEMENT)

Michael Ealy (TV—THE GOOD WIFE, CALIFORNICATION—FILM—THINK LIKE A MAN, TAKERS, SEVEN POUNDS, FAST & FURIOUS 2)

Joy Bryant (HIT AND RUN, BOBBY, BADASS, HONEY)

Pugnacious, sanctimonious, and relentlessly working the angles, Kevin Hart's character, Bernie, hijacks the new About Last Night whenever he appears on screen, turning an essentially crude wingman into the conscience of the film's torturous, nettled discourse on romance. The same goes for Regina Hall's brusque, flame-throwing Joan, with whom Bernie has a saucy, sometimes grotesque don't-call-it-a-relationship. During a double date with Danny (Michael Ealy) and Debbie (Joy Bryant), the matchmaking, mile-a-minute couple claws at each other for the audience's guffaws, while their friends awkwardly try to make conversation. Bantering as they leave together, Danny and Debbie are genuinely charmed—and

surprised to be so—by each other. The next day, Bernie catches Danny checking his Facebook for a friend request from Debbie at work, and the script reveals itself as a parallel study in two couples.

As such, screenwriter Leslye Headland makes the most of an inherently hoary balancing act. Danny and Debbie's bland sexual euphoria soon gives way to a real relationship while Bernie and Joan's crumbles, but they inevitably run afoul of their too-fast decision to move in together and—less common to the rom-com genre—Danny's surprising shallowness and fear of commitment. Bernie warns his friend that he's "playing the fuck-buddy game, and somebody always gets hurt. Nine times out of 10 that somebody happens to be the one with a vagina!" Hart's delivery is brash, impassioned, and hilarious, throwing Ealy's doe-eyed, milquetoast leading man even further askew when his crazy friend's observations turn out to be correct.

Overall, the jokes work more often than not thanks to this type of conversational subterfuge, which strongly dictates the filmmaking choices. The film's editors make a lot of their cuts on lines that bring the characters' conversations to a grinding halt, which means the 180-degree rule gets a shellacking whenever Hart or Hall are on screen. And the digital camerawork captures the full length of a moment of intensity with the same adventureness that the game actors reveal. The filmmakers' almost Cassavetes-like emphasis on performance gives the film a spontaneous feeling, standing at bizarre odds with Danny's improbably lush penthouse or the many generic upscale bars where the action unfolds. Beneath most every woozy rom-com trope available, *About Last Night* buries an almost admirable human messiness—and it looks and feels like everybody had a great time making it.



Fans of **THE BEST MAN'S WEDDING**, **RIDE ALONG**, **ANCHOR MAN 2**, **BAGGAGE CLAIM**, **LAST VEGAS** and **DELIVERY MAN** will like this one too.



5/20 3 GRAND PIANO THRILLER
\$1 MILL BO 396 SCREENS R 90 MINUTES

Elijah Wood (OPEN WINDOWS, MANIAC, CELESTE AND JESSE FOREVER, SIN CITY, BOBBY)

Kerry Bishel (ARGO, NEWLYWEDS, RED STATE, SEX AND THE CITY)

John Cusack (HIGH FIDELITY, EIGHT MEN OUT, SAY ANYTHING, THE GRIFTERS)

Tom Selznick (Elijah Wood), a master pianist who stopped playing in public after a catastrophic performance years ago, regards his mentor's custom-made piano with the trepidation of a recovering addict. Less than poised before a Chicago audience that includes his famous actress wife, Emma (Kerry Bishé), he opens his sheet music to discover a message that he initially takes for a joke: "Play one wrong note and you die." It could be the mantra that director Eugenio Mira, a different kind of rhythm man, embraces as he depicts Tom's panic to stay alive as a maniac (Cusack) barks taunts at him through an unbelievably acquired earpiece. As the musician's fingers move in a blur through lightning-fast chords and octaves, the filmmaker paints Tom's anxiety in a mini-masterstroke of fervid call-outs to cinema's great masters of suspense.

Mira thrills in watching Tom attempt to worm his way out of a most unusual hostage situation, synching his indulgences of style to the character's wily physical maneuvering. As the pianist attempts to contact a friend via cell phone, then text message, all without his tormentor noticing and without playing a wrong note, the camera circles around him, sometimes hovering above him, and with a verve as manic as Tom's pounding of the ivories. Mira may be chasing after Hitchcock's ghost, but he does so in the key of the master auteur's acolytes. In a delicious graphic match between the slicing of a woman's throat and the bow stroke of a cello, and in one use of split screen that contrasts performance and murder.

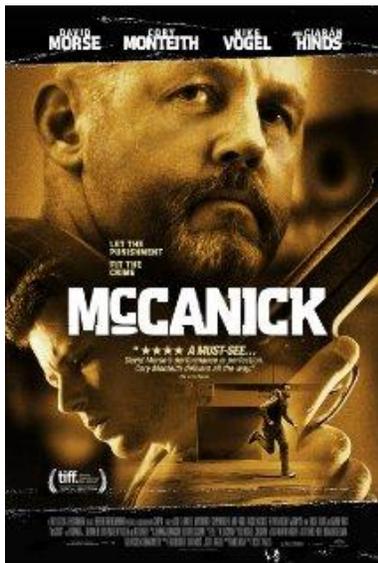
The true nature of the story's hostage scenario, when revealed, strips the relationship between Tom and his god-like metaphysical mystery, of the pianist's how he's received by successfully play the composition "La the state of his bit of Mira imagining convincing drag act and existential reckoning.

Fans of **COUNTY, OLD BOY, FRUITVALE STATION,** and **CLOUD ATLAS** will like this one.



tormentor of its and too fine a point is made insecurity as an artist and the public. But in his drive to final notes of the fictional Cinquette," regardless of instrument, we see a little himself as more than just a plying his art as a mode of

AUGUST: OSAGE NEBRASKA, ONCE, SIGHTSEERS, THE EAST



5/20 3 McCANICK THRILLER
\$2 MILL BO 465 SCREENS R 96 MINUTES

David Morse (TV-- ST ELSEWHERE, HACK, XTREME FILM—THE GREEN MILE, WORLD WAR Z, COLLABORATOR, THE HURT LOCKER, DRIVE ANGRY, INSIDE MOVES)

Philadelphia homicide detective Eugene McCanick is having the most awful of birthdays. He's just learned that Simon Weeks (Corey Monteith), the young male prostitute he put away for the murder of a congressman, is back and prowling the streets. In a single-minded pursuit of finding Simon that leads him into a dark slum, McCanick kills a small-time crook and accidentally wounds his partner, Floyd (Mike Vogel).

Delivering a performance of staggering intensity, David Morse steps out of the supporting roles he's been habitually relegated to and absolutely shines. This is a layered, keenly observed character study of a tightly wound man who lives alone with a punching bag hanging in the middle of his kitchen and lugs around a World's Greatest Dad mug that has clearly been shattered at some point and glued back together again. Drinking from it appears to be a hopeful gesture, considering he's planning a reconciliation dinner in the evening with his estranged son, who has recently followed in his father's footsteps and become a cop.

While McCanick's desperate search for Simon continues throughout the day, in spite of urgent pleas to cease and desist from his captain and the threat of violence that constantly exists in knocking on the wrong doors, the film periodically circles back to the past. Flashbacks carefully begin to unravel the mystery of why it's so important for McCanick to track this kid down, revealing key secrets about the events leading up to Simon's arrest seven years ago.

Since, under the circumstances, much attention will surely be focused on Monteith, it's worth mentioning that he finds the right note of enigmatic charisma in his pivotal supporting role, but this is clearly Morse's film. He has grand moments, as when he breaks into Simon's apartment and proceeds to tear it apart in a violent outburst that sees anger develop into tears. But even in the quieter instances, he conceals that same pit of churning emotion under a taut mask of macho posturing and deceit.



Shot largely in back alleys and tenement buildings, director Josh C. Waller paints a world of hustlers and drug dealers that feels appropriately gritty and seedy. Daniel Noah's script is smart and nuanced, eschewing standard plot points in favour of exceedingly tense confrontations that reflect the title character's inner turmoil.

McCanick may be a twisted knot of resentment hell-bent on kicking in doors and busting heads in order to find the answers he seeks, but there are battles within himself he isn't quite ready to fight and some hard truths he isn't prepared to face. Fans of **HOMEFRONT**, **ESCAPE PLAN**, **RIDDICK**, **PARANOIA**, **THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES**, **SNITCH**, **PARKER** and **GANGSTER SQUAD** will enjoy this too.



5/20 1 THE MONUMENTS MEN

HISTORICAL DRAMA

\$72 MILL BO 2498 SCREENS PG-13 118 MINUTES

George Clooney (UP IN THE AIR, THE DESCENDANTS, INTOLERABLE CRUELTY, OCEAN'S 13, THREE KINGS, OUT OF SIGHT)

John Goodman (THE BABE, RAISING ARIZONA, THE BIG LEBOWSKI, THE ARTIST, THE FLINTSTONES)

Matt Damon (THE BOURNE SUPREMACY, WE BOUGHT A ZOO, CONTAGION, ROUNDERS, STUCK ON YOU, THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY)

Throughout World War II, the Nazi regime looted a massive quantity of art from all over Europe, then resolved to destroy this booty once their makeshift empire crumbled. As the war drew to a close, "trophy brigades" from the advancing Russian army claimed a good portion of the remnants as spoils, viewing it as compensation for their massive military sacrifices. Other Allied nations engaged in similar, if less widespread, campaigns of plunder, while individual soldiers often looted at will. Now the true story of one of the world's greatest treasure hunts gets the soft-pedal prestige treatment in George Clooney's *The Monuments Men*, which reduces a big, messy maelstrom of theft and uncertainty down to a digestible, faintly appetizing mush.

In Clooney and Grant Heslov's streamlined version of the story, the mission to save Europe's artistic relics was a snazzy bit of heroism by an unlikely crew of aesthetes, which now offers an occasion for reflective contemplation about art's place and purpose in our modern world. Recruited by the American government to salvage masterpieces and protect cultural heritage, preservationist Frank Stokes (Clooney) scrapes together a ragtag bunch of decidedly non-military personnel: a fragile museum director (Matt Damon), a scruffy sculptor (John Goodman), a ferrety historian (Bob Balaban), a doofy architect (Bill Murray), among others. These men get introduced via a customary montage sequence, but it's telling that

this one devotes scant time to differentiating or otherwise personalizing them, boiling each down to a shorthand defining detail. The rest of the film keeps up the same lackadaisical attitude toward characterization, leaving us with a crew of anonymous types, each barely distinguishable from the others.

So while *The Monuments Men* needs its historical framework to exist, its potential buoyancy is dissipated by the task of telling such a complex story in an easily palatable manner. It at least grapples with the realities of its period rather than exploiting them, but in doing so wastes time with unnecessary subplots and the repeated underlining of its themes. What results is a flat fable of populist heroes battling the evils of exclusionary greed, with Hitler as the ultimate Grinch, a failed artist who won't let anyone else enjoy art. The extensive, hand-wringing effort to adjust the tone at just the right mixture of reverence and derring-do prevents the complete development of either; a halfway comic scene involving an unexploded landmine can't overcome the lingering effect of the preceding one concerning a barrel full of gold teeth extracted from Nazi victims. The struggle to shape this material into something both fun and affecting may make this damaged film even more likeable.

Fans of **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY**, **PHILOMENA**, **12 YEARS A SLAVE**, **HOMEFRONT**, **CAPTAIN PHILIPS**, **FAST & FURIOUS 6**, **THE EAST**, **THE COMPANY YOU KEEP** and **THE GREAT GATSBY** will enjoy this one too.



5/20 2 POMPEII ACTION

\$24 MILL BO 2192 SCREENS PG-13 105 MINUTES

Kit Harrington (HBO'S GAME OF THRONES)

Keifer Sutherland (TV'S 24—FILM--FLATLINERS, LOST BOYS, COWBOY UP, A TIME TO KILL, EYE FOR AN EYE)

Emily Browning (NED KELLEY, STRANDED, SUCKER PUNCH, THE UNINVITED)

Things start off promisingly enough, with Milo (Dylan Schombig), a young member of a Celtic horse tribe, watching his family and friends get slaughtered by a scenery-gnawing, vaguely Brit-accented Kiefer Sutherland, who plays Corvus, a Roman senator prone to shouting, "Kill them all!" Seventeen years later, Milo is reintroduced as a slave turned gladiator played by Kit Harrington, whose ab-licious entry proves that Anderson knows full well how to plant his tongue in his cheek. Unfortunately, the director spends most of his time staging a lot of tiresome non-action, as if anyone came to see the *Resident Evil* maestro's take on historic calamity to watch ploddingly thin political discourse or the courtship of Milo and Pompeian beauty Cassia (Emily Browning).

Pompeii does find some effective irony in highlighting the frivolity of making plans, when the gods, or whatever forces you believe wield more control than puny humans, have a stronger agenda. Still a powerful douchebag under the corrupt reign of Titus, Corvus has trekked to Pompeii not only to claim Cassia as his wife, but to sponsor the plans of her wealthy father, Severus (Jared Harris), to *rebuild* the doomed city. Such pointless endeavors run parallel with Milo's arrival from Britannia as an arena favorite, fated to square off against Pompeii's reigning champion, Atticus (Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje). As slaves and politicians quarrel in halls we all know will be buried in lava, Mt. Vesuvius makes the occasional grumble, but be prepared to wait for the fireworks.

Anderson should at least be applauded for using 3D cameras (as is his wont), instead of lazily relying on post-conversion. The subject matter eventually proves highly amenable to the format, as the raining ash adds a naturally enhanced depth of field to the imagery. The one standout set piece is a (presumably) earthquake-induced tidal wave, which may be stretching the laws of science for the sake of spectacle, but is plenty welcome after listening to, say, Cassia prattle on with her mother, Aurelia (a painfully flat Carrie-Anne Moss), and her black lady servant, Ariadne (Jessica Lucas), about Milo's poor-boy virtues.



Once *Pompeii* has thoroughly plundered *Gladiator*, stolen bits from *Dante's Peak*, and even lifted lines from *Jurassic Park* and *The Dark Knight* ("Why...so...serious?" Atticus eventually asks with a grin), it becomes a full-tilt Roman twist on *Titanic*, with a star-crossed, class-divided couple scrambling for safety amid a catastrophic equalizer, and their power-drunk nemesis aiming to thwart their success to the bitter end. Thanks to the ways of his people, Milo has a gift for calming, and communicating with, trusty steeds, whether they're pulling Cassia's carriage or having a conniption in her private stables. Milo knows that the horses know that disaster's brewing.

Fans of **THE LEGEND OF HERCULES, MANDELA: THE LONG WALK HOME, SIGHTSEERS, PROMISED LAND, THE MASTER, CROOKED ARROWS, and THE DEVIL INSIDE.**



5/20 2 3 DAYS TO KILL ACTION

\$29 MILL BO 2165 SCREENS PG-13 117 MINUTES

Kevin Costner (THE BODYGUARD, BULL DURHAM, FIELD OF DREAMS, DANCES WITH WOLVES)

Hailee Steinfeld (ENDER'S GAME, TRUE GRIT, CAN A SONG SAVE YOUR LIFE)

Connie Nielson (GLADIATOR, ONE HOUR PHOTO, ICE HARVEST, DREAM LOVER, RETURN TO SENDER)

Amber Heard (ZOMBIELAND, THE JONESES, THE INFORMERS, PINEAPPLE EXPRESS)

A tired-looking Kevin Costner plays Ethan, a grizzled CIA "lifer" diagnosed with brain cancer and given months to live. For his few remaining days on the planet, Ethan returns to the City of Lights, where he intends to patch up his relationship with his wife, Christine (Connie Nielsen), and daughter, Zoey (Hailee Steinfeld). Obligatorily, a sexy CIA handler, the improbably named Vivi Delay (Amber Heard), pulls Ethan back into One Last Job, promising him a potentially lifesaving experimental drug for his help, just as he's tasked with three days of babysitting the daughter he barely knows.

Amber Heard stands under a bordello red spotlight on an otherwise empty set, her leg propped up suggestively, as if she were posing for a lurid portrait. But there's also a cell phone to her ear, no one's watching her, and she's alone. Kevin Costner's character, Ethan Renner, a former government agent, is on the other line. He's at home, hallucinating. That's partially because he has "brain cancer," but it's mostly because the experimental drugs Heard is giving him to treat that cancer induce hallucinations as a side effect. Costner wants these drugs so he can spend more time with his teenage daughter before he dies. Heard is giving him these drugs, in turn, as payment for his work as a state-sanctioned hitman. At her behest, Costner is killing his way toward the film's dirty-bomb-dropping big bad guys, "The Wolf" and

"The Albino." Now he's freaking out, calling Heard, asking for a way to stop these psychedelic visions. She's got one scientifically proven solution for his plight: drink some vodka. .

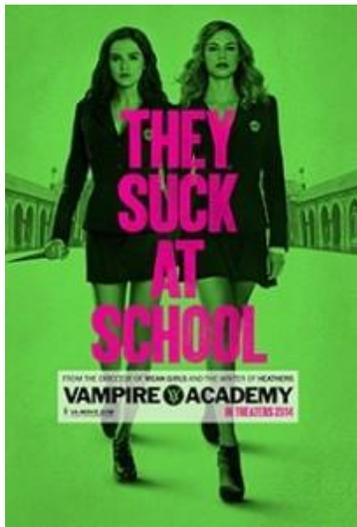
The plot is designed around mixing familial dynamics with pleasingly-presented violence. Costner's Ethan is estranged from his teenage daughter (Hailee Steinfeld,) and when he's diagnosed with the aforementioned affliction, he decides he needs to spend his last days making up for the time he lost while he was out killing. That becomes a challenge when



high-up operative Heard – squeezed so tightly into her leather and latex getups that she looks like a sorority girl dressed as Scarlett Johansson on Halloween – pulls him back into 'the trade.'

She offers him both a cure for his ailment and a \$50,000-per-henchman-corpse stipend to track down the Albino and the Wolf, two men who've been dropping dirty bombs across Europe. The push-pull between Costner's two separate priorities – his daughter, and his death-dealing – becomes the joke of the whole film. The gag is that Costner is constantly haranguing his tied-up victims and prisoners for fatherly advice, when he should be like Bruce Willis in a 80s action movie, indulging that boozy machismo, shooting them in the face.

The appeal here will be for those that liked **RIDE ALONG, ESCAPE PLAN, ENDER'S GAME, WHITE HOUSE DOWN, GROWN UPS 2, BULLET TO THE HEAD** and **THE LAST STAND**.



5/20 3 VAMPIRE ACADEMY SCI/FI
\$9 MILL BO 936 SCREENS PG-13 104 MINUTES

Zoey Deutch (TV-NCIS, CRIMINAL MINDS, FILM--- BEAUTIFUL CREATURES)

Lucy Fry (TV—LIGHTNING POINT, MAKO MERMAIDS)

This movie is often more fun than many brainless supernatural tween films. This is more of the *Psycho Beach Party* treatment, having fun with *Twilight*'s reading of the vampire condition as an allegory for absence. In essence, **VAMPIREACADEMY** wants to have it all: campy and smart in passages, with some sharp dialogue.

Zoey Deutch stars as Rose Hathaway, a half-human/half-vampire 17-year old "Dhampir" guardian-in-training who will never be a royal. Rose charges herself with the protection of her BFF, Lissa Dragomir (Lucy Fry), a royal "Moroi" (a peaceful, mortal vampire) from the threat of nasty bloodthirsty "Strigoi" vampires. So, there are a million ways this could go, but here writer Waters draws upon the narrative structure of his now-classic teen comedy **MEAN GIRLS** with Rose providing the cynical expository voice over that explains what we need to know. Luckily for us, Rose, played in her first starring role by Deutch is engaging, channeling a bit of Emma Stone in **EASY A**.

After a car accident, Rose and Lissa live on the lamb, running around attempting to assimilate into American culture. Rose serves as Lissa's protector and provider, allowing her to bite her directly for nourishment. Enter the forces of St. Vladimir's Academy, the boarding school that, like Hogwarts, aims to develop and keep the peace. At the Vampire Academy, they attend classes in the middle of the night (it's important to note sunlight annoys the Moroi but doesn't kill them) and break-off for sect-based training. For the Dhampirs it's hand-to-hand combat; for the Strigoi it's magic craft.

Gossip and danger ensue upon Rose and Lissa's return. As a royal, Lissa is welcomed back, while Rose is, in essence, grounded — no Vampire Weekend fun for her. The plot develops in ways that are moderately amusing and somewhat disorienting, but to be fair Rose seems fairly bored by this as well, as she just wants to be a normal teen. Despite the semi-erotic feeding sessions, she and Lissa do find heterosexual love. One senses writer Waters' script, if unrestricted, would have been more off-the-wall, considering his campy filmography.

Well-directed and fun, if not a bit too long and perhaps concerned with a plot that's not nearly as engaging as its leads, *It makes this* a little smarter than your average teen adventure. Fans of **WARM BODIES**, **THOR**, **ENDER'S GAME**, **THE HUNGER GAMES**, **R.I.P.D.**, **DARK SKIES**, and **STOKER**.



5/27 2 ENDLESS LOVE DRAMA

\$24 MILL BO 2147 SCREENS PG-13 104 MINUTES

Alex Pettyfer (MAGIC MIKE, THE BUTLER, IN TIME, BEASTLY)

Gabriella Wilde (CARRIE)

Bruce Greenwood (TV—JOHN FROM CINCINNATI, YOUNG JUSTICE—FILM—SUPER 8, DONOVAN'S ECHO, DINNER FOR SCHMUCKS)

There's no parade of nearly nude males, but every swoony, summer-lovin' cliché is accounted for, from lakeside fireworks and leaps off a dock to toasted marshmallows and twirls in a daisy field. Even in casting former model Gabriella Wilde as Jade, the upper-crust high school senior pining for working-class peer David (Alex Pettyfer), Feste conceivably settled on someone whose tousled blond locks could catch the sun like wheat, and who, after sneaking out to steal first-love's kiss, could flail her alabaster limbs in a way that evokes *Dirty Dancing's* swan-like Jennifer Grey.

In an early scene at a party thrown for Jade's birthday, a convenient power outage allows Jade and David to sneak off and kiss in a closet by candlelight. Outside, as Jade's father, Hugh (Greenwood), toasts his missing daughter as the "light of [his] family's life," the closet canoodling makes it modestly clear that she's also the fire of David's loins. This moment not only kicks off the classic schism between an overprotective dad and a love-struck boy from beyond the tracks, it introduces the movie's adamantly chaste approach to sex. *The movie* obscures the sounds of lovemaking with blaring pop ballads, and when David proceeds to presumably claim Jade's flower, the movie takes great care in depicting the tasteful removal of his (naturally) rain-soaked shirt.

If the movie offers anything that edges close to stimulating, it's a thin commentary on faith in fidelity, which arises when David catches Hugh cheating on wife Ann (Joely Richardson), and stirs up ghosts of David's past that underscore his and Jade's class differences. True, long-term love, the film suggests, is something romanticized and sought-after by the poor, while trivialized and taken for granted by the privileged (David's zest for Jade even awakens something in Ann, who's through masking hard truths with home décor seemingly handpicked by Nancy Meyers). There's also the matter of Jade's

recently deceased brother, whose death still haunts the family, but whose peripheral inclusion has an ultimate significance that feels too little and too late.

Through all of this, we're meant to gather that Jade, who chooses David over medical school, breaks out of her shell by defiantly saying yes to love. There's even a scene in which Jade's other brother, Keith (Rhys Wakefield), proclaims that she "[becomes] a woman" the moment she bucks Dad's authority and insists that David is staying at the family's immaculate lake house. However, it's nearly impossible to feel a liberating loss of innocence in a movie so innocent by design.

The message gets through and for those that were entertained with films like **LABOR DAY**, **DELIVERY MAN**, **ADORE**, **THE WORLD'S END**, **THE INTERNSHIP**, **THE BLING RING** and **SAVE THE DATE**, this one will do the trick.

