

8/7 BREAKING IN THRILLER
\$48 MILL BO 2654 SCREENS **PG-13** 93 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX
DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO

Gabrielle Union (SLEEPLESS, ALMOST CHRISTMAS, THINK LIKE A MAN TOO, THE BIRTH OF A NATION, CADILLAC RECORDS)

Campy fun rules the day in the home invasion movie "Breaking In," a garden variety film that offers a slight twist from the typical genre story line. This isn't one of the best of the class, but the film delivers what it promises and will likely meet all audience expectations (and at times even mildly exceed them). Think of it as a good bad movie.

Following the sudden death of her millionaire father, Shaun (Gabrielle Union) hauls her two kids (Ajona Alexis, Seth Carr) to the remote countryside to get his giant mansion estate prepared for sale. When the family arrives, they get an unexpected surprise in the form of four bad guys who are in search of a hidden safe that holds boatloads of cash. The house is a virtual fortress that's designed as a two story panic room and when the baddies hold the children hostage inside, Shaun becomes increasingly desperate as she attempts to break in and rescue her family.

There is little character development or plot that extends beyond the basic premise, but the minimal background information doesn't hurt the film's effectiveness. It's mindless entertainment, but it's also satisfying to see a woman transform into full-on mama bear attack mode to do whatever she can to take down the villains. Even when the story veers into "Home Alone" territory, it's still a blast to watch as Shaun fights back with whatever everyday object is at hand, be it a broken wine glass, a kitchen knife, or a cigarette lighter.



The performances are far better than they should be, with Union carrying the movie with a convincing fury. Even the two child actors are likeable in their supporting roles. I cared about these people and became emotionally invested in their story at a surprisingly early point in the movie. Other elements aren't so great, however. The film feels as if it was pieced together with an awkward timeline and scene breaks, adding to the overall inelegant feel of the filmmaking. The dialogue becomes downright corny, with sneering caricature baddies repeating the same lines over and over in an attempt to either fill time or to remind inattentive audience members of the plot. One character echoes the same warning that the "cops will be here in ninety minutes so the clock is ticking" nearly half a dozen times.

It's illogical and predictable, but "Breaking In" isn't a total lame duck.

This will rent as well as **RED SPARROW, PROUD MARY, THE COMMUTER, DEN OF THIEVES, and ACRIMONY.**



8/7 LIFE OF THE PARTY COMEDY
\$49 MILL BO 115 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX
DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO

Melissa McCarthy (THE BOSS, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, IDENTITY THIEF, SPY, THIS IS 40)

Melissa McCarthy, who clearly set out to create a raucous comedy that's also paradoxically the portrait of a kind gentlewoman. The result is a film whose heart is in the right place, even when every other piece feels basically out of alignment.

McCarthy, never the type of performer to tamp down her own charisma, jackhammers viewers with geniality as Deanna Miles, a suburban mother who, just as she's dropping off her daughter, Maddie (Molly Gordon), for her senior year in college, is flatly told by her nebbish husband, Dan (Matt Walsh), that he wants a divorce. This before they've even pulled out of the driveway of their daughter's sorority house. His argument about telling her so abruptly, and why he even more quickly informs her that he has a mistress, is that ripping off the bandage quickly is really supposed to be for her benefit.

In Deanna's eyes, even stock movie villains like Dan, and, later on in *Life of the Party*, his blond barracuda of a girlfriend, Marcie (Julie Bowen), are there to teach her a lesson in bootstrap-tugging self-reliance.

So it goes that she decides to return to college to finish off the degree that she put off at Dan's insistence when the two got pregnant with their daughter.

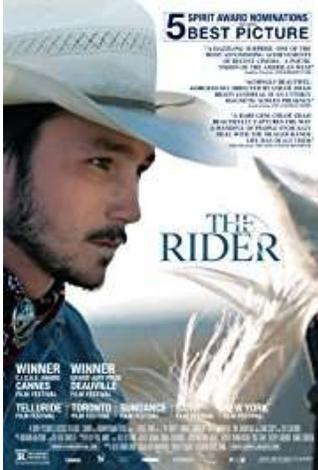
Great plan, except that Deanna insists on going to the same college where Maddie is enrolled, setting up an intergenerational, interfamilial odd-couple buddy-comedy scenario that the film never makes the most of. Instead of being mortified by McCarthy's mom jeans-clad beam of frumpy sunshine, the sorority sisters and, with only mild initial resistance, Maddie herself all welcome Deanna with curious enthusiasm. Deanna is positioned as the best-case scenario for them, a woman blooming with self-discovery who can also bake

a lasagna practically blindfolded. She's the matron saint for cool moms everywhere, not to mention new divorcees who, after tolerating wan missionary sex with their milquetoast mates, full-throatedly take in the excitement of no-strings-attached sex with much younger, stupider men.

For a little while, it's almost a breath of fresh air that Falcone and McCarthy ignore the stalwart plotting device known as dramatic conflict, especially when it allows McCarthy the opportunity to perform extended, non-sequitur comedy showcases. In one, Deanna's fear of speaking in front of a class, completely unmotivated by anything we know about her character up to that point, causes her to regress from sweaty-pit dread to phlegmatic panic to total, collapsing bodily rejection. But novelty and McCarthy's comedic chops only carry *Life of the Party* to midterms, and it soon becomes apparent that it's a star vehicle without any engine.

This will rent as well as **FATHER FIGURES, GAME NIGHT, DADDY'S HOME 2, GIRL'S TRIP and GOING IN STYLE.**





8/7 THE RIDER DRAMA
\$ 3 MILL BO 224 SCREENS R 104 MINUTES
DVD ONLY NO BLU RAY OR COMBO

Real-life bronc rider Brady Jandreau, his father, Tim, and Brady's younger sister, Lily, who has Asperger's syndrome, play variations on themselves, a casting strategy that looks as if it may become Zhao's hallmark. If that suggests a documentary approach, though, *The Rider* plays, strangely, more like a typical scripted drama, its performances telegraphing emotion in more predictable ways and its screenplay tightly structured.

The Rider's narrative is a fairly familiar one of daredevilry and recovery: Following a bronc ride that's left him recuperating from trauma, with a metal plate in his head, Brady Blackburn (Brady Jandreau) weighs a desire to continue pursuing his passion against the very real chance that one more ride could end his life or leave him in a state like his paraplegic friend, Lane Scott. (Scott, a former bull-riding star, also plays a version of himself here, though in reality it was a 2013 car crash that left him partially paralyzed.) Of course, Brady also has his family to think about, especially Lilly, who appears visibly concerned each time horses are mentioned around her.

The proximity of this fiction to actual fact adds an inherent layer of interest, especially in scenes between family members, which resemble the kinds of conversations they must have, or have had, about the real Brady's accident and his high-risk life choices. But those opportunities aren't seized on as directly as they could be; the writing instead emphasizes the universality of the family's struggles, turning a potentially very personalized narrative into more of an archetypal one. An exception to this is a scene in which Brady is woken up by a group of his cowboy buddies and dragged out to the middle of nowhere for a night of drinking and guitar playing around a campfire. As the friends work in unison to raise Brady's spirits and take his mind off his injury, each reveals a bit about themselves, their own cultural ideas, ethnic backgrounds, and individual feelings on the American West.

The film that *The Rider* most closely resembles is Darren Aronofsky's *The Wrestler*, which likewise filled a good portion of its cast with sports professionals as opposed to actors—most unapologetic about the dangers of their craft—and toed the line between indulging an underdog's zeal and cautioning overexertion. Zhao's film is more intuitive, never once letting its individual moments lapse into the emotionally maudlin, but in terms of its overall structure and the specifics of Brady's post-accident life, it feels tidy and conventional. Jandreau's presence should heighten the sense of realism here, but instead Zhao seemingly directs the first-time actor into being the laconic, brooding screen presence that this kind of film would normally call for (an impression dispelled only in the scenes in which Jandreau works with horses, displaying a kind of innate talent no one could fake).





8/14 AVENGERS-INFINITY WAR

ACTION/ADVENTURE \$693 MILL BO
 4367 SCREENS PG-13 139 MINUTES DVD/COMBO
 DIGITAL COPY WITH THE BLU RAY

Chris Evans (GIFTED, ANT MAN, SNOWPIERCER, THE AVENGERS, PUNCTURE)
Robert Downey Jr (THE JUDGE, SPIDERMAN: HOMECOMING, IRON MAN, TROPIC THUNDER, WONDER BOYS, BOW FINGER, U.S. MARSHALS)
Scarlett Johansson (GHOST IN THE SHELL, SING, WE BOUGHT A ZOO, HITCHCOCK, LOST IN TRANSLATION)

What is this, a crossover episode? After 18 films, the overlords at Marvel Studios have gathered almost all of their indentured servants, er, star-studded stable together into the ever-crashing, ever-booming, and ever-banging extravaganza *Avengers: Infinity War*. Whether you look at this whirling dervish and see a gleefully grandiose entertainment or a depressing exemplar of the culturally degraded present moment will depend on your investment—in all senses of that term—in Marvel's carefully cultivated mythos.

No other production house plays it safer. Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige and company have mastered their banal stretch-the-tale-out template to such a degree that it's guaranteed few will question why the previously elusive Infinity Stones—which have been teased in just about every prior movie installment, as well as in some of Marvel's TV offshoots—are collected with ridiculous ease by purple people-squashing supervillain Thanos (Josh Brolin). It happens because it needs to, and let's be fair: If a pro forma narrative was a real deal breaker, we'd be denying ourselves the pleasures of many a space and soap opera. But it would be nice if there was more "there" there.



This is a calculatedly sudsy film, evidenced by the first scene on an Asgardian starship where Thanos crosses paths with Thor (Chris Hemsworth), Loki (Tom Hiddleston), the Incredible Hulk (Mark Ruffalo), and all-seeing, all-hearing gatekeeper Heimdall (Idris Elba). Spoiler: Not everyone makes it out alive, and MCU fanatics should prepare themselves for plenty more bereavement, though death is hardly a definite in Marvel's world, particularly since some of these folks have sequels and other brand extensions on the horizon.

Soon after, Dr. Stephen Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch) interrupts Tony Stark, a.k.a. Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.), and inamorata Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow) as they're talking nuptials and offspring. No time for petty human concerns, dude. There's a genocidal giant on the way and he's got some Stones on him. Not all of them, though, as Dr. Strange has an Infinity gem around his neck, while another



LEAGUE, WONDER WOMAN, THOR, HOMECOMING.

is in the head of (Paul Bettany), canoodling with Witch" Maximoff Scotland. And yet Stone, is on a where it's guarded be *too* revealing.

This will be **TOMB RAIDER, PANTHER,**



android Vision who's off Wanda "Scarlet (Elizabeth Olsen) in another, the Soul distant planet by...but that would

HUGE and rent like **BLACK JUSTICE** and **SPIDERMAN:**





8/21 **BAD SAMARITAN**

ACTION/THRILLER

\$5 MILL BO R 110 MINUTES DVD/BLU RAY

Two part-time valet attendants spend their time robbing unsuspecting customers whilst they are busy eating dinner. One night this slick operation comes unstuck when a local businessman pulls up in his Maserati.

Upon first inspection the subject matter and creative force behind this dark and edgy thriller raise questions. Director, writer and producer Dean Devlin established himself in the mid Nineties collaborating with director Roland Emmerich on movies including **Independence Day**, **Stargate** and **Godzilla**. From then on his projects either theatrically or otherwise have been both entertaining and primarily mainstream. His latest directorial effort

however is the equivalent of casting against type, being both inherently dark, morally ambiguous and cinematically challenging.

This might seem like a by the numbers thriller but screenwriter Brandon Boyce is asking us some interesting questions beneath the surface. Issues of nature versus nurture, karmic backlash and moral choices are all addressed within this slick piece of cinema. Set up and concisely drawn within fifteen minutes **Bad Samaritan** provides backstory, establishes tone and then smartly deviates from expectations. In order for that to work effectively Dean Devlin needed a very specific type of actor.

Bringing in both David Tennant and Robert Sheehan is ultimately what makes **Bad Samaritan** work so well. They share minimal screen time but each one engages with the audience and brings something different to potentially two-dimensional roles. Of the two Tennant does much of the heavy lifting and seems to revel in breathing life into Cale Erendreich. Emotionally detached, independently wealthy, single-minded and meticulous Tennant manages to make this character human. Boyce's set up is good and Erendreich carries shades of Patrick Bateman, while **Bad Samaritan** itself drifts towards **American Psycho** and into Eli Roth territory. However, Devlin is sensible enough to remain on the right side of this line.



This will rent as well as **BEIRUT**, **THE HURRICANE HEIST**, **THE COMMUTER**, **ACTS OF VIOLENCE** and **THE FOREIGNER**.



8/21 **GOD'S NOT DEAD: A LIGHT OF DARKNESS** DRAMA

\$9 MILL BO 763 SCREENS PG 105 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO
28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

John Corbett (TV—PORTLANDIA, STILL THE KING, SEX AND THE CITY)

The wonderful series of faith versus skepticism does not disappoint with its third installment.

"God's Not Dead: A Light in Darkness" is written and directed by Michael Mason, the third entry in the faith-based God's Not Dead series determines "A Light in Darkness" doesn't go where you think it's going.

This drama centers on Pastor Dave (David A.R. White) , whose church located on the grounds of the local university is burned down and the university uses the intense incident as an excuse to shut St.James down but Dave fight to save his church . He seek legal help from his lawyer brother Pearce (John Corbett), to help him fight the decision as they both worked together for a united front . It seems like the movie has a good story line and ultimately has a message of hope and peace. This will rent as well as **TULLY, LEISURE SEEKERS, I CAN ONLY IMAGINE, and LET THERE BE LIGHT.**





8/21 SHOW DOGS FAMILY/ANIMATED
\$19 MILL BO 2763 SCREENS PG 92 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL COPY WITH COMBO 28 DAYS
BEFORE REDBOX

Dog is a man's best friend – or so they say. *Show Dogs* is the latest canine outing from *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* and *Scooby-Doo* director Raja Gosnell that ought to have some pedigree to it by now. Added to which, we just can't get enough of cute animals showing humans up on film.

The plot is predictable: Max is a no-nonsense Rottweiler police dog (voiced by Ludacris) paired with a human cop partner in Frank (Will Arnett) to solve the mystery of a missing panda. This leads them to go undercover at a prestigious dog show in Las Vegas. They (naturally) don't hit it off to begin with but warm to each other in the end. Oh and there are lots of other doggie personalities accompanying them along the way, including a papillon called Philippe (voiced by Stanley Tucci), a camp former show champion with a liking for human pampering and beds.

Arnett plays the human sidekick well, acting the fool when doggie co-star Max requires him to, while learning lots of valuable life lessons along the way. He also seems to be the only human questioning what the animals want/are thinking – the others, like the chief of police, seem to instinctively know what the dogs are thinking which goes unexplained.

The stars voicing the animals inject some much needed character into them, if it wasn't for the off-putting, out-of-sync jaw moves that such animation suffers from. Only Tucci's Philippe comes out unscathed as a rather twitchy dog, constantly living on frazzled nerves.

The gags are old, but still get kiddies' sporadic laughs. In fact, anything toilet humour-related, although feeling somewhat lazy, always triggers the youngsters' giggles – and this film certainly has that safety net to fall back on. Philippe may be a discarded dog show star, but he's definitely the one the kids remember long after viewing, as the rest of the dog show is geared towards committed lovers of pets and animal talent shows.

Show Dogs does exactly what it says on the tin; feeds fans of such family entertainment but with little meaty substance. As much as you want to feel satisfied in laughs, the effect is as short-lived and superficial as some of the talent contest paraphernalia.

This will rent as well as **SHERLOCK GNOMES, PETER RABBIT, PADDINGTON 2, and LEAP.**





8/21 TAG COMEDY

\$26 MILL BO 2376 SCREENS R 100 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO 28
DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

**Jeremy Renner (WIND RIVER, ARRIVAL, THE HURT LOCKER,
AMERICAN HUSTLE, THE AVENGERS)**

For one month every year, five highly competitive friends hit the ground running in a no-holds-barred game of tag they've been playing since the first grade. Based on a true story that was reported in a 2013 article in the Wall Street Journal, "Tag" has the most basic of premises — and it's something that works in the film's favor. The result is a delightful, funny, rambunctious

descent into the gleeful madness of how far these guys will go to be the last man standing.

The now grown group of childhood friends includes successful veterinarian Hogan (Ed Helms), slick-talking executive Bob (Jon Hamm), Sable (Hannibal Buress, an asset with his amusing deadpan line delivery), stoner Chilli (Jake Johnson), and the legendary fitness trainer Jerry (Jeremy Renner), the only one of the gang who has never, ever been tagged. With Jerry's upcoming marriage and retirement from the game looming, Hogan rounds up the fellas for one epic last game to see who can win bragging rights by finally making the undefeated man "It."

It sounds ridiculous and it is, but the film portrays and exploits the male competitive streak in hilarious fashion. These guys will stop at nothing to get the upper hand on each other. They wear costumes, hide behind cars, even enlist the help of doppelgangers to throw each other off the trail. The jokes are simple yet inspired, with a good mix of physical pratfalls (yes, and they're actually funny here) and more meaningful gags about each man's flaws and how it's in their nature to act on them. Even the slapstick bits are genuinely humorous. The extent to which these grown men will go to be victors at a 30 year old game of tag can get silly, but that's where the very best belly laughs originate. One of the best action bits is early in the story when Hogan and Bob corner Chilli and he mounts his escape, Indiana Jones style. It doesn't go well.



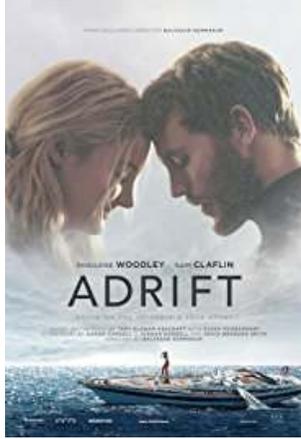
These guys are believable as longtime friends and the actors play exceptionally well off each other. Their poker-faced banter never feels insincere nor forced, and these are people you want to hang out with. This is a bro movie through and through, with women (and their very thinly written characters) taking the back seat. The only female that holds her on (and nearly steals the show) is Isla Fisher as Hogan's uber-intense wife Anna, in what reminds me of an over-the-top homage to Fisher's "Wedding Crashers" character.

The film becomes repetitive when it rehashes a no-nonsense voiceover (it sails through with flying colors the first time but feels stale but its third overuse), and a few too many jokes are in very poor taste (so much so that the characters themselves reference the fact). Some of the more unpleasant barbs take aim at tragedy (the sudden death of a husband, a potential miscarriage) or are downright gross (including a scene involving a childhood stuffed bear). All of these "jokes" left me with an unshakeable icky feeling. Despite these ill-advised quips, the movie still manages to bring the laughs until the end.



"Tag" is an enjoyable ode to lifelong relationships, a comedy with heart, and one that instills the value of true friendship and reminds us that we're never too old to play. It's not destined to become a classic but when it comes to easygoing summertime entertainment, it nearly reaches mindless, fun perfection.

This will rent as well as **FATHER FIGURES, I FEEL PRETTY, SUPER TROOPERS 2, THE HANGOVER, A BAD MOM'S CHRISTMAS** and **GIRLS TRIP**.



8/28 ADRIFT THRILLER

\$33 MILL BO 2482 SCREENS PG-13 96 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL CODE WITH THE COMBO 28 DAYS
BEFORE REDBOX

Shailene Woodley (SNOWDEN, ALLEGIANT, INSURGENT, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS)

Director Baltasar Kormákur's *Adrift* is a simple, acutely observed love story that also happens to be a rousingly stripped-down tale of survival. Loosely based on the true story of Tami Oldham (Shailene Woodley) and Richard Sharp (Sam Claflin), who in 1983 set off from Tahiti to deliver a yacht to San Diego only to sail directly into a ferocious hurricane, this lithe and affecting melodrama ping-pongs between the couple's picture-perfect Polynesian courtship and their grueling ordeal drifting on the open ocean.

Tami and Richard are almost too perfect for each other: She's a California-bred free spirit who's been hopping from one beachy paradise to the next since she graduated high school, while he's a dashing Brit who's sailed the world over in a boat he built with his own hands. If Tami and Richard's romance seems too good to be true, Woodley and Claflin manage to bring them down to earth with gentle nuances—shades of uncertainty, self-effacement, even melancholy—that evoke the sense that these two individuals didn't even know they were looking for love until they found each other.

Adrift's bifurcated narrative structure also provides a friction that keeps the couple's romance from becoming too sickly sweet: For every envy-inducing moment of island splendor—such as Tami and Richard jumping off a ridge into a crystal-clear lagoon—there's an opposing image of the couple looking gaunt and frail as they struggle to find land before starving to death.

After disastrous encounter with the hurricane, Richard spends the rest of the film bruised and broken, convalescing in the back of the yacht. That means that the responsibilities of keeping them alive falls on Tami, a relative sailing neophyte, who singlehandedly repairs their vessel, pumps gallons of water out of the cabin, navigates with a sextant, and scrounges up sustenance—forgoing her own vegetarianism to do a little underwater spearfishing. These survival sequences bring to mind J.C. Chandor's similarly themed *All Is Lost*, but with that film's blank-faced austerity replaced by Kormákur's wide-eyed inquisitiveness about how people adapt to extreme situations.

This will rent as well as **CHAPPAQUIDICK, THE HURRICANE HEIST, 15:17 TO PARIS, THE COMMUTER, and ACT OF VIOLENCE.**





8/28 BOOK CLUB COMEDY

\$51 MILL BO 2876 SCREENS PG-13 104 MINUTES
DVD/ COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX
DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO

Diane Keaton (LOVE THE COOPERS, SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE, ANNIE HALL, LOOK WHO'S TALKING NOW, BABY BOOM, FATHER OF THE BRIDE)

Jane Fonda (TV---GRACE AND FRANKIE---FILM---FATHERS & DAUGHTERS, LES DANIELS' THE BUTLER, BETTER LIVING THROUGH CHEMISTRY, MONSTER IN LAW)

The sweetly bawdy "Book Club" is a film made for a specific target audience: women over 60. The comedy feels familiar, yet it's one that you can't help but like. If you're on the fence about this one, let me make your decision easier: if you look at the poster, know the story, and still think it sounds good, then you'll adore this film. This is harmless, sentimental fun aimed at mom and grandma, and they're going to love it.

A group of four longtime friends has been keeping up their monthly book club for decades. There's Sharon ([Candice Bergen](#)), a federal judge who has sworn off men after her ex-husband's ([Ed Begley Jr.](#)) engagement to a pretty young plaything; Carol ([Mary Steenburgen](#)), a local celebrity chef who is facing a rut with her husband Bruce ([Craig T. Nelson](#)) and is desperate to rekindle the flame; Vivian ([Jane Fonda](#)), a wealthy hotel owner with a wild streak who has never been in a serious relationship but is spellbound by the return of a hopelessly romantic old flame ([Don Johnson](#)); and Diane ([Diane Keaton](#)), a recent widow who is annoyed by the constant worry from her two grown daughters ([Alicia Silverstone](#), [Katie Aselton](#)) and has started a secret liason with a handsome stranger ([Andy Garcia](#)). This month's book selection is "Fifty Shades of Grey" and after some initial resistance, the novel stimulates the ladies into doing a bit more than just talking.



What's refreshing about these women is that none seem like fictional caricatures. They're all highly successful professionally but are currently facing a few stumbling blocks in their personal lives.

Even better is that these are all mature women, a group that is woefully underrepresented onscreen. All of the actors are talented pros who are believable as friends from way back, but I think Bergen is the best thing about this movie. She brings a beautiful and bittersweet spin to her role, and it's nearly impossible not to love (or at least respect) her character.

Women rule the day (as it should be in a film like this), with all of the male characters taking a backseat. The guys are all charming but with flat personalities, providing a bit of geriatric eye candy for the intended audience. There's a great cameo from [Richard Dreyfuss](#) as one of Sharon's internet dates, a scene that plays out as a real life "this could happen to me!" fantasy sequence for Baby Boomers.

If you're even the slightest bit uncomfortable with older women openly embracing their sexuality, then this is not the movie for you. The bosom buddies sit around and chat about men and

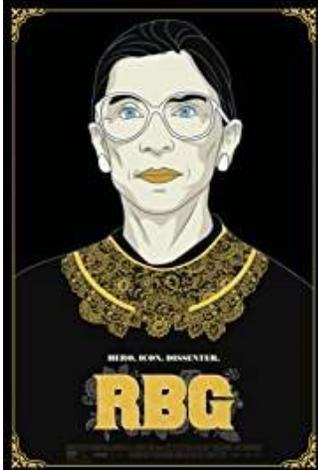


sex while drinking wine. Lots of wine. There's lots of old lady humor (think one-liners about hot flashes and Viagra) but plenty of relatable jokes and put-downs for those born after 1950. The film plays like a delightful cable sitcom: not too bawdy but with just the right amount of sass.

With equal parts romance, comedy, and conflict, the formula works even if the script mostly sings a familiar tune. This rom-com is not the cinematic equivalent of a Pulitzer Prize winning novel but is more of a breezy beach read, which makes it the perfect summertime diversion.

This will rent as well as **GAME NIGHT, MOLLY'S GAME, FATHER FIGURES, DADDY'S HOME 2 and A BAD MOM'S CHRISTMAS.**





8/28 RBG DOCUMENTARY
\$12 MILL BO 432 SCREENS PG 98 MINUTES

The groundbreaking legal legacy of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is the focus of “RBG,” a well-crafted if slightly stale documentary about the feminist icon. The film explores Ginsburg’s career from her early days at Harvard to her strongly worded dissenting opinions on the high court today. Fans of the newfound pop icon will love this film, although it’s mostly an hour and a half of preaching to the choir.

Ginsburg has led a lifelong fight against gender discrimination and has faced it head-on herself. She’s an interesting (and charismatic) subject, but this film barely scratches the surface of her life and career. Filmmakers Julie Cohen and Betsy West choose to focus on a handful of landmark court cases that are presented in an uninspired, academic manner. They’re

educational but lack additional insight.

The best elements focus on Ginsburg’s early history, including her time spent at Harvard law school, the loving relationship filled with mutual respect with husband Martin, and a semi-detailed greatest hits list of her judicial accomplishments. The everyday human moments are also a delight to watch, like when the judge opens her closet and lovingly shows off her collection of collars that she was gifted over the years, when the camera joins her for a daily workout session, or when Ginsburg is shown a sketch from Saturday Night Live starring Kate McKinnon and laughing right along with her.



It’s also a documentary that disappointingly fails to ask (or answer) the hard questions, including an all too brief mention of why the justice refused to step down while Obama was still president so that a younger judge could be put on the bench in her place, or a deeper justification of her controversial negative comments on then-candidate Donald Trump.

Overall this is a still a well-crafted, straightforward documentary that paints an interesting portrait of one of the most brilliant legal minds America has ever known. It’s a rah-rah cheer for women’s rights, and it will leave viewers with a fresh respect for the octogenarian activist attorney.