

8/4 2 DO YOU BELIEVE DRAMA
\$14 MILL BO 1387 SCREENS PG-13 120 MINUTES

Mira Sorvino (TV—FALLING SKIES, THE INTRUDERS, STALKER—FILM—THE GREY ZONE, THE ANGEL OF DEATH, RESERVATION ROAD, SPACE WARRIORS)
Sean Astin (OUT WEST, THE SURFACE, MOM'S NIGHT OUT, ABSTRACTION)

Do You Believe? is kind of like PRESaul Haggis's *Crash*, but where the theme is Christian faith rather than racial intolerance. It is the new film from director Jonathan M. Gunn (whose *Like Dandelion Dust* remains one of the best faith-based films to date) and *God's Not Dead* writers Chuck Konzelman and Cary Solomon. Movies with explicitly Christian content are hot right now, and it's admirable to see filmmakers trying to deal seriously with issues of faith. Despite some noble intentions, though, *Do You Believe?* makes several wrong-headed choices that severely limit its potential.

Ted McGinley plays Pastor Matthew, a man of the cloth who has a late-night encounter with a street preacher (Delroy Lindo). This inspires him to give a sermon about how faith without action is meaningless. His words end up impacting many people, including a homeless mother (Mira Sorvino), a couple (Cybill Shepherd and Lee Majors) mourning the death of their adult daughter, a pregnant runaway teen (Madison Pettis), a veteran (Joseph Julian Soria) with post-traumatic stress issues, a man (Brian Bosworth) dying of leukemia, a gang member (Shwayze) second-guessing his life of crime, and a doctor (Sean Astin) with a God complex. These characters' lives intertwine in a variety of interesting ways.



This will do as well as **THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, GOD'S POCKET, ST. VINCENT, THE BOOK OF LIFE,** and **INTO THE STORM.**



8/4 3 FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD
DRAMA
\$10 MILL BO 956 SCREENS PG-13 119 MINUTES

Carey Mulligan (INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS, THE GREAT GATSBY, SHAME, DRIVE, PRIDE & PREJUDICE)
Michael Sheen (TV—MASTERS OF SEX—FILM—KILL THE MESSENGER, PHILOMENA)

Elevated in station and circumstances after coming into a large inheritance, Bathsheba Everdene (Carey Mulligan) takes over her uncle's 100-acre farm, a once proud estate which has fallen into disrepair. Here she comes into contact with a series of suitors, first among them Gabriel Oak (Matthias Schoenaerts), from whom she's already rejected one marriage proposal, and whose situations are reversed now that he's lost a farm and she's gained one. Also involved are middle-aged bachelor and neighboring landowner William Boldwood (Michael Sheen), a lonely man who proves to be more than a bit obsessive, and impetuous army officer Francis Troy (Tom Sturridge), whose dashing façade masks a corrupt and licentious nature.

Each man is attractive to the staunchly independent Everdene, but also lacking in some serious way; she's savvy enough to realize this, but still can't help but get entangled. At times, the film appears ready to spin this abundance of choices into a study of the economics of desire, with Everdene weighing each potential affiliation by considering what value it might have to a woman whose security is already assured. But as in the *The Hunt*, which abandoned its apparent critique of buried male aggression for mopey miserablism, the film lingers at the fringes of its interesting conceit. Instead of advancing character psychology or digging into the thorny nature of these relationships, Vinterberg's bland direction obsesses over pretty portraiture. The results are therefore handsome but subtextually thin, and the lack of real analysis or consideration leaves this perilously close to a Goldilocks-style depiction of privileged female indecision, not much of an improvement on John Schlesinger's 1967 version, which was dynamically and colorfully crafted.



This will do as well as **ST. VINCENT, THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING, BOYHOOD, BOOK OF LIKE, THE BOOK THIEF,** and **THE IMITATION GAME.**



8/4 1 INSURGENT ACTION

\$129 MILL BO 3846 SCREENS PG-13 114 MINUTES

Shailene Woodley (THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, DIVERGENT, THE DESCENDANTS, THE SPECTACULAR NOW)

Theo James (TV—GOLDEN BOY, THE ROOM AT THE TOP, BEDLAM—FILM—DIVERGENT)

Tris (Woodley) and a few of her fellow Dauntless warriors—along with her meek Erudite brother, Caleb (Ansel Elgort, dropping syllables so often you'll wonder if the call's about to drop)—begin the second movie on the run. At the end of *Divergent*, Tris and her boyfriend, Four (James), successfully thwarted erudite leader Jeanine's (Kate Winslet)

plot to seize control of their walled-off post-apocalyptic Chicagoland empire, but not before her parents and a few hundred other Abnegation citizens were slaughtered. The bloodshed has proven impossible for Tris to accept, and she's caught in a tailspin of guilt and rage. While Tris grieves her lost parents, Four is forced to reckon with the reemergence of the mother, Evelyn (Naomi Watts), he long ago presumed dead. Now the leader of the vagrant Factionless populace, Evelyn pours the charm on in an attempt to forge an underground alliance to defeat Jeanine, who's predictably shoring up her forces once again.

The first film capitalized on the metaphorical implications of teens being forced to essentially chart the course of their entire future lives on a single decision (read: college, for those who can afford it). Similarly, the sequel invests a surprising amount of energy into examining Tris's battles with doubt and self-loathing in the wake of the death and destruction she's convinced is entirely her fault. At one level, it's all jerry-rigged to make Tris (who measures "100 percent" Divergent) an iffy bet to pass another climactic series of faction simulations. But at a more utilitarian level, it



attempts to make the movie speak on behalf of the rude discoveries of the pubescent mind.

This will be a huge renter like **DIVERGENT**, **TAKEN 3**, **JUPITER ASCENDING**, **OBLIVION**, **THE HUNGER GAMES**, **INTERSTELLAR**, and **MAZE RUNNER**.



8/4 2 TRUE STORY DRAMA
\$5 MILL BO 856 SCREENS R 99 MINUTES

James Franco (THE INTERVIEW, HOMEFRONT, THIRD PERSON, THIS IS THE END, LOVELACE, 127 HOURS)
Jonah Hill (21 JUMP STREET, THE WOLF OF WALL STREET, MONEYBALL, NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM, THE 40 YEAR OLD VIRGIN)

How Michael Finkel (Hill) came to meet Chris Longo (Franco) is a fascinating story of chance and cold-blooded crime. The way it's depicted in *True Story*, though, reveals less about the facts of Finkel and Longo's strange, real-life alliance than it does the nature of truth, and the relationship between reporter and subject. As we're introduced to Finkel, he's in the middle of getting the boot from his job with *The New York Times*, for conflating the experiences of a number of young African boys who were used for slave labor in cocoa plantations along the Ivory Coast into a single figure in his 2001 *New York Times Magazine* story "Is Youssouf Malé a Slave?" The path that leads him from this disgrace to sitting beside Longo might have been treated as a tale of redemption, a talented writer finding his journalistic conviction in the wake of a huge professional betrayal, but the filmmakers see this more as the story of Finkel coming to terms with the hard, often conflicting truths at the center of his profession.

Finkel's introduction to Longo is a flash of wild coincidence, as Hill's middle-aged reporter is telephoned for a quote concerning Longo pretending to be Finkel when he was arrested in Cancun for the murder of his family in Oregon. The rest of the film centers around Longo's murder trial and the writing of Longo's memoir, which serves as the source material for and shares its name with Rupert Goold's film, but the particulars of the drama and dialogue hinge on the subjectivity of nonfiction and fiction storytelling alike.



A good addition to your library that will rent as well as **A MAN MOST WANTED**, **THE DROP**, **ST. VINCENT**, **FOXCATCHER**, **BLACK OR WHITE**, and **STILL ALICE**.



8/11 1 HOT PURSUIT COMEDY

\$36 MILL BO 3037 SCREENS PG-13 87 MINUTES

Sofia Vergara (TV—MODERN FAMILY—FILM—FADING GIGOLO, CHEF, MACHETE KILLS, THE THREE STOOGES, NEW YEAR’S EVE)

Reese Witherspoon (THE GOOD LIE, THIS MEANS WAR, LEGALLY BLONDE, WALK THE LINE, MUD)

Witherspoon is Officer Rose Cooper, a second-generation cop whose common sense is even less pronounced than her *Golden Girls* namesake. Desperate to live up to the legacy of her father, she joins the thin blue line and, upon misunderstanding the slang meaning of the term "shotgun" and Taser-ing the mayor’s son, gets relegated to overseeing the evidence room. One day, she’s selected to accompany Daniella Riva (Vergara) to Dallas, where she’s expected to testify against a brutal drug-cartel boss. (The reason the hapless Cooper is chosen is that a female officer must serve as Riva’s escort—and that the film implies that Cooper is the only female in the SAPD is by some measure the most believable element in the entire film.)

Witherspoon is, to her credit, unafraid to come off priggish and sour as Cooper. As a mob moll fixated on her suitcase filled with jewel-studded heels, Vergara is, even more gallingly, only required to make Charo’s enunciation look Shakespearean in comparison, and to that end she delivers, subservient to a tidal wave of cultural stereotyping. She gives the movie energy at the cost of her own dignity; the only thing that could’ve made her misguided contribution grislier would have been to fellate a Chiquita banana.

This will do as well as **HORRIBLE BOSSES 2, DUMB AND DUMBER 2, THE BOY NEXT DOOR, THE WEDDING RINGER, NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 3** and **22 JUMP STREET**.



8/11 1 UNFRIENDED HORROR

\$34 MILL BO 2847 SCREENS R 83 MINUTES

Shelley Hennig (TV—DAYS OF OUR LIVES, MALIA TATE, JUSTIFIED—FILM—OUIJA)



“Take that shirt off, take that shirt off,” pleads Mitch (Moses Storm). “Make me,” coos his girlfriend, Blaire (Shelley Hennig). You see both their faces, close up, as they peer into their Skype screens. Mitch—or Mitchie, as Blaire has deemed him in her address book—pulls out a large shiny blade. Her eyes go wide, she smiles and says, “You’re adorable and really sexy when you’re violent.”

Okay. So you’re inside a horror movie with teens who like to play this way, kids who will be in trouble because of sex, kids who have no idea what’s coming even if you do know, because you’ve seen this movie more than a few times. But if the plot of *Unfriended* is too familiar, its trick is at

least sort of new, a step off from the found footage trend that's dominated low budget scary movie making at least since *Blair Witch*—or, more precisely, it's a step in. Most movies using the found footage conceit take up the footage part, with handheld shots and harrowing close-ups of frightened faces, skritches suggesting where cameras turn off or [oscillating fans](#) to indicate that some of the footage-makers are cleverer than others. *Unfriended* goes in another direction, borrowing something else entirely from *Blair Witch*.

Specifically, it borrows from the memorably brilliant internet campaign, using the fundamental interface of Blaire's screen as your only access to what's happening. This screen, of course, offers many types of images and apps, the narrative condensed to bits of Skype, Spotify, and Facebook, instant messaging and Google searching. That these can appear more or less simultaneously makes the action seem to occur quickly: Blaire and Mitch's flirtation—that is, her shirt-unbuttoning—is interrupted by a group Skype, including not only their usual friends, but also an unknown interloper, whose [blank person icon](#) becomes instantly horrifying.

As the friends ponder what to do or who might be messing with them, Blaire and Mitch exchange messages in which he suggests what you know he must: maybe it's "a ghost". You know this is coming because you've also seen what Blaire was looking at before all this started, before Mitch started being so adorably violent, namely, a YouTube upload showing the ghastly gunshot suicide of Laura Barns (Heather Sossaman). The backstory for this event—and yes, it occurred exactly one year ago—becomes the film's plot. Each of the Skypers reveals,

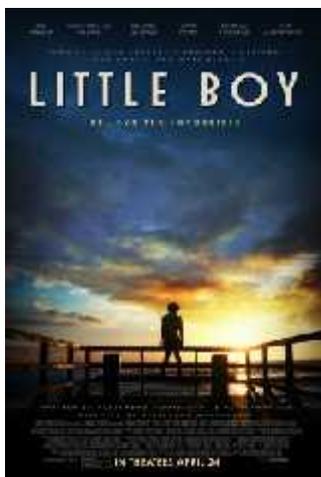


however reluctantly, his or her part in the bullying and other abuse that led Laura to kill herself. No surprise, much of this abuse is documented and uploaded to YouTube, so that Blaire's screen can show you what happened, how Laura was humiliated or what sexual violence was committed against her.

As regular as all this might sound, *this film* does raise a few good questions concerning how social media works, how it is used, and also how it shapes experience. Most obviously, the MacBook-screen-as-movie-screen points out, experience can be limited by dependence on social media as a means to communicate. Those limits turn increasingly abstract and also more vivid as you observe what's communicated, whether professions of loyalty and love, denials of responsibility, or accusations. Jess (Renee Olstead) starts recalling a history of nasty actions by Val (Courtney Halverson), a sexual encounter between Adam (Will Peltz) and one of the girls was "an accident" (they were, of course, drunk), and Ken (Jacob Wysocki) starts showing off the blender with which he makes margaritas while pulling on his bong.

Laura manages these interactions by typing, insisting that no one hangs up, that all "play a game". She's also visible, in recordings. That all events are recorded poses another question. Whatever the friends are telling one another, whether they're confessing or lying outright, misremembering or trying to massage a difficult truth, they place a certain value on documentation and also, at the same time, trivialize it, sharing lies and truths and terrible pictures with everyone on the planet. As private moment and performance, or maybe self and act, become indistinguishable, the film asks (and can't possibly answer) how this culture of over-sharing can be understood, how it matters.

This one will rent as well as **THE SEVENTH SON, PYRAMID, THE BOXTROLLS, AS ABOVE SO BELOW,** and **DELIVER US FROM EVIL.**



8/18 3 LITTLE BOY DRAMA

\$8 MILL BO 1435 SCREENS PG-13 106 MINUTES

Jacob Salvati (TV—CLEANERS, RED WINDOW, MAD MEN, UNTHINKABLE)

Emily Watson (THE BOOK THIEF, THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING, WAR HORSE, PUNCH DRUNK LOVE)

Michael Rapaport (TV—JUSTIFIED, THE MOB DOCTOR, PRISON BREAK—FILM—PUSH, LIVE FREE OR DIE, COP LAND, BEAUTIFUL GIRLS)

This film is narrated by its titular character as a grown man, and with a distinctly old-coot nostalgia for the town of his youth, O'Hare, the type of place "you see in postcards." Glossy pastels dominate the film's color palette, while its drippy score cloyingly adapts to every high and low of the narrative's ever-shifting machinery. Initially, and through its bombardment of kitsch so old-fashioned and obsessively manicured, there's only a sense that Alejandro Monteverde's film is trying to convince you of nothing more than America's exceptionalism.

The story follows young Pepper Flynt Busbee's (Jakob Salvati) crisis of consciousness after his pops, James (Michael Rapaport), is sent to war in his flat-footed brother's place, and the local priest (Tom Wilkinson) gets the unusually short boy to think that he can will his father back home. For a not so short spell, and as an outgrowth of a scene between Pepper and the priest that empathetically argues for the necessity of faith without insisting on coerced religious conformity, *Little Boy* movingly captures the magic-obsessed tyke trying to navigate the fine line between the reality of his life with the delusion of his fantasies. Our country's anti-Japanese resentment during the war may be depicted in cartoonish broadstrokes once Pepper befriends, begrudgingly at first, Hashimoto (Cary-Hiroiyuki Tagawa), but in the racists of O'Hare so readily buying into delusion themselves, and at the precise moment the boy's attempt to move a mountain coincides with an earthquake striking the area, the film humanely gets to the root of how are prejudices arise from the longing that makes us susceptible to propaganda.



Monteverde's aesthetics, however, don't complicate the film's professed inquiry into how these desires are mediated by pop culture. As in a scene that collages James's tense capture in the Philippines with Pepper being taunted by a group of bullies at home, there's less a sense of the film's easily digestible presentation being an outgrowth of a child's immature perspective on the world than a filmmaker's naïve desire to convey life experience to such a sentimentalized degree that the world comes to resemble only the sham of a Norman Rockwell painting.

This one will rent like **STILL ALICE, THE LOFT, THE COBBLER, BIG EYES, MAPS TO THE STARS** and **ST. VINCENT**.



8/25 2 ALOHA COMEDY
\$18 MILL BO 2815 SCREENS PG-13 105 MINUTES

Bradley Cooper (THE HANGOVER, SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK, AMERICAN HUSTLER)
Rachel McAdams (A MOST WANTED MAN, THE VOW, MEAN GIRLS, THE NOTEBOOK, MIDNIGHT IN PARIS)
Emma Stone (BIRDMAN, MAGIC IN THE MOONLIGHT, GANGSTER SQUAD, THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN)

For Brian Gilcrest (Bradley Cooper), the military contractor at the center of writer-director Cameron Crowe's *Aloha*, the thrill of discovery and wonder of space have dulled over the years, due to a career based on visiting war zones, to say nothing of almost being killed by a rocket. Subsequently, he's become the favored contractor of Carson Welch (Bill Murray), the richest man in America, who asks him to oversee the launch of his own private satellite in Hawaii, which Carson has secretly armed with an explosive payload. Crowe's script marries this storyline with Brian's love triangle with Allison Ng (Emma Stone), his military liaison, and his ex-girlfriend, Tracy (Rachel McAdams), which serves as a glaringly obvious narrative reflection of Brian's inability to decide between a lucrative future defined by indifference or possibly giving up everything he's worked for to be true to his passion for space and its seemingly infinite possibilities.



The plotting of these interwoven arcs is predictable throughout, such as the scarcely surprising 12th-hour reveal that Brian is a father. Much of the film is gripped by a startling repetitiveness, volleying as it does between Tracy and Brian discussing their breakup, Allison and Brian talking about the moral and legal issues with the aforementioned launch, or Carson reminding Brian that he can ruin him if things don't go smoothly. Unsurprisingly, the few sequences that don't involve these elements are the most fascinating, from Tracy's relationship with her new husband, Woody (John Krasinski), to Brian's relationship with Bumpy (Dennis "Bumpy" Kanahale), the king of the local native islanders. Brian and Bumpy are old friends, and in their scenes together, Cooper and Kanahale bring out both a long personal history between the men and the complications that have come between them now that Brian is working for people who want to essentially buy native Hawaiian culture. Tracy and Woody's exchanges are similarly intimate in detailing the hardships of being married to a soldier, which is balanced out with a handful of uniquely uproarious scenes, such as Allison and Carson squaring off on the dance floor, with Stone and Murray matching each other's increasingly goofy and inventive gesticulations and body moving.

The one will rent as well as **THE DUFF, THE GAMBLER, THE WEDDING RINGER, THE JUDGE, 22 JUMP STREET** and **BLENDED**.