



12/5 AMERICAN ASSASSIN ACTION
\$38 MILL BO 2987 SCREENS **R** 122 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Michael Keaton (MR. MOM, SPOTLIGHT, SPIDERMAN: HOMECOMING, BEETLE JUICE, THE FOUNDER, CLEAN AND SOBER, NEED FOR SPEED)

As the protagonist of Vince Flynn's best-selling series of counter-terrorism thriller novels, Mitch Rapp was born as a logical offshoot of Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, a character who's continued to emerge as more youthful in each new cinematic incarnation. Both men work with the C.I.A., but where Jack Ryan is measured and intelligent, Rapp is brash and impulsive—a twentysomething renegade who carries even more emotional baggage than Bruce Wayne. Not only did Rapp lose his parents in a car crash when he was 14, but his fiancée, Katrina, was killed by terrorists within hours of his proposal to her. In Michael Cuesta's *American Assassin*, all of this young man's manufactured trauma gives way to a lot of overly mannered brooding and righteous indignation that swiftly threatens to weigh down the film with its overbearing turgidity.

After opening with the carnage that leads to Katrina's (Charlotte Vega) death, Cuesta immediately plunges Rapp (Dylan O'Brien) down an endless rabbit hole of revenge and despair. A few brief, clunky montages make us privy to his burgeoning martial arts skills along with his fluency in Arabic and vast knowledge of the Quran, all of which he's managed to acquire in the two years since he lost his betrothed.

Once he sets out on a solo mission to infiltrate an ISIS-like terrorist cell to take out his sworn enemy, he catches the eye of Irene Kennedy (Sanaa Lathan), a high-level C.I.A. agent who sees his potential despite a lengthy history of vigilante justice and emotional instability. In the world of the film, this not only makes Rapp a potential candidate for the C.I.A., but apparently someone to be fast-tracked into the most critical of missions.



As with the sequence depicting him refining his skills on his own, Rapp's training with legendary C.I.A. agent and tactical fighter Stan Hurley (Michael Keaton) moves at an alarmingly rapid pace. Nary a few minutes pass between Stan throwing his underling to the ground with a knife to his neck and Rapp charging into the field to retrieve stolen Russian plutonium that's being sold to Iranians. But before this plot of potential nuclear warfare ever takes off, Cuesta makes it clear that these global machinations, which could lead to the start of World War III, remain hazily in the background in favor of servicing both Rapp's egocentric revenge fantasy and Stan's eventual showdown with a former student, Ghost (Taylor Kitsch), who's been radicalized.

American Assassin's narrative plays out in the most unsurprising ways from here, managing the difficult task of globe-hopping from D.C. to Istanbul to Rome while following the unfolding of a Middle Eastern terrorist plot and still making the story all about the emotional and professional hang-ups of three white dudes.

This will rent as well as **THE HITMAN'S BODYGUARD, LOGAN LUCKY, THE MUMMY, JOHN WICK CHAPTER 2, and THE DARK TOWER.**



12/5 **DESPICABLE ME 3** **FAMILY**
\$265 MILL BO 4146 SCREENS **PG** 90 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO

VOICES OF: Steve Carell, Kristen Wiig.

[Minions](#), which told the origin story of the titular yellow creatures, partially resolved this problem not by correcting for it, but embracing it, turning the scatterbrained discursiveness of the series into the film's central defining feature and at times achieving the manic energy of classic Looney Tunes. Now, *Despicable Me 3* maintains the same sense of anarchic glee established by the prequel while linking it to the character relationships established by the first two films. In so doing, the filmmakers have created the best entry in the series yet—a madcap stream-of-consciousness adventure that nevertheless feels slightly more substantial than the pure sugar rush of [Minions](#).

The plot here centers on supervillain turned good guy Gru (Steve Carell) discovering that he has a long-lost twin brother, Dru (also voiced by Carell), who lives in the far-off land of Freedonia. (Note the apt allusion to the Marx Brothers's anarchic classic [Duck Soup](#).) After losing his job with the Anti-Villain League and being abandoned by his Minions (all voiced by Pierre Coffin), Gru sets off for Freedonia with his wife, Lucy (Kristen Wiig), and adopted daughters, Margo, Edith, and Agnes (Miranda Cosgrove, Dana Gaier, and Nev Scharrel, respectively), to meet the brother he never knew.

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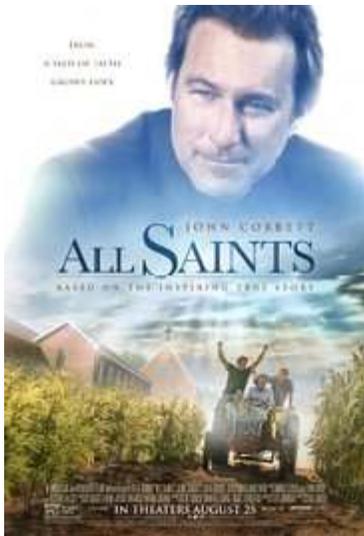
Flitting from one loopy set piece to the next, the filmmakers free themselves to follow their silliest whims, such as an 1980s-obsessed supervillain (Trey Parker) who lives in a giant Rubik's Cube, a giant action figure who shoots blobs of bubble gum at Los Angeles, and the Minions performing an impromptu rendition of Gilbert and Sullivan's "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General" from *The Pirates of Penzance*. If all this wackiness is only occasionally laugh-out-loud funny—the '80s references feel particularly played out—it's nonetheless executed with good-natured breeziness.

The comically grotesque character designs, redolent of Sylvain Chomet's similarly extravagant figurations, remain a highlight of the series, as does the go-for-broke voice acting of the celebrity cast, particularly Carell's dual characterizations, which demonstrate a remarkable comedic range. The giddy, luxuriously coifed Dru provides a perfect foil for the sour, bald Gru, and Carell manages to develop separate voices that are sufficiently similar to match the mirror-image designs of the characters but distinct enough to indicate their completely different worldviews and life experiences.

Like past entries in the series, the latest film still suffers from structural problems, wasting Lucy in a make-work subplot about her bumbling attempts to ingratiate herself with Gru's daughters, though even this narrative strand involves oddball touches like an elaborate cheese festival. The filmmakers employ the Minions judiciously, in short bursts that prevent them from wearing out their welcome (a real possibility given the babbling little buggers' pop-culture ubiquity), but the film continues the series's unfortunate habit of leaning on Agnes, the youngest of the daughters, for a burst of uber-cutesiness that leaves a sickly sweet taste in the mouth.

This will rent as well as **LEGO BATMAN MOVIE, MINIONS, SMURFS, TROLLS, STORKS, BOSS BABY and MOANA.**





12/12 ALL SAINTS DRAMA
\$7 MILL BO 846 SCREENS PG 138 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

John Corbett (MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING 2, MY BEST BOYFRIEND, SEX AND THE CITY 2, BABY ON BOARD)

At last! Here is a faith-based film that seeks to entertain and inspire rather than convert its audience. And it stars two actors from one of my favorite TV series, *Northern Exposure*. John Corbett portrays the Reverend Michael Spurlock, a newly minted Episcopal priest assigned by his bishop to All Saints Episcopal Church in Smyrna, Tennessee, close to Nashville. Barry Corbin plays the elderly parishioner Forrest, who takes an instant disliking to Michael because everyone knows that Michael has been appointed to close the

dwindling congregation. His job is not to pastor the people but to inventory all the congregation's possessions—Forrest disparagingly calls the new pastor the bishop's "errand boy." Indeed, when the pastor's adolescent son Atticus (Myles Moore) declares that he will be bored in such a small place, Michael assures him that they will not be there very long—probably just for the two months needed to close the deal with a prospective buyer.

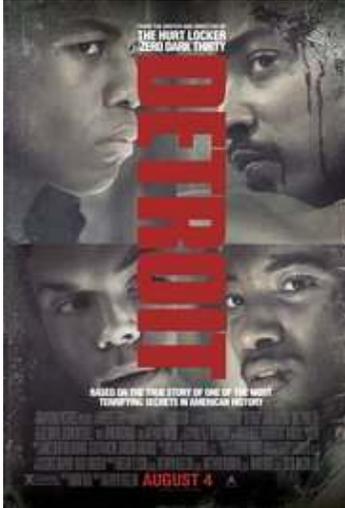
One night as he stands alone outside the church, Michael has an epiphany. The Karen are in dire need, but the church is broke and about to be sold. However, the church does own considerable acreage, enough to plant a variety of crops—and the Karen are farmers, though many at the present are plucking feathers at a chicken factory. He proposes that the members and the Karen plant crops, part of which can feed the refugees, and part of which can be sold for cash to pay off the church's mortgage.

Without consulting Bishop Thompson (Gregory Alan Williams), Michael gives the boot to the two developers planning to buy and replace the venerable church with a big box store. Accepting the priest's plan, the Karen and church members pitch in to plow the field and plant the crops. Help comes in a variety of forms, sometimes from those not a part of the church. After receiving an offer from a stranger, Michael amusingly asks Aimee if he really heard that. The Karen especially put in long hours, those who work at the chicken factory rising early before going off to work, and upon their return, working past sunset.

The Bishop's cabinet also needs convincing. Obtaining their permission is difficult, but when compared to the problems raised by Nature as spring turns to summer, that task seems easy. There is the hurdle of not enough water, requiring some form of spraying it onto the plants. Then, when That problem is solved and matters seem to be going well, a huge rainstorm threatens to drown the crops, requiring the people to fill sandbags to protect the plants. Much of the produce is lost, but the drenched harvesters manage to save a truckload of produce for which an urban buyer is willing to pay them enough to save the church. But then, still another disaster...

This will rent as well as **THE GLASS CASTLE, TULIP FEVER, THE CIRCLE, THE PROMISE, and BEFORE I FALL.**





12/12 DETROIT DRAMA
\$22 MILL BO 2892 SCREENS R 143 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

John Boyega (ATTACK THE BOCK, THE CIRCLE, STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS)

There's a tonal shift about one-third of the way through Kathryn Bigelow's *Detroit*, and as shocking and upsetting as everything that happens in the docudrama's centerpiece sequence unquestionably is, it's even more disturbing to contemplate the reasons the left turn feels so disruptive—and how that very difference informs how America digests and expels its systemic racial assaults. Based on an event that left multiple black men dead in a seedy motel

amid the 1967 Detroit riots, the film opens with an animated sequence showing how the country's urban cores were abandoned by the white middle class—presented with such a starkly grade-school veneer that you suspect Bigelow is condescending to specific portions of the audience. The film then launches quickly into street-level recreations of the events that touched off the fiercest uprising in a summer occupied by them.

That *Detroit* is a response to the Black Lives Matter/Blue Lives Matter battle currently playing out in 2017 is obvious even in this early sequence, and not merely in the sense that it observes the half-century gap

between the events depicted in the film and the state of Trump's America and finds very little to suggest things have changed. In cross-cutting between characters, Bigelow denies the audience a protagonist, but she and screenwriter Mark Boal most certainly supply an antagonist: Will Poulter's Philip Krauss, a trigger-happy Detroit police officer who, within the first minute of the film, is shown shooting a black grocery looter in the back and leaving him to die. Played sweatily by the actor who was once slated to play Pennywise in the remake of Stephen King's *It*—and who needs to have a serious talk with his agent lest his career follow the path of go-to racist villain player Bryce Dallas Howard—Krauss is the least subtle portrayal of white supremacy in power since James Woods slobbered over every inch of scenery in *Ghosts of Mississippi*.



That his grinning evil is juxtaposed against the naturalism of virtually the rest of the ensemble tips Bigelow and Boal's hands even before the film drops the "Day 1," "Day 2" reportage and elevator-drops the audience into what is, by all justifiable standards, a torture-horror film. On a hot night during the height of the riots, police and National Guard troops descend on a motel after one patron shoots a toy gun out his window with righteously bellicose brio. From that innocent misunderstanding, a siege ensues, as Krauss, his partners on the force, and a wavering-but-willing guardsman terrorize about a dozen guests with racist obscenities, beatings, and psychological mind games.

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Bigelow's genre shift is itself the film's most powerful political statement. The newsreel style of the early sequence keeps audiences engaged by scope, and skeptics at arm's length in the knowledge that demonstrations in America circa 2017 "aren't like that anymore, at least." The debasement and cold-blooded murder that dominates the film after the shift doesn't let a single viewer off the hook, and Bigelow almost seems to be arguing that it's a direct byproduct of how easily this country processes (in other words, waves off) its own complicity in nurturing racism, indeed making it part of its national identity. A film like *Detroit* enters the current climate with an expectation that it adds to the conversation. The film, maybe to its credit despite the cultural dynamite it lights, argues that the conversation, centuries in, already speaks for itself, and anyone with any semblance of a soul already ought to see that.

This will rent as well as **THE WALL, 47 METERS DOWN, THE PROMISE, PATRIOTS DAY, HIDDEN FIGURES, and NOCTURNAL ANIMALS.**



12/12 HOME AGAIN ROMANTIC COMEDY
\$28 MILL BO 2745 SCREENS **PG-13** 97 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Reese Witherspoon (HOT PURSUIT, INHERENT VICE, WALK THE LINE, MUD, LEGALLY BLONDE)

Home Again, starring Reese Witherspoon, is one of those romantic comedies that is incredibly sweet to the core. Alice (Witherspoon), the daughter of a famous director, is a recently separated mother of two who moves back to her childhood home in California. After a fun night out celebrating her 40th birthday, she comes home with Harry (Pico Alexander), a young 20-something with a heart-melting smile and the charming personality to match. She wakes up to find two of his two friends sleeping on her couch and relief that nothing actually happened with Harry the night before, as he

was too sick from the night's festivities. Ready to leave the boys, and the night, behind her, she comes home from work to find the guys still at her house hanging out with her mother, Lillian (Candice Bergen).

Harry and his two friends, George (Jon Rudnitsky) and Teddy (Nat Wolff), are struggling filmmakers trying to get their short film made into a major motion picture. Broke and homeless, Lillian thinks it would be nice to offer up the guest house to the boys, much to the chagrin of Alice's ex-husband Austen (Michael Sheen). As wary as she is by the offer, Alice slowly warms up to the boys, even rekindling that squandered first night with Harry.

The look and feel of the film is very warm and comforting, with its golden hues and most scenes set in the comfort of Alice's home. That compounded with the endearing sweetness of Reese Witherspoon, helps to wash away the preconceived notions of what this film should be and allows you to just sit back and enjoy the story. Sure, it's a typical romantic comedy with a love triangle and grand romantic gestures that win the heart of the heroine.

This will rent as well as **THE BIG SICK, ROUGH NIGHT, PARIS CAN WAIT, BEFORE I FALL** and **WHY HIM**.





12/19 THE LEGO NINJAGO MOVIE FAMILY
\$55 MILL BO 2387 SCREENS PG 103 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

VOICES OF: Jackie Chan, Dave Franco, Fred Armisen

After the film opens strongly with a news montage showing the city's beloved heroes, you are plunged into the life of Lloyd (Franco), who by night is a gifted warrior using his skills and a giant vehicle to defeat evil, while by day is an ordinary teenager who struggles to defeat his greatest enemy: high school. However, while defeating the city's major threat it soon transpires that he has a major secret, one he's been hiding his entire life. You have to credit the idea of the third film in Hollywood's ongoing idea to turn every modern trend into a Lego movie. The animation here is stunning, featuring a vast array of

colours, which oddly shine brighter than the previous times around, and a host of voices that are having a lot of fun. There's Franco, Jackie Chan as the eccentric teacher Sensei Wu, and Lord Garmadon (Theroux), a four-armed villain who plans to take over the city.

Though unlike the previous installments which zipped along with the quick witted jokes, the top-notch writing and the zappy kid-friendly comedic antics, 'The LEGO Ninjago Movie' is perhaps the weakest in the series. Some of the jokes fail to grasp the next brick on the brick wall that the previous installments built, which are currently perched at the top and a thinly written plot – a poorly written cat gag, which quickly becomes the film's main plot point, and weak characters that don't leave much of an impact. There is credit given to Chan, who gives his all to make the film work. He's hilarious, whether he's telling this story in a live-action state or using his quick reflexes in Lego mode – a fight scene with Garmadon and offering his keen teachings of wisdom are notable standouts. However he earns his worth and is always there to perhaps smooth off the film's unfinished edges.



The third film in the ongoing Lego series is still thoroughly entertaining and remains decidedly within the silly, loveable, self-aware sphere of the franchise, but a little too often it swoops into familiar territory, feeling empty, repetitive and predictable. Ultimately leaving it to struggle the long climb towards the top of the wall, leaving it to hang precariously in the middle.

This will rent for you as well as **THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE, NUT JOB 2, SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE and TROLLS.**



12/19 DUNKIRK ACTION \$188 MILL BO
4014 SCREENS PG-13 106 MINUTES DVD/COMBO
28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Mark Rylance (BRIDGE OF SPIES, THE BFG, THE GUNMAN, DAYS AND NIGHTS)

Tom Hardy (THE REVENANT, THE LEGEND, MAD MAX: FURY ROAD, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, THIS MEANS WAR)

The incessant clacking of gears weaves in and out of the noise of breaking waves, German Stukas, and copious explosions, highlighting that the overriding fear facing the 400,000 Allied soldiers trapped on the northern coast of France during World War II is that of time slipping away as the

Germans advance.

The overwhelming hopelessness of the Allies' position is palpably felt in the film's opening stretch, arguably the single greatest piece of filmmaking of Nolan's career. With scarcely any dialogue, *Dunkirk* tracks one petrified soldier, Tommy (Fionn Whitehead), as he attempts to bypass the massive queues of soldiers on the titular beach to make his way onto one of few rescue ships. Pairing with an equally frightened private, Gibson (Aneurin Barnard), Tommy will do anything to sneak aboard one of the vessels. The two men communicate in silent gestures, constantly scanning their environment for escape routes, and their instinctive self-preservation is further propelled by the nightmarish shrieks of the divebombing Stukas, with the film's sound mixed to such deafening levels that the planes start to feel apocalyptic.



The fluid editing of this sequence is concise and pointed, magnifying a sense of fear until it becomes unbearable, and the disaster that befalls every effort to get off the continent casts an invisible seal around the area, hauntingly rendering the low-tide flats of the beach as a purgatory. Unfortunately, the precise artistry that shapes this sequence is lost when Nolan broadens his scope to take in the simultaneous narratives involving a RAF pilot (Tom Hardy) defending ships against bombers and a civilian captain, Dawson (Mark Rylance), whose private boat is pressed

First we jarringly leap from midday to pitch-black night, and soon we start seeing the same action from intersecting perspectives at different points in the film, though at times it's hard to tell if it's a replay or a different action entirely. Nolan's long-running issues with spatial coherence in his action scenes explode here, with shots running into each other without transition and even seemingly linked images within the same plotlines featuring casual violations of the 180-degree rule and other continuity markers. The editing is meant to heighten the sense of bewilderment facing the Allies.

At first, this is to the film's credit; the characters don't waste time offering backstory or personality quirks, as they're too focused on the immediacy of survival. In fact, most of the characters have names you can only glean from the credits, with the men becoming too preoccupied with their own skins to give a damn what the fellow next to them is called. After a time, however, the blurred lines between characters only exacerbate the editing's cold, distancing effect. This inadvertently stunts the power of a few instances of interpersonal contact that do materialize, such as the traumatized soldier (Cillian Murphy) who's picked up by Dawson from a torpedoed ship.

This will rent as big as **THE MUMMY, WONDER WOMAN, TRANSFORMERS: THE LAST KNIGHT, GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY 2, HACKSAW RIDGE, and SUICIDE SQUAD.**



12/19 KINGSMAN: THE GOLDEN CIRCLE ACTION

\$92 MILL BO 3193 SCREENS R 141 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Colin Firth (GENIUS, BRIDGET JONES BABY, THE RAILWAY MAN, THE KINGS SPEECH)
Mark Strong (6 DAYS, MISS SLOANE, ZERO DARK THIRTY, THE IMITATION GAME)

The film's opening sees Eggsy fighting old foe Charlie (Edward Holcroft), now wielding a powerful robotic arm, in the back of a gadget-filled cab as SUVs with mounted, ever-firing mini-guns trail behind. That's a lot of moving parts, and the sequence never collapses into confusion, an impressive feat given the intricacy with which visual gags are set up, like the cab door that's torn

off its hinges and ridden by Eggsy like a sled so as to prevent himself from being flattened. But from the outset, *The Golden Circle's* grandiose action lacks spark, never raising any stakes because of how it begins at a fever pitch, a buoyancy that the film doesn't work against or come down from.

This opening sets a wacky tone that extends to the characters, like Poppy Adams (Julianne Moore), a cartel leader who taints the global drug supply in a scheme to legalize—and, weirdly, regulate and tax—drug sales. She dwells in a town of her own design, mocked up in 1950s kitsch and nestled away in the Cambodian jungle. Poppy isn't unlike Samuel L. Jackson's villain from the first film, an embodiment of deluded neoliberal interventionism that sees abject chaos and mass murder as an act of perverted philanthropy. Moore hits the film with an immediate jolt of scenery-chewing intensity as Poppy forces a new hire to kill, then eat, his friend, and the actress looks on with the blank smile one might expect from a ball-busting company president. Moore gives Poppy a wild-eyed insanity that undercuts the calm of her vocal delivery, yet Vaughn's direction never synchronizes with the cracked intensity of her performance, instead framing her in placid long shots that call more attention to the one-note joke of Poppy's retro surroundings.



Despite delivering her drug ultimatums exclusively to the President of the United States (Bruce Greenwood, playing a Bush parody that underscores just how out of step the film is with the present), Poppy inexplicably targets the British intelligence agency Kingsman for attack. Poppy wipes out the organization's members save for Eggsy and quartermaster Merlin (Mark Strong), who make their way to America to link up with Statesman, Kingsman's Yankee equivalent, and discover old colleague Harry (Colin Firth) retconned back to life with the help of gadgets after his explicit execution in [The Secret Service](#). This section of *Golden Circle* miserably bogs down in plot exposition, as well as setup for characters who in some cases, like Channing Tatum's Tequila, hardly appear in the rest of the film. Statesman, hidden within a distillery in much the same fashion that Kingsman exists behind a tailor shop, barely hints at the widespread organization it's meant to be; even when the film moves into war rooms and equipment lockers, it feels as if we've only scratched the surface of what these spy networks look like.

With both spy groups teamed up, the rest of the film unfurls as a series of action sequences that spotlight Vaughn's ability to layer multi-stage mayhem and, perversely, derive no actual thrills from it. Vaughn loves to especially home in on Whiskey (Pedro Pascal) as he wields a rope lined with a laser edge that can dice foes, but shots of the Statesman in combat favor darting pans that insistently follow the point of his whip like a dog that can only look at your finger pointing and never to whatever it is you're actually pointing at.

This will be as big a renter as **THE HITMANS BODY GUARD, 47 METERS DOWN, LOGAN LUCKY, THE FATE OF THE FURIOUS, and JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2.**



12/19 MOTHER THRILLER

\$19 MILL BO 2236 SCREENS R 121 MINUTES DVD/ COMBO

Jennifer Lawrence (X-MEN: APOCALYPSE, HUNGER GAMES, AMERICAN HUSTLE, SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK)

Darren Aronofsky's *mother!* is one of those rare movies -- like Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, and Gaspar Noé's *Irreversible* -- that is impeccably constructed, technically brilliant, boasts outstanding performances, is absolutely brimming with artistry and ambition, but is so punishing and painful to watch that it feels impossible to recommend to a friend for fear that they'll ultimately blame their inevitable, crippling, post-movie PTSD on you.

This shouldn't come as a big surprise to those familiar with Aronofsky's work; many of his films, like the powerful but nauseating *Requiem for a Dream*, are strenuous and icky, to say the least. Steeped in twisted symbolism and unnerving imagery, *mother!* fits snugly into the filmmaker's catalogue and will no doubt alienate many, if not most, moviegoers who buy their tickets expecting a witty thriller about a contentious mother/daughter relationship. This is a grotesque, two-horned beast of a marital drama, a nightmarish vision of emotional abandonment and psychological abuse, all for the sake of art.

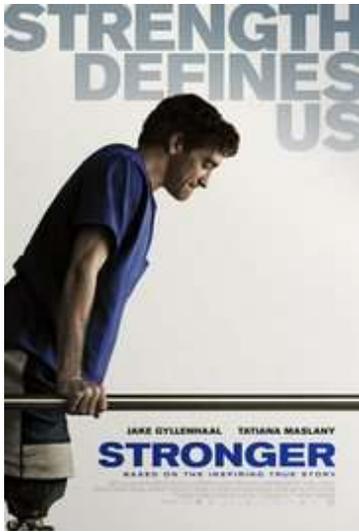
Following the quaint-turned-chaotic life a couple living in a countryside mansion, the film is a layered metaphor for the age-old artist/muse convention, in which Aronofsky has been a participant. The story circles the idea slowly at first and then gradually builds momentum until it spirals nearly out of control, with each act more deranged and calamitous than the last. While interpretations of the twisty parable will likely vary slightly from person to person, what seems clear is that Aronofsky made the film as a way to address and work through some personal demons, though the guy seems to be a bit too hard on himself. There's a difference between self-critique and self-loathing, and with *mother!* he ventures deep into the latter.

Javier Bardem plays "Him", a poet plagued with writer's block and a proxy for Aronofsky himself. As personal as the movie seems to be, it does not center on Him, but rather His Her, or "Mother", played by Jennifer Lawrence. While He is constantly entrenched in his writing (or lack thereof), She remodels and redecorates their Victorian home, experimenting with different paints and rugs and fixtures to ultimately create what she calls "paradise". The friction between them feels like familiar domestic drama fare at the outset: He's loving but distant, She feels alone, undervalued, and overworked in her own home. When an older couple show up at their doorstep (played by Ed Harris and a devilish Michelle Pfeiffer), the tone blackens and tensions rise, but it's still familiar territory.

Then things get weird. More and more strangers barge into the house (either invited by Him and not Her, or not invited at all), treating it as their own, extolling Him and ignoring Her as they rearrange the furniture and repaint the walls. Then they smash the furniture, smash the walls, and smash past Her as they stomp up the stairs and into forbidden rooms. What pervades as we watch the impudent invaders trash the place is a sickening feeling of personal violation on behalf of Her. Lawrence is well cast here; she's got some of the most expressive eyes in the business, and she makes us feel every bit of her frustration, anger, and terror as she watches her would-be paradise burn to the ground. If anything, the young actress is over-equipped, capable of handling far more complexity than the underwritten role requires.

Ratcheting up the insanity of the later scenes is the cinematic presentation, which is typically top-notch for Aronofsky and co. The hellish imagery is presented largely from Lawrence's perspective, with the camera staying uncomfortably tight behind her shoulder, limiting our view. The resulting sense of claustrophobia and disorientation is paralyzing. The sound design contributes as much as the visuals; every floorboard creak and scream reverberate throughout the house, forcing you to anxiously wonder which room each mysterious noise is coming from. This is powerful, often painful, paranoia-inducing cinema.

This will rent as well as **ATOMIC BLONDE, WIND RIVER, THE PROMISE, PASSENGERS, and HIDDEN FIGURES**



12/19 STRONGER DRAMA
\$7 MILL BO 645 SCREENS R 159 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Jake Gyllenhaal (LIFE, SOUTHPAW, EVEREST, DEMOLITION, PRISONERS, END OF WATCH)

The slogan “Boston Strong” came to define Massachusetts’s capital in the months following the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing which took the lives of three people and injured hundreds more. It was a rallying cry for unity in the face of adversity, but for Jeff Bauman, who lost both of his legs in the attack, it came to embody the imprudent expectation that he play the role of public hero. As everyone around him was desperately clamoring to make sense of a seemingly senseless act, Jeff unwittingly became a crutch upon which others leaned as he was forcibly shaped into a public figure in spite of his

personal difficulties. Director David Gordon Green’s *Stronger* wisely muffles the noise of the patriotic “Boston Strong” fervor and mostly elides emotional grandstanding in favor of meticulously charting the ebbs and flows of Jeff’s physical and mental recovery in the aftermath of the tragedy.

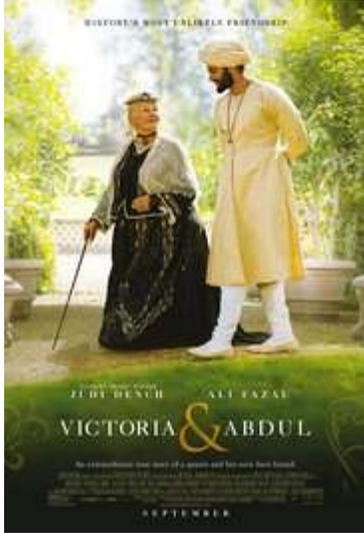
After the bombing, Jeff (Jake Gyllenhaal) reconnects with his ex-girlfriend, Erin Hurley (Tatiana Maslany), who he’d planned to welcome at the marathon’s finish line. She becomes his caretaker, as well as shields him from his overbearing alcoholic mother, Patty (Miranda Richardson), who seems more concerned with taking advantage of the public appearances that Jeff’s new fame affords them than with his well-being. Once Erin and Jeff start to fall in love again, Green zeroes in on the intricacies of their dysfunctional relationship, offering up an unassuming portrait of wounded love and solitude reminiscent in its sense of detail of the filmmaker’s early work.



Green’s approach is unhurried with the film’s character interplay, yielding a lived-in sense of reality and leaving the more inherently cliché-ridden parts of the story, from insensitive family members to the trumpeting of American exceptionalism by the “Boston Strong” commotion, off to the periphery.

Jeff’s detachment from his family members is amplified whenever he overhears them from another room discussing his potential media opportunities, cheering when one of the bombing suspects he identified is caught, or carrying on about how his sacrifice wasn’t for naught. As those closest to him increasingly treat him like some sort of prop, Jeff leans more on Erin for empathy and assistance. And it’s at this point that *Stronger* increasingly fixates on the binding qualities of love, and without idealizing Jeff and Erin’s relationship. In fact, Green goes to great lengths to show how this relationship is complicated by Jeff’s lingering immaturity and PTSD, as well as by Erin’s frustrations at his unwillingness to put in all the work that’s necessary for him to fully recover. Throughout, their love is deeply intertwined with trauma, and so it’s only natural that many of their most tender, affectionate exchanges occur during painful medical procedures and extensive rehab sessions as they do in the bedroom.

This will rent as well as **WIND RIVER, DARK TOWER, PATRIOTS DAY, THE BIG SICK, THE CIRCLE and THE FOUNDER.**



12/19 VICTORIA AND ABDUL DRAMA
\$15 MILL BO 1000 SCREENS PG-13 112 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Judi Dench (PHILOMENA, SKYFALL, THE BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL, QUANTAM OF SOLACE)

Queen Victoria strikes up a very unlikely friendship with Indian clerk named Abdul Karim, causing many problems for the household.

The story sees Abdul Karim and Mohammed taken from India across to England to present Queen Victoria with a coin. From that the friendship stems as Abdul doesn't exactly follow the correct protocol when in the presence of the Queen. She is rather taken with the young man as well though and it does create a rather easy to watch film. Sometimes you just

need a film like this, although I guess it does highlight some major issues that were the norm back in the late 1800s.

Judi Dench is as outstanding as always and the build up to eventually seeing her face and the start of her performance is well built up and creates such a suspense. I think we have reached the point though where we are just expecting a good performance from Dame Judi and we get that in this film. Credit does have to go to Ali Fazal as well though as he is brilliant as Abdul and they work so well together, that was obviously very important to have the main two with such strong performances. I was also rather surprised to see Eddie Izzard as I had no idea he was in the film, I thought he put in a rather impressive performance in his supporting role as well, just felt like that was well worth mentioning.

This will rent as well as **THE GLASS CASTLE, THE BIG SICK, THE HERO, NORMAN, and THE GIFTED.**





12/26 THE MOUNTAIN BETWEEN US THRILLER
\$29 MILL BO 2395 SCREENS PG-13 112 MINUTES DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS
BEFORE REDBOX

Idris Elba (THE DARK TOWER, STAR TREK: BEYOND, THE TAKE, ZOOTOPIA, AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON)

Kate Winslet (COLLATERAL BEAUTY, TRIPLE 9, INSURGENT, LABOR DAY, DIVERGENT)

The story begins when a woman named Alex (Kate Winslet) meets Ben (Idris Elba) after their flight is canceled. The two have never seen each other before, but they both need to reach their destinations in time. And so Alex, who is ready to get married, suggests they board a charter plane. When their plane crashes midflight, however, they are left injured and stranded in the freezing wilderness alongside the pilot's dog. There are times when the characters feel like they are built to serve the plot instead of being well-rounded and interesting in themselves. Alex is a photojournalist, which explains why she asks a lot of questions (most of the information we get about them is simply through small talk) and why she needs to invade Ben's privacy. She also owns a camera, which helps them zoom further ahead into the mountains. Ben, on the other hand, is a doctor, which gives him the freedom to say that he plays Candy Crash in order to train his amygdala – a reference so awkward even Elba couldn't playfully make it work – and you have all kinds of surface-level character traits that seem as if they're taken straight out of the doctor stereotype handbook. That said, Kate Winslet gives a convincing and impassioned performance, making us feel for her character's physical pain, her desire to meet her future husband, and most memorably her need to have "1% of anything," as she says after asking Ben to waste his phone's battery life in order to listen to a song. Unfortunately, however, Idris Elba is hardly given any chance to display genuine emotion behind his cold exterior, though there are several good exceptions.

This one will rent as well as **WIND RIVER, THE DARK TOWER, KIDNAP, THE WALL and SLEEPLESS.**