



6/7 1 13 HOURS ACTION
\$55 MILL BO 2845 SCREENS R 134 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO

John Krasinski (TV---THE OFFICE---FILM---ALOHA, PROMISED LAND, NOBODY WALKS, IT'S COMPLICATED, DREAMGIRLS)

It's hard to imagine a less appealing notion than Michael Bay tackling the 2012 attack on a United States embassy outpost and CIA base in Benghazi, Libya. More than three years after the fact, the incident has become both the flashpoint of America's disastrously half-assed intervention in Libya and the subject of so many farcical show trials that Benghazi has become a meme for right-wing paroxysm. To be sure, *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* certainly lives up to its sardonic nickname, "Bayghazi," as it contains all the flashy but incomprehensible camera tricks, bad jokes, and the even worse self-seriousness that categorizes Bay's work, though his typical distrust of government is mostly evinced here in the huffy impotence and curt officiousness of the CIA station's feckless chief (David Costabile).

The conflict between Bay's respect for the men he profiles and his natural inclination toward simple-minded cliché results in early scenes that struggle for a level of focus that's almost necessitated by the film's added patina of topicality. The opening, for instance, consists of tedious setup and bland exposition that remind the viewer that Bay, for all his fidgety cutting and slapdash composition, is too often painstakingly dull. No matter who writes his films, characters are always introduced the way they are in Dan Brown novels: as a summary of credentials in place of a personality.



Bay manages to turn his forced displays of alpha-male bona fides into a boon, as in an early scene that depicts Jack Da Silva (John Krasinski) reuniting with friend and fellow Navy SEAL Tyrone "Rone" Woods (James Badge Dale) upon arriving in Libya to join the CIA base's Global Response Staff. Their meaningless exchanges of war-buddy clichés suddenly drop into cold professionalism when a local militia shuts down their street and threatens them. So much of Bay's cinema pushes masculine performativity into realms of abject parody, but the speed and calm with which the two men pull sidearms on rifle-brandishing militants and intimidate them with their lack of fear offers a rare instance of this image-barraging filmmaker actually showing rather than telling. This is a siege film that has the benefit of spatial limitations and architectural coherence in the two chief settings of the secret base and the embassy building.

There's something truly bracing, both within the context of Bay's filmography and Hollywood's general dramatization of the War on Terror, about a coda that returns to fields of dead Libyan insurgents as their mothers and wives wail over their corpses and the erstwhile stone-faced leader (Andrei Claude) looks on with silent regret at the price paid for nothing. It's perhaps the only even-handed moment in Bay's entire career, a fleeting acknowledgment that these men might have been as trapped by their own narrow, ingrained sense of duty as the six men who willingly entered an unwinnable fight to protect strangers.

This will rent as well as **BRIDGE OF SPIES, CONCUSSION, THE MAN FROM UNCLE, LONE SURVIVOR, NO ESCAPE**, and **RUN ALL NIGHT**.



6/7 1 HAIL, CAESAR! COMEDY

\$30 MILL BO 2246 SCREENS PG-13 104 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

George Clooney (OUT OF SIGHT, OCEAN'S THIRTEEN, LEATHERHEADS, GRAVITY, THE PERFECT STORM, ONE FINE DAY)

Josh Brolin (AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON, INHERENT VICE, GANGSTER SQUAD, MEN IN BLACK 3, AMERICAN GANGSTER)

A retreat from the ruminative, dramatic comedies that have marked Joel and Ethan Coen's last few films, *Hail, Caesar!* is their most manic work since *Burn After Reading*. Where the 2008 film farcically took aim at the organized chaos of the Bush administration, the Coen brothers' latest occurs on a Hollywood studio lot beset by internal and external pressures. So many scattered scenes and plotlines intertwine that metatextual layers start to break down, to the point that the narrator for the fictional Bible epic that gives the film its name regularly comments upon the "real" world as well.

The only constant amid the film's collapsing and expanding narrative bubbles is Eddie Mannix (Josh Brolin), a "fixer" who walks with the stiff gait of a gumshoe, but acts largely as a babysitter for stars under contract at Capitol Pictures. A man who seems to never sleep, he travels from one potential fire to the next, covering up a starlet's (Scarlett Johansson) out-of-wedlock pregnancy by concocting a scheme for her to adopt her own child, or keeping cast and crew in line at the behest of the studio's unseen chief executive.

Hail, Caesar!'s structure is shaped by the films made by Capitol Pictures. The tonal shifts only become more erratic as the studio shuffles its stars between lots, as when Hobie Doyle (Alden Ehrenreich), the pretty but dense lead of a singing-cowboy western, gets placed in a costume drama where he wades into a parlor gathering dressed in a tux, but walking as if he just leapt off a horse, all bowlegged and stiff-jointed. His line deliveries earn him a private lesson with a despairing director, Laurence Lorenz (Ralph Fiennes), who tries to coach Hobie on a single sentence for so long that the scene recalls the *Simpsons* bit featuring Sideshow Bob getting smashed in the face with a rake, wearing out its welcome only to become increasingly funnier.

The film allows the Coens to broaden out and poke fun at the various aspects that influence a production. Early on, Eddie decides to get out ahead of any controversy surrounding *Hail, Caesar!* and its depiction of Jesus by inviting a multi-denominational group of priests and preachers to give their thoughts on the central Bible epic. Also present is a rabbi, who regards the whole thing as entertainment in and of itself and butts in only to trample over competing Catholic and Protestant interpretations of Jesus with offhanded dismissals like "God is a bachelor, and he's very angry."

On the flipside is a cell of communist screenwriters who abduct mega star Baird Whitlock (George Clooney) to bleed the studios, only to let slip that their ideals of upending the means of production stem from bitterness over not getting the back-end points they think they deserve. In perhaps the only subtle joke in the entire film, the warped prosperity politics that Hollywood communists bring to the cause is tacitly positioned as a precursor to Scientology, another faddish, extreme cause that the Hollywood faithful would frame in terms of making more bank.

Hail, Caesar!'s diffuse momentum doesn't always work to its favor, often resulting in plots, characters, and performances that are partially etched; Clooney, for one, displays only in flashes the self-effacing buffoonery he brought to his prior collaborations with the Coens. Nonetheless, the omnidirectional assembly permits strange but wonderful sights that could not easily have been shoehorned into a more focused feature: a tap dance from a sailor musical that slowly foregrounds the



homoeroticism of a film such as *Anchors Aweigh*; a Soviet submarine docking offshore near a house whose space-age design suggests the work of John Latuner.

The overall subject of the film, of the bricolage of complexes and manias that keeps Hollywood running, has been covered one too many times for even the Coens to make truly fresh again. Nevertheless, their idiosyncrasies elevate the film above the level of a mere creative exercise, and the obvious giddiness that pervades their pastiche of forgotten fads goes a long way toward countering the reductive view of the filmmakers as snide pessimists.

This will rent as well as **THE MARTIAN, SPECTRE, FANTASTIC FOUR, TED 2, MAGIC MIKE XXL, TOMORROW LAND, GET HARD, and ST. VINCENT.**



6/7 1 ZOOTOPIA FAMILY

\$297 MILL BO 3978 SCREENS PG 108 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO/3D COMBO

VOICES OF: Jason Bateman , Idris Elba

During a school play, young girl bunny Judy Hopps (Ginnifer Goodwin) declares her dream of becoming a police officer. Afterward, her staunchly middlebrow parents try to discourage her from such an ambition, bluntly saying she should embrace the pleasures of complacency. But not even a terrifying encounter with the school's fox bully, Gideon Gray (Phil Johnston), is enough to shake her resolve. *Zootopia* promises, then, a homily about following one's bliss. But in compressing Judy's arduous uphill climb to reach the promised land of her dreams into a five-minute montage, the film more richly homes in on her discovery of the complexities of the real world as she learns to navigate the challenges of life as a cop in a big city, assigned to the titular Zootopia, while attempting to hold onto her optimism in the process.

It's the specific nature of those real-world complexities that gives Byron Howard and Rich Moore's film its thematic importance. The world of *Zootopia* is one in which predator and prey coexist in harmony, but despite the hype for this ostensibly post-racial paradise, different species continue to live in separate communities, and prejudice still lingers in the air. Even now, an elephant-run ice cream parlor still chooses to refuse to serve a fox simply on the basis of class. *Zootopia* turns out to be, in large part, an allegory of racism, with Judy, through her uneasy alliance with a sly trickster fox, Nick Wilde (Jason Bateman), as they solve a mystery revolving around disappeared predators, discovering harsh lessons about the bigotry that still exists not only in society, but within her own ostensibly open-minded self.

The film goes deeper in its allegorizing, tapping into the volatile nature of identity politics.

But *Zootopia* goes deeper in its allegorizing, tapping into the volatile nature of identity politics. Judy's dream of being a cop is more broadly painted as a fight to break out of preconceived societal notions—a battle that most creatures around her seem to have already conceded long ago, as evidenced not only by her father's discouraging words, but also her law-enforcement superiors' initial refusal to take her seriously on account of her being a diminutive female bunny in a male-dominated environment. Nick eventually reveals himself to be a victim of such assumptions as well, as noted in a flashback to a childhood incident in which fellow creatures rejected him from membership of a club simply because of his species.

All of this social commentary is wrapped up in a film that plays as a kiddie version of a buddy-cop mystery, with the odd couple of Judy and Nick diving into Zootopia's underworld—complete with a mafia of mice led by a Don Corleone type—in order to uncover a nefarious plot targeting the city's predators. The film has plenty of playful comic sequences and inspired sight gags, imagining in one scene Zootopia's DMV being run by sloths. Visually, there's



an incredible amount of detail to take in, as the titular city is richly imagined as the settings of *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, *Brazil*, and other such fantastical cinematic municipalities. In the end, though, it's the film's nuanced take on race and identity that stays in the memory—most notably the way it's willing to complicate its idealism by honestly acknowledging the difficulties in trying to achieve an equal society. This will rent as big as **THE PEANUTS MOVIE**, **ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: ROAD CHIP**, **GOOSEBUMPS**, **MINIONS** and **INSIDE OUT**.



6/14 3 45 YEARS DRAMA
\$6 MILL BO R 95 MINUTES DVD/BLU RAY

Charlotte Rampling (BASIC INSTINCT 2, FAREWELL MY LOVELY, CLEANSKIN, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN)
Tom Courtenay (NIGHT TRAIN TO LISBON, THE LAST COMPASS, FLOOD, QUARTET)

The first sound we hear in *45 Years* is the recurrent click of a slide projector. Photographs are the film's principal totems, dusted off in dim attics and shining from the screens of smartphones, though of course there are others as well: scraps of song, slips of paper, pressed flowers. But for Kate and Geoff Mercer (Charlotte Rampling and Tom Courtenay), an English couple pried apart on the eve of their 45th wedding anniversary, such fragments don't freeze the past in place so much as expose its essential slipperiness. Casting the work of grief and the passage of time in the vernacular of waves, cyclical and unceasing, writer-director Andrew Haigh's exquisite two-hander calls into question the relationship between the lives we lead and the artifacts we accumulate. In *45 Years*, memories are mercurial substances, always threatening to turn the ache of nostalgia into the pain of regret.

While the action of *45 Years* is confined to a single week, it nonetheless rummages through a half-century of personal history. When Geoff receives word that the body of his former lover has been discovered in Switzerland, decades after she fell to her death in an Alpine crevasse, the news sends the Mercers reeling. "It's like she's been standing in the corner of the room all this time, behind my back," Kate says later, as if Geoff had been carrying on an affair. "It's tainted everything."

Though Geoff's grief shadows the film as surely as the gunmetal pall of the countryside, Haigh departs from the source material, David Constantine's short story "In Another Country," to focus on Kate's response. As Geoff pores over mementos he's long since secreted away, Courtenay's stricken presence ripples across Rampling's face like a stone dropped in still water. Taken together, their remarkable performances become a single, seamless entity, measuring each flicker of emotion with the precision of a seismograph.

It's the summative effect of these modest exchanges, unspooling one after another in long, tranquil shots, that lends *45 Years* its profound sense of loss. "We don't realize it at the time, but those memories—they're the things, aren't they?" Kate suggests at one point, straining for optimism, yet the film ultimately severs the Mercers' memories from their material referents. In the course of six days, for example, a few bars of Gary Puckett & the Union Gap's "Young Girl" become impossible to bear, the lyrics' dispatch from Geoff and Kate's dual biography now subject to revision. "You've kept the secret of your youth...Now it hurts to know the truth," the song proclaims, its romance suddenly soured, and on such treacherous terrain *45 Years* is at its most sure-footed. None of us can skirt memory's crevasses.



By the time the click of the projector returns, accompanied by the sound of crashing waves, Kate's confrontation with totems from a past she can neither change nor prevent sends *45 Years* hurtling toward its finale. Even the Mercers' wedding song, the Platters' swooning "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," now cuts to the quick: Swaying to the tune in the film's last scene, at the anniversary celebration to which their trying week has been building all along, Kate's unforgettable gesture condenses two lifetimes' worth of grief into a single, shattering image. As Haigh's portrait of fragile memories and broken hearts suggests, time heals no wounds: To remember is necessarily to mourn, for the past is always already irrevocable.

A worthy film that will rent as well as **STILL ALICE, 5 FLIGHTS UP, YOUTH, TRUTH, and SUFFRAGETTE.**



6/14 1 LONDON HAS FALLEN ACTION
\$53 MILL BO 2498 SCREENS R 109 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO

Gerard butler (OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN, THE HURT LOCKER, LAW ABIDING CITIZEN, SHATTERED, 300)

Aaron Eckhart (I, FRANKENSTEIN, THE RUN DIARY, OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN, BATTLE LOS ANGELES, ERASED)

Morgan Freeman (UNFORGIVEN, DRIVING MISS DAISY, DOLPHIN TALE, TED 2, RED, THE BUCKET LIST)

Mike Banning (Gerard Butler) says he's made of "bourbon and poor choices." His pointed self-assessment is conspicuous not so much because the secret agent never pauses during Babak Najafi's *London Has Fallen* to take a swig, but because there's never any doubt throughout this sequel to *Olympus Has Fallen* that Mike isn't going to make all the right choices in once again saving President Benjamin Asher (Aaron Eckhart) from the clutches of a terrorist mastermind. And it's the dulled sense of self-awareness in Butler's delivery that initially announces the film as a degradation of sorts, one that's less a knowing imitation of *Die Hard* than an imitation of an imitation.

Mike contemplates his resignation at the start of the film, though it isn't for reasons that have anything to do with the child he's about to have with his wife, Leah (Radha Mitchell). The screenplay so quickly deems her superfluous to the story, though certainly not as disposable as Ashley Judd's first lady from *Olympus Has Fallen*, that it's understood that Mike is just biding his time until he's reminded of his essential purpose. (Somehow, jogging backward alongside the ruler of the free world brings him no satisfaction.) And in London, where the world's leaders converge to mourn the death of the United Kingdom's prime minister, he not only rediscovers his sense of purpose, but becomes a symbol of the film's own belief in the upside of American power.

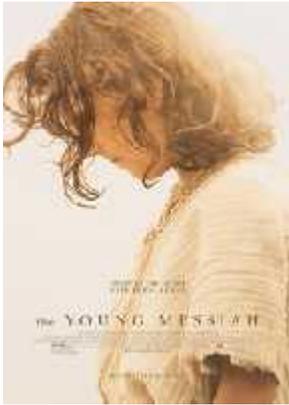
The film begins with a torrent of footage of terrorist attacks from all over the world, all of which seem to point to one man, Aamir Barkawi (Waleed Zuaiter), who's ostensibly killed by a U.S. drone attack in Pakistan's Punjab region. Two years later and it's only the audience that has the intel—i.e., the knowledge of having seen countless films like this before—to comprehend that the funeral for the U.K.'s prime minister at St. Paul's Cathedral is a concerted effort to bring the world's superpowers to their knees. And as Mike and the president arrive at the cathedral, the prime ministers of various countries are cheekily



rendered as dominos waiting to fall in some weirdly elaborate revenge plot.

London Has Fallen is never as funny as when the Italian prime minister is observed giving his 30-year-old honey a private tour of Westminster Abbey's rooftop, but the film's kinetic action, essentially a series of chases carried out across central London's streets and subway system, comes with its own punchlines. Racing the president toward safety after the initial attack on the city, Mike transforms their getaway vehicle into a Rube Goldbergian killing machine, slamming on the brakes in one scene so a motorcyclist can crash through the back window and he can shoot him point-blank in the head. Butler, whether sliding out of a car door to shoot at a pursuer or jumping from scaffolding and into a nearby building, is as fleet on his feet as Najafi is in his sculpting of the film's flurry of action. Like its predecessor, *London Has Fallen* is content to dumbly relish in the inanity of Mike's rampage. Outside of a scene where Lynne Jacobs (Angela Bassett) acknowledges our government's lack of foresight, politics are rarely on its mind. But as smart as it may seem for painting Barkawi as seeking revenge solely for the death of his daughter, the film mostly succeeds at advancing Mike's improbable yet largely singular survival as a symbol of American triumphalism.

This will rent as well as **BLACK MASS**, **LEGEND**, **THE MARTIAN**, **THE TRANSPORTER: REFUELED**, and **KINGSMEN: THE SECRET SERVICE**.



6/14 3 THE YOUNG MESSIAH DRAMA
\$8 MILL BO 1734 SCREENS PG-13 107 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO BEFORE REDBOX

Adam Greaves-Neal (TV—SHERLOCK, ALL AT SEA)

Based on the 2005 Anne Rice novel, "Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt", *The Young Messiah* is a fictional work that seeks to represent a year in the life of Jesus when he was a seven-year-old boy. As a movie that tries to tread the line between Christian audiences, fans of the Rice work, and your average movie-goer hoping for an interesting film, it is a respectable effort that falls short, primarily because most of us already know the story of Jesus' birth as well, as what comes later. As much of this film's story consists of allusions to those well-known events that come before and after, and we know that no actual harm is going to befall Jesus, Mary, or Joseph, there's no tension or intrigue, leaving only the way it spins its yarn of interest, rather than the subject of the yarn itself.

Cyrus Nowrasteh (*The Stoning of Soraya M. The Island*) directs and very loosely adapts the Rice novel with his wife Betsy (*Bad Day on the Block*), starting off the film with young Jesus (Greaves-Neal) with his family, having fled to Egypt due to a decree by Herod the Great to find the child that had managed to escape slaughter as a babe seven years back. At this point in his life, Jesus isn't yet aware of his divine identity, having recently been able to resurrect a dead bird, but not knowing what this means.

While in Egypt, Jesus has his first run-in with a crafty Demon (Keenan) who is trying to alter events to turn people against the young Son of God, resulting in circumstances that cause Jesus to employ his ability to raise the dead yet again. Meanwhile, as Herod's reported death clears the coast for the family for the long road back to their home in Nazareth, Roman Centurion named Severus (Sean Bean, *The Martian*) is tasked by Herod's new reigning son, also called Herod, with investigating the whereabouts of the boy, and, if found, putting an end to his life. Along the way, Jesus finally confronts the hows and whys of what makes him different than other little boys his age.

Jesus is portrayed by Adam Greaves-Neal, who seems sweet, kind and innocent, and is certainly child movie-star cute enough to land the role among an estimated 2,000 young boys who tried out for the role, but his portrayal is often stiff and comes off a bit whinier than perhaps most would prefer from their messiahs. In a certain way, the Jesus character this compares to most is that of young



Anakin Skywalker in *The Phantom Menace*, except without the pod race, action sequence interludes, and eye-popping special effects.

This will rent as well as **WAR ROOM, LEARNING TO DRIVE, A WALK IN THE WOODS, THE LONGEST RIDE** and **THE IMITATION GAME**.



6/21 2 THE BROTHERS GRIMSBY COMEDY
\$8 MILL BO 1056 SCREENS R 83 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Sacha Baron Cohen (ANCHOR MAN 2, HUGO, BRUNO, TALLADEGA NIGHTS, BORAT)
Rebel Wilson (PITCH PERFECT, PITCH PERFECT 2, HOW TO BE SINGLE, PAIN & GAIN)

Like Ali G and Borat, Sacha Baron Cohen's Nobby from *The Brothers Grimsby* is a human Rorschach blot, crafted to suss out essential truths about the people he interacts with. But where those other two characters put their audiences in a privileged position, laughing at (or admiring the patience of) the non-actors they interacted with, Nobby tests us like a hyperactive preschooler, sometimes hamfistedly transgressive, sometimes simply mischievous, and occasionally scoring a surprisingly cogent point.

The film is an anti-snobbery stealth bomb, delivering the message that dumb jokes and other simple pleasures, and the unpretentious working-class people who enjoy them, are every bit as good as the sanctimonious elites who look down on such things. To get viewers to think about whether they line up on one side or the other of that divide or straddle it, more or less uncomfortably, *The Brothers Grimsby* keeps firing jokes at us, daring us to laugh by lining up one after another, many of them stupid, overfamiliar, or potentially offensive, then taking the premise so far that you may find yourself laughing at the sheer absurdity of the thing. Or not.

Aside from its propensity to dive overboard, *The Brothers Grimsby* is a deeply conventional film, starting with the fact—unusual for Cohen—that it expects its audience to empathize with its main character. A wide-eyed welfare cheat who we first encounter as he's testing a mattress in a store by having sex on it with his girlfriend, Nobby seems at first to be as off-puttingly socially inept as Cohen's more famous characters. But then he heads home to his unruly but well-loved herd of kids and the overcrowded flat where he keeps a much-needed bedroom empty for his brother, Sebastian (Mark Strong), for whom he's been pining ever since they were separated as kids, and you realize he's a good man—not the sharpest pencil in the box, but loving and loyal.

That bait and switch takes only a couple of minutes to play out, moving as briskly as everything else in this minimally plotted spoof. Nobby soon reunites with his brother, of course, and Sebastian turns out to be a slick secret agent for a branch of MI5, turning this into a raggedy Bond knockoff starring the odd-couple brothers. Nobby is delighted with the guns he starts firing partway through their adventure, crowing: "It completely detaches you from the guilt of your actions!" That line, and his propensity to blithely kill the wrong people now that he just can't stop shooting at things, is a nicely sharp running commentary on the rampant gunplay in most spy movies and the way it never seems to result in unintended deaths.



This will be a good rental like **NEIGHBORS, GET HARD, UNFINISHED BUSINESS, DADDY'S HOME** and **RIDE ALONG 2** were.



6/21 3 MIDNIGHT SPECIAL SCI FI
\$4 MILL BO 789 SCREENS PG-13 110 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO BEFORE REDBOX

Michael Shannon (99 HOMES, SHE'S FUNNY THAT WAY, MAN OF STEEL, HAPPY HOUR)
Kirsten Dunst (TV—FARGO, PORTLANDIA—FILM—THE TWO FACES OF JANUARY, ANCHOR MAN 2, SPIDER MAN 3)

The opening scene of *Midnight Special* is a model of economical visual storytelling. The noise from a television establishes the setting around Fort Worth, Texas, where the local news broadcasts an Amber Alert for a missing child, Alton Meyer (Jaeden Lieberher). A taped-up peephole informs us that we're in a hotel room, where the windows are covered in cardboard and duct tape. As men tinker with guns, a child sits on the floor, playing with a flashlight while covered in a white sheet. By the end of the scene, a couple of things are clear: Alton is in the hotel room, as is his suspected abductee, Roy Tomlin (Michael Shannon), and an accomplice. But further questions arise. What does Roy want with Alton, and why is Alton wearing goggles and a pair of industrial-grade earmuffs?

If *Midnight Special* is, at its heart, a work of science fiction, it rolls out like a chase film. With the help of his childhood friend, Lucas (Joel Edgerton), Roy has kidnapped the child from captivity at a compound run by a Branch Davidian-like cult that once counted Roy as a member. The sect's leaders, among them the frighteningly calm Calvin Meyer (Sam Shepard), aren't alone in trying to recapture the boy: An NSA analyst, Paul Sevier (Adam Driver), learns that Alton has somehow obtained sensitive government intelligence, the dissemination of which would be tantamount to treason. While Roy and Lucas shield Alton from religious henchmen and the roving helicopters and military checkpoints unleashed by the federal government, Nichols gradually gives shape to the nature and purpose of Alton's supernatural abilities.



Nichols's indifference to emotional logic is most sorely felt in his portrayal of Alton. The young boy, clad in those earmuffs and goggles, is too precious for this world, and the film treats him with utter seriousness. He only seems like a nine-year-old as he reads *Superman* comics, finding kinship with another tortured being; he betrays no humor or tenderness to his family. *Midnight Special* goes to great lengths to present itself as the story of a father who's desperate to help his son fulfill his destiny, but Alton's sense of purpose is leaden ("I saw the sunrise this morning. I think I know what I am now") and Nichols's outline of the family's history is sketchy.

As Lucas, the only human being in the film who seems to be genuinely transformed in Alton's presence, Edgerton gives a quietly heartbreaking performance, but Shannon is grave and determined throughout. The thorny potential of his character, an ex-fanatic who abandoned his child, dissipates as the film proceeds and Roy takes on the role of a bland protector. Nichols retains a bracing knack for producing apocalyptic drama in distinct, naturalistic environments, but his screenplays are still frustratingly choppy, bursting with ideas as they fumble with basic elements of dramaturgy. *Midnight Special* follows suit, starting off as a dynamic parable about faith before wilting into a glum and rather disingenuous paean to the family.

This one will rent as well as **VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN, THE WALK, THE TRANSPORTER REFUELED, SELF/LESS** and **SOUTHPAW**.



6/21 1 MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING 2

COMEDY

\$57 MILL BO 3179 SCREENS PG-13 94 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO

Nia Vardalos (FOR A GOOD TIME CALL, MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING, MY LIFE IN RUINS)

John Corbett (TV—SEX, DRUGS & ROCK N ROLL, PARENTHOOD, NORTHERN EXPOSURE---FILM---SEX AND THE CITY 2, I HATE VALENTINE'S DAY, STREET KINGS, ELVIS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING)

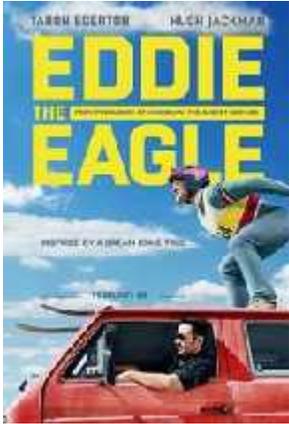
Flash back to 2002, when the original *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* was still hogging up valuable real estate at art houses everywhere deep into summer. For months after its original release, every family member, every neighbor, every neighbor's family member excitedly opened conversations by asking if I had finally seen it. Though I'm not proud of it, at the time I would often ask them how many films they'd seen in the theater during the previous 12 months, and would gloat when they admitted that *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* was the only one. Knowing that the theme of the film was that one should always follow their heart, despite the contradictive directives of family and community, I reasoned that refusing to see the biggest, fattest sleeper hit of our era was a show of solidarity with Nia Vardalos's lovelorn character, Toula.

Still living next door to her parents (along with everyone else in her family) in suburban Chicago, Toula begins the film wondering how the time passed by so fast, and how it came to be that her daughter, Paris (Elena Kampouris), went from a cherub who called her "Mommy" to become the sullen, easily mortified teenager who calls her "Mother." Toula is still conscious of her own fraught relationship with her helicoptering relatives, but can't help herself from doting on Paris. Or allowing her daughter to move to a different city to attend college. Or putting a moratorium on her own father, Gus (Michael Constantine), insisting Paris find a good Greek boyfriend, even though that ship should've long ago sailed given Toula's own convention-bucking nuptials to the *xeno* Ian (John Corbett). But even as Gus continues to harp on tradition like the Tevye knockoff his character ultimately represents, he discovers that his own spicy marriage to Maria (Lainie Kazan) was never actually finalized with a valid certificate. They are, in effect, living in sin. And therein lies the movie's excuse to stage another ostentatious wedding.



Toula and Ian fret a lot about letting Gus and Maria act as matchmakers for Paris to ensure her attachment to a Greek boy, and worry about their lack of alone time compared to Toula's time spent "fixing" her family. It may take two false endings to get there, but the sequel ultimately hands the win to the family elders. The lesson of the first film was that any rules laid out by your family are only meant to increase your chances for happiness in life, and that nothing will make you happier than to follow the path that makes the most sense to you. *My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2* may recycle a lot of things from the original, but that sentiment isn't one of them.

Fun movie that will rent as well as **DADDY'S HOME, TRAINWRECK, NEIGHBORS, BURNT,** and **VACATION.**



6/28 2 **EDDIE THE EAGLE** ADVENTURE
\$17 MILL BO 2007 SCREENS **PG-13** 116 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Hugh Jackman (PAN, CHAPPIE, X MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST, PRISONERS, THE WOLVERINE)
Taron Egerton (LEGEND, KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE)

One passage about two-thirds of the way through *Eddie the Eagle* suggests a more unconventional tale lurking beneath the film's avalanche of underdog-sports-movie clichés. Up until this point, this proudly “based on a true story” production hews closely to the standard genre template, with British wannabe athlete Eddie Edwards (Taron Egerton) risking life and limb in order to become a ski-jumper at the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary even without the requisite years of experience going in. But then, after he successfully finishes the 70m jump at the games, Eddie, overwhelmed by emotion at having achieved his goal, begins to outwardly express his joy by flapping his arms like an eagle for the crowd (thus his “eagle” nickname). As a result, he becomes a celebrity during those games, egged on in part by some canny PR professionals, to some degree overshadowing the ski-jumping events themselves (to the consternation of some of the British Olympic coaches).

During these scenes, one begins to hold out hope that the film will add a more interesting wrinkle to its predictable triumph-against-all-odds arc, acknowledging the irony of Edwards becoming famous not because of any athletic ability or his relentless can-do optimism, but because audiences saw his behavior as little more than an amusing sideshow. Edwards himself seems all-too-willing to play up to the crowd's adoration, to the disappointment of his unofficial coach, former U.S. ski-jumper Bronson Peary (Hugh Jackman), who gruffly warns him about how transitory such fame is.

Ultimately, though, the worshipful filmmakers have no interest in suggesting anything less than pure-hearted about this supposedly guileless figure. Taron Egerton's hammy performance as Edwards follows his director's lead: With his oversized glasses, thick-footed gait and jutted-out chin, Egerton radiates childlike sincerity to a degree that occasionally verges on the cartoonish. Most of the performances in the film, in fact, are pitched at similarly broad levels, especially the villainous British Olympic Association official (Graham Fletcher-Cook) who seems adamant about keeping Edwards off the team. Perhaps, though, there's only so much the actors can do with characters that seem to have been conceived to only be either passionate supporters or mustache-twirling opponents of Edwards's quest for personal vindication. *Eddie the Eagle* remains more committed to printing the uplifting legend of its title character than in actually examining the human beings underneath.



This one should do as well as **CONCUSSION, PITCH PERFECT 2, THE WALK, TOMORROWLAND,** and **PROJECT ALMANAC.**



6/28 2 EYE IN THE SKY THRILLER
\$14 MILL BO 2157 SCREENS R 102 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO BEFORE REDBOX

Helen Mirren (TRUMBO, RED 2, WOMAN IN GOLD, LOVE RANCH, THE CLEARING)

Aaron Paul (TV---BREAKING BAD---FILM—NEED FOR SPEED, EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS, THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT)

Alan Rickman (DIE HARD, CBGB, GAMBIT, HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS 2, LOVE ACTUALLY)

In an elegant boardroom at Whitehall, where the gears of British government turn, the hypothetical fear of a suicide bombing comes up against the actual consequence of a drone strike. The mission to capture radicalized U.K. citizen Susan Helen Danford (Lex King) and several other extremists in a Nairobi neighborhood has evolved into a “targeted assassination,” and then into a thicket of moral and legal complications, each to be argued over porcelain teacups and stained wood far from the field of battle. Is it appropriate to kill one innocent now, the amassed officials ask, in order to prevent the predicted death of 80 people in an attack that still lie in the future? Is it lawful? Is it necessary? Is it right?

That these are discrete questions lends Gavin Hood’s *Eye in the Sky* an academic aspect, as though the situation were developed in a college seminar, yet the film stitches the array of answers into a convincing whole. This is a mere thought experiment in the drone wars, perhaps, but it’s an exceedingly efficient, tense, and focused one, attuned to the errors of judgment and compromised ethics that crowd any white paper’s margins.



Tracing the border between the mediated and the immediate, the film’s brisk, intelligent approach to the subject matter is a function of its basic architecture, a skeleton of screens. As Danford’s pursuer, Colonel Katherine Powell (Helen Mirren), paces her concrete bunker at London’s GCHQ, nerve center of the nation’s signals intelligence program, U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Steve Watts (Aaron Paul) awaits instructions in a narrow Nevada trailer, illuminated by images from another hemisphere; Powell’s superior, Lieutenant General Frank Benson (Alan Rickman), watches from Whitehall with members of the prime minister’s administration, while an American image analyst confirms the identities of their quarry from her Hawaiian outpost.

Director Gavin Hood treats the aesthetics of high-tech surveillance as the opaque membrane through which the prosecution of the War on Terror must pass.

With a confusion of coordinates and crosshairs, signal strengths, and airspeeds, Hood treats the aesthetics of high-tech surveillance as the opaque membrane through which the prosecution of the War on Terror must pass. The crisp pictures, relayed from African soil to Western nodes of power, offer only the illusion of clarity, when in point of fact the conflict’s repercussions are as cloudy and unpredictable as a storm. It’s this disconnect between actions and outcomes, amplified by the first-person-shooter accoutrements of digitized combat, that *Eye in the Sky* elucidates most fully. Shifting from those on the ground in Kenya, including a nine-year-old girl in the line of fire (Aisha Takow) and an operative for the British-allied Kenyan military (Barkhad Abdi), to the cloistered figures weighing their fates in one or another secure location many miles distant, the film’s drone cameras and satellite feeds become barriers, not apertures—the seventh degree of separation that allows civilian deaths to be glossed as “collateral damage.”

As Watts balks at Powell’s aggressive posture, or Benson sighs at politicians kicking sensitive decisions up the chain of command, it’s not any one position that *Eye in the Sky* condemns so much as

the dissociative apparatus of modern warfare itself. The film creates, in essence, a visual analogue to the language of “enemy combatants” and “rules of engagement,” in which the Western democracies conducting the War on Terror pretend to transparency in order to hide the truth.

The problem with thought experiments, of course, is their tendency to run aground at the chaotic intersection of theory and practice, and *Eye in the Sky*'s attention to systems and institutions reduces individuals to dots on an ideological map, or pieces on a strategic chessboard. The film's schematic structure of arguments and counterarguments works well enough to establish the stakes, aided, as the narrative proceeds, by Paul's watery eyes and Takow's sweet smile, but the score's adamant strings cue a final-act swing toward the mawkish, one ill-served by the sparse characterization.

As a rare pop-cultural treatment of what [The Intercept](#) recently called “America's stealth war against jihad in Africa,” and as a sharp, inventive attempt to grapple with what the state's omniscience obscures, *Eye in the Sky* is hard to shake; as a human drama, it can only be described as shaky. “In war, truth is the first casualty,” the film's epigraph reads, quoting Aeschylus, but it's never the only one.

This one will rent as well as **BRIDGE OF SPIES**, **SPOTLIGHT**, **THE HATEFUL 8**, **MISSISSIPPI GRIND**, **CONCUSSION**, **SOUTHPAW**, and **SIROCCO**.



6/28 1 KUNG FU PANDA 3 FAMILY
\$151 MILL BO 2956 SCREENS PG 100 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO/ 3D 3 DISC COMBO

VOICES OF: Dustin Hoffman, Jack Black, Bryan Cranston

Kung Fu Panda 3 finds the franchise's titular hero, Po (Jack Black), still struggling with the burden of responsibility that's come with the advancement of his powers that occurred at the end of [the previous film](#). His humbling failure to fulfill a request from his shifu (Dustin Hoffman) proves that he's not yet ready to take on the mantle of teacher, and so Po begins to once again harbor doubts about his destiny. His uncertainty is backdropped by a new super-powered threat, the Chi-draining villain Kai (J.K. Simmons), and the sudden return of Po's father, Li (Bryan Cranston), whose ties to Po's latest adversary prove crucial in figuring out how to defeat him.

The film evenly distributes its action in quick bursts of fluidly animated fight choreography. Some of these plot points will be familiar to anyone who's seen the first two *Kung Fu Panda* films, while the rest (a long-lost parent and a bad guy with a score to settle) have more or less just been ported over from [How to Train Your Dragon 2](#). But where that film often seemed to suffer from uneven pacing, back-loading its action, as many animated adventure films seem to, in a chaotic and lengthy climax, *Kung Fu Panda 3* continues to find a kind of balance and a benefit in its genre affiliation, evenly distributing its action throughout in quick bursts of fluidly animated fight choreography.

And when its own climax does arrive, it's handled like a charmingly cartoonish riff on Akira Kurosawa's [Seven Samurai](#). Po and his never-quite-love-interest, Tigress (Angelina Jolie), train the inhabitants of an entire peaceful panda village for a coordinated offensive against Kai's encroaching army, each faction's respective attacks devised from the villagers' greatest natural strengths (barrel rolling, spitting dumplings, and so forth). With this act, *Kung Fu Panda* as a series essentially comes full circle:



The student has become the teacher, but only through recognizing, just as his teacher had to, that the best tutelage allows charges to advance in their own individual ways.

This will rent as well as did **MINIONS, THE PEANUTS MOVIE, HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 2, MAX** and **INSIDE OUT**.