



A CURE FOR WELLNESS

6/6 2 A CURE FOR WELLNESS HORROR
\$10 MILL BO 1893 SCREENS R 146 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Dane DeHaan (LITTLE DARLINGS, TWO LOVERS AND A BEAR, KNIGHT OF CUPS, THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN 2)

The film begins in a Draconian pastiche of the modern corporate world, where Mr. Lockhart (Dane DeHaan) works as a ladder-climbing entrepreneur for an unspecified business empire in New York City. Talk of a paradigm-shifting corporate merger fills the menacing dead air of the film's opening sequences, when we learn that Lockhart has been elected to retrieve the company's CEO, Mr. Pembroke, from the Swiss mountain spa to which he's fled, and usher him back to the United States to begin business dealings. The story then smash cuts to the Alps—in rousing fashion, with Verbinski's camera rigged to the side of a high-speed train lurching out of a cliffside tunnel into the mountain air—and will never return from its eventual destination, except for in patchy flashbacks to the scene of Lockhart's defining (and rote) childhood trauma: his father hurling himself to death off a New York bridge.

As the aforementioned shot attests, Verbinski has a flair for introductions, and the subsequent scene that takes Lockhart to Pembroke's wellness retreat is even niftier in its approach. The walled-in driveway leading up to the summit on which the resort is perched winds upward like a long circular coil, leaving Lockhart with only partial views of the palatial estate as he cranes his neck from the backseat of a cab whose driver provides the first of many vague encapsulations of the grounds' "dark history." It's a familiar horror-movie scenario, with the fish-out-of-water protagonist being fed shady exposition while registering the first stirrings of something being "off." But it's one in which Verbinski finds a kinetic analogue to his hero's mental state, with the distinct sensation of the spins reflecting the magnetic pull of the resort itself.



Verbinski excels at such disorienting crosscuts (the film's literally hell-raising climax juxtaposes ghastly happenings in the spa's basement with jubilant festivities in the ballroom above), and in a larger sense, *A Cure for Wellness* thrives on a collision of tones. The immaculate cosmetics of the wellness retreat itself, from the prudently manicured foliage to everyone's spotless white uniforms, contrast with an alarming emphasis on creepy-crawly body horror. There's enough sickly exposed white flesh on display throughout the film—often submerged in water filled with man-eating eels—to make Ulrich Seidl blush, while one bit of dental treatment/torture administered to Lockhart produces a retina-searing image worthy of early Cronenberg.

Alongside all this phantasmagoria, and further augmenting the dissonant effect, is Hannah (Mia Goth), a "special case" at the resort to whom Lockhart develops an interest somewhere between anthropological curiosity and romantic attraction. On the one hand, Hannah, the daughter of the icy mastermind behind the entire operation (Jason Isaacs), is conceived as faux-naïf horror archetype, creepily humming melodies and affecting mile-long stares. On the other, Goth brings fragile warmth to the role, complementing DeHaan's tetchy intensity, a byproduct of personal tragedy, with a more deep-seated, subconscious awareness of her own developmental malfunctioning.

The nature of Hannah's affliction, and that of all the patients at her father's foul human lab, turns out to be predictably unspeakable (prepare yourself for the unavoidable think pieces that will focus on the film in relation to the recent mainstreaming of white supremacy). But more gratifying than the film's muddled conglomeration of themes is the moment-to-moment anticipation of where Verbinski will put his camera next, be it right up in the mirrored eye of a taxidermied deer or under the surface of a pool swimming with

period blood and snake-like water carnivores. *A Cure for Wellness* demonstrates a studio's glut of resources being gifted to a director more than capable of playfully exploiting them without the baggage of franchise expansion, and if not quite visionary, it is something rare nowadays.

THIS WILL RENT AS WELL AS **BYE BYE MAN**, **UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS**, **BLAIR WITCH**, **OUIJA**, and **DON'T BREATHE**.



6/6 1 BEAUTY AND THE BEAST FAMILY \$432
MILL BO 4356 SCREENS **PG** 129 MINUTES
DVD/ COMBO

Emma Watson (THE COLONY, MY WEEK WITH MARILYN, all of the HARRY POTTER movies)

A tale as old as time: Raving, torch-carrying mob descends upon the territory of the Other to exact vengeance for an entirely speculative crime. Fairy-tale villains always seem to want what they can't have, whether it's to be the fairest of them all or simply to rule the world. But in the case of Gaston, the whiny,

entitled, and dim-witted Big Bad at the center of Bill Condon's *Beauty and the Beast*, what he covets is the elusive Belle (Emma Watson), beautiful but bookish, who has improbably spurned him in favor of the Beast (Dan Stevens). A scene in which an angry white man with inexplicable power calls for the destruction of difference in the name of protecting his homeland from a hypothetical threat ("We can't be safe until the Beast is dead!") is now sadly met with a grim, resigned recognition. But



what this competently directed live-action remake of 1991's animated [Beauty and the Beast](#) actually delivers is a remarkably optimistic balm to a festering, existential wound.

While nothing can make us truly forget the horrors of the present day, *Beauty and the Beast* offers an almost absurdly realized alternate universe where diversity and racial harmony are the norm, conflicts are resolved in comically expedient ways, and everyone in town has a great singing voice. Belle asks what seems to be the film's big question—"Can anybody be happy if they aren't free?"—and then is abruptly granted her freedom. The villain is ultimately recognized as the buffoon he's always been, and the angry mob morphs into a dance party. There's even a queer meet cute, in which two men end up face to face during a partner dance—and much to their delight.

Beauty and the Beast's narrative sags in its middle section, mostly due to the screenplay being almost self-consciously conflict averse. But the set pieces are visually satisfying, if not dazzling, and the special effects employed in bringing to life the non-human characters—effects which at times are so dominant that you forget you're actually watching a live-action film—contribute a liveliness and sense of wonder to what's already a delightfully realized world. In staying mostly true to the original source material, Condon's remake can revel in its representation of a known entity rather than possibly crumble under the pressure to make the story new again. It's not about what happens, necessarily, but rather how it looks when it inevitably does, especially for a genre so reliant on spectacle, animated or otherwise. And the aesthetics here, in what's a delicate balancing act where actors must interact sometimes exclusively with CGI, are by and large sound.

The biggest narrative intervention in the remake from the original film is a raising of stakes for the secondary characters enslaved in the castle in the form of household objects in terms of their relationship with the curse that's befallen the castle and its inhabitants. If the Beast doesn't find love within the time

allotted by the Enchantress and her curse, Lumière (Ewan McGregor), Cogsworth (Ian McKellen), Mrs. Potts (Emma Thompson), Maestro Cadenza (Stanley Tucci), Madame Garderobe (Audra McDonald), Plumette (Gugu Mbatha-Raw), and Chip (Nathan Mack) will also be doomed, losing even their ability to speak to one another, much less perform song and dance numbers.

And the small moments of shared grief in which the staff turned objects say goodbye to each other while apparently succumbing to the curse are heartbreakingly believable, even when delivered from a clock to a candle. This sense of shared burden is this new *Beauty and the Beast's* greatest triumph. We're all in this together, the filmmakers tell their audience, no matter what kind of darkness might descend upon us. And while a happy ending is never in doubt for its characters, the film somehow turns that inevitability into an asset. For a little while, at least, the majority of those in the audience can actually be reinforced in their belief that love will always trump hate.

This will be a huge renter like **FANTASTIC BEASTS, ROUGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY, MOANA, DOCTOR STRANGE and SUICIDE SQUAD.**



6/13 1 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 ACTION

\$93 MILL BO 2893 SCREENS R 122 MINUTES

DVD/COMBO

Keanu Reeves (SPEED, MATRIX, KNOCK KNOCK, 47 RONIN, THE REPLACEMENTS)

The elegant simplicity of [John Wick](#) scarcely demanded a follow-up, but *John Wick: Chapter 2* remarkably balances its predecessor's spartan characterizations and plotting with a significant expansion of scale. The escalated but straightforward action is clearly on display in the opening scene, in which John Wick (Keanu Reeves) puts the events of the first film to bed by retrieving his car from a Russian mobster (Peter Stormare). Driving out of the gangster's warehouse, John is struck by a car, only to be hit again, and again, and again until it looks like every cab in New York has plowed into his Mustang. When he's at last flung from the vehicle, he immediately engages in hand-to-hand combat with more than a dozen thugs, leaving the lucky ones with mere permanent disability as he tears his way through the warehouse.

No sooner does John settle that business than he finds himself drafted by Santino (Riccardo Scamarcio), an Italian mobster who orders a hit on his own sister so he can assume her role as head of the Camorra. John's attempts to beg off the assignment meet the expected violent pushback, setting into motion his latest quest for revenge. More importantly, this exhausting continuum of violence pulls even more focus than the first film did onto Reeves's work as John. In his early days, Reeves was that unlikeliest of creations, a heartthrob action hero, and his capacity for boundless energy and tender vulnerability suggested a limited range. Age hasn't particularly weathered the actor the way it has beefier and much slower action stars, but it does permit him to cut his still youthful face with creases of bitterness without looking silly. *John Wick: Chapter 2* traffics in clichés wholesale, none more so than Reeves's reformed killing machine who wishes to be a man of peace, but neither the script nor Reeves puts much effort into the illusion that John isn't instinctively thrilled by the hunt. The actor fills even John's resting face with tense fury, and the further one gets into the film the more the tranquil moments he spends thinking of his late wife feel jarring.

One of the first film's best attributes is how much of a clandestine second world it suggested while never offering any more information about it than necessary. This sequel delves deeper into the assassin network, linking the Continental Hotel seen in the previous film with an international chain of hotspots and havens that come with the same supply of comfortable rooms, ample armament, and excellent booze. The arcane set designs of the hotels stand in sharp contrast to the hypermodern style of much of the



other locations in the film; one quickly loses count of the number of times John engages in a gunfight before a wall onto which light is projected, most memorably in a scene of him staggering against one wall that's lit in incandescent white as he leaves splotches of blood on it every few feet. In a shot that could have come out of a 1980s Michael Mann film, Santino calls John while standing in an art gallery lit by soft fluorescent tubes that project electric blue up into the marble statues that loom over the gangster. Even an ancient Roman catacomb is washed in pale light, and director Chad Stahleski manages to cram a post-rock rave into the subterranean area.

This will rent as well as **SPLIT, HACKSAW RIDGE, DOCTOR STRANGE, THE ACCOUNTANT, and DEEPWATER HORIZON.**



6/13 1 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE FAMILY

\$176 MILL BO 3567 SCREENS PG 94 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO/3 DISC 3 D COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

VOICED BY Will Arnett and Michael Cera.

Though Chris McKay's *The Lego Batman Movie* pulls from a host of DC and Warner Bros. properties for its characters, its clearest source of reference comes from Marvel, specifically the wisecracking self-reflexivity of Tim Miller's [Deadpool](#). From its opening sequence, which features Batman (Will Arnett) speaking over a black screen about how black opening screens always signal a quality movie, this spinoff of [The Lego Movie](#) successfully transplants the humor of [Deadpool](#) to a kid-friendly format, replacing vulgar, smug irony for a more innocent puckishness to which it's better suited.

As he did in [The Lego Movie](#), Arnett plays up Batman's increasingly dark, solitary side, bolstering the hero's self-seriousness with the arrogance thinly hidden within his individualism. Batman spends as much time calling attention to his abs as he does fighting crime, and he devotes most of his one-man assault on a rogue's gallery of foes in the film's first action scene to playing a song about how great he is. So self-centered is this Caped Crusader that he drives the Joker (Zach Galifianakis) to utter bewilderment, rage, and even sadness by saying that despite their endless dust-ups, he doesn't care about anyone enough to consider the Clown Prince of Crime his nemesis. A running theme of contemporary Batman stories is the effect that his own presence has in attracting and escalating conflict within Gotham City, and that idea is taken to a literal extreme here when Joker concocts a convoluted, chaotic plan solely to be validated by his enemy's attention.

Batman's lack of superpowers has made him a popular choice for live-action adaptations, but the ease with which this film gathers so many villains for the opening sequence is a testament that the character and his world benefit from animation more than many of his costumed peers. The vivid color palettes that serve as a backdrop here make a point of divorcing Batman from his surroundings, so that he stands out as an aberration and not as a logical fixture of Gotham. The hero's intelligence and quick thinking also play into the self-referentiality of the Lego conceit, showing off his ability to construct useful vehicles and gadgets within seconds to respond to various threats.

The film's bubblegum animation further prefigures a warmer story for Batman than usual, one that matches the overflow of villains with a host of eager allies. Trusty servant Alfred (Ralph Fiennes) attempts to break through to his surrogate son about the importance of companionship, represented most clearly by Bruce Wayne's inadvertent adoption and subsequent deputizing of Dick Grayson (Michael Cera). Even Barbara Gordon (Rosario Dawson), who takes over as police commissioner with a promise to end Gotham's



reliance on Batman, expresses an open desire to work with the man, and much to his chagrin. Much of the film's humor derives from the contrast between Batman's unyielding misery and the enthusiasm of his partners.

More broadly, though, *The Lego Batman Movie* continues [The Lego Movie](#)'s love of an unbroken chain of one-liners, sight gags, and pop-culture references that collide together so quickly it can be difficult to remember any one joke as another three quickly take its place. One's mileage will vary with this approach given the potential here for sensory overload, but the hit-to-miss ratio is surprisingly high. Also impressive is the manner in which the film pulls from a host of specific touchstones in the series, from the Penguin's Iceberg Lounge to a brief glimpse of the department store Shreck's from *Batman Returns*. The animators even take liberties with Warner's licensing to include villains from other properties owned by the studio, from Voldemort to King Kong to, most amusingly, the shark from [Jaws](#).

While the innumerable sight gags that draw from Batman's rich multimedia history are amusing in their own right, they also demonstrate a facet of the hero that's been buried in the pursuit of an increasingly narrow vision of seriousness. In many ways, *The Lego Batman Movie* brings to mind Grant Morrison's run on the Batman comic-book series, providing the surface pleasures of a banquet of references to every stage of the comic while using the contradictory images of the constantly evolving character to critique his core persona. The film gradually builds to the statement that Batman, perhaps the most famous loner hero in comics, is ultimately defined by his relationships and only capable of realizing his best self by caring for and depending on others. Ironically, this film, with its gimmicked block animation, makes Batman more human than he has been on-screen in a generation.

This will rent as well as **FANTASTIC BEASTS, TROLLS, THE SECRET LIFE OF PETS and STORKS.**



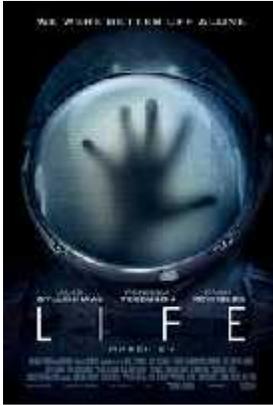
6/13 3 TABLE 19 COMEDY \$4 MILL BO
845 SCREENS PG-13 87 MINUTES DVD/BLU RAY
28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Anna Kendrick (THE HOLLARS, THE ACCOUNTANT, TROLLS, PITCH PERFECT 2)
Lisa Kudrow (TV—THE COMEBACK, WEB THERAPY, FRIENDS---FILM---NEIGHBORS 2, GIRL ON A TRAIN)

There's the devil's rejects, and there's the wedding rejects. Eloise (Anna Kendrick) was slated to be the maid of honor for her best friend's wedding, but a recent messy breakup with the best man in all of the proceedings, Teddy (Wyatt Russell), has left her in a bad way. Not wanting to attend, she decides to, only because it's her best friend getting hitched.

No longer being a central part of the ceremony, Eloise is relegated to *Table 19*, where all of the people who have only the slightest connections to the bride and groom take space at. These people include the rocky Jerry & Bina Kepp (Craig Robinson, Lisa Kudrow), awkward Walter (Stephen Merchant), preteen hormone raging Rezo (Tony Revolori), and retired nanny Jo (June Squibb). They are the forgotten at this wedding, but rest assured, by the time this ceremony is over, they'll make their presence felt.





6/20 2 LIFE SCI/FI \$33 MILL BO 2487 SCREENS R
104 MINUTES DVD/BLU RAY

Ryan Reynolds (DEADPOOL, CRIMINAL, SELF/LESS, MISSISSIPPI GRIND)
Jake Gyllenhaal (NOCTURNAL ANIMALS, EVEREST, SOUTHPAW, ENEMY)

As it opens, the film establishes a familiarly meditative tone in line with so many of the other art house-aspirational space jaunts, with techno jargon delivered at a pace as atrophied as an astronaut's muscles after spending years in zero gravity. Dr. David Jordan (Jake Gyllenhaal, dead behind the eyes from his first scene) heads up a six-person crew exploring a satellite struck, apparently, by some detritus from Mars—"apparently" because the film's whispery exposition deliberately makes it unclear what's transpiring other than, assuredly, science. Or, as it turns out, padding.

The dirt left behind on the ruined piece of equipment is collected, compartmentalized, squeezed, and pressed between two slides. Under the microscope, a hairy Martian paramecium lies in suspended animation, backlit impeccably to complement the milky-beige interiors of a very new-age International Space Station. (If the ship in Morten Tyldum's [Passengers](#) had a janitor's closet, it would look a lot like this.) And it gets even more poetically severe the moment the team's head scientist, soft-spoken Brit Hugh Derry (Ariyon Bakare), figures out the precise atmospheric simulation that allows the cell to start fluttering around like it's auditioning for the next Terrence Malick film. It grows, and it grows, and the world falls in love with the new life form soon named Calvin (after the elementary school precociously lucky enough to earn the right to tag it).



For the first reel or so, *Life* exhibits none. And then a miniature cattle prod is brought into the mix, and the film becomes an entirely different proposition, one which realizes the setup's clear echoes of the first [Alien](#) in initially gut-wrenchingly bloody fashion. Sometimes, the transition of the gear shifts in films such as these are enough to excuse everything around them and add up to, if not exactly Takashi Miike's [Audition](#), then at least a satisfying potboiler.

This will rent as well as **ARRIVAL, THE MARTIAN, SLEEPLESS, PASSENGERS, and THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN.**



6/20 2 T2 TRAINSPOTTING DRAMA \$5 MILL BO
874 SCREENS R 117 MINUTES DVD/BLU RAY

**Ewan McGregor (TV---FARGO---FILM---JANE GOT A GUN,
AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, A MILLION WAYS TO DIE IN THE
WEST, TRAINSPOTTING)**

Perhaps unique among his contemporaries, director Danny Boyle has sculpted a filmography that's aesthetically distinctive without being beholden to any particular genres or themes. For better and for worse, every new Boyle production hurls a stylistic buzz saw into a different formula; he injects a speed freak's glee into the survival saga, the prestige biopic, and the dystopian zombie film. The filmmaker's oeuvre doesn't have many ideological through lines, but it's the work of a man who savors a challenge.

What happens, then, when Boyle decides to remix himself? *T2 Trainspotting* is a belated sequel to his zeitgeisty 1996 breakthrough about Edinburgh heroin junkies facing the consequences of their addiction in a post-Thatcherite society that's left them to waste. Set 23 years after *Trainspotting*, *T2* seeks to recreate its forbear's blend of grime, bliss, rebellion, and cynicism in a more globalized Scotland. So it begins with Mark Renton (Ewan McGregor) on the run once again—but on a treadmill in a gym. He's evidently clean but hasn't quite outrun his past, a point Boyle punctuates with a nasty face plant and a flurry of grainy images of playground antics and teenage misadventures.

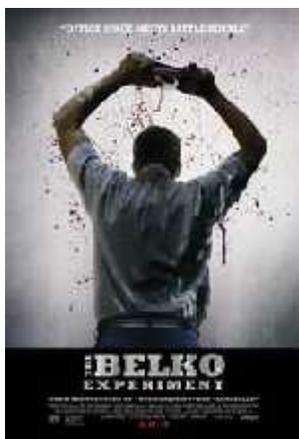
Without apparent motivation, Renton returns to Edinburgh a generation after pocketing the proceeds of a drug deal and absconding to Amsterdam. His friends have failed to nurse their resentments: Danny, a.k.a. Spud (Ewen Bremner), is still an earnest, oafish addict and a disappointment to his family; Simon, a.k.a. Sick Boy (Jonny Lee Miller), blackmails wealthy professionals while tending to his dead father's pub, and his smack habit has been replaced by an appetite for cocaine and grudges; the manic pugilist Begbie (Robert Carlyle), meanwhile, seems to have evolved from a sociopath to a genuine psychopath after a stint in prison. Some have children and some don't, but they've all become weary and fatalistic, and their reunions come attendant with an uneasy mix of nostalgia and duplicity.



They revisit their regrets as they orbit around Veronika (Anjela Nedyalkova), Sick Boy's crafty and seductive Bulgarian-immigrant business partner. Boyle milks this nostalgic trip for all it's worth, liberally cutting to scenes from and recreations of footage from his 1996 film. *T2* makes a minimal effort to update *Trainspotting*'s iconic soundtrack for a new era, instead broadly opting to tease the audiences with stray notes from Iggy Pop, Underworld, Brian Eno, Young Fathers, among others. There are explicit nods to literally every memorable image in the earlier film; Renton's "Choose Life" monologue, which bookended the original, is given a particularly groan-worthy reprisal, taking the form of a wan condemnation of social media culture rather than a more pungent indictment of Western Europe's rightward drift.

The heart of *T2* lies in the relationship between Renton and Sick Boy, but their rocky reunion is another victim both to the wheel-spinning innate in Hodge's script and Boyle's relative lack of fresh ideas. Both Miller and McGregor manage to keep the film relatively buoyant and charismatic, conveying the barbed nature of their characters' new partnership while affirming their lifelong bond. (Miller, in particular, does some great gestural work, chewing gum with utter savagery when he's not snorting coke.) But in following up a fairly incisive criticism of the U.K.'s social safety net with this woebegone tail of old grudges and nostalgia, *T2* lets Renton and Sick Boy down, taking a few easy potshots at old, Protestant racists without positing an idea of where these men fit into a society that's become more diverse and less tolerant.

This will rent as well as **SPLIT, GOLD, PASSENGERS, SILENCE, NOCTURNAL ANIMALS, SHUT IN, and DENIAL.**



6/27 2 THE BELKO EXPERIMENT HORROR

\$11 MILL BO 2156 SCREENS R 89 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Tony Goldwyn (INSURGENT, DIVERGENT, THE MECHANIC, KISS THE GIRLS)

In the tradition of “Battle Royale” and “You’re Next,” [“The Belko Experiment”](#) offers the cheerfully mean-spirited spectacle of an ever-decreasing number of trapped people killing each other lest they be killed. This elaborate elimination process, of employees in a Colombian corporate high-rise, represents director [Greg McLean](#)’s best work since his debut feature “Wolf Creek,” as well as a long-aborning pet project for scenarist/producer James Gunn (“Guardians of the Galaxy”). It should delight bloodthirstier genre fans in various formats and markets, with Orion Releasing and BH Tilt partnering to claim U.S. theatrical rights the day after the pic’s Toronto midnight premiere. The distributors plan to open the movie on 1,000 U.S. screens in March.

It’s not exactly clear what Belko Corp. does, even to those who work there, though we’re told it’s a “nonprofit organization that facilitates American companies in South America in the hiring of American workers.” For most, it’s just a job, until a day that begins oddly with some extra-rigid security at the company HQ, well outside Bogota city limits, with any local hires being summarily sent home.

Only mild-mannered middle manager Mike (John Gallagher, Jr.), who’s having an in-house romance with the sparky Leandra (Adria Arjona), notices anything amiss before the 80 people here suffer what at first seems (they hope) a tasteless “prank.” A voice over an intercom informs them: “In eight hours, most of you will be dead,” and advises that survival is possible only for those who follow each “directive” of the “game” that has now commenced.



The first is that those present must kill two among themselves within 30 minutes, “or else.”

“Or else” turns out to be twice that number suddenly falling dead from apparent gunshots. But closer examination reveals that the dead are in fact snuffed by imploding devices that were implanted as an alleged security measure (in case of kidnapping) when each staffer was hired. Unknown forces are watching the captives’ every move via hidden cameras. There’s no escape: This “experiment” began with blowtorch-resistant metal shutters sealing off every exit door and window. Attempts to signal for help are discouraged by the site’s remoteness, and snipers fire when characters try to hang an SOS banner from the roof.

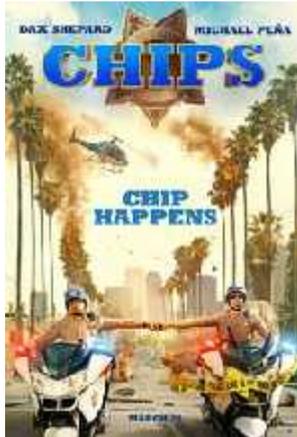
Once the full gravity of the situation dawns on them, those who are still breathing quickly reveal inner natures even they may not have guessed at — particularly once that intercom voice warns that 30 more must die in the next four hours, or (again) twice that number will go boom via remote control. Mike assumes Chief Nice Guy role, urging unity and resistance for the collective good alongside Leandra, security man Evan (James Earl), and numerous others.

A few folks simply, uselessly, flip out under the strain, notably stoner Marty (Sean Gunn). But presenting a far greater menace to the majority is a small consortium of alpha males led by Belko COO Barry (Tony Goldwyn). With creepy lieutenant Wendell (John C. McGinley) as his second-in-command, they decide it’s realistic to “buy time” by obeying some of the unseen controller’s orders — with themselves, of course, appointed as everyone else’s judge, jury, and executioners.

Once Elvis (or whoever the survivor may be) exits the building, you can safely go home, and the coda’s vague attempt at an explanatory social critique is as underwhelming as such things usually are. Still, that

scarcely diminishes the fun and vigor of everything that precedes it. As a self-aware guilty pleasure, "The Belko Experiment" may not quite seize greatness, but it does give it a playful squeeze.

This will rent as well as **THE BYE BYE MAN, UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS, ASSASSIN'S CREED, BLAIR WITCH** and **OUIJA: ORIGIN OF TRUTH**.



6/27 2 CHIPS COMEDY

\$18 MILL BO 2132 SCREENS R 100 MINUTES

DVD/COMBO BEFORE REDBOX

Dax Shepard (TV---PARENTHOOD, WEB THERAPY, ROBOT CHICKEN)

Michael Pena (COLLATERAL BEAUTY, THE MARTIAN, HELL AND BACK, ANT-MAN)

The film tells the mismatched-cops-who-learn-to-accept-their-differences-and-be-bros story we've seen a thousand times before with a relatively straight face. Most of the humor (however unsuccessful it may be) comes from the actions taken by the buddy cop duo (Shepard and Michael Pena) as opposed to from them being a buddy cop duo. This is the key critical difference between **CHiPs** and **Jump Street**. The film is still raunchy enough to earn its R rating and disregard the intentions of the original series, but not bold enough to ever satirize it. Fortunately, though, Shepard keeps the film moving at a pretty fast pace. That, coupled with his on-screen chemistry with Pena, makes this a watchable, if uninspired, middle-of-the-road action movie. High speed chases and motorcycle stunts that are competently filmed will always be at least a little interesting, and this movie gets that right as well.



As for the "comedy" part of this action-comedy... it's honestly very weird how many of the jokes in **CHiPs** don't land. There's a lot of questionable, dated, and easy shots taken in the movie that I suppose were going for shock laughs, but instead just felt tone-deaf and out of touch. Gay-panic jokes without a satirical slant just can't fly anymore, and this movie spends a great deal of time proving that point.

The cast is fine, I suppose. Shepard and Pena both play well off of each other and make their scenes together pretty fun to watch despite their less-than-comedic dialogue. Vincent D'Onofrio seems to be exerting the minimum amount of effort required to make his villain anything other than physically imposing, which is disappointing since just this past fall he gave such a great character performance in **The Magnificent Seven**. He very much still has the ability to transform himself and wow an audience, but he seems to just pick and choose when to make an effort. So, much like he did in **Jurassic World**, he decided not to be interesting here. Kristen Bell is also in this movie, which is a decision I would question if I didn't know she was married to Dax Shepard. I suppose they got to have fun filming together, even if he didn't write her a very good part.

Ultimately, **CHiPs** is just an incredibly underwhelming movie. It did not have to be made, and there is next to nothing in it that stands out or is at all memorable. It's not bad. Really, it isn't. I watched the whole thing and had no problem doing so. The issue is that it also isn't very good. **CHiPs** is a movie that was made and is fine. That's really all there is to say about it.

This will rent as well as **OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, BAD SANTA 2, MASTERMINDS** and **WAR DOGS**.



6/27 1 POWER RANGERS ACTION ADVENTURE
\$85 MILL BO 2987 SCREENS **PG-13** 124 MINUTES
DVD/ BLU RAY

Dacre Montgomery (TV---STRANGER THINGS, HOME AND FAMILY)

Power Rangers, director Dean Israelite's franchise-establishing reboot (five more films are already planned), keeps the same basic template as the original: Five high schoolers are summoned by a giant talking head named Zordon (voiced here by Bryan Cranston) and a fey, C-3PO-like robot (Bill Hader) to battle the evil space witch Rita Repulsa (Elizabeth Banks). They morph into colorful suits to fight bizarre monsters with karate, weapons, and giant robotic dinosaur cars that interlock to form a massive Optimus Prime-like battlebot. The new film wisely jettisons the queasy racial color-coding of the original series (in which an African-American boy was the "Black" Ranger, and an Asian-American girl was the "Yellow" one) while upping the diversity quotient with an autistic ranger and one who identifies as lesbian, though it still manages to position the white male jock (Dacre Montgomery) as the leader of the group.

The film reconfigures the basic elements of the series into a Marvel-style superhero origin story, complete with shiny metallic suits (replacing the spandex of the original) and an effects-laden finale—which, as in your average Marvel movie, is a busy hodgepodge of explosions and bloodless carnage. Israelite gets some mileage out of the quintet's pure excitement in discovering their powers as they hop over gorges and fling notes to each other in class with laser-like precision, and the cast mostly strikes the right balance between campiness and conviction, with Banks's archly grotesque turn as Rita and RJ Cyler's lovably dorky Billy being particular standouts.



While never quite attempting the exaggerated grimness of Joseph Kahn's über-gritty faux-reboot *Power/Rangers*, Israelite does affect a sense of moody gravitas with a muted color palette, some dutch angles, and even a visual allusion to Christ. But the hoped-for solemnity is consistently undermined both by the inherent goofiness of the material and a comically prominent Krispy Kreme product placement. The original series, while certainly no unimpeachable classic of action filmmaking, at least embraced its own ridiculousness, particularly in its almost surreal assortment of high-concept monsters.

This will rent as well as **MONSTER TRUCKS, TROLLS, DOCTOR STRANGE, and STORKS.**