

11/6 BLACKKKKLANSMAN COMEDY
 \$47 MILL BO 2874 SCREENS R 135 MINUTES
 DVD/COMBO DIGITAL CODE WITH THE COMBO 28
 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

**Adam Driver (TV---GIRLS, BOB'S BURGERS---FILM---
 STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI, STAR WARS: THE
 FORCE AWAKENS, THIS IS WHERE I LEAVE YOU,
 WHILE WE'RE YOUNG, LINCOLN)**

Director Spike Lee has finally reclaimed his relevance with "BlacKkKlansman," a hard-hitting and uncomfortably funny film about the first African-American detective to work for the Colorado Springs Police Department. It's gutsy, provocative, and packed with humor that's

designed to make audiences squirm, yet it never feels like the film's sole mission is to shock or agitate. This one manages to excel at something many thinkpiece social commentary films can't: it's thought-provoking and entertaining at the same time.

Rookie Ron Stallworth (John David Washington) is determined to make a name for himself once he joins the police force, so he sets out to infiltrate and expose the members of local Ku Klux Klan. Working with his white colleague Flip Zimmerman (Adam Driver), the duo team up to take down the extremist group. There are close calls with the hate-filled locals as Ron (who becomes a card carrying member of the KKK) provides the voice and Flip becomes the face of the operation. Lee marries the look and feel of a '70s era blaxploitation flick with a gutsy modern-day sensibility, creating a project that is as disarming as it is alarming. He goes for broke in every way possible, which means the film isn't without its problems.



Lee pushes the white power caricatures a little too far (they eventually become too cartoonish and diminish the film's overall message), and there are some poorly shot fantasy-like sequences. The film also features a few too many self-congratulatory scenes that feel like they were written solely as Oscar bait. But overall the good far outweighs the bad, from the unexpected humor and genuine thrills to the solid performances from the cast (including Topher Grace as Grand Wizard David Duke and Laura Harrier as student activist Patrice).



Lee uses history to string together a chilling American legacy of white supremacy that stretches from the Civil War era to last year's deadly rally in Charlottesville. He creates a potent commentary on current events that leads to the brutal realization that our society hasn't changed all that much since 1970, especially when it comes to race relations. This film left me asking "when is enough, enough?"

The somber ending will make you want to hug your neighbors and hopefully inspire others to either start or continue speaking out about injustices, wherever they may arise. We can all make the world a better place by fighting together to stamp out hate. *All power to all the people.*

This easily will rent as well as **ACRIMONY, SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BREAKING IN, DEAD POOL 2,**



11/6 CHRISTOPHER ROBIN FAMILY
\$87 MILL BO 3123 SCREENS PG 104 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO

Ewan McGregor (TRAINSPOTTING, TRAINSPOTTING 2, MILES AHEAD, A MILLION WAYS TO DIE IN THE WEST, DECEPTION, BLACK HAWK DOWN)

Disney films by design are made to tug at your heartstrings and “Christopher Robin,” a live action adventure based on A.A. Milne’s beloved Winnie the Pooh stories, has a charm quotient that is off the charts. The surprisingly pensive story focuses on Christopher (Ewan McGregor), now grown up and struggling to balance his home life with his career. When a magical event brings his beloved bear Pooh back into his life, Christopher returns to the Hundred Acre Wood to reawaken the

creativity of the playful boy who still lives inside.

The performances from the film’s human actors take a back seat to the outstanding animation. Pooh and his friends (including Tigger, Eeyore, and Piglet) are brought to life and they look stunning. From the soft plush fur to the slightly threadbare worn spots from a life of being loved, these cherished characters look real from the tactile artistry.

There isn’t much of a unique story and all of the important clichéd life lessons are learned, but the film offers a refreshing spin on the typical by-the-book fare.



While Christopher is ignoring his family in order to climb the corporate ladder, the demands of his job are treated with respect instead of ridicule. The man finds a balance between family and career without resorting to the typical unrealistic “*I quit!*” scene. And Christopher’s stuffed animal friends are presented as real pals too (they can be seen and heard by everyone), and not as simply a figment of his overactive imagination.

The film has an unusual blend of melancholy and whimsy, which in turn makes this film much more meaningful to adults rather than children. It’s a tender and charming look at how we all grow up and lose touch with our childhood. If you’re looking for a boost of poignant warmth of nostalgia, this is the magical movie you’ve been waiting for.

This will rent as well as **A WRINKLE IN TIME, UNCLE DREW, PETER RABBIT, THE GREATEST SHOWMAN, FERDINAND, LEAP!, and CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS.**



11/6 INCREDIBLES 2 FAMILY
\$605 MILL BO 4356 SCREENS PG 118 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO WITH DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO

VOICES OF CRAIG T. NELSON and HOLLY HUNTER

Incredibles 2 immediately sees the Parr family springing into action, facing off against the Underminer (John Ratzenberger), a mole-like super villain who bursts out of a city street in a giant pneumatic drill. Though this opening action sequence picks up exactly where the end of *The Incredibles* left off, one can easily sense the influence of the intervening decade-plus of Marvel movies in the sequel's Avengers-style team fights—everyone here has a role and gets

a moment to shine in the spotlight—and in the chaotic urban mayhem that's so characteristic of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

It's not long, though, before *Incredibles 2* settles into the same laidback rhythm that characterized the original film. After making an expensive mess of things in downtown Metroville, the Parr clan is forced into hiding in a cheap motel, until Helen (Holly Hunter), Bob (Craig T. Nelson), and family friend Lucius (Samuel L. Jackson) are approached by corporate tycoon Winston Deavor (Bob Odenkirk) and his whip-smart inventor sister, Evelyn (Catherine Keener), for a PR mission to revive public support for superheroes and overturn the ban on their activities. The Deavor siblings move the Parrs into swanky new digs, a space-age riff on Frank Lloyd Wright's famous Fallingwater house with precarious high-tech accoutrements—including remote-controlled floors that slide away to reveal pools of water—that could have been pulled out of the garishly chic house from Jacques Tati's *Mon Oncle*.



Winston and Evelyn choose Helen, a.k.a. Elastigirl, to serve as the public face of their new project, which forces her to leave her family behind in order to fight crime in the Manhattan-like city of New Urbrem. There she finds herself taking on the Screenslaver (Bill Wise), a mysterious baddie with the power to commandeer technology and hypnotize people to do his bidding. After the Screenslaver causes the city's new monorail system to malfunction, Elastigirl single-handedly averts disaster in a pulse-pounding sequence whose lithe, springy fluidity easily outclasses the similar train-based action set piece from Ron Howard's *Solo: A Star Wars Story*. Meanwhile, Bob is stuck at home looking after the kids, struggling to help Dash (Huck Milner) with his math homework, cheer up Violet (Sarah Vowell) after she's rejected by a boy, Tony (Michael Bird), and keep up with Jack-Jack's destructive new powers.

Bob's resentment at being forced into domesticity forms the dramatic spine of the film. If *The Incredibles* was essentially a superhero riff on male mid-life crisis, the sequel primarily concerns male anxiety about women taking over traditionally masculine roles. The film also touches heavily on the uncertainty that many women feel about pursuing their dreams at the expense of spending time with their families. These are weighty topics to pursue in an animated action-comedy, and Bird, with a light tone and deft touch, manages to give them their due. This is a fleeter, funnier film than the original, and Bird gets considerable comedic mileage out of Jack-Jack's wild capriciousness, as evidenced by *Incredibles 2*'s single most hilarious sequence, in which the Parr family's youngest uses his multifarious abilities—fire, lasers, multiplying, turning into a gremlin—to battle a feral raccoon just for the hell of it.

Because superhero movies are still male-dominated, it's refreshing to see a film such as this place a female hero at the center of all its skirmishes. Besides, Elastigirl's powers are simply more fun to watch in action than everyone else's; indeed, the animators have a field day with the way she molds herself into various shapes throughout the film. Unfortunately, pulling Helen away from her family makes *Incredibles*

2's plotting seem slightly mechanical. As it ping-pongs between displays of Elastigirl's derring-do and the rest of her family's domestic worries, the film becomes almost sitcom-like in the way its broken up into clear A and B storylines. It also doesn't help that the story's villain is so half-baked, as from the moment the Screenslaver shows up, it's painfully obvious who's pulling his strings.

Everything in *Incredibles 2* is inexorably driven toward a big final blowout. That sequence is suitably grand and eye-popping, but haven't we seen all of this before? *The Incredibles* felt like a genuine novelty way back in 2004. And as *Incredibles 2* follows so closely in its predecessor's footsteps, and in a time when a new take on the superhero genre—from the too-big-too-fail franchises of Marvel and DC to small-scale twists on the formula like *Chronicle* and *Super*—arrives in theaters almost weekly, it's hard not to be disappointed that Bird's latest is, in the end, just another superhero movie.

This will be a big renter as was **THE JUSTICE LEAGUE, COCO, CARS 3, PADDINGTON 2, DESPICABLE ME 3, PIRATES: DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES, GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY and MOANA.**



11/6 PAPILLON THRILLER

\$4 MILL BO 1734 SCREENS R 133 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY DIGITAL COPY WITH THE BLU RAY
28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

**Charlie Hunnam (TV—SONS OF ANARCHY—FILM—
KING ARTHUR: THE LEGEND OF THE SWORD, THE
LOST CITY OF Z, CRIMSON PEAK, PACIFIC RIM,
DEADFALL)**

Based on the international best-selling autobiography, “Papillon” brings the epic story of Henri “Papillon” Charrière (Charlie Hunnam) back to the screen with a gritty and violent streak. It’s a dark and sometimes horrific tale of an innocent man who is framed for a murder he didn’t commit and sentenced to life in the notorious prison on Devil’s Island in French Guiana. It’s also arguably an unnecessary remake of Franklin J. Schaffner’s 1973 feature starring Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman.

Rami Malek steps into the role of convicted counterfeiter Louis Dega, with his trademark creep / quirk appeal working overtime. Malek sells his role as a wealthy artistic type who understands what he needs to do to survive in prison. After another rich prisoner is gruesomely murdered on his first night in the brink, Dega forms an alliance with Papillon. The Parisian safecracker agrees to serve as Dega’s protector in exchange for money to finance his escape plan.

The film is well-acted with effective performances (although the scenes near the end of the film feel a little hokey). The project was shot in chronological order, and you can see and feel the stress of filming on the actors as the movie progresses. They look just as worn down as their characters, and it’s clearly visible in their performances. Audiences may start feel



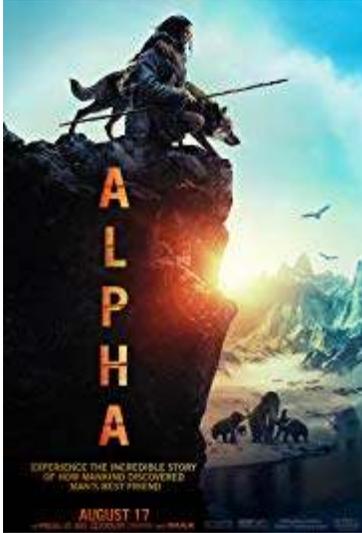
worn down too, especially when the multiple attempts at a prison break begin to feel repetitive. Thankfully the cast keeps things engaging and interesting despite the two hour plus run time. The film starts out in Paris during the 1930s and closes in the late 1960s. It’s a sprawling story that’s slow-moving and dragged out a bit too long, yet director Michael Noer manages to build upon the suspense.

The superstar here is composer David Buckley’s score, a melancholy soundtrack that perfectly reflects the overall mood of the film. It’s among my favorites of the year.

If you’re a fan of escape films, the lead actors, or of the original material on which it’s based, you’ll likely enjoy this version of “Papillon.”

This will rent as well as **ADRIFT, GOTTI, BAD SAMARITAN, DARK CRIMES and DEATH WISH.**





11/13 ALPHA ADVENTURE
\$34 MILL BO 2878 SCREENS **PG-13** 96 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL CODE WITH THE COMBO

Jóhannes Haukur Jóhannesson (ATOMIC BLONDE, THE SISTERS BROTHERS, I REMEMBER YOU)

The first thing you should know, and which trailers have played incredibly coy about, is the entirety of the dialogue in *Alpha* is spoken in an ancient language and subtitled in English, translating the words spoken by a primitive tribe in Europe over 20,000 years ago. It would have been much easier for director Albert Hughes and screenwriter Daniele Sebastian Wiedenhaupt to nudge this into familiar territory and have everyone speak in English with a vague British accent but everyone goes full out here and

the result gives the film its first dose of authenticity. It also could alienate families bringing in young children on the premise this is going to be a routine boy and his dog tale...it's anything but.

Alpha is first and foremost a tale of survival against the elements, an intense journey of self-discovery for a boy just becoming a man. The son of a chief, Keda (Kodi Smit-McPhee, *X-Men: Apocalypse*) is a sensitive soul that struggles with taking the steps toward adulthood that are expected of him. His father (Jóhannes Haukur Jóhannesson, *Atomic Blonde*) wants to protect his only son but recognizes he must educate him as well. Taking his son on their seasonal bison hunt hundreds of miles away from their home, he hopes to teach him the ways of his ancestors and give him greater strength. When an accident separates Keda from his tribe, he is forced to grow up fast as he fights the elements (both natural and animal) to make his way home. Along the way he befriends a gray wolf and develops a bond that will set the stage for future generations.



What pushes the film into recommended territory is the filmmaking and performances. Hughes and cinematographer Martin Gschlacht (*Goodnight Mommy*) go for an epic scale and the achievements are breathtaking. I saw the film in IMAX 3D and *Alpha* makes one of the strongest cases in recent memory to shell out the extra money for this premium experience. The vistas are rendered through a mix of CGI and natural scenery from locations in British Columbia and the unobtrusive 3D provides a wonderful depth that actually enhances the visuals ten-fold.

Smit-McPhee has had numerous successes on screen in his ten year career but this is a definite high point. Tasked with carrying much of the movie along with his canine co-star (also a mix of CGI and real dog), Smit-McPhee doesn't say much throughout the film but conveys much emotion with his physicality. As the film progresses and the expedition gets more difficult, the young actor helps to relate the desperation and doubt his character begins to feel as more and more roadblocks emerge to prevent his safe arrival. As Keda's father, Jóhannesson gives great emotional weight to a role that could just as easily have been a staid macho Neanderthal.

Chances are *Alpha* is going to get lost in the hustle and bustle of these waning summer weeks. If it's showing in your neck of the woods in IMAX, in 3D, or better yet in IMAX 3D I'd strongly encourage you making the effort to see it. My advice would be to leave young kids at home but anyone older than 11 would be a good companion for this one – it's worth your time.

This will rent as well as **ADRIFT, RED SPARROW, DEN OF THIEVES, WIND RIVER and FIRST PURGE.**



11/13 MILE 22 ACTION

\$38 MILL BO 2382 SCREENS R 94 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL CODE WITH THE COMBO 28
DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Mark Wahlberg (TRANSFORMERS: THE LAST KNIGHT, PATRIOTS DAY, DADDY'S HOME 2, LONE SURVIVOR, THE PERFECT STORM, THE DEPARTED)

Mile 22 is a mixed bag of a film. The opening is strong enough to gauge the interest of the audience. A covert black ops style mission filled with brutality and suspense. It is when the film introduces Mark Wahlberg's character where things begin to get muddy. Not only does the film's

narrative get confusing because they are trying to add so many elements that don't have any bearing on the overall story but his character is the one that causes the most speed bumps in the film. Mark plays James Silva and while his character is given a little backstory about being a hothead with violence issues, Wahlberg's performance just comes off as jarring. One of my primary concerns about the film was the short runtime, just over 90 minutes. That may be fine for a comedy, but for an action/thriller like this, you do need more time to flesh out character motivations in a story.



Here Wahlberg plays a bipolar wildcard with the gift of verbal diarrhea, but we don't know much about him (outside of the fact his character is based on Steve Bannon which doesn't make much sense).

It's also pretty obvious that Wahlberg put Iko Uwais in the film for some Raid like inspiration which comes off well but rushed. When the film focuses on being an action film and a thriller that is where the film works. Where it lacks, is setting up the story to get us to the point where we can admire the great set pieces. Despite Wahlberg's flaws as a character, he and Lauren Cohan work really well together. Ronda Rousey who is clearly inexperienced as an actress does very well in her role, and Uwais is a scene stealer.

A pretty decent action film that will rent as well as **THE COMMUTER, SICARIO 2, BREAKING IN, TAG, BAD SAMARITAN, THE HURRICANE HESIT, and PROUD MARY.**



11/20 BLINDSPOTTING COMEDY
\$6 MILL BO 523 SCREENS R 95 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY DIGITAL COPY WITH THE BLU RAY

Daveed Diggs (TV---BLACK-ISH, GET DOWN, THE MAYOR)

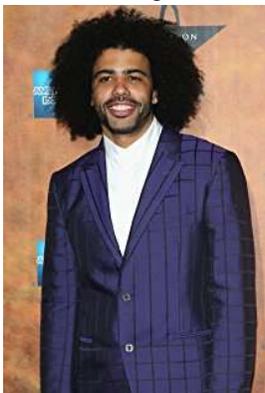
Owing much to its impassioned artistry and racially charged themes, the indie dark comedy “Blindspotting” comes out swinging. Whatever your expectations are for this film, it exceeds them in every way possible. Its anger is offset with a clearer understanding, and the shrewd balance of organic humor with agonizing intensity left me rattled, shaking, and close to tears.

We’re introduced to Collin (Daveed Diggs), struggling to make it through his last few days of a one year probation after being released from prison. While he’s trying to straighten up and put his life back together, his best friend Miles (Rafael Casal) is hell bent on embracing a more exciting and dangerous lifestyle. The two men have been buddies since childhood, growing up on the same streets of Oakland, California. With the increasing gentrification of the neighborhood, everything they’ve known and loved their entire lives is being wiped away and replaced with outsiders. The men struggle with their own identities in the midst of change that neither of them asked for.

Longtime friends Diggs and Casal co-wrote the film and when paired with first-time feature director Carlos López Estrada, they make a dynamite team. Everything about this project is exciting, from its jolting energy to stylish cinematography. There are Oscar-caliber performances all around, and the spirited screenplay is filled with great humanity and humor. There’s something truly magical going on here because the film is a textbook example of the creative use of art as a social tool.



Heavy themes are definitely at play too, with hot button issues like racism, identity, police brutality, class, and stereotypes presented with a raw and brutal honesty. The film offers a challenging look at the power of race through a blistering critique of white privilege and the turbulent relationship between lifelong residents and culture clashes with the new hipsters taking over “their” city. The realism is unparalleled in a fresh and relevant way, and the film could prove to be a visual 2018 time capsule for viewers in the future. It’s timely, poignant, and uses incendiary humor to forcefully instigate a conversation that many would rather avoid having because there’s no easy answer.



And that’s where the film’s brilliance really shines. If you’ve ever wondered what it was like to experience real life from the point of view of those who are different from you and are struggling to get by, especially if you don’t live your life in the minority, then the mission is fully accomplished here. Things always look different depending on your perspective and by challenging all kinds of stereotypes, the film becomes an even more exceptional (and provocative) piece.

There are uncomfortable moments of discord that manifest in the form of disturbing nightmares or in jarring spurts of brutal violence. Collin and Miles often express their frustrations and fears by launching into spoken-word rap riffs that flow like urban poetry. The passionate creativity reaches new heights here, and nearly everything about the film works on an elevated level without ever feeling gimmicky or forced. It’s a film filled with big ideas, but none are overshadowed by the heart of the story: the intimate friendship and deep level of understanding between the two men.

“Blindspotting” is an emotionally charged work of art that will continue to disturb and challenge me in ways that I’ll never forget. I feel it will prove to be one of the greatest cinematic expressions of racial tension and tumultuous unrest for generations.

This will rent as well as **SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, ACRIMONY, TAG, BLOCKERS, LIFE OF THE PARTY, BABY DRIVERS.**



11/20 CRAZY RICH ASIANS ROM/COM
\$138 MILL BO 3892 SCREENS PG-13 DVD/COMBO
DIGITAL CODE WITH THE COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE
REDBOX

Constance Wu (TV—FRESH OFF THE BOAT, THE EASTSIDERS, ROYAL PAINS)

When it comes to standard issue rom-com territory, “Crazy Rich Asians” nears perfection. It’s impossible not to fall victim to the film’s abundant charms. I’d vote this one as 2018’s Most Likely to Become an Instant Classic, especially if you enjoy bubbly, feel good entertainment. This movie has quickly earned a place in my highest echelon of great modern romantic comedies alongside “Love Actually,” “While You Were Sleeping,” “Crazy Stupid Love,” and “Serendipity.”

Based on the novel by Kevin Kwan, the story follows college professor Rachel Chu (Constance Wu) as she accompanies her boyfriend Nick (Henry Golding) to his best friend’s wedding in Singapore. Nick has kept a pretty substantial secret from his love — he is the eldest son of one of the country’s wealthiest families (and one of its most sought-after eligible bachelors). As native New Yorker Rachel navigates a foreign land, the close-knit community turns on her with a jealous, gossip-fueled rage. Nick’s mother (Michelle Yeoh) disapproves of the relationship, even going so far to tell Rachel that she will never be good enough for her son. The couple become tangled in a battle for true love or familial money, where either choice could have disastrous emotional consequences.



This film is absolutely delightful. It’s a terrific blend of romance, drama, and screwball comedy. It’s fun to long for the lifestyle of the obscenely wealthy, daydreaming about driving rare sports cars or dropping \$3 million on a pair of diamond earrings. The movie makes being rich look fun, but also tiring. The characters are all likeable and feel realistic, and their struggles are universal to almost anyone who has ever been in love. The film takes its characters seriously, and it shows. These are far from stereotyped caricatures.

The chemistry between Wu and Golding is nothing short of enchanting, and there are many extremely funny jokes that are worthy of hearty laughter. The strong supporting cast (including Gemma Chan, Chris Pang, and Ken Jeong) effortlessly picks up the slack, including an uproarious turn from Awkwafina as Rachel’s goofy college friend. She proves herself a comedic force to be reckoned with.

I have very few criticisms for this movie because it sets out to create a breezy, lighthearted piece of escapist entertainment and exceeds all expectations. There’s nothing too serious and while far from being a deep thinkpiece, you have to evaluate this film for what it is: a real winner.

This will easily rent as well as **MAMMA MIA 2, OCEAN’S 8, TAG, BOOK CLUB, LIFE OF THE PARTY** and **BLOCKERS**.



11/20 KIN SCI/FI
\$7 MILL BO 1634 SCREENS **PG-13** 114 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Myles Truitt (TV—ATLANTA, QUEEN SUGAR, SUPERSTITION)

With more free time following his suspension from school, Eli (Truitt) heads over to a local abandoned warehouse in his section of Detroit to search for scrap metal, except this isn't a standard trip.

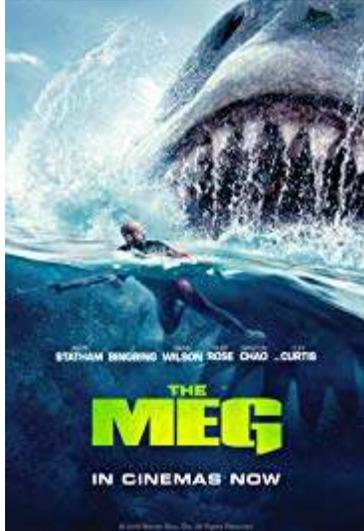
He walks into the main corridor of the warehouse to find the aftermath of a shootout — there's futuristic figures laying on the ground all around him. Next to a masked man, he notices a box, which actually becomes a technologically advanced ray gun when activated.

The event coincides with Eli's brother Jimmy (Reynor) returning home from a stint in prison, and Jimmy has to find money quickly to pay back the gang members, led by Taylor (**Franco**), that kept him alive while he was locked up.



But after Jimmy's plan to get money goes terribly wrong, Eli and he are forced to go on the run to escape Taylor, not to mention that a few more futuristic soldiers have come to town looking for their misplaced ray gun.

Some silly fun here but it will rent as well as **HOTEL ARTEMIS, DARK CRIMES, DOWNSIZING, GEOSTORM** and **DARKEST MINDS**.



11/20 THE MEG THRILLER

\$136 MILL BO 2987 SCREENS PG-13 113 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL CODE WITH THE COMBO
28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Jason Statham (MECHANIC: RESURRECTION, FAST & FURIOUS 6, THE EXPENDABLES, FAST 7, CRANK: HIGH VOLTAGE, TRANSPORTER 3, SAM)

There's a force to the stillness of Jason Statham's screen persona. As his Jonas Taylor says to another character in director Jon Turteltaub's *The Meg*, "I could just kick your ass right here," and though a punch isn't thrown, Statham's intimidating delivery—at once growly and smooth—and poise has a piledriving impact. Turteltaub uses Statham's almost

preternatural talents to ground the ridiculous premise of *The Meg*, a thriller where deep-sea divers and vacation beaches are imperiled by a prehistoric mega-shark.

The Meg's main action is set off the coast of China, and it involves an international research team bent on exploring the oceanic depths beneath a freezing layer of water. But after their submersible vessel is attacked by something large and mysterious, retired rescue diver Jonas Taylor is called in to help. It turns out that Taylor was forced into retirement years before, following a botched submarine rescue mission that responded to a crisis eerily like the one at the center of this film. Taylor, who's since been subsisting on a diet of cheap beer (his forearm veins are nevertheless still popping—because Statham), reluctantly agrees to take on this new mission, in part because one of the trapped scientists is his ex-wife (Jessica McNamee). Soon, the expedition discovers what they're dealing with is a megalodon, a shark that can reach over 20 meters in length, believed to be long extinct.



The Meg's plot isn't restricted to one imperiled space, unexpectedly and agilely moving across the ocean, from the vessel to the interrupted calm of the research team's underwater home base, and then from a large fishing boat before concluding on a beach crowded with vacationing swimmers. Throughout, Turteltaub diverts the focus from the beast below to the confines of man-made spaces, the hard metal surfaces of which cause more damage to those trapped within than the shark's teeth. This, compounded with nods to the unethical practices of shark and whale hunting, gives *The Meg* some topical frosting, as the apparatuses set up by humans become the real monsters. When Dr. Suyin Zhang (Li Bingbing) dives into a state-of-the-art shark cage in order to confront the megalodon, she soon discovers that it's the ingenuity of the protective cage that's her true obstacle.

Hanging over all shark movies is *Jaws*, where Steven Spielberg's warm rendering of human beings offsets the horror spectacle. The great white shark is tattooed in our memory, but so are the travails of Roy Scheider's Chief Brody and his family, and more than that, the Robert Shaw character's monologue of the A-bomb-delivering *USS Indianapolis*, where the stakes of man versus nature and man versus man are set side by side.

This will rent as well as **47 METERS DOWN, 15:17 TO PARIS, GAME NIGHT, LOGAN LUCKY, ATOMIC BLONDE and TAG.**



11/27 THE HAPPYTIME MURDERS COMEDY
\$22 MILL BO 2172 SCREENS R 91 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL CODE WITH THE COMO AND 28
DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Melissa McCarthy (TV—SAMANTHA WHO?, MIKE & MOLLY, THE GILMORE GIRLS –FILM--THE BOSS, TAMMY, THE HANGOVER III, IDENTIY THIEF, GHOSTBUSTERS: ANSWER THE CALL)

In what I'd describe as a "filthy Muppet movie," the comedy takes place in the seedy underbelly of present-day Los Angeles. Puppets and humans coexist, but there's a general bigotry between the two groups. When a series of brutal murders erupt across town, former police partners Connie Edwards (Melissa McCarthy) and Phil Philips (Bill Barretta) must reunite to solve the crimes. The two clash and butt heads as one is made of flesh and the other felt, but they eventually work together to crack the case. Everything about this movie sounds funny (even the title inspires snickers) and it should've (and could've) been a slam dunk. Unfortunately, it's not.

McCarthy, whose comedic talent is wasted yet again, brings considerable enjoyment to the project as its brightest element. She plays her detective role completely deadpan, and you'll never know that she's acting with a puppet rather than a human co-star. Barretta gives a fitting voice performance that complements his gritty and grizzled character, and Maya Rudolph and Elizabeth Banks turn up in memorable supporting roles.



The cutting edge premise is mostly squandered in favor of cheap gags and scenes featuring crude sexual content that seem to exist solely as a method to push buttons. This could've been a lot funnier (and a lot more socially relevant) if writer Todd Berger had chosen instead to focus on character development over cussing and lazy one-liners about drug abuse or barbs about masculine-looking women. It's not exactly smart entertainment so as far as bawdy puppet movies go, this one ranks well below "Team America: World Police."

"The Happytime Murders" may be demented in its off-color wisecracks, but this is not a terrible movie — although it will prove to be an acquired taste for most. (Parents, this film is in no way affiliated with traditional muppets, so use some common sense and leave the kids at home for this one).

This will rent as well as **DADDY'S HOME 2, LIFE OF THE PARTY, BAD MOMS, GIRLS TRIP, and BLOCKERS.**