



**10/3 3 THE BOOK OF HENRY DRAMA**  
\$5 MILL BO 687 SCREENS PG-13 105 MINUTES  
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

**Naomi Watts (CHUCK, DIVERGENT, WHILE WE'RE YOUNG, ST. VINCENT, BIRDMAN)**

Before it takes this jarring detour into suspense territory, *The Book of Henry* appears to be simply a run-of-the-mill family flick about a precocious 11-year-old, Henry Carpenter (Jaeden Lieberher), who runs his family's household more than his mother, Susan (Naomi Watts), does. While clearly a loving parent, Susan prefers to play video games and get drunk with her friend, Sheila (Sarah Silverman), while Henry looks after his younger brother, Peter (Jacob Tremblay), and takes care of the family finances. Henry is the sort of adorable child genius who only exists in the minds of screenwriters, a mature, sensitive man trapped in the body of a boy whose mind is a bottomless fount of knowledge about everything from ballistics to neurology.

Midway through the film, Henry develops a brain tumor and dies in his mother's arms. He leaves behind a secret notebook explaining that their neighbor, Glenn (Dean Norris), is abusing his stepdaughter, Christina (Maddie Ziegler). Susan later finds a tape recording in which Henry provides detailed instructions on how to kill Glenn, and it's at this point that the film really goes off the rails, taking a sharp turn into the macabre with no modulation in tone to ease the transition. Indeed, there's little sense that Trevorrow recognizes how disorienting it is for the audience to watch Susan go from reading bedtime stories to practicing head shots with a sniper rifle.

At the last minute, Susan decides not to take the final shot, a moment that's played with such a false note of mushy emotionalism that one can't help but laugh in disbelief (photos of Susan and Henry together appear at an opportune moment). Susan's decision not to murder Glenn is treated as an inspirational breakthrough—the a-ha moment when she finally realizes the meaning of maternal responsibility—rather than a difficult decision about how to respond when one encounters others committing horrendous acts of violence. Whatever genuine moral dilemma is buried beneath the screenplay's mounds of half-baked melodrama is completely undone anyway by a cop-out ending that gives the audience the death it has been primed for without getting Susan's hands dirty.



This will rent as well as **NORMAN, THE ZOO KEEPER'S WIFE, TABLE 19, BEFORE I FALL and GOLD.**



**10/3 3 A GHOST STORY** SCI FI/ HORROR  
\$3 MILL BO 456 SCREENS R 92 MINUTES  
DVD/BLU RAY

**Casey Affleck (TRIPLE 9, MANCHESTER BY THE SEA, THE FINEST HOURS, INTERSTELLAR, OUT OF THE FURNACE)**

*A Ghost Story's* opening moments feign a kind of horror-film setup, one abstracted to the point of tonal blankness by the time the actual haunting begins. A couple, credited as “C” and “M” (Affleck and Rooney Mara), creep through their Texas home to investigate the source of mysterious bumps in the night. The first of many laboriously elongated takes comes shortly thereafter: a very slow pan from a wide shot of C and M's house to a car wreck just a few yards away. The next scene finds this accident's sole designated casualty suddenly reanimated, which sets up an unresolved friction between the ghost's blatantly humorous visual presence and Lowery's insistence on approaching his film and its themes with a dire sense of self-seriousness.

The tone here is so ineffective because the narrative is prone to obliqueness: C is a bearded singer-songwriter bro defined by scattered, always-fragmented flashback scenes of his relationship with M, and by the shitty, reverb-laden indie music he home-records—which intermittently, and cloyingly, serves as a soundtrack for the film. For M, we have even less to go on than that. Maybe she has a job? She at least definitely has a friend willing to make her a pie—which she gobbles down almost in its entirety in a single take, in a scene that acts as something of a litmus test for the film. Will you, perhaps, just nod in agreement at Lowery's self-evident affection for Tsai Ming-liang movies? Or will you ponder what character depth is actually being communicated by watching a long scene of someone emotionlessly binge-eating a pie?



We do at least learn marginally more from Mara's pie-eating than we do from a later tangent involving a “prognosticator” played by Will Oldham, who delivers a lengthy oral history of humankind—seemingly meant to be taken as sincere—to a bunch of unrealistically rapt partygoers. But really, *A Ghost Story* is probably better off in the sequences that get rid of humans entirely, cycling through alien tableaux of refuse and derelict architecture in the key of Nikolaus Geyrhalter's [Homo Sapiens](#). It's certainly better off when it doesn't try to do anything with minorities, who factor into this narrative twice: a Hispanic family that reacts with an offensive stoicism to the presence of a destructive poltergeist (because of course they believe in spirits!); and unseen-but-heard 19th-century Native Americans who leave the bodies of unnamed white settlers dead on the ground and filled with arrows.

This will rent as well as **A CURE FOR WELLNESS, THE BELCO EXPERIMENT, T2: TRAINSPOTTING, RINGS** and **UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS**.



10/3 **1** **PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES** ADVENTURE  
\$181 MILL BO 4236 SCREENS DVD/COMBO

**Johnny Depp (FANTASTIC BEASTS, ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, BLACK MASS, EDWARD SCISSORS HANDS)**

Picking up a generation after the events of Verbinski's [At World's End](#), *Dead Men Tell No Tales* follows Henry Turner (Brenton Thwaites), the son of Will Turner (Orlando Bloom) and Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley), as he attempts to lift the curse placed upon his father to captain the ghostly *Flying Dutchman*. To that end, he naturally needs Jack's help, though the pirate quickly finds himself the target of *another* ghost ship, this one headed by Salazar (Javier Bardem), a pirate hunter who fell afoul of a young Jack's actions and remains cursed to a half-life lived entirely at sea.

This is the third time in five *Pirates of the Caribbean* films that such a conceit has been employed, and it's the first marker of numerous callbacks that make *Dead Men Tell No Tales* feel more like a shoddy reboot than a continuation. Once again, the heroes must find a magical treasure that can undo curses, and they need Jack's magic compass to guide them. Henry is every bit as joylessly handsome as his father, though Thwaites lacks the straight-man chemistry that Bloom had with Depp, thus preventing him from being a counterweight to the latter's preening and ensuring that he becomes a helpless bystander to it. And amid all these filthy, sweat-covered men is an intelligent, self-sufficient woman: Carina Smyth (Kaya Scodelario), an astronomer whose ability to do math gets her sentenced to death as a witch—a literal throwaway joke from *Family Guy*.



In *Dead Men Tell No Tales*, the action is big but straightforward: In an early scene, Jack's crew plans to hijack a bank vault and inadvertently drags the whole bank off—a funny sight, yes, but one that never goes any further than the Terry Gilliam-esque sight of an enormous building being yanked straight down narrow streets, barring a few pratfalls from Jack that scarcely deviate from the main action. Later sea battles, invariably shot in nighttime, reduce Salazar and his fragmented, decayed men to murky shadows, to say nothing of their semi-sentient ship, which loses all the eerie impact of the Venus-flytrap effect of its exposed frame ribs opening and closing over unlucky vessels. If Verbinski's unwieldy but coherent sequences resemble the warped and original creations of a bright child messing around with a bunch of random LEGOs, Rønning and Sandberg's rigid, functional scenes give the impression of having been schematically erected from a predetermined toy kit.

This will rent as well as **KONG: SKULL ISLAND, BOSS BABY, POWER RANGERS, ROUGE ONE: STAR WARS, and MOANA.**



10/3 **3** 6 DAYS ACTION  
\$2 MILL BO 356 SCREENS R 92 MINUTES  
DVD/BLU RAY

**Mark Strong (KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE, BEFORE I GO TO SLEEP, ZERO DARK THIRTY, BLOOD, GET CARTER)**

We never see Margaret Thatcher or even hear her voice until the final minutes of *6 Days*, yet the British prime minister's cold, implacable presence pervades nearly every frame of director Toa Fraser's film. Depicting the six-day standoff between terrorists associated with the Iranian separatist group Democratic Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Arabistan (DRFLA) and the British government at London's Iranian embassy in 1980, *6 Days* moves methodically and dispassionately toward its predestined conclusion. By the end, it leaves the root causes of the militant group's malcontent entirely unexplored, bluntly justifying, even celebrating, the Iron Lady's typically staunch refusal to admit her country's guilt for the byproducts of its imperialist ventures or to negotiate with terrorists no matter the cost.

In 1980, Thatcher was still a fledgling prime minister, so the potential rescue of the 26 hostages and the execution of the terrorists provided her with the chance to display her strength to the world at large. But rather than following the hostage situation from the upper echelons of the British government where the important decisions were made, *6 Days* unfolds from the viewpoints of three individuals on the ground: Max Vernon (Mark Strong), a hostage negotiator, Kate Addie (Abbie Cornish), a BBC news reporter, and Rusty Firmin (Jamie Bell), the leader of the Special Air Services (SAS) unit that's waiting outside the embassy for the go-ahead to begin their raid. By presenting multiple perspectives, *6 Days* operates under the guise of well-rounded objectivity, further shrouding its blunt, politically charged admonitions with a structure that portends peace and violence as equally likely outcomes.



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While Max is presented as a pacifist who's looking for a peaceful resolution through his negotiations with the terrorists' leader, Salim (Ben Turner), an increasing futility encroaches on the arbitration as Max continually runs into situations that prevent him from fully appeasing the Iranians' demands. He's presented as admirable for the intellectually agile ways he convinces Salim to release two hostages and keep the lines of communication between the two sides open. Nonetheless, his methods are ultimately presented as ineffectual in the face of the impending siege, whereupon the film transfers all its praises of heroism to Rusty and the SAS squad, who prepare diligently for the opportunity to make Mother England proud—and on live television.

This will rent as well as **THE WALL, LOST CITY OF Z, ASSASSIN'S CREED, and LIFE ON THE LINE.**



**10/10 1** **BABY DRIVER** COMEDY  
\$76 MILL BO 2875 SCREENS **R** 112 MINUTES  
DVD/BLU RAY

**Ansel Elgort (INSURGENT, PAPER TOWNS, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, DIVERGENT)**

**Jon Hamm ( TV---MAD MEN, WEB THERAPY, PARKS AND RECREATION—FILM—KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES, MILLION DOLLAR ARM)**

June 24, 2017 The technical sophistication of Edgar Wright's artistry reaches new heights with the heist-cum-musical *Baby Driver*, which fully weds the filmmaker's signature flair for rapid but precise editing patterns with his propensity for carefully chosen soundtracks. As robbers carry out a bank job in the opening scene, the camera stays with wheelman Baby (Ansel Elgort) as he listens to the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's "Bellbottoms," swaying to the melody and even popping the windshield wipers on the downbeats. The camera moves with Baby's taps and grooves, with the cuts likewise timed on the song's twos and fours, so as to add kinetic energy to images of the driver simply waiting for his crew to leave the bank. In the ensuing chase, this synthesis of on-screen movement, editing, and musical timing coalesces into a balletic tour de force, complete with wry visual gags like Baby hiding among cars of a similar color and make on the highway so as to dupe a police helicopter.

Compared to the grid layout of so many metropolises, Atlanta's streets were constructed around largely defunct railroad lines, leaving thickets of curved and angular intersections and dead ends, all hemmed in by four intersecting interstates that, when



viewed on a map, look suspiciously like the anarchy symbol. Making a car-chase movie in the bottleneck capital of the United States is like crafting a submarine thriller in Lake Tahoe: theoretically possible but so fundamentally constrained as to be absurd. Wright uses this to his advantage, however, structuring his chases around necessary drifts and sharp turns that better fit the soundtrack's beats. As in the Toronto-set [Scott Pilgrim vs. the World](#), the director takes a tax-break shooting location on its own terms, exploring the idiosyncrasies of a city's unique construction.

The gnarled schematic of Atlanta's streets leads to vehicular interactions between Baby, cop cars, and civilian obstacles that play out as delicate dances more than wanton carnage. Each major sequence in *Baby Driver* has a distinct sense of choreography to match the disparate styles of the soundtrack's songs, which range from the Damned's caterwauling punk to the anthemic roar of Golden Earring's "Radar Love." The prevalence of the songs is justified by Baby's long-standing tinnitus affliction, a scar of a tragic childhood accident that's clouded his head in more ways than one.

With its music-dependent protagonist blasting away the physical reminder of childhood trauma, *Baby Driver* literalizes Wright's fascination with people's emotional overreliance on pop culture as a cover for arrested development. Yet the film approaches the theme from a different angle, presenting in Baby not a stunted man-child, but a boy forced to grow up too soon, who's on a quest for innocence rather than one to shed it. This flipped dynamic stresses the film's scenes of softer introspection, as evidenced by the equal prominence of gentle soundtrack choices like the gossamer filigrees of Dave Brubeck's "Unsquare Dance" alongside heart-pumping jams. Befitting a director so preoccupied with the necessity to grow while never losing sight of one's benign obsessions, Wright continues to hone his skills. He's no longer the idol-aping synthesist of the VCR Generation. Now, he looks increasingly like the most original action filmmaker of his generation.

This will rent as well as **JOHN WICK 2**, **CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**, **THE GIFTED**, **PASSENGERS** and **THE FATE OF THE FURIOUS**.



**10/10 2 THE BEGUILLED DRAMA**  
**\$14 MILL BO 1894 SCREENS R 93 MINUTES**  
**DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX**

**Nicole Kidman (LION, SECRET IN THEIR EYES, THE RAILWAY MAN, BEWITCHED, MOULIN ROUGE)**  
**Kirsten Dunst (HIDDEN FIGURES, MIDNIGHT SPECIAL, ANCHORMAN 2, SPIDERMAN 3)**

*The Beguiled* takes place at a decaying Seminary for Young Ladies in rural Virginia during the height of the Civil War, a small community lorded over by headmistress Martha Farnsworth (Nicole Kidman, applying her trademark vampish eyebrow maneuvers to the maximum). While picking mushrooms in the forest, pre-teen student Amy (Oona Lawrence) happens upon a wounded Union soldier, John McBurney (Colin Farrell, plausibly sociopathic yet doe-eyed in a single breath), and drags him back to the school to convalesce. Much of the tension constituting *The Beguiled's* first two acts is subsequently wrought from the mixed reactions that greet him there. Probing her characters one languorous close-up at a time, Coppola weighs Martha's tough-love skepticism toward the corporal against the softer pinings of both Alicia (Elle Fanning), the school's oldest pupil, and Edwina (Kirsten Dunst), one of the teachers. Sofia Coppola serves up a cautionary revenge tale told from multiple perspectives, and thus none at all.



The film is a display of aesthetic-emotive prowess, told from one ethereal and vogueish look to the next—and if taken strictly as a mood piece, it's beyond reproach. Coppola's ensemble manages to evoke dull echoes of life-worn pain from a screenplay that gives them essentially zero backstory and a series of dialogues whose sparse and withholding nature can only be deliberate. The case can be made for *The Beguiled*, adapted like the 1971 Don Siegel version from the 1966 Thomas P. Cullinan novel, fitting into a cinephilic legacy: The hushed timbre of Amy's relationship to the immobilized McBurney harkens back to Victor Erice's [Spirit of the Beehive](#), while the remoteness of this particular moss-eaten, Greek-columned location evokes [Picnic at Hanging Rock](#), [Black Narcissus](#), and the films of Luchino Visconti.

An immigrant-cum-mercenary who's pegged the value of his life at \$300, McBurney wastes no time gaslighting Alicia and Edwina. After developing feelings toward the bedridden Irishman that are both complicated and sincere, Edwina finds him *in flagrante delicto* late one night with Alicia—and indeed, without Dunst's impeccably coiled performance, it'd be hard to know for sure what this betrayal really means. One quick glimpse turns the film on its axis, bringing Coppola's screenplay further into revenge-thriller territory and exposing the story's own, spring-loaded salacious side in the process.

The long-simmered breakdown in relations between McBurney and his keepers—to say nothing of his inevitable and psychotic assertion of male dominance—is *The Beguiled's* make-or-break moment: prematurely climactic after so much fragmentary quietude. Suddenly, the film is less apiece with the socio-historical context of the Civil War than it is with the trendy and, lest we forget, long-overdue misandry of 2017. This isn't to say that men *aren't* trash; it's that the film stakes so much on that revelation as to linger in the memory, once the credits have rolled, as something of a pantomime in themes.

This will rent as well as **THE ZOOKEEPER'S WIFE**, **THE PROMISE**, **THE SHACK**, and **DENIAL**.



**10/10 1 DESPICABLE ME 3 FAMILY**  
\$258 MILL BO 4146 SCREENS PG 90 MINUTES  
DVD/COMBO

**VOICES OF: Steve Carell, Kristen Wiig.**

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

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

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



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

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

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



**10/10 1 THE HOUSE COMEDY**

\$27 MILL BO 2686 SCREENS R 88 MINUTES  
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

**Will Ferrell (DADDY'S HOME, ANCHOR MAN 2, GET HARD, THE CAMPAIGN, BLADES OF GLORY)  
Amy Poehler (TV—PARKS AND RECREATION, THE AWESOMES, WET HOT AMERICAN SUMMER)**

Nonsensical characterizations abound throughout *The House* without ever dipping into unbridled absurdity as suburban couple Scott (Will Ferrell) and Kate Johansen (Amy Poehler), upon realizing that their daughter's college fund and potential scholarship opportunities have evaporated, take a trip with Frank (Jason Mantzoukas), their depressed, newly single friend, to Las Vegas in an effort to win back some of their lost earnings. After almost mopping up a windfall during a game of craps, the Johansens hatch a scheme to open a casino in Frank's basement and recruit people from the surrounding neighborhoods to come and feed their insatiable gambling habit.

Much of the humor in *The House* relies on the premise that Scott and Kate have spent the last 20 years repressing their younger urges in order to raise a child. Faced with the prospect of needing to fill an "empty nest," as Scott puts it, the couple jokes with one another about how they'll be going to "Fucktown" once Alex (Ryan Simpkins) leaves for school, all before trailing off at the realization that they're likely kidding themselves. In effect, the casino becomes their means to reinvigorate their social lives, so that Kate is once again smoking pot and urinating on lawns at two in the morning like she did back in college, while Scott discovers his masculinity by threatening to chop off the limbs of gamblers who owe their new casino a debt.



Flashes of rudimentary satire briefly deepen Scott and Kate's desperation over having to tell Alex that she won't be able to attend college. In the film's best scene, the couple slowly realizes that they're incapable of bending to the will of their financial reality but have also pampered Alex to such an extent that they're ready to risk prison in order not to disappoint her. But instead of then exploring the social and economic complexities of a parent-daughter relationship predicated on ideological difference like in [Toni Erdmann](#), the filmmakers use these dynamics as a pretense for a series of sight gags and enervated spoofs of everything from *The Sopranos* to *Fight Club*.

The film's idiocy extends to its aligning of Scott and Kate's transformation into axe- and blowtorch-toting badasses with hip-hop and black culture, so that one of their debt-collecting rampages is scored to Snoop Doggy Dogg's "Gz and Hustlas." The pairing of act and music isn't so much farce as inane fodder for ensuring *The House's* removal from anything resembling genuine social commentary, but it also indulges the laziest form of cultural fantasy, where the awkward, middle-aged white couple is allowed to engage in cultural appropriation for a spell before returning to their dull middle-class lives, and all without consequence. After all, it's not the parents, but Bob (Nick Kroll), head of the town council, who's ultimately to blame for Alex's educational deprivation, since he siphoned the funds from her scholarship as a means to shower Dawn (Allison Tolman), a fellow council member, with expensive gifts.

This will rent as well as **CHIPS, WHY HIM, OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY and BRIDGET JONES BABY.**



**10/10 3 MAUDIE DRAMA**

**\$7 MILL BO 693 SCREENS PG-13 105 MINUTES  
DVD/ BLU RAY**

**Sally Hawkins (THE DOUBLE, PADDINGTON, BLUE JASMINE, GODZILLA)**

**Ethan Hawke (THE PHENOM, THE MAGNIFICENT 7, SINISTER 2, PURGE, TOTAL RECALL)**

Catching a glint of joy in the troubled life of storied Nova Scotian folk painter Maud Lewis (Sally Hawkins), *Maudie* opens as she arduously fights against her arthritic body to apply a deliberate brush stroke to one of the few unpainted corners of a wall. Rewinding several years, the film re-centers on the semi-blissful final years of her otherwise difficult life. Because of her crippling arthritis and wild spirit, Maud is treated with contempt by her brother, Charles (Zachary Bennett), and their aunt, Ida (Gabrielle Rose). Yearning to escape their control, she moves into the hovel of a misanthropic fishmonger, Everett Lewis (Ethan Hawke), as his housemaid, leading these perpetual outsiders into a loving, if unorthodox, relationship. Although Maud spends more time painting the home's walls than obeying the cantankerous Everett, their pasts give them a well of mutual understanding. This fortunate arrangement and the chance patronage of an urbane New Yorker, Sandra (Kari Matchett), turn her hobby into continent-spanning fame.

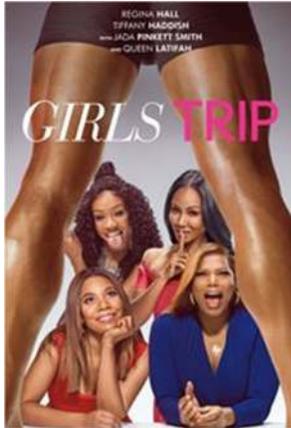
Almost instantly, it's clear that Sherry White's screenplay will hit every beat expectedly on cue: Maude and Everett's initially coarse introduction, their offbeat romancing, the peaks and valleys of her career, and the personal struggles that nearly tear them apart until they bounce back and live their days out in pleasant dignity.



While there are thankfully no grand speeches about Maud overcoming adversity, the whole affair thinly coasts on worn-out emotional cues and comes off predictably neat and feel-good. Maud couldn't paint a hurricane that would blow this overburdened narrative off course.

Few people filter in and out of the world of Maud and Everett's dusty shack. It's a setup that hinges *Maudie's* emotional center on the performances. Without making Maud a tragic figure or a symbol for the power of positive thinking, Hawkins gives the woman an indefectible thrust of optimism in the face of emotional hardship she knows she'll never slough off. Hawkins's wide smile and warbling but vibrant voice impart an unexpected vitality to Maud's tiny frame, imbuing the character with a soul-deep strength of resolve.

This will rent as well as **THE ZOO KEEPER'S WIFE, NORMAN, THE PROMISE and BEFORE I FALL.**



**10/10 1 GIRLS TRIP COMEDY**  
\$101 MILL BO 3987 SCREENS R 122 MINUTES  
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

**Queen Latifah (ICE AGE, MIRACLE FROM HEAVEN, BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE, 22 JUMP STREET, J Regina Hall (BARBERSHOP: THE NEXT CUT, VACATION, THINK LIKE A MAN TOO, ABOUT LAST NIGHT)**

The Flossy Posse may have once ruled the school in the 1990s, but with the crew now hovering on the other side of 40 years old, priorities have changed. Ryan (Regina Hall) is on the cusp of becoming the next Oprah multi-threat, thanks in part to her very public chemistry with her strapping, ex-NFL-player husband. Sasha (Queen Latifah) graduated with two—count 'em—two degrees in journalism, and has written up *Time* magazine cover stories but now runs a flailing gossip blog. Lisa (Jada Pinkett Smith), the first to drop her wild college days and settle down, now struggles as a divorcée with two children, sharing a roof with her mother. And Dina (Tiffany Haddish) has finished her world tour of STD contraction in nothing flat, and doesn't seem to be interested in doing anything other than repeating past successes in the future.

All four, so inseparable whenever the DJ would spin Chubb Rock, are decidedly on their own separate paths when Ryan gets an invitation to be the keynote speaker at the Essence Festival. Faster than you can say “10-drink minimum,” the quartet are climbing aboard a flight to New Orleans.

*Girls Trip's* setup is trite, its episodic excursions into the comedy of mortification are templated far beyond the possibility of any true spontaneity, its musical digressions with New Edition's “If It Isn't Love,” Maxwell's “Ascension,” and Mase and Puff Daddy's “Feel So Good” play shamelessly to the target demographic, and the film ultimately sacrifices pacing in favor of shoe-horning in both humor and heart. Ryan's business partnership with her husband reveals itself very early on as a prime example of not shitting where you eat, and thus the destination debauch reluctantly steps to the left in favor of a four-way orgy of self-actualization. Well, at least a three-way, with Haddish's Dina retaining her chokehold on her own id with both hands pumping. (She assumes the Zach Galifianakis role in this clique, and milks it for every last drop, even when she's stealing Auntie Angel's “grapefruit method” video slurp for slurp. She steals the entire film too.)



And yet, even when the film starts embodying Ryan's life-coach realness, you can never be mad at *Girls Trip* because of how unpretentiously Lee sets up his actors to enjoy their time together. If this isn't by a long shot the best representation of the filmmaker's crowd-pleasing instincts, at least it goes down easy. Easy like a Sunday-morning hangover.

This will rent as well as **BAYWATCH, GOING IN STYLE, SNATCHED, BAD MOMS, OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY, and NEIGHBORS 2.**



**10/17 1 SPIDERMAN: HOMECOMING**  
ADVENTURE

285 MILL BO 4356 SCREENS PG-13 133 MINUTES  
DVD/COMBO

**Tom Holland (THE LOST CITY OF Z, EDGE OF WINTER,  
CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR)**

In contrast to the bloated portent that typically characterizes the Marvel Cinematic Universe, director Jon Watts's *Spider-Man: Homecoming* announces itself as a scaled-down, more intimately crafted affair. The very first shot shows a child's crayon drawing of the Avengers, indicating that this film exists in the same world as the legendary superhero team but isn't told from their point of view. Rather, the film is presented from the perspective of a budding young hero who looks up to Iron Man, Captain America, and Thor as role models—not unlike *Homecoming*'s target audience of teens who've been raised in a cinematic era saturated with superhero movies.

This latest iteration of Peter Parker was introduced in *Captain America: Civil War*, in which he was recruited by Tony Stark to fight a group of rogue superheroes led by Captain America. Watts replays the blockbuster battle royale from the previous film as a chintzy cellphone-shot video diary enthusiastically narrated by Peter (Tom Holland), a move which cleverly positions the youthful webslinger as a wide-eyed amateur enthralled by the idea of being in such close proximity to his heroes. He's not some po-faced martyr with the weight of the world on his back; he's simply an everyday teen thrilled to be living out every kid's dream of fighting alongside his idols.



Having gotten a taste of the big time, Peter longs to join the Avengers for real, bugging Tony's (Robert Downey Jr.) assistant, Happy Hogan (Jon Favreau), with a flurry of texts asking when he'll be called back for another mission. In the meantime, though, he's stuck in high school, doing low-rent Spidey stuff around his Queens neighborhood in his spare time. The first 40 or so minutes of *Homecoming* lock into an amiably laidback groove, homing in the human-sized stakes of Peter's life—house parties, school bullies, a crush on a hot girl (Laura Harrier)—rather than the potential destruction of the entire planet. The film takes the time to establish a strong, funny relationship between Peter and his nerdy pal Ned (Jacob Batalon) that simply exists for its own sake.

For a time, *Homecoming* feels more like a comic-book riff on *Teen Wolf* than the latest entry in Marvel's expansive series of interlocking blockbusters in which every installment feels like an advertisement for the next one. With its jokey screenplay, bouncy music cues, and bright color palette, the film's first act offers a refreshing rebuke to the self-serious soap operatics of so many MCU movies—to say nothing of the grim portentousness of Zack Snyder's DC Comics movies or the contrived nihilism of James Mangold's *Logan*. Played by Holland with gawky, squeaky-voiced enthusiasm, the Spidey of this film is very much a teen, one whose youthful exuberance is genuinely infectious even as his over-eagerness gets him into serious trouble.

Soon, though, the stakes are raised, and Spider-Man is pitted against a scrap merchant turned arms dealer, Adrian Toomes (Michael Keaton), who's flooding Peter's neighborhood with massively destructive weapons. While the film mostly manages to preserve its jocular tone, undercutting nearly every dramatic beat with some kind of punchline, it ultimately falls victim to many of the same problems that plague so many superhero blockbusters. The bloated runtime includes no less than two different prologues and three separate endings. And not only does the film waste strong comedic actors (Marisa Tomei, Hannibal Buress, Donald Glover, Martin Starr) in thankless bit parts, but the numbing action

sequences are Marvel's usual mess of quick cuts, bloodless explosions, and giant colored beams of energy.

This will rent great as did **KONG: SKULL ISLAND**, **THE FATE AND THE FURIOUS**, **SNATCHED**, **BAYWATCH** and **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY 2**.



## 10/24 **1** ANNABELLE: CREATION HORROR

\$68 MILL BO 2984 SCREENS **R** 109 MINUTES  
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

**Anthony LaPaglia (TV—THE CODE, BAD BLOOD, WITHOUT A TRACE)**

At the dark heart of *Annabelle: Creation*, an origin-story prequel to a spin-off of an ongoing horror series, is a doll that doesn't do much of anything but observe, with a cruelly malignant rictus grin, the terror that befalls the people of the film. Immobile and unspeaking, this conduit for a demonic force is an oddly limited figure around which to build a horror franchise. But where John R. Leonetti's *Annabelle* struggled to figure out how to integrate his title figurine into its satanic-horror goings-on, director David F. Sandberg comes up with an elegant solution in *Creation*: to treat the doll as a blackly funny visual gag, a ghoulish little punchline to the film's cunningly effective scares.

In an isolated farmhouse with a picture-perfect view of the mountains, artisanal dollmaker Samuel Mullins (Anthony LaPaglia) lives happily with his beloved wife, Esther (Miranda Otto), and daughter, Bee (Samara Lee), until the latter is killed in a tragic accident. Years later, the couple opens their house to a group of orphan girls, who delight in the property's sprawl even as they remain wary of all its oddities. One day, the handicapped Janice (Talitha Bateman) finds out why she and the other girls are forbidden from entering Bee's old bedroom. After going into the room, Janice discovers the doll that Samuel made for his daughter just before her death and unleashes a mysterious demonic force that begins to terrorize the house.



The film isn't above throwing in all manner of tried-and-true horror chestnuts—from a monstrous scarecrow to a grisly crucifixion to Esther's unsettling *Phantom of the Opera* mask—but *Creation* syncretizes these disparate elements with a consistent tone of giddy malevolence that's bolstered by killer timing and a coherent sense of space. Scenes like one in which Janice desperately tries to descend the stairs in a slow-moving chairlift before being brusquely jolted out of the seat demonstrate Sandberg's penchant for patiently coiling the tension before a sudden and startling release. *Creation* successfully homes in on its singular goal: pure, unrelenting terror.

This will rent as well as **GHOST IN THE SHELL**, **LIGHTS OUT**, **RINGS**, **RESIDENT EVIL: THE FINAL CHAPTER**, **THE BYE BYE MAN** and **UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS**.



**10/24 1 THE EMOJI MOVIE FAMILY**  
**\$67 MILL BO 4075 SCREENS PG 86 MINUTES**  
**DVD/BLU RAY**

Gene (T.J. Miller) is a Meh Emoji who lives in Textopolis, a digital city that exists with the smartphone owned by an ordinary human teenager named Alex (Jake T. Austin). While Gene is excited about getting to finally work with the other emojis that populate Alex's phone, he has one big problem: for whatever reason, Gene is capable of expressing more emotions than the single one that he is meant to express. Despite their concerns, Gene's parents Mel (Steven Wright) and Mary Meh (Jennifer Coolidge) do agree to allow their son to join the emoji workforce – only for disaster to strike on Gene's very first day, when he is selected by Alex and panics, messing up Alex's message to the girl that he has a crush on and wrecking the text center where the emojis operate, in the process.

Facing the threat of deletion by bots dispatched by Smiler (Maya Rudolph), a Smiley Emoji and the leader of the text center, Gene flees and ends up crossing paths with Hi-5 (James Corden), a Hand Emoji who has fallen out of popularity. Hi-5, in turn, agrees to take Gene to meet Jailbreak (Anna Faris), a "Hacker Emoji" who can reprogram Gene so that he only expresses the "Meh" emotion. Upon meeting with her, the pair strike a deal with Jailbreak: if Gene and Hi-5 help her to reach the Dropbox (so that she can leave Alex's phone forever), then Jailbreak will "fix" Gene for good.

As developed by Sony Pictures Animation (the studio behind the *Hotel Transylvania* and *Smurfs* movie franchises), [The Emoji Movie](#) represents an attempt to take the most popular apps and emojis on your smartphone and create a Pixar-style "secret world", populated by most every non-trademarked IP emoji that has ever been created. Assisting *Emoji Movie* co-writer and director Tony Leondis (*Lilo & Stitch 2: Stitch Has a Glitch*, *Igor*) in his efforts here is a voice cast composed of several noteworthy comedic actors and celebrities with proven comedy chops; Sir Patrick Stewart himself (lending his voice to the Poop Emoji here) among them.



This will rent as well as **SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE, LEGO BATMAN MOVIE, POWER RANGERS, and ROCK DOG.**



**10/31 1 THE DARK TOWER ACTION**

**\$48 MILL BO 2989 SCREENS PG-13  
95 MINUTES DVD/BLU RAY**

**Matthew McConaughey (FREE STATE OF JONES, THE WOLF OF WALL STREET, MAGIC MIKE, DALLAS BUYER'S CLUB)**

Instead of focusing on Roland Deschain (Idris Elba), the gunslinger who roams the desiccated wastelands of his home planet, Mid-World, the film is largely seen through the eyes of Jake Chambers (Tom Taylor), a boy from Earth whose visions of a looming apocalypse lure him into Roland's world.

Opening with Jake's nightmares of the nefarious sorcerer Walter O'Dim (Matthew McConaughey), a.k.a. the Man in Black, *The Dark Tower* tracks the boy as he dodges accusations of insanity from friends and family as well as attempts by human-skin-wearing werewolves to abduct him and other children. The exposition comes fast before and after Jake escapes into Mid-World and meets Roland, piling up details about the Dark Tower, which holds the balance of power between worlds, and Walter's plan to destroy it.

The condensed narrative keeps the film from getting lost in the lugubrious structure of most franchise starters, but the speed with which characters lay out the dire stakes of Walter's schemes prevents King's rich mythology from taking root. As a result, *The Dark Tower* is just another in a long string of modern blockbusters to make the end of the world its default concern.

The film's frantic pace also affects the action scenes, which are resolved either quickly or, as in encounter between Jake and a demon guarding an interplanetary portal, indecisively. And all this action, the best of which comes down to individual moments that we already glimpsed in the trailers (such as Roland showing off his reloading and sharpshooting skills), takes place against nondescript backdrops of rocky landscapes or dilapidated buildings.



This one will rent as well as **DEEP WATER HORIZON, KING ARTHUR: THE LEGEND OF THE SWORD, GHOST IN THE SHELL, and XXX: THE RETGURN OF XANDER CAGE.**



## 10/31 **1** KIDNAP ACTION

\$28 MILL BO 2943 SCREENS **R** 91 MINUTES  
DVD/COMBO BEFORE REDBOX

### Halle Berry(X MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED, NEW YEARS EVE, THE CALL, DIE ANOTHER DAY, MONSTERS BALL)

Just as soon as Karla (Halle Berry) steps away from her six-year-old son, Frankie (Sage Correa), to take a call about his parental custody, the boy is gone. This scene from *Kidnap* follows an introductory sequence that establishes Karla as your prototypical action movie's idea of a single mother and waitress: down on her luck and exceedingly loving to her child. And once Karla catches a glimpse of her son being forced into a beat-up Mustang GT and subsequently hops into her mom van in order to rescue him, the clichés that plague the film's prologue unfortunately tag along for the ride.

Set in Louisiana, if for no other reason than to take advantage of the hefty tax break filmmakers are now offered to shoot there, *Kidnap* does at least use its remote setting to explain why the roads and highways across which Karla chases after her son's kidnappers, Margo (Chris McGinn) and Terry (Lew Temple), remain nearly empty for the duration of Luis Prieto's film. Throughout, the camera hangs tight on Karla, capturing the mix of anger, fear, frustration, and helplessness that supercharges her reconnaissance mission. At one point, when she and one of Frankie's kidnappers stand across from each other in a field, the scene exudes the feel of a western standoff.



One has to make allowances for the script's inanities—from Karla inexplicably spouting lines of exposition while sitting alone in her car, to police remaining all but absent throughout much of her hours-long car chase—in order to even begin to appreciate such satisfyingly visceral B-movie thrills. Indeed, when *Kidnap* sticks to its nuts-and-bolts approach to the thriller genre, it's fun and loose, thriving on the ambiguities behind the motivations of Frankie's captors and the cat-and-mouse nature of Karla's pursuit of them. Karla loses her cellphone in the film's opening moments, and later is forced by the kidnappers to back off (or else!), which sets the stage for the heroic mom to constantly come up with ways of never losing sight of Margo and Terry, from switching out vehicles to enlisting the help of bystanders.

Eventually, *Kidnap* stumbles to find varied ways of keeping the chase alive after Margo and Terry threaten to kill Frankie one to many times in order to keep Karla at bay. The film catches a second wind, and a frightful one at that, once Karla arrives at the kidnappers' home base, but believability has been stretched so thin before this point that the finale is unable to gather much emotional force. Ultimately, *Kidnap* is an efficient vehicle for the delivery of some lean action that's frequently weakened by a scarcely whip-smart script.

This will rent as well as **SPLIT, SLEEPLESS, ASSASSIN'S CREED, and GHOST IN THE SHELL.**