



8/5 1 DIVERGENT SCI/FI/ADVENTURE
\$151 MILL BO 3967 SCREENS **PG-13** 139 MINUTES

Shailene Woodley (TV—CROSSING JORDAN, EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND—FILM--THE DESCENDANTS, THE SPECTACULAR NOW)

Theo James (TV'S THE GOLDEN BOY—FILM—UNDERWORLD AWAKENING, THE INBETWEENERS)

Kate Winslet (CARNAGE, LABOR DAY, TITANIC, LITTLE CHILDREN)

This movie gives its teens the cold sweats in a moderately futuristic, post-war Chicago, where residents who've submitted to a five-pronged class system are protected by a massive security fence, and those who haven't (or, more ominously, couldn't hack it within their own class) are kept on the outside to fend for themselves. Upon graduation age, Chicago's youth are tasked to pledge their lives to whichever faction they choose, though only after they've undergone a psychologically avoidant-borderline neuroimaging regimen that gives them very clear recommendations how to choose. Like many caste systems, it's seemingly built to keep people exactly where they were born. That applies to everyone but the "divergents," or those whose emo aptitude tests show them to be proficient in multiple categories, a condition that puts the entire classification arrangement in jeopardy.

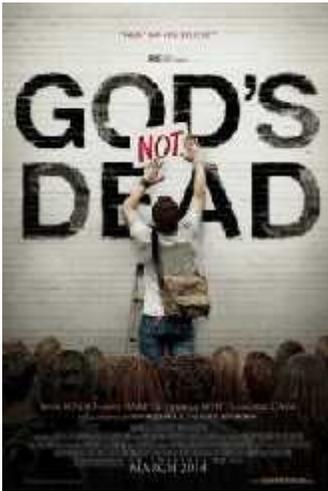
Beatrice (Woodley), being the story's protagonist, is of course a divergent, with off-the-chart readings that her test administrator sweeps under the rug to keep her off the radar of those who would destroy her. You know, jealous types. Beatrice was born into the Abnegation tribe, but though they're somehow technically the ruling class in Chicago, their charitable, humble Amish act couldn't be any less appealing to a teenager. (It's a wonder anyone picks them at all at the public-selection ceremony.) So Beatrice picks the acrobatic, adventuresome Dauntless band, who protect the order of things by, apparently, jumping from moving trains, getting tatted, and playing elaborate tournaments of Capture the Flag in abandoned amusement parks.



It's well into the second hour before it becomes clear that some shady scheming is percolating from the Erudite faction, who represent the brainy ego to Abnegation's superego and Dauntless's id. Led by sneering business-suit baddie Jeanine Matthews (Winslet, the Erudite are revealed to be plotting to overthrow Agnegation's rule. Given the latter's avoidance of pride, common sense would call it an act of generosity on Erudite's part, but apparently common sense isn't factored into their brand of "knowledge," or they'd simply ask Abnegation to step down.

More believably, at least within the confines of YA fiction, Triss's journey toward a higher state of consciousness kicks off with the promise of tall, dark, pouty-lipped nookie—in the extremely eventual future. Theo James provides more than enough PG-13 smolder as Four, Triss's personal coach as she tries to win over the skeptics within the ranks of Dauntless. But though their relationship flares, Triss cuts him cold with an admittedly very abnegatory "I'm saving myself." And such is the crux of *Divergent's* frustratingly dystopian spin, insisting its teens make all of their life-changing decisions before they're ready, and then celebrating a hero for denying herself the one thing biology has pretty much already given the green light.

Great fun for those that liked **THE HUNGER GAMES, TWILIGHT, I, FRANKENSTEIN, TRANSCENDENCE, ROBO COP, JACK RYAN** and **NON-STOP** will love this.



8/5 1 **GOD'S NOT DEAD** DRAMA
\$61 MILL BO 2376 SCREENS PG 113 MINUTES

Shane Harper (TV—**GOOD LUCK CHARLIE, HAPPYLAND, DANCE ON SUNSET**)

Kevin Sorbo (**FATAL CALL, SHADOW WITNESS, SOUL SURFER, BITCH SLAP**)

Lacking only glowing red eyes to complete the effect (rather like the Jews in the wartime Nazi propagand films), Radisson sinisterly strokes his goatee while lecturing his impressionable students on the triumph of science and reason over the ancient “superstition” of Christianity. When a lone dissenting voice emerges in the form of fresh-faced prelaw student Josh (Disney Channel alum Shane Harper), Radisson hands him the ultimatum that sets the rest of the rickety plot in motion: Either Josh drops the class, or else he has to take to the podium and try to prove the existence of God to Radisson and his fellow students over the course of the next three sessions.

To sweeten the pot, director Harold Cronk and screenwriters Cary Solomon and Chuck Konzelman (all vets of multiple prior Christian pics) add in a chorus of other nonbelievers, including a popular lefty blogger (Trisha LaFache) who ambushes Robertson and his wife, Korie, with hand-wringing lefty concerns about the ethical treatment of animals and the conservative values espoused on their TV show. This happens shortly before said blogger is diagnosed with an advanced stage of cancer, to which she responds, “I don’t have time for cancer!” Neither, it seems, does her equally godless, corporate-big-wig boyfriend (Dean Cain), who promptly ditches her upon hearing the news. He shows scarcely greater concern for his dementia-stricken mother, but at least she has a good, God-fearing daughter (Cory Oliver) to look in on her — a daughter who just happen to be the put-upon mistress of a certain hard-line philosophy professor.

Meanwhile, back on campus, Josh begins mounting his defense of the Lord in a fashion that might be called “Christian Apologetics for Dummies,” countering the bad professor’s scientific reasoning with his own citations from theistic scholars who suggest that Scripture and science can exist harmoniously side by side. Well, sometimes those forces sync up more harmoniously (the Big Bang) than others (evolution), but never shall the twain really meet — at least not with this milquetoast Abercrombie model at the stand, making his arguments with all the passionate conviction of a what-I-did-on-my-summer-vacation report. Played by Harper as a nice, clean-cut kid who doesn’t really want to ruffle anybody’s feathers, but who comes to believe that “God wants somebody to defend him,” Josh just might be the Almighty’s worst advocate since William Jennings Bryan.



Fans of **SON OF GOD, PITCH PERFECT, HEAVEN IS REAL, THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY**, and **LIFE OF PI** will like this one.



8/5 1 NEED FOR SPEED ACTION
\$41 MILL BO 2856 SCREENS **PG-13** 138 MINUTES

Dominic Cooper (MY WEEK WITH MARILYN, CAPTAIN AMERICA, AN EDUCATION, MAMMA MIA!)

Aaron Paul (TV'S BREAKING BAD, BONES, GHOST WHISPERER)

This competition takes awhile to get underway though, as the filmmakers front-load the film with a lengthy detailing of the death of Tobey's angelic compatriot in a high-speed crash caused by Dino (Dominic Cooper), Tobey's rival who subsequently frames him for the entire fiasco. The inclusion of all this bloated introductory drama is also part of the film's messy design, which packs in a preposterous amount of

narrative pit stops along Tobey and Julia's route to the West Coast. Backed by Benny (Scott Mescudi), Finn (Rami Malek), and Joe (Ramón Rodríguez), the would-be couple find themselves in a number of high-speed chases, but the filmmakers branch out to tend to the comings and goings of the crew and the competitors. Benny's inane asides, largely delivered as he pilots planes and helicopters, is a constant irritation, as are the interjections of Monarch (Michael Keaton), the race's loudmouth mastermind. There's one extended sequence, set at a gas station, which has absolutely no bearings on anything in the movie, other than to remind us how awesome Tobey is.

The audience is even privy to Finn's resignation from his day job, which consists of him stripping down to his socks and stealing a kiss from the office hottie, who yells at him to call her. It adds absolutely nothing to the film, and doesn't say much about the character other than he's comfortable with his body and committing mild sexual assault. Indeed, this scene speaks to the film's egregious and unwavering misogynistic posturing. Much of the talk between Tobey and his crewmates can be likened to a dick-measuring contest, and Benny, at one point, stops mid-chase to zoom in on a trio of runners' bouncing asses.



Fans of **FAST AND FURIOUS**, **NOAH**, **ROBO COP**, **NON-STOP**, **THREE DAYS TO KILL**, **ENDER'S GAME** and **RIDDICK** will be very happy with this one too.



8/5 2 **OCULOUS** SUPERNATURAL/HORROR
\$28 MILL BO 2156 SCREENS R 104 MINUTES

Karen Gillan (TV---**DOCTOR. WHO, POND LIFE**)

Brenton Thwaites (TV—**HOME AND AWAY, SLIDE, SEA PATROL**)

Funny how Kaylie Russell (Karen Gillan) is only able to trace the seemingly indestructible antique she blames for the death of her mom and dad as far back as the 18th century, and to the Scottish royal family's country estate. This becomes a convenient means for the makers of *Oculus* to completely evade having to explain how a wall mirror became the locus of supernatural activity, maliciously driving a mother to drown her tots, causing a fat man to lose weight before driving him to suicide, and convincing Kaylie and her brother Tim's (Brenton Thwaites) parents that their marriage was being torn apart by another

woman. Take, though, the entity's absurdly elaborate sense of humor, and strange propensity to cause dehydration, as a given and the film may be enjoyed as a throwback to such low-rent, psychologically charged chillers as Sandor Stern's *Pin*, another slow-burning yarn about siblings tormented by a maybe-not-so-inanimate object.

In *this movie* seeing isn't exactly believing when Kaylie and Tim reunite with their antique mirror for a final showdown, and the film is at its nerviest when foregrounding the object's taste for blurring the lines between the real and the imagined. Tim enters the fray as a doubting Thomas, and with an irritating litany of psycho-babble as a means of explaining the horrors of the past away, but Kaylie quickly makes him into a believer with newfangled recording devices and a plethora of iMacs, which first capture the pair having discussions in contexts in which they weren't originally delivered. As plants wither around them, the brother and sister are cruelly teased with the possibility of having done harm to themselves and to others, from a shard of pottery driven into a loved one's neck to a bite taken out of what may not actually be an apple. And it's with these did-I-or-didn't-I horrors that the stage is set for what becomes a grippingly staged time warp.

OCULOUS begins in dreams before freely hopscotching between Kaylie and Tim's present-day sleuthing and the horrors that, 11 long years ago, sent her to foster care and him to a mental institution. Through a mini-triumph of montage, what begins as run-of-the-mill backstory vomit is thrillingly repackaged as an almost-Lynchian duet between warring states of consciousness. The mirror, as it tightens its grip on the brother and sister, forces them to waltz alongside their younger selves during their parents' last days, and subsequently the depth of the siblings' fraught relationship to their shared past is put into poignant focus. The final shocks may completely unhinge from Kaylie and Tim's troubles with memory and foreground all the supernatural hokey that's so dubious about the story to begin with,

This is a very well done little film that will appeal to all that liked **THE CONJURING, OPEN GRAVE, SABOTAGE, NON-STOP, VAMPIRE ACADEMY, I FRANKENSTEIN** and **DEVIL'S DUE**.





8/12 2 A HAUNTED HOUSE 2 HORROR/COMEDY \$19
MILL BO 1734 SCREENS R 86 MINUTES

Marlon Wayans (THE HEAT, A HAUNTED HOUSE, WHITE CHICKS, SCARY MOVIE 2)

A Haunted House 2 continues its comedic tale of ghostly hijinks about a year after the original reached its conclusion. Malcolm (Marlon Wayans) has moved on with his life as he hopes to forget the terrible situation that turned him into a single man after being with Kisha (Essence Atkins) for so long. As of now, he appears to be over his harsh episode and has picked up a new love of his life along the way in the form of Megan (Jaime Pressly).

Together, Malcolm and Megan move into a home with a two children from a previous relationship. This new living arrangement for Malcolm and his instant family gets off to a good start, but that all changes once some strange things begin to happen on the property. At first, Malcolm finds a mysterious box that appears to left inside the home, then he discovers a doll that looks to have a mind of its own. Along with a bunch of other things following behind, the events in the house go from positive and loving o down right evil.

Malcolm doesn't know what to do at first, but he soon realizes that the evil apparitions that he believed he had left in his past are back and stronger than ever. In order to defeat this enemy and keep his new family safe, he must muster up the courage to fight ,but he may also need the help of his old friends and some new compatriots. For all involved, this proves to be dangerous, but it's also necessary while being raucous and hilarious for some.

Fans of **ABOUT LAST NIGHT, ROB THE MOB, DELIVERY MAN, WE'RE THE MILLERS, PEEPLES, MOVIE 43,** and **SCARY MOVIE 5** will laugh out loud with this one.





8/12 2 BEARS FAMILY
\$19 MILL BO 1790 SCREENS G 78 MINUTES
Narrated by John C. Riley

Seeing brown bears up close in their natural habitat of Alaska was amazing. The camera was purposefully placed at eye level to the bears so we can see the world through their eyes. This also provides a chilling moment where a wolf stares the audience down.

The story begins with Sky, a mother bear, who is taking care of her cubs and mothers can totally relate to her. Two rambunctious cubs named Amber and Scout climb all over her, want to nurse all the time, and slow her down from getting to food. Motherhood as a bear and as a human are pretty similar.

Expect plenty of laughs from children and adults as we follow along on

their journey, but there are also moments where the mother bear comes out as Sky tries to protect her cubs from Tikanni the wolf and another bear named Magnus.

The cinematography provides some of the most amazing views of bears. They were able to get incredibly close to the bears to provide a beautiful story and documentation of their life.

The movie is rated G and is appropriate for all audiences.

No one makes better kids films than Disney. If they liked **THE NUT JOB**, **FREEBIRDS**, **EPIC**, **PLANES**, **FROZEN** and **WRECK IT RALPH** they will be busy for awhile.



8/12 3 BELLE DRAMA
\$9 MILL BO 735 SCREENS PG 104 MINUTES

Gugu Mbatha (TV—TOUCH, UNDER COVERS, FILM—ODD THOMAS, LARRY CROWNE)

Tom Wilkinson (BATMAN BEGINS, THE SAMARITAN, THE LONE RANGER, THE DEBT)

Matthew Goode (TV—THE GOOD WIFE, DANCING ON THE EDGE—FILM—BURNING MAN, STOKER, LEAP YEAR)

"I have been blessed with freedom twice over," says Dido (Gugu Mbatha-Raw) at one point in *Belle*, marvelling at her good luck. Dido's first blessing came early in life, when her father, Captain Sir John Lindsay (Matthew Goode), found her in a squalid orphanage and took her to be raised at her Uncle William

Murray's aristocratic estate. Dido, like her mother, is black, but bloodlines being bloodlines, William (Tom Wilkinson) and his wife, Lady Ashford (Miranda Richardson), agree to raise her, despite their initial horror at the notion. This affords Dido many

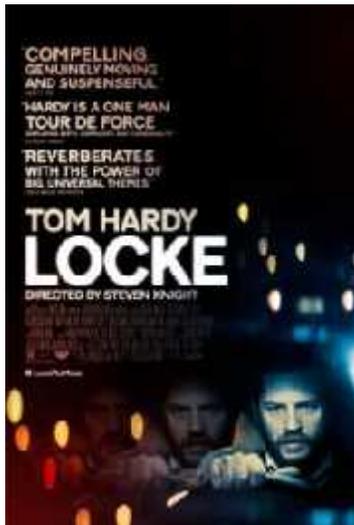
privileges, but it doesn't put her on equal footing with those around her. Dido doesn't sit with her family for dinner and when guests arrive, their thoughts and comments about her skin color are hardly kept silent.

Like Solomon Northup, then, Dido is an exceptional case whose "good luck" gives us perspective about the horrors of "normal life" for black people at the time. It's set far from plantations or slave ships of the time, among the English upper class, where decisions about slavery are being slowly deliberated, particularly by William, Lord Chief Justice of England, as he works on a case concerning a slave ship whose crew purposely drowned its sick slaves in order to recoup the insurance on them. *Belle* is concerned largely with intellectual horrors and portrays the fight against slavery rather neatly as a growing feeling of internal guilt that slowly turns society toward the light. The one scene meant to show us the darker side of racism is shot and edited so fitfully that it almost becomes unintelligible; the quick cuts and extreme close-ups hide the violence we're supposed to be witnessing, as if there's a fear about truly presenting it. Better to get back to the grand speeches about justice and human nature, the movie seems to say.

Beneath this disappointingly shallow treatment, though, *Belle* hides a less tidy reality, one that emerges from Dido's second blessing: As a teenager, because she has no male relative to override her, she inherits her father's fortune. This means that, unlike her cousin and best friend, Elizabeth (Sarah Gadon), Dido isn't dependant on finding a husband who can support her, a fact that gives her a level of autonomy unheard of to most women. As Elizabeth points out to Dido on the way to meet yet another potential husband, without the ability to work or an inheritance, women are at the mercy of men: "We are but their property."



The appeal for this story will be solid for those that liked **LINCOLN**, **FRUITVALE STATION**, **THE HELP**, **12 YEARS A SLAVE** and **PHILOMENA**.



8/12 3 **LOCKE** ACTION
\$2 MILL BO 489 SCREENS R 85 MINUTES

Tom Hardy (THIS MEANS WAR, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, INCEPTION)

Ruth Wilson (THE LONE RANGER, ANNA KATERINA, SAVING MR. BANKS)

The fourth wall in *Locke* is the windshield of a car, inside which a man with a superhero's name drives toward a destination that, like the many details of his personal and professional life, only becomes known to the audience through a series of fraught phone conversations. Ivan Locke (Hardy) doesn't break that wall, though he does exit through the driver's seat door at one point in what comes as a relief from the film's deliberately punishing and sometimes artful theatricality. The voices on the other side of Ivan's calls notwithstanding, writer-director Steven Knight has handed Hardy a plum role in what's essentially a

one-man production set inside what may as well be a cardboard box, and the actor dutifully pounds the sides of it with that intensely simmering mix of rage and pathos that's become his calling card.

A stickler for safety and propriety, Ivan accesses his digital rolodex via buttons on his steering wheel, and through chats with his wife, son, colleagues, and others, a narrative of the methodical Welshman's downfall comes into grueling focus. The structural engineer admits to his wife of an almost year-old and one-time-only affair, subsequently destroying his marriage. Opting to be by the side of the woman who's now about to have his child, he also loses his job, though his integrity is such that he spends much of his car ride to London ensuring that the next day's work (a foundation "pour" of concrete) goes according to plan. And to the woman he impregnated and whose nerves he struggles to assuage throughout the film, he will not tell her that he loves her, because if it wasn't already clear, Ivan is a slave to the truth.

A small drama here that will appeal to those that liked **UNDER THE SKIN**, **JOE**, **ROB THE MOB**, **THE MONUMENTS MEN**, **HOMEFRONT** and **DISCONNECT**.



8/12 1 MUPPETS MOST WANTED FAMILY
\$52 MILL BO 2825 SCREENS PG 104 MINUTES

Voices of Ty Burrell, Ricky Gervais, Tina Fey

Since success mandates sequels, it makes sense that Stoller is back, along with director James Bobin. Back in the late '70s, Kermit and the crew turned *The Muppet Movie* into a timeless gem. Their fiscally forced follow-up was an international mystery with the gang heading over to the continent to continue their amiable adventures. Fast forward over three decades and this new version is taking its collection of crazies and shifting them over to Europe. Well, put another way, *Muppets Most Wanted* has a Cold War era-like narrative which sees a promoter named Dominic Badguy (Ricky Gervais), offering the gang a chance to tour the world. What they don't know is that the friendly foreigner is actually working for a Russian criminal named Constantine who looks suspiciously like Kermit, except for a mole on his cheek.

Indeed, after plotting to escape a nasty GULAG, our villain works his way into the Muppet family while our hero gets dragged off to take his place. As they move around from country to country, the gang always seems to be appearing at a place located right next to a bank, museum, or similar place of safely secured valuables. This allows Constantine to do what he does best while the rest of the Muppets remain oblivious. Then, Sam the Eagle and INTERPOL inspector Jean Pierre Napoleon (Ty Burrell) take on the case of finding our fiend. In the meantime, Kermit is wooing the warden of his GULAG (Tina Fey), a true fan of our web-footed friend. Even Miss Piggy is tricked by Constantine, falling for his debonair demeanor while accidentally aiding and abetting his actions.

When you look at how *The Muppets* got things right, how it revered the past while bringing the characters up to the high tech social media present, anything afterwards was going to be considered a bit of a letdown. In fact, after any reset, the reality of what to do with your new configuration sets in, and sometimes, you make a misstep or two. Luckily, *Muppets Most Wanted* is "almost" as good as the first go around, a rousing entertainment which pales only slightly in comparison to its predecessor. Without human helpers Jason and Amy (both Mr. Segal and Ms. Adams did not return for Part 2) but a slew of sensational cameos, this second installment into what is bound to be more Muppet movies is fun, jovial, and subversive. Adults—the original demo for Henson's creations—will get many of the allusions. The kiddies will simply enjoy the silly slapstick antics.

This will be for all that liked **TURBO 2**, **CARS 2**, **CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS 2**, and **WRECK IT RALPH**.





8/12 3 THE RAILWAY MAN DRAMA
\$6 MILL BO 600 SCREENS R 116 MINUTES

Colin Firth (THE KING'S SPEECH, A SINGLE MAN, MAMMA MIA!, LOVE ACTUALLY)

Nicole Kidman (MOULIN ROUGE, COLD MOUNTAIN, THE STEPFORD WIVES, TO DIE FROM, FAR AND AWAY)

Here, in this movie based on the true-life story of a young Scotsman brutally tortured by the Japanese Kempeitai during World War II, that sense appears alternately heroic and damaged. Resolutely focused on Eric's experience, both external and internal, the movie twists itself into a knot of clichés.

The first shots of *The Railway Man* hint at the problems to come. The young Eric (Jeremy Irvine) appears in a low angle shot with the London Bridge looming behind him, a valiant uniformed soldier returned home and visibly glad for it. Cut to the older version of this veteran (Colin Firth), lying on a floor, reciting a childhood rhyme, emotionally undone and alone, desperate. Between these two versions of Eric, the film inserts all manner of flashbacks, from older Eric's informal meetings with a fellow veterans' group to younger Eric's capture by Japanese soldiers, along with younger incarnations of those fellow veterans, as well as the older Eric's meeting and apparently whirlwindy romance with Patti (Nicole Kidman).

That the couple's meeting takes place on a train is a little cute, but again, suggests his capacity for focus. That it shows up on screen by way of his telling the story to his veteran friends, most specifically Finlay (Stellan Skarsgård), provides a rudimentary frame. Clambering awkwardly and rather loudly into seat opposite hers, Eric slowly warms to Patti's efforts at conversation, responding most frequently with facts concerning trains and towns where trains stop.

As he confesses to Finlay and company, over the course of just a few stops on this ride, he falls in love with her and yes, reader, he marries her. This happy occasion leads pretty much directly to moments of emotional withdrawal, physical and mental torments, and essential meanness to Patti, which leads in turn to the dredging up of his very, very bad time in Changi prison.

This bad time is jumpstarted in his flashbacks when Eric discovers the purpose he and other prisoners will serve for their captors, namely, to be slave laborers building the notorious Burma Railway (the construction killed some 90,000 Asian civilians and 14,000 Allied POWs). The POWs' resistance leads to repercussions, including Eric's torture. Here the movie transforms from a sometimes clever, other times obvious elaboration of the blurring of time and place inside Eric's PTSD, or his difficulties with "masculinity" as a social construct, into a more ponderous sorting out of demons. He discovers that one of his torturers, a translator named Nagase, is now giving tours of the prison, Eric decides (after an alarming bit of prodding by Finlay) to face his horrific past, or, as the film phrases it, the "army of ghosts" that continues to torment him.

The film holds out the possibilities of Eric's desire for vengeance and his turning into a monster of the sort he sees in Nagase (played in flashbacks by Tanroh Ishida and in present time by Hiroyuki Sanada). But as Eric makes his way to Changi and looks into the eyes of that monster, the film becomes less complicated rather than more, an unfortunate turn. Sitting across each other at the same table where they sat some 40 years earlier, the two men contemplate what it means to survive war, to feel guilt for doing so, and to make sense of utter chaos.

"Why are you still alive"? Eric asks Nagase, setting into motion more too-explanatory flashbacks to show how Nagase's experience paralleled Eric's own, preserved by the enemy to serve the enemy's purposes (one for his railway knowledge and the other for his language skills). As the torture scenes focus on waterboarding, you're reminded that Japanese waterboarders were executed by Allied victors, and may pause to ponder the current debate over American waterboarders.



Fans of **SABOTAGE**, **NON-STOP**, **ROB THE MOB**, **PARANOIA**, **PAIN AND GAIN** and **SNITCH** will like this one too.



8/19 1 THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN 2 ADVENTURE
\$197 MILL BO 4128 SCREENS PG-13 143 MINUTES

Andrew Garfield (THE SOCIAL NETWORK, NEVER LET ME GO, LIONS FOR LAMBS, THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN)

Emma Stone (THE HELP, GANGSTER SQUAD, CRAZY STUPID LOVE, ZOMBIE LAND)

Jamie Foxx (RAY, DJANGO UNCHAINED, HORRIBLE BOSSES, DUE DATE, LAW ABIDING CITIZEN)

Garfield's performance gives the film a lively kick for the most part, but doesn't quite mesh with the overbearing sentimentality afforded his relationship with Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone). A sequence where he walks through oncoming traffic to meet her in a love-struck trance is the most unbelievable element of a film that also includes Paul Giamatti riding around in a mecha-rhino; the scene where Peter makes a collage on his wall halfway through the film, to essentially remind the audience what's happened so far, is a photo-finish second. Much more rewarding is Parker's warm relationship with Aunt May (Sally Field), who frets over his fascination with his deceased parents (Campbell Scott and Embeth Davidtz) and their work.

The Parkers' experiments inevitably lead back to OsCorp, and the filmmakers' treatment of the Osborne bloodline is the film's primary saving grace. The scene where Harry Osborne (DeHaan), sporting an Interpol-cover-band hairdo, visits his ailing, literally reptilian father, Norman (Chris Cooper), is genuinely chilling, as Cooper's nefarious paterfamilias leisurely reveals that Harry will die of the same genetic disease as he is now succumbing to. And Harry's transformation into the Green Goblin smartly leans more toward the outlandishly monstrous than the "realistic," and Max's transformation into Electro is similarly nonsensical in the best possible way. Would that the filmmakers focused more on the relationship between Parker and these other mutants, as the film may have ultimately grappled with the issues of identity, humanistic purpose, and fate that it constantly skirts here.



Everyone that loved **MAN OF STEEL, IRON MAN 3, NOAH, ROBO COP, PACIFIC RIM** and **FAST AND FURIOUS 6** will love this adventure.



8/19 3 FADING GIGOLO DRAMADY
\$ MILL BO 367 SCREENS R 90 MINUTES

John Turturo (THE BIG LEBOWSKI, THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1,2,3, SLIP STREAM, QUIZ SHOW, CLOCKERS)

Woody Allen (ANNIE HALL, SLEEPER, EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX)

Sharon Stone (CASINO, BASIC INSTINCT, TOTAL RECALL, HE SAID SHE SAID)

In this film, women come in one of two regressive types: sex-crazed fiends, from Dr. Parker (Sharon Stone) to her friend Selima (Sofía Vergara), or meek, mousy widows like Avigal (Vanessa Paradis), who cries upon feeling a man's hands on her bare back because she hasn't been touched like that since her

husband died. None of these women are given any inner life outside of their function as catalysts for actions taken by the two main male characters; even when Avigal finally takes control of her own agency in a climactic scene involving a makeshift Hasidic court, it's only as the result of a male's tender touch.

Turturro's titular gigolo, Fioravante, is given one quirk—the fact that he works at a flower shop—to suggest the sensitive soul behind the quietly stoic exterior. And his pimp, the elderly bookstore owner Murray, is played by Woody Allen as a repository of familiar Allen shtick, broad ethnic humor and all—with the broadness buttressed by the caricatures that make up the supporting cast.

It all adds up to a nice little story and a diversion to all of the explosions and shoot ups that grace most screens today. A labor of love here with a sweetness to it that will appeal to those that **liked ENOUGH SAID, SAVING MR. BANKS, BAD WORDS, THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL, PHILOMENA,** and **THE BEGINNERS** will like this one.



8/19 2 THE QUIET ONES SUPERNATURAL
\$9 MILL BO 2027 SCREENS PG-13 98 MINUTES

Sam Claflin (SNOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMAN, THE HUNGER GAMES: CATCHING FIRE)

Jared Harris (TV—MAD MEN, FRINGE, THE RICHES, FILM—SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE WARD, POMPEII, LINCOLN)

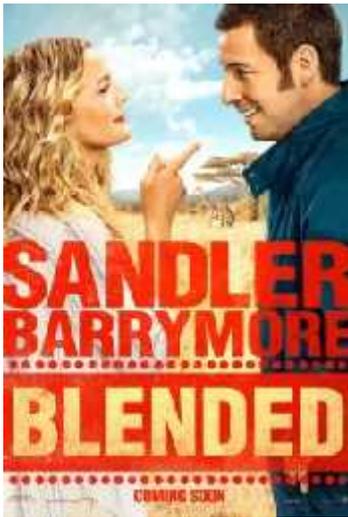
The story, concerning Oxford professor Joseph Coupland's (Harris) attempts to tease out the malevolent entity that appears to reside within young Jane Harper (Olivia Cooke), may be trite, but it's enlivened by the perpetual state of inquiry affected by the preponderance of analog equipment used to record and assess a series of possibly supernatural occurrences. Throughout, as hunky cameraman-for-hire Brian (Claflin) records the story's hauntings on equipment that feels as bygone as the dodo, perspective is reframed with every shift in aspect ratio, and sometimes as unnervingly as the strange goings-on that may or may not be the handiwork of the not-so-quiet Evie.

Though the director, Pogue has a propensity to cheaply cut to effusively noisy activity, such as the popping of a champagne cork, he's an elegant framer of even the most mundane action, orchestrating the film's consistently chilly unease from a series of unassuming jolts embedded in the humdrum. From a radiator that blows its top to a van door that gently opens after the professor and his troops walk into a manse-cum-research-facility in the country upon being evicted from their rooms at Oxford, coincidence is creepily propped up as the film's possible Big Bad. In one particularly effective scene, a flirty exchange between Joseph and one of his lab assistants, Krissi (Erin Richards), outside of Jane's room is fraught with an agonizing tension that's rooted in the possibility that Jane, or Evie, or an especially tenacious combination of the two, could pull some part, if not all, of the golden-haired Krissi into her room through the door's ominous window.

Much is made of the nature of the professor's experiments and the conflict between his weird science and religion, none of which is deepened exactly by the revelation of his true relationship to a young boy once haunted by an entity known as Mr. Gregor. There's a certain cunning to the finale's fiery staging as a coming-out story of sorts. Paralleling an earlier scene in which Krissi calls out Joseph for his misogyny, as if speaking for every woman in the Hammer Films canon, the film torches the sexist notion that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, correlating self-acceptance with the severity of Evie's hauntings and propping up its horrors as a selfless expression of a once-invisible girl's sense of agency.

Fans of **OPEN GRAVE, VAMPIRE ACADEMY, A WINTER'S TALE, DEVIL'S DUE,** and **YOU'RE NEXT** will like this one too.





8/26 1 BLENDED COMEDY

\$42 MILL BO 3129 SCREENS PG-13 117 MINUTES

Adam Sandler (ANGER MANAGEMENT, FUNNY PEOPLE, THE WEDDING SINGER, HAPPY GILMORE)

Drew Barrymore (ET, SCREAM, WHIP IT, HE'S JUST NOT THAT INTO YOU, RIDING IN CARS WITH BOYS)

At a conceptual level, **BLENDED** had as much promise to examine Sandler's diametric impulses as anything this side of **JACK AND JILL** (giving Armond White and his instantly notorious rave review of the film the rhetorical benefit of the doubt), which literally split Sandler in two before unconvincingly proposing that both Jill the crass buffoon and Jack the kind-hearted oaf complete each

other. *Blended* operates under similar logic, but stacks the deck by once again reuniting Sandler with Drew Barrymore, the co-star who first domesticated the ex-*Saturday Night Live* frat boy.

The film's single parents Jim and Lauren can't even get through a single date. Mutually hostile from the outset, they both secretly arrange to be pulled away via cellphone from the mounting disaster. They meet up again to return each other's accidentally swapped credit cards and, in convoluted fashion, unknowingly end up swiping their mutual friends' unwanted tickets to a luxury South African resort vacation. The only catch: It's a resort set up to help step-families get off on the right foot by sharing exotic "familymoons" amid the grandeur of humping rhinos, sax-blowing monkeys, and Terry Crews's bulging pythons. Faster than you can say *The Brady Bunch Goes on Safari*, Jim, Lauren, and their collective quintet of apprehensive kin are getting rinsed in the baptismal waters of traditional, evidently superior two-parent family units.

In case you didn't get the heteronormative hint, each parent is lugging around opposite-sex broods. And flailing. Lauren reacts to her son's lascivious feelings for the babysitter (whose face he tapes to a *Playboy* centerfold) with shuddering convulsions, and Jim the patriarch evidently thinks his rail-thin teen daughter will manage fine with maxi beluga-sized tampons. They need each other. Their kids need them to need each other. And the filmmakers responsible for setting Barrymore up with Sandler for this encore duet seem pretty convinced all the two actors

need is each other too, or else they might've used their chemistry to mirror Sandler's own competing impulses to alternately regress and charm. Or at least bother to lay out comedic set pieces that aren't simply family-friendly big-budget variations on *Jackass* stunts. Late in the film, when it's clear beauty will fall for beast, they both concur parenting is giving 99 percent of yourself over to your children and hoping for the best with the remainder. *Blended*, which summarily ignores the kids once their respective sole problems are "solved," makes a pretty lousy case for the domestic one-percenters.

Definitely for all fans of **50 FIRST DATES**, **GROWN UPS**, **BAD WORDS**, **ENDLESS LOVE**, **ANCHOR MAN 2**, and **LABOR DAY**.





8/26 3 LEGENDS OF OZ: DOROTHY'S RETURN

FAMILY

\$9 MILL BO 1967 SCREENS PG 88 MINUTES

VOICES OF: Dan Aykroyd, Lea Michele, Martin Short, Oliver Platt

Like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives...except the sands of time do not flow as freely in Kansas as they do in the Emerald City, at least according to Will Finn and Dan St. Pierre's *Legends of Oz: Dorothy's Return*. Though Dorothy Gale (Lea Michele) has barely gotten a chance to survey the wreckage done to her aunt and uncle's home since tapping her way back to the Sunflower State, the Scarecrow (Dan Aykroyd) has evolved into an inventor of efficient but audience-punishing devices. Rather than aim his "rainbow mover" at the Jester (Martin Short), now shrilly terrorizing the Land of Oz in the wake of his wicked sister's demise, the Scarecrow uses his makeshift time-travel mechanism to bring Dorothy back to his fantasy dominion—this in spite of the fact that the only talent the girl has ever displayed for fighting evil is an accidental water dousing. And rather than drop Dorothy and Toto in front of the Emerald City, they're left some half-dozen Candy Land-like neighborhoods away, thus allowing an already thin and bland storyline to be stretched out to an almost Sadean extreme.

Trying to follow the busted yellow brick road, Dorothy encounters on her way to her obligatory showdown with the Jester a series of generic-brand Epcot Center attractions, such as the cringingly literal Great Wall of China, behind whose teacup walls lives the fragile, suitor-seeking China Princess (Megan Hilty). Though Dorothy is now a legend in Oz, the subject of hero worship is treated uncritically throughout, existing only to afford the girl a convenient get-out-of-execution card after she and obese Wiser the Owl (Oliver Platt) lick a bunch a candy they shouldn't have. And in what is either a sign of creative bankruptcy or a reflection of our sad times, Dorothy's new friends do not want for such qualities as courage or intellect. In fact, they want for nothing at all, though Wiser discovers at one point that he can still fly despite being one *Freaky Eaters* appearance away from a massive heart attack, and implicit in China Princess's ever-relaxing attitude we're meant to believe that the best cure for vanity is to find a husband.



This will be enjoyed by those that liked **EPIC, THE LEGO MOVIE, THE NUT JOB, TURBO 2, PERCY JACKSON: SEA OF MONSTERS**, and **KICK ASS 2**.