

1/6 2 **BOYHOOD** DRAMA \$23 MILL BO
775 SCREENS R 165 MINUTES

Ethan Hawke (THE PURGE, BEFORE MIDNIGHT, BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD, TRAINING DAY, QUIZ SHOW)

Patricia Arquette (TV—BOARDWALK EMPIRE, CSI, LAW AND ORDER—FILMS—THE BADGE, FAST FOOD NATION, ED WOOD, FLIRTING WITH DISASTER)

Our lives are made up of individual moments, parsed out over individual minutes over individual seconds which, in the end, always seem too short and sadly succinct. There's no great story arc, just lots of little ones, each playing out among the various personality pros and cons we develop and scatter like so many dandelion seeds into the wind.

By the time we are old enough to realize it, we only remember the epics, the instances where things changed radically for better and worse. Births, deaths, degrees, achievements, jobs, kids, diseases, divorces—these are the buzzwords we use as we spin our time into something more meaningful. In the end, though, those individual moments fade, failing to resonate as powerfully as a performance or a Richard Linklater's brilliant film is made up exclusively of life's minor incidents. Telling the simple story of one family's foray into human existence spread out of 12 actual real time years (more on this in a moment), the filmmaker best known for *Slacker*, *Dazed and Confused*, the *Before* Trilogy, and *Bernie*, dissects the details of little Mason Jr. and big sister Samantha's daily subsistence, from fights at the dinner table to awkward silences among warring adults.

Patricia Arquette as the mother, Olivia, and newcomer Ellar Coltrane (his own daughter, Lorelei, rounds out the family foursome)—and began filming, 12 years ago. The two name stars were in their early 30s at the time, while fictional siblings were barely six and eight.

Capturing select scenes over a few days over the course of the timeframe, Linklater was able to expose the actual maturation process both inwardly and outwardly. No make-up was used, no CG effects applied to render Coltrane younger or Hawke older. Instead, like a scripted extension of Michael Apted's equally amazing *Up* documentary series, we witness the actual aging process as it applies to performers and the characters they play.

Early on, a group of boys paw at a Victoria's Secret catalog, an acknowledgement that almost every male discovers sex through the pages of such a product guide. Later, Mason Jr. joins some "older boys" for some good old fashioned delinquency—and his first beer. From an uneasy admission to a parent over drug use to "the conversation" with a teacher who only has your best interests at heart, *Boyhood* borrows from everyone's experiences to showcase the similarities we all share.

While watching this, we unexpectedly become like the characters in the film. We forget the big impacts on our lives, and instead concentrate on the smaller things. We yearn to see the fresh face of a young Coltrane in the now slightly soured college age Mason, Jr. We want a return to those green Texas backyards, those hidden places between houses where the imagination can run free and we are given time to recall what formed us.

As we grow older, those hours suddenly shift into minutes which then turn into seconds. Before we know it, all that's left are impressions. We eventually refer to them as memories, but over the long haul, many of those memories don't represent the things we actually want to remember. Instead, they are just points on a map, dots we eventually connect when we're feeling wistful. We've arrived at the destination, unsure of how we got there.

His one will rent as well as **THE HUNDRED FOOT JOURNEY, MALEFICENT, IF I STAY, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, HEAVEN IS FOR REAL, STAND BY ME** and **HER**.





1/6 2 GET ON UP MUSICAL DRAMA
\$31 MILL BO 2682 SCREENS PG-13 139
MINUTES

**Chadwick Boseman (TV—FRINGE, JUSTIFIED, CASTLE—
FILM--42, DRAFT DAY)**

**Dan Aykroyd (THE BLUES BROTHERS, GHOSTBUSTERS,
THE CAMPAIGN, 50 FIRST DATES, PEARL HARBOR,
TOMMY BOY, CONEHEADS)**

That the time-shuffling James Brown biopic opens with an unmistakable low point in the Godfather of Funk's long and checkered history, with the musician waving around a shotgun while trainees at one of his franchise locations cower in terror, turns out to be a major red herring. As if taking

a cue from its own title, the movie emphatically sets its sights on the upward trajectory of Brown's career, spending the bulk of its time depicting how Brown (played with winning doses of insouciance by Chadwick Boseman) transcended his abusive, backwoods upbringing and his adolescence spent in servitude to his brothel-madam aunt, promising "Pretty girls! Whiskey!" to roving packs of Korean War veterans traveling through town. (In one disquieting, isolated sequence, the preteen Brown is seen pulling a pair of shiny dress shoes from the swinging corpse of a lynched man.)

Sentenced to prison for upward of 10 years for stealing a man's suit, Brown quickly befriends Bobby Byrd (Nelsan Ellis), the frontman of the Famous Flames, a gospel group that performs at Brown's penitentiary, and helps him get his feet on the ground once he's released. Brown joins their group, teaches them to sing from the crotch, and swipes the microphone at a juke joint while Little Richard takes a tinkle break out back, a breach of etiquette that earns the "Tutti Frutti" superstar-in-waiting's respect. (As Richard, Brandon Mychal Smith works stank-face wonders with his one-scene part, alternately warning Brown of the dangers of "white devil" record execs and feeling him up and down with his darting eyes.)



Bolstered by the enthusiastic response their new act has been getting, the Famous Flames implode before they can even tour the chitlin' circuit in earnest. The record company decides Brown has to be a headliner, and the rest of the group will have to be satisfied with standing behind an ampersand. Despite Brown's reassurance that he had nothing to do with the decision, they bristle and walk. All except Byrd. The episode is but one of the many instances of *Get on Up* conflating Brown's musical genius with his basically compassionate nature, as if asserting both to be mutual givens, an attitude that comes to find its most prominent example in Byrd himself.

This one will rent as well as **BLENDED, SINGLE MOM'S CLUB, THINK LIKE A MAN TOO, BAGGAGE CLAIM, RIDE ALONG, ANCHOR MAN 2, and 12 YEARS A SLAVE.**



1/6 3 THE GUEST ACTION
\$1 MILL BO 326 SCREENS R 99 MINUTES

Dan Stevens (TV—DOWNTON ABBEY, SENSE AND SENSIBILITY, THE TOMORROW PEOPLE—FILM—THE FIFTH ESTATE, THE COBBLER)
Sheila Kelley (TV—LOST, HAWAII FIVE O, GOSSIP GIRL—FILM—MATCHSTICK MEN, NURSE BETTY, ONE FINE DAY)

Somewhere in Anywheresville, U.S.A., the type of place where our military goes to mine for its soldiers, and where everyone, less characteristically, is simply biding time until Halloween, a man comes knocking on the Peterson family's door. His name, he says, is David (Dan Stevens), and when Laura (Sheila Kelley) invites him into her

home. the movie furthers its characters' sense of alienation and longing, if not its passably sincere regard for PTSD, through an audaciously precise rhyming of theme with dreamy soundtrack choices.

A leap of faith is needed to forgive the sheer inscrutability of Stevens's tall, blond stranger, the almost *Serial Mom*-ish lack of patience that doesn't quite jibe with the meticulousness that his master plan would seem to necessitate, even if his appeal to the members of the Peterson clan, as surrogate brother and son, is clearly and immediately understood. But his mystique is the grist for a series of cheeky set pieces informed by his scrupulous military training, as in a scene wherein he targets young Luke's (Brendan Meyer) bullies with a provocative drink order—cosmopolitans for the guys, blowjobs for their girlfriends—that leads to grisly fisticuffs and a squeaky-clean exit strategy made possible by his canny gift for manipulation.



Though understandably seduced by David's salacious hanging of a towel around his waist, she eventually sees through his con after he doles out a truly inexplicable form of vengeance on her behalf. The rest of the film commits to validating her instincts, and builds toward an awesome riff on *Lady from Shanghai's* finale that, as in the car ride Anna and David take to a pre-Halloween party, treats the film's soundtrack cuts as deliriously synchronized accents to the characters' vacillating between despair and inspiration. *The Guest* may not cut deep, and its finale is a jokey afterthought, but in his flair for audio-visual embellishment, his choreographed use of smoke and mirrors, weaponry and bloodshed, faces and bodies, Wingard announces himself as a conspirator of super-cool cine-pleasure.

Even with a limited release this should rent as well as **SABOTAGE, THE EQUALIZER, EXPENDABLES 3, SIN CITY, BRICK MANSIONS, LOCKE,** and **BLOOD TIES**



1/6 3 HORNS HORROR

\$1 MILL BO 109 SCREENS R 120 MINUTES

**Daniel Radcliffe (ALL HARRY POTTER MOVIES, WHAT IF, KILL YOUR DARLINGS, DECEMBER BOYS)
Juno Temple (LOVELACE, AFTERNOON DELIGHT, KILLER JOE, LITTLE BIRDS)**

Ignatius Perrish (Radcliffe) lives up to his fiery namesake by waking up from a bender as a devil in not-so-inconspicuous disguise, with horns protruding from his forehead that give him the power to divine people's deepest, often naughtiest, secrets. Yesterday he was a hangdog, seemingly resigned to the fact that no one would ever believe that he didn't kill the love of his life, Merrin (Temple), even if he couldn't quite remember what he did after she broke his heart and he tumbled into a

boozy oblivion. Today he's an impish oracle, knowing that his old buddies turned cops are closet cases with the hots for each other, that his mother wishes he would skedaddle from her life, and that a screaming brat's mom thinks of her black lover as a "jigaboo." Following author Joe Hill's lead, Alexandra Aja's film adaptation sees Ig's power as both gift and burden, but in his similar intertwining of goodness and blasphemy, however playfully, he corroborates the source novel's flimsiness as theological discourse.

Hill begins his novel as a vibrantly detailed Kafkaesque freak-out. If Ig's metamorphosis into a devil incarnate feels less like a conceit in search of motivation on the page, it's because Hill's often bitter nostalgia for youth, recalling the richest passages from father Stephen King's masterwork, *It*, hints at Ig struggling to reconcile his present-day tragedy with his youthful idealism. Aja is faithful enough to the novel's more cunning toying with chronology, thrillingly capturing the rich passage in which young Ig and his friends perilously goof off near a river by using a cherry bomb to blow up a turkey, but he's mostly interested in his characters' youthful reverie insofar as it allows him to push to the surface the red herrings that Hill was careful to make undiscernible. Aja, too, has his eyes set less on the notion of reckoning than he does on literalizing the inner states of characters who've been warped by religion, opening the film with a wonky—possibly Gaspar Noé-inspired—conflation of Ig and Merrin's bygone splendor in the grass with the on-the-floor aftermath of one of Ig's latter-day drunken all-nighters.



That cross, which grants anyone who wears it immunity from Ig's newfound powers of foresight, is the engine that propels some of the story's more audacious set pieces, but if Hill understands it as a symbol of Merrin's struggle with agency, Aja only sees it as a device—a means to unlocking the mystery of the girl's death.

This one should rent as well as **THE QUIET ONES, OCULOUS, OPEN GRAVE, VAMPIRE ACADEMY, and DEVIL'S DUE.**



1/6 3 LEFT BEHIND ACTION

\$14 MILL BO 1945 SCREENS PG-13 110 MINUTES

**Nicolas Cage (FACE/OFF, GONE IN SIXTY SECONDS, LEAVING LAS VEGAS, LEAVING TESS, MOONSTRUCK)
Lea Thompson (SPY SCHOOL, BACK TO THE FUTURE I, II, III), RED DAWN, THIN ICE)**

Two different crowds will likely offer themselves up to this movie: the intended evangelical Christian audience, and neo-ironic Nicolas Cage followers. Cage plays a sallow-faced airline pilot named Ray Steele, ambushed by his spunky daughter, Chloe (Cassi Thompson), just as he's about to fly to London—for work, but also intending to have an extramarital affair with one of his flight attendants. (Ray's idea of a hot date, and thus one of the film's surprisingly few explicitly given examples of sin, is a U2 concert.) He's drifted, slowly but surely, from his wife, Irene (Lea Thompson), as she's intensified her devotion to her Christian faith; in a bit of ass-covering faux-magnanimity, he chuckles to Chloe: "If she's gonna run off with another man, why not Jesus?" Yet Chloe finds herself stymied, too, by her mom's obsession with God's wrath, wishing she could refocus on family necessities instead. But just as things become emotionally unmanageable for Chloe, the unthinkable happens: the Rapture begins, and all the world's truest believers go to Heaven in the blink of an eye.

What's interesting here is that the victims include the entirety of humanity's children and also random side characters like the gentle old man on Ray's flight, whose widow can only stare at his muddled pile of clothes. The remaining passengers include a comic-relief dwarf, an Asian UFO-conspiracy theorist, a coked-up heiress, and a vaguely accented Easterner—who is, to the film's credit, only accused of being a terrorist once (though he uses the word himself, after somebody implies he's Muslim). While Ray struggles to turn his plane around ("I can't let these people go down without a chance to correct their mistakes!"), the world below him falls to pieces.

This one should rent as well as **GOD'S POCKET, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, OCULUS , GOD'S NOT DEAD, FLIGHT, THE QUIET ONES** and **HEAVEN IS FOR REAL.**





1/6 1 NO GOOD DEED THRILLER
\$54 MILL BO 2798 SCREENS PG-13 84 MINUTES

**Idris Elba (TV—LUTHER, THE OFFICE—FILM—PACIFIC RIM, PROMETHEUS, THOR, 28 WEEKS LATER)
Taraji P. Henson (THINK LIKE A MAN TOO, LARRY CROWNE, THINK LIKE A MAN, KARATE KID)**

This is a movie about a woman trapped in her own home with a stranger she slowly realizes is a terrorizing psychopath. More accurately, it's a movie about two great actors stuck in a lousy thriller. Taraji P. Henson plays the woman. Idris Elba plays the psychopath. These are talented, charismatic actors, who have done great work in the past and surely will again. But the movie is thin, obvious, empty, and gives them characters with one-note dynamics and little of interest to do. They're producers on this picture, so you can't feel too sorry for them, but if this is the best material they could find, they deserve better.

It's a rote, unsurprising and straightforward woman in danger movie that hauls out all the old tropes we've seen many times before. Even the Surprise Twist, which is really more of a mildly intriguing development or a new piece of evidence, isn't too surprising. Henson, a well-off former prosecutor, is home with her two small children on a dark and stormy night while her lawyer husband (Henry Simmons) is away. Elba's a working class murderer who escapes from prison after being turned down for parole, stops to kill his ex-girlfriend (Kate del Castillo), and then crashes his stolen car. He walks to Henson's house, where she lets him use her phone and her first aid kit. That's her good deed. It does not go unpunished.

At first he's nice, sipping tea, making small talk with a flirtatious neighbor (Leslie Bibb), and complimenting the kids on their cuteness. But soon enough he's maneuvered the situation into something far more dangerous. He's cut the phone lines. (No cell phones?) He's hidden the knives. (No blunt objects?) He glowers and stalks while Henson pleads and plans. Aimee Lagos's script plays out more or less how you'd think, with Henson scheming to protect her kids and alert the authorities, while Elba cuts off escape routes and heightens the tension until the climactic violent act brings it all to an end.

If you rented these pretty well then this will work too. **EDGE OF TOMORROW, BRICK MANSIONS, DRAFT DAY, NEED FOR SPEED, NON-STOP, SABOTAGE, and JACK RYAN: SHADOW RECRUIT.**





1/13 2 A WALK AMONG THE TOMBSTONES THRILLER

\$26 MILL BO 2714 SCREENS R 114 MINUTES

Liam Neeson (TAKEN, SCHINDLER'S LIST, UNKNOWN, THIRD PERSON, LOVE ACTUALLY, GANGS OF NEW YORK)

Dan Stevens (TV—DOWNTON ABBEY, SENSE & SENSIBILITY, MAXWELL)

"Did the corruption get to you?" Ex-cop Matthew Scudder (Liam Neeson) doesn't stop to think. "Not really," he says. "I wouldn't have been able to support my family without it." The camera at this moment in *A Walk Among Tombstones* cuts conventionally between the two men talking,

one face and then the other. But the shot of Scudder here reveals in an instant just where he's been and where this movie is going.

In part, this is because the shot transitions from the younger man, a drug dealer named Kenny Kristo (Dan Stevens) whose house, Scudder notes, is expensively appointed, and whose face, you notice, features a painstakingly groomed beard. But mostly, it's because the shot frames Neeson's face, worn and wily and also, still, curious, at least enough to have come out to Kenny's house on an invite he and you knew right away was trouble, and enough to ponder the Kenny's ask, namely, that Scudder help him avenge his wife Carrie's (Razane Jammal) murder.

When Scudder comes on the serial murdering aspect of the case, he's not precisely expecting it, but he's not surprised. Again, his experience—the experience we don't know and might imagine—leaves him sad and ready. That is, until he meets TJ (Brian "Astro" Bradley, a kid without a home and with an affection for Dashiell Hammet. This dropped name makes clear the plotty perversities of *A Walk Among Tombstones* have particular contexts, including an era when their plots were less actionated and their pursuits more cerebral.

TJ and Scudder's meeting takes place in an appropriately throwback setting, the public library where the boy is quicker with the microfiche than his elder, where he displays an intuition for putting pieces together that proves utterly useful. TJ wants to be a detective, he tells Scudder, but/and his sketchbook reveals he also aspires to superherodom. While Scudder first appears amused by this distraction (the smile that almost turns up the corners of Neeson's mouth is fantastic), he also commits to the kid, and their friendship ends up the movie's most crucial emotional journey; though not exactly resolved, it's wholly affecting and complicated.



Their investigation, unevenly paced and undertaken as a series of small steps forward and back, hardly ever goes as expected. It leads Scudder and TJ to places they might rather not see, to see men possessed of daunting ugliness, living in a world so suffused with corruption that they tend not to be noticed. This world, noted more than once by people living in it, is at once familiar and strange. It's familiar that girls and women serve mostly as victims and emblems, damsels to be rescued and pursued, images to be hung on walls and lamented, dreams to be lost and missed.

This movie isn't just another vengeance movie, just another coming of age story or franchise starter, even just another Liam Neeson movie. It's all that, but it is also, sometimes, a movie about what you expect and about how movies create what you expect. It will rent as well as **BRICK MANSIONS, NEIGHBORS, DRAFT DAY, NEED FOR SPEED, SABOTAGE, NON-STOP, LONE SURVIVOR** and **3 DAYS TO KILL**.



1/13 1 **GONE GIRL** THRILLER
\$137 MILL BO 3857 SCREENS R 149 MINUTES

Ben Affleck (GOOD WILL HUNTING, DAREDEVIL, ARGO, CHANGING LANES, CLERK II, BOILER ROOM, THE TOWN)

Neil Patrick Harris (TV—HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER, DOOGIE HOWSER—FILM--

Rosamund Pike (JACK REACHER, THE WORLD'S END, A LONG WAY DOWN, THE DEVIL YOU KNOW)

It goes way beyond a simple “he said/she said”. It’s the 24-hour news cycle broken down and deconstructed. It’s a Lifetime movie with megalodon teeth, a tour de force for a director that’s known for his dark, foreboding film work. Even with its bestseller pedigree, *Gone Girl* would be a significant cinematic achievement, mostly for all the things it avoids while getting so much of the mystery thriller genre 100 percent right. It’s terrific, and terrifying.

Ben Affleck stars as Nick Dunne, a man who has long lived in the shadow of his wife, Amy (Rosamund Pike). She’s the subject of a celebrated book series by her parents (David Clevinger and Lisa Banes) and, over the course of their five-year marriage, he has grown disgruntled and uneasy. A family tragedy brings him back to his Midwestern roots, where he opens a bar with his sister Margo (Carrie Coon). On the day of their fifth anniversary, Amy unexpectedly goes missing.

Nick is immediately considered a suspect in her disappearance and the policemen in charge of the case, Detective Rhonda Boney and Officer Jim Gilpin (Kim Dickens and Patrick Fugit) begin searching for clues. Once the media pounces on the situation, our desperate hero finds himself tried and sentenced in the court of public opinion. Only two people can potentially help him, a slick lawyer named Tanner Bolt (Tyler Perry) and Amy’s ex-boyfriend, Desi Collings (Neil Patrick Harris).



There’s a lot more plot in here, but to discuss it further would undermine what Fincher and his writer, *Girl* novelist Gillian Flynn, have to offer. As much as this is a movie about characters, it’s actually more about what these characters do that’s so compelling. The various themes explored—the meaning of marriage, ancillary fame, media hounding, trial by television, what does it take to be a cold blooded, conniving person and how that can be hidden and/or abandoned for the sake of a bigger picture—are just some of the concepts worked through here.

Oddly enough, it’s only he who comes under scrutiny (although, it would be hard for the missing person experience such an examination) and this is where *Gone Girl* nails it. By spending all of our time focused on Nick, by going through every mudraking cliché we can, the fallacy of such an approach is revealed. This is particularly true of Missi Pyle’s Ellen Abbott, a Nancy Grace like pundit pitbull who doesn’t mind defaming someone just as long as the public is on her side. Teeth bared like a mother protecting her young, she’s the main reason Nick gets no peace.

And here’s the deal: he shouldn’t. He’s not innocent. He’s been sleepwalking through this failed marriage for far too long. He should be held accountable, just not for a murder. He’s a fraud as a husband. Indeed, *Gone Girl* is also fraught with arguments about commitment and insight. When questioned by the cops, Nick can’t name his wife’s blood type (which isn’t too unrealistic. I’ve been married almost 30 years and I have no clue what my wife’s is, let alone she knowing mine). While some of the

other questions may be tricky (friends, free time), the idea that, occasionally, strangers pass themselves off as your standard marrieds gives this film a great deal of depth. Fincher then finds a laser like path through the pitfalls, ending up with something that's both satisfying in its aesthetic and devastating in its determinations.

In fact, anyone outside of this amazing auteur might have fallen for Flynn's pat pronouncements and simply let the story sell the tickets. But with Fincher, *Gone Girl* becomes fuller, richer. It's more than just a mystery. It's way beyond a man tried to defend himself against what the rest of society believes he is. Granted, cinematic scenarios like this often turn into a pointless pissing match, the guys given none of the doubt while the women work to win everyone over. But what is she was indeed the baddie? What if it was her doing to him what the world assumes such couples do? *Gone Girl* gives us the ramifications of that, and much, much more. That's what makes it one of the best movies of the year.

This will be a huge renter like **HERCULES**, **EDGE OF TOMORROW**, **X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST**, **DIVERGENT**, **BLENDED**, **TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF DISTINCTION**, and **THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN**.



1/13 3 THE TWO FACES OF JANUARY

THRILLER

PG-13 96 MINUTES

Viggo Mortenson (A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE, 28 DAYS, A DANGEROUS METHOD, G. I. JANE, LORD OF THE RINGS)

Kirsten Dunst (ON THE ROAD, SPIDER MAN 3, MONA LISA SMILE, BRING IT ON, DROP DEAD GORGEOUS)

This is a superbly acted and sporadically intriguing thriller. Set in 1962 Athens, the film opens on Rydal (Oscar Isaac), an American tour guide whose year-long stay in Greece seems to have consisted mostly of leading groups of slender young women around the

Parthenon and pontificating about Theseus's tumultuous relationship with his father. One late afternoon, Rydal chitchats with Colette (Kirstin Dunst), who happens to be vacationing with her husband, Chester (Viggo Mortensen), leading to the trio becoming holiday companions. In these initial sequences, Amini frames the perfectly groomed and garmented actors with the same sense of luscious care that he affords the Greek geography, though that attention begins to wane once Chester's identity as a con man is revealed, forcing the three into hiding, and igniting a father/son-like rivalry between Rydal and Chester.

Writer-director Hossein Amini displays a Buñuelian sense of time, best epitomized by economical leaps in narrative progression, like when Colette hands Chester a scrap of paper with Rydal's hotel information on it, which is immediately followed by a scene days later with the two of them walking through a local flea market. But unlike Buñuel, who roots these abrupt shifts forward in time, either in reality or reverie and within the psychological and class distress of a singular character, Amini fumbles for a precise, philosophical meaning to the film's plotting. Instead, his edits and sequences are engineered for narrative efficiency, often at the expense of thematic or affectual aims. The same can be said for a memorable cut from and insert of Chester flipping through a wad of hundred-dollar bills to a shot of water spraying out from behind their getaway boat. Amini moves about the film's events as if going through a checklist, finding the most suitable functional equivalent for any number of other stitching elements he could have presumably mustered. These aesthetic devices lend the film a sense of precision and refinement, but only to the effect of it being too calculated a concoction, ready-made for consumption as a film that's playing by the hard-and-fast rules of "quality" filmmaking.

The film's title matches the relationship of Rydal's opening story regarding Theseus, whose carelessness drove his father Aegeus to suicide. In that vein, Rydal and Chester gradually become much the same man despite their initial, seeming differences, a narrative device that mirrors the dual male characters of Claude Chabrol's first two films, *Le Beau Serge* and *Les Cousins*. However, a deeper significance between the men eludes Amini outside of cinematic allusions, primarily because his script has the pair jumping through a series of narrative hoops in the film's final third, rather than honing in on the masculine perfidies that undergird their homosocial love/hate relationship.



This should rent as well as **THE RAILWAY MAN, LOCKE, HER, THE MONUMENTS MEN, PHILOMENA, and THE BOOK THIEF.**



1/20 1 ANNABELLE HORROR
\$84 MILL BO 3275 SCREENS R 88 MINUTES

Ward Horton (TV—FRINGE, CSI MIAMI, BODY OF PROOF, WHITE COLLAR, ELEMENTARY—FILM—NAIL POLISH, I HATE VALENTINE’S DAY, THE WOLF ON WALL STREET)

Alfre Woodard (TV—TRUE BLOOD, PRIVATE PRACTICE, MEMPHIS BEAT, DESPERATE HOUSE WIVES---FILM—12 YEARS A SLAVE, THE FORGOTTEN, PRIMAL FEAR, THE SINGING DETECTIVE)

Annabelle Wallis (X-MEN 1ST CLASS, W. E. BODY OF LIES)

Among the many objects from paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren’s cabinet of demonically possessed curiosities is the indisputable scene-stealer was Annabelle, a pigtailed, rosy-cheeked wooden moppet who looked like Howdy Doody in drag, or Raggedy Ann after a long night in the wrong part of town. Now, back to 1969, when Annabelle was just a normal, ordinary (if still freaky-looking) doll in the collection of a Santa Monica housewife (Annabelle Wallis) and her med-student husband (Horton).

In the pantheon of cinematic devil dolls, Annabelle plays a game of inches, changing her position on the shelf or methodically rocking back and forth in a creaky chair, but never full-on running through the house wielding a weapon like the diminutive kewpie doll of Dan Curtis’s 1975 cult classic “Trilogy of Terror,” or Chucky of the “Child’s Play” franchise (who would sure make a swell beau for Annabelle if he weren’t already taken). But no matter: Wherever Annabelle goes, trouble seems sure to follow, in the form of mysteriously slamming doors and malfunctioning appliances (TV, oven, sewing machine), all of which Leonetti milks for every ounce of ominous portent (though, really, there is only so much one can do with a demonically possessed tin of stove-top popcorn).



It’s only when John’s residency occasions a family move to tree-lined Pasadena that “Annabelle” brings out the bigger guns, including imperiled baby carriages, ectoplasmic apparitions and a full-on winged demon, courtesy of makeup effects wizards Greg Nicotero and Howard Berger. Pretty much on cue, a friend-or-foe neighbor rears her head (Woodard, in the Ruth Gordon part), a God-fearing priest (Tony Amendola, a dead ringer for F. Murray Abraham) arrives on the scene, and a turntable won’t stop playing The Association singing “Cherish” (used here the way John Carpenter used “Mr. Sandman” in “Halloween”) — before, literally and figuratively, all hell breaks loose.

But when it comes to “Annabelle’s” five or six big stinger moments, Leonetti manages to deliver the jolts, and if audiences are sure to head home complaining about how dumb and predictable it all was, many may also find themselves nursing their significant others’ lightly bruised forearms.

This will rent as well as **EDGE OF TOMORROW, DELIVER US FROM EVIL, PURGE: ANARCHY, A HAUNTED HOUSE 2, THE QUIET ONES, BLENDED** and **300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE**.



1/20 1 THE BOXTROLLS FAMILY

\$51 MILL BO 3426 SCREENS PG 96 MINUTES

VOICES OF: Ben Kingsley, Jared Harris, Tracy Morgan, Elle Fanning.

One of the more memorable recurring gags in Graham Annable and Anthony Stacchi's *The Boxtrolls* involves Mr. Trout (Nick Frost), a submissive henchman to the nefarious Archibald Snatcher (Ben Kingsley), contemplating whether he's a hero or a villain. As he assists Snatcher on his campaign to capture and kill all of the titular sewer-dwelling species, who harmlessly collect mechanical items at night, Trout becomes more aware that the drummed-up hatred for the nocturnal creatures is more his boss's way to advance in society through fear of the other; he's also pinned a child's kidnapping on the

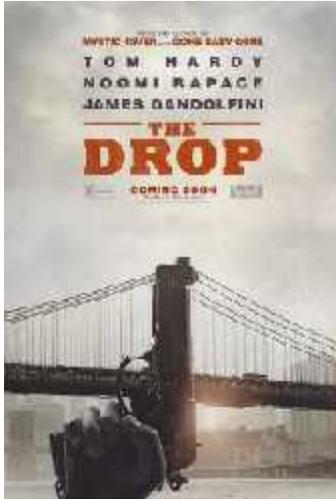
gibberish-speaking trolls. This is similar terrain to *ParaNorman*, in which the staples of the horror genre were upended to expound on the virtues of fully understanding and empathizing with perceived enemies, but *The Boxtrolls* is ultimately only passingly interested in such inquiry.

As the film progresses, it goes to great lengths to remind the audience how gleefully innocent the boxtrolls are and how unfathomably corrupt and evil Snatcher is. Whereas Snatcher, accompanied by Trout, Mr. Pickle (Richard Ayoade), and Mr. Gristle (Tracy Morgan), is capable of essentially orphaning young Eggs (Isaac Hempstead Wright), the boxtrolls take the young boy as one of their own, teaching him how to forage for tossed-away mechanisms, to fix them, or create new inventions with them. A seemingly unwanted byproduct of this attention to Snatcher and his heartless plan to rise up to the level of aristocrat is that the villain becomes the only fascinating character in the whole film, Eggs and the boxtrolls being nothing more than plain visions of absolute goodness.



Indeed, Snatcher's obsession with class, represented by the white hat worn by Jared Harris's Lord Portley-Rind, the town's buffoonish de-facto leader, is seen as a moral and physical rot on the top-hatted exterminator. The script, adapted by Irena Brignull and Adam Pava from Alan Snow's novel *Here Be Monsters*, also places cheese as a sign of wealth and distinction, and Portley-Rind's own obsession with Brie and Roquefort puts him at a distance with Winnie (Elle Fanning), his curious daughter. Snatcher, of course, is therefore obsessed with cheese as well, but has a severe allergy to dairy, one that causes him to grotesquely swell up all over his face, essentially showing how money brings out the ugliest and monstrous part of man.

This will rent as well as **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES, MALEFICENT, MUPPETS MOST WANTED, THE NUT JOB** and **DESPICABLE ME 2.**



1/20 3 THE DROP ACTION
\$12 MILL BO 1265 SCREENS 106 MINUTES

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

Noomi Rapace (DEAD MAN DOWN, PROMETHEUS, THE MONITOR, THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN TATTOO, PASSION)

James Gandolfini (TV—THE SOPRANOS---FILMS—ENOUGH SAID, NOT FADE AWAY, THE TAKING OF PELHAM 123, A CIVIL ACTION, GET SHORTY, CRIMSON TIDE)

This movie plays out on the fringes of New York City, in the heart of old-school, pre-cool Brooklyn, the domain of dive bars, unkempt backyards, and single-family houses. Despite an introductory shot which sets the underworld-focused tone, with the inverted underside of the Manhattan Bridge reflected in the murky surface of a puddle, the film emphasizes the everyday nature of its location, in which keeping mum about illegal neighborhood business is only one of many tribal codes governing this tight-knit, family-oriented milieu. None of this is a problem for simple bartender Bob Saginowski (Hardy), who's not one to question the way things are, living sparsely in a house passed down from his deceased parents, old plastic coating still clinging to the vintage furniture.

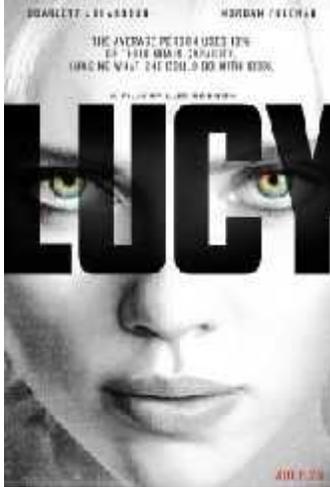
The titular "drop" is itself a quaintly traditional bit of business, in which mob-controlled bars are selected on a rotational basis to collect an entire borough's worth of dirty money, transferred briefly into a secure lockbox, with the gangsters arriving at the end of the night to pick up the haul. In a different movie this might feel like the silly stuff of expansive criminal conspiracies, but in keeping with its overall homespun feel, *The Drop* keeps things intimate, cataloguing a steady accretion of small cash envelopes.



Much of the film takes place in one of these drop bars, a cozy watering hole run by Cousin Marv (JGandolfini), whose name on the front adds to the overall family feel. Marv himself isn't particularly avuncular; once something of a local heavy, he now labors in grumpy servitude under the Chechens, who took control of his bar after a short struggle eight years earlier. Marv's dissatisfaction progresses to something more acute when the bar is suspiciously robbed on one of its nights serving as the drop, losing five thousand dollars of mob money which Marv and his trusty bartender are expected to recover themselves.

This is one of many challenges for the quiet, impassive Bob, who's also dealing with the adoption of an abused puppy, an equally damaged love interest (Noomi Rapace), and the aggressive advances of a local thug with ties to both (Matthias Schoenaerts). These elements are all incorporated within the pulpy narrative, which unfolds with satisfying precision, anchored by a well-constructed script from veteran novelist Lehane, stylish direction from Belgian import Michaël Roskam, and strong performances all around. All this leads up to a suitably nasty conclusion, which both expands and explains the grim pall of Catholic guilt that's been looming throughout.

This one will rent as well as **CHEF, ROB THE MOB, OUT OF THE FURNACE, THE EAST, THE DEBT, SIN CITY, and DRAFT DAY**



1/20 1 LUCY SCI/FI/THRILLER
 \$127 MILL BO 3478 SCREENS R 89 MINUTES

Scarlett Johansson (CHEF, DON JON, CAPTAIN AMERICA, HER, IN GOOD COMPANY, THE HORSE WHISPERER, THE PRESTIGE)

Morgan Freeman (THE BUCKET LIST, GONE BABY GONE, MILLION DOLLAR BABY, THE SUM OF ALL FEARS, KISS THE GIRLS)

A young student living in Taiwan, Lucy (Scarlett Johansson), becomes a drug mule against her will at the hands of a crime lord (Choi Min-sik). Surgeons insert a packet of synthetic drugs into Lucy's abdomen that bursts while she's travelling to Europe. As a result, she begins acquiring increasingly powerful mental talents and physical abilities.

Writer and director Luc Besson is back in *The Fifth Element* form messing around with ideas about human brain capacity, executed in dialogue that sounds like a Wikipedia entry, amidst hectic car chases and hallway gun battles. Any deconstruction of the plot results in Besson screaming back, "BECAUSE SCIENCE!"

Lucy is elevated to a God-like status with each percentage of brain power she unlocks, that's contrasted against the chaos caused by the villains still in cave-man mode. Besson wildly unleashes his special brand of Euro crazy and the sillier *Lucy* gets, the better it gets, not many action films confidently go bonkers like *Lucy*.

Lucy is science-fiction lunacy and it's great to be back in the madhouse with Besson as he flips cars and minds. This will make this rent as well as **X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST, CAPTAIN AMERICA, DIVERGENT, BLENDED, NEIGHBORS, TRANSCENDENCE, THE MONUMENTS MEN, LONE SURVIVOR, and FAST AND FURIOUS 6.**



1/27 1 THE BOOK OF LIFE FAMILY
 \$48 MILL BO 2867 SCREENS PG 105 MINUTES

VOICES OF: Channing Tatum, Ron Perleman, Ice Cube, Danny Trejo, Diego Luna

"It's the classic mortal dilemma, two boys in love with the same girl." So agree the two deities, La Muerte (Kate del Castillo) and Xibalba (Ron Perlman), as they observe three children at play. "Classic" is one word for it. You might also call it old, a point underlined when the girl, Maria (voiced by

Genesis Ochoa as a child, Zoe Saldana as an adult), steps into the middle of the boys' argument over her to declare, "I belong to no one."

Right. Still, the boys will go on in *The Book of Life* to pursue their possessive claims, each embodying an awfully regular option: Joaquin (Elias Garza, then Channing Tatum) is a jock and Manolo (Emil-Bastien Bouffard, then Diego Luna) an artist, guitar in hand. The contest is granted extra framing in this animated feature, the first directed by Jorge R. Gutierrez, as El Muerte and Xibalba place bets on which boy will win the girl. The winner of the bet gets to rule over the Land of the Remembered, the much preferred of two realms where spirits go after death. Where the dead who are remembered wear colorful outfits and enjoy what looks like an endless party, those cast off to the Land of the Forgotten look just that, gray and bony and mopey.

The bet allows El Muerte and Xibalba to pop up repeatedly as the kids more or less live their lives, sparring with one another over who best understands what girls want. They're not the only observers, however, as *The Book of Life* begins with yet another framing layer, provided by the titular tome, housed in a museum, initially reviled by a set of children delivered by school bus for the ritual rehabilitation known as detention. These students, variously shaped and sized, are all clever and cynical, certainly resistant to any sort of lessons offered in a museum. They're also unprepared for the guide Mary Beth (Christina Applegate) who takes up the challenge: she leads them into a back room where she proceeds to tell them the story in the book, the one about Maria and Joaquin and Manolo, the spirit deities, and Mexico's Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead).

Still, Maria resists when her dad prods her to marry Joaquin, whom he likes to call "the son I never had." The boys both have legacies to face, Joaquin's father a war hero who died at the hands of the big mechanical-looking bully called Chakal (Dan Navarro) and Manolo's a legendary matador, Carlos Sanchez (Hector Elizondo) who does his best to stomp out his son's artistic inclinations.

Manolo offers a familiar alternative model of masculinity: he writes songs and sings under Maria's balcony, and also shows some smooth moves in the bullfighting arena. He inspires Maria and infuriates his dad when he refuses to kill the bull. Manolo's place in his world is thus perpetually tenuous, as he values the family tradition (singing about the many bullfighting Sanchezes who came before him), but also rejects it, as he wants to marry (or maybe possess) Maria, but he's not thrilled about fighting for her, as his doting dead mother (Ana de la Reguera) advises.

Manolo reunites with that dead mother during his own adventure as a spirit, yet another complication brought on by the ongoing contest between El Muerte and Xibalba. In the Land of the Remembered, Manolo finds happy spirits, yet he yearns to return to the land of the living to pursue Maria. Just so, he follows a series of directives outlined by the Candlemaker who, as voiced by Ice Cube, is as anomalous as you might expect.

This will rent as well as **MR. PEABODY AND SHERMAN, THE NUT JOB, CLOUDY WITH MEATBALLS 2, PARANORMAN** and **JACK THE GIANT SLAYER**.



1/27 3 MY OLD LADY DRAMA

\$4 MILL BO 373 SCREENS PG-13 107 MINUTES

Kevin Kline (DE-LOVELY, IN AND OUT, SILVERADO, FRENCH KISS, A FISH CALLED WANDA)

Maggie Smith (TV—DOWNTON ABBY---FILM—HARRY POTTER, THE BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL, LADIES IN LAVENDER, GOSFORD PARK)

Kristen Scott Thomas (IN THE HOUSE, EASY VIRTUE, NOWHERE BOY, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, THE ENGLISH PATIENT)

This film is basically a three-character play without a single character you can believe in. Mathias Gold (Kline), a penniless failed novelist and three-time divorcé, arrives in Paris to sell the stately apartment his father has just bequeathed to him. But he can't take possession, he learns, as long as Mathilde Girard (Smith), his elderly tenant, is alive, because she sold the apartment to his father under France's viager system, in which a buyer gets a property in exchange for a low down payment and a commitment to pay the seller a monthly fee for the rest of his or her life. Mathias makes an uncomfortable and highly unlikely arrangement with Mathilde, settling into an empty room in the apartment to wait for her to die. When he's not learning about her past or haranguing her about his, he's selling Mathilde's furniture piece by piece behind her back to finance his stay, or trying to find a way to dislodge her and her daughter, Chloe (Thomas), a tart-tongued woman who takes an instant dislike to him.



Mathias's grandstanding self-pity brings out the worst in Kline, whose histrionic, self-righteous pontificating soon becomes tiresome. Smith's quiet focus upstages his showy posturing, the empathy in her enormous eyes and her expressive voice, with its seductive blend of confidence and confidentiality, making it easy to imagine Mathilde as the bold and loving free spirit of her tales of her youth. But when Mathias finds her guilty of collusion in ruining his childhood and that of her own daughter, Mathilde meekly accepts the verdict, petering into mousy irrelevance. Scott Thomas, like Smith, makes the most of an underwritten part, giving Chloe the road-worn air of a woman made wary by having been consistently let down by life while injecting enough sizzle into her attacks on Mathias to hint at fires simmering beneath her defensive shell, but not even she can make us believe her character's tumble for the lugubrious and self-obsessed Mathias.

This will rent as well as **THE SKELETON TWINS, THE HUNDRED FOOT JOURNEY, IF I STAY, WHAT IF, THE RAILWAY MAN, THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL,** and **GRAND PIANO.**



1/27 1 FURY ACTION

\$67 MILL BO 3137 SCREENS R 134 MINUTES

Brad Pitt (THELMA AND LOUISE, MONEYBALL, INGLORIOUS BASTERDS, MR. AND MRS. SMITH, THE MEXICAN, FIGHT CLUB)

Shia LaBeouf (TRANSFORMERS: DARK OF THE MOON, SURF'S UP, WALL STREET: MONEY NEVER SLEEPS)

As it rattles through the countryside, its defensive armor pocked by dozens of mortar and bullet marks, one can tell that Fury has seen its fair share of fighting. As a tank trying to clear a path to Berlin for Allied troops during the final desperate days of World War II, it's also safe to

say that there's a suicide mission quality to the crew's purpose, even with assurances from Staff Sergeant Don "Wardaddy" Collier (Pitt) that he will keep them safe.

So far, he's been more or less successful. While he recently lost his side gunner, our hardboiled hero has managed to keep the low IQ likes of mechanic Grady "Coon-Ass" Travis (Jon Bernthal), driver Cpl. Trini "Gordo" Garcia (Michael Pena), and artilleryman Boyd "Bible" Swan (Shia LaBeouf) alive. They've all been overwhelmed by the recent loss, making newcomer Norman Ellison's (Logan Lerman) acclimation into this group all the more difficult.

Besides, our new recruit wants nothing to do with killing. A glorified desk jockey, he's been pulled onto active duty thanks, in part, to the American's desire to barrel through the German countryside and destroy Hitler and his headquarters once and for all. While the body count has been significant, the individual raids on small towns and villages have yielded lots of intelligence, and some startling realizations. The enemy, mostly SS officers and their reluctant underlings, are using women and children as soldiers/shields, letting them die in the name of country.



Wardaddy is a perfect example of this paradox. He hates the SS so much that he'll gladly get his hands dirty executing them (including a particular gruesome and suspenseful sequence of close quarters hand-to-hand combat). On the other hand, the losses experienced by his fellow GIs often reduce him to lonely, tear-streaked contemplation. We witness at least three of these depressing downtimes in the movie, each one proving Brad Pitt's bravado is easily undermined. Even when his fellow actors have similar breakdowns (especially Lerman, whose whiny and uncooperative... that is, until he learns to like killing Germans), only Wardaddy's warrant our respect. Pitt sees the bigger picture here. Everyone else just wants a ticket home. There is a sequence where Wardaddy and his gang witness a horribly uneven dogfight between hundreds of Allied planes and a few German stragglers, but for the most part, this is a conflict waged on the ground, face to face, with mortars and tracer bullets exploding all around.

No, the real impact comes at the end, when it looks like Fury's run of luck has vanished. We've seen them scrape by before, fate taking two other tanks instead of theirs. But stranded at a crossroad, a huge contingent of SS heading their way, it's time for Wardaddy and his men to put up or shut up. And they put up magnificently. Realistically. Without flag-waving or chest pounding. It's also a brilliant deconstruction of tank life, albeit one where the drudgery and grimness underlines the true Hell of War.

This will rent as well as **LONE SURVIVOR, NEIGHBORS, EDGE OF TOMORROW, X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST, GODZILLA, BLENDED, and NON-STOP.**



1/27 1 THE JUDGE DRAMA
\$45 MILL BO R 141 MINUTES

Robert Downey Jr (IRON MAN 1,2,3, CHEF, DUE DATE, THE AVENGERS, WONDER BOYS, BOWFINGER)

Robert Duvall (THE GODFATHER I, II, CRAZY HEART, JACK REACHER, TENDER MERCIES, A CIVIL ACTION, DEEP IMPACT)

Vera Farmiga (TV-BATES FAMILY—FILM—SAFE HOUSE, THE CONJURING, GOATS, SOURCE CODE, UP IN THE AIR)

Billy Bob Thornton (TV—FARGO, THE BIG BANG THEORY—FILM—EAGLE EYE, BAD NEWS BEARS, FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS, THE ALAMO, MONSTERS BALL, PUSHING TIN)

Hank Palmer In another of the slightly snoozy roles Robert Downey Jr. has been taking since Tony Stark first blasted into the sky over Afghanistan (*The Soloist*, *Due Date*). A motor-mouthed Chicago defense attorney doing his best to forget the small Indiana town where he grew up and the family he left behind, he prefers to subvert justice and piss on the law, as all defense lawyers in these sorts of stories do (his first act in the film is literally to urinate on the opposing counsel). Hank gets a call from home: Mom's dead. He returns for the funeral, reunites with his charmingly eccentric family, and learns about the values he's ignored for so long.

Only that's not all. After spending a little awkward time with his brothers Glen (Vincent D'Onofrio) and Dale (Jeremy Strong), Hank is all ready to zip back home to water his highly symbolic hydrangeas, finish divorcing his wife, and figure out how to raise his button-nosed moppet of a daughter (Lauren Palmer). Just before he leaves, his father, Judge Palmer (Duvall) is charged with murdering a local druggie. This sets up for a courtroom drama, along with a cross-generational conflict. Frankly, the sight of the hyper-verbal Downey squaring off against the grounded Duvall might even make you think that the movie will supremely enjoyable nonsense. It gets pretty close with a great cast too.



This will rent as well as **IF I STAY, THE GIVER, DRAFT DAY, BLOOD TIES, HER, THE MONUMENTS MEN, and A TIME TO KILL.**