



**3/3 3 FOXATCHER DRAMA**  
\$4 MILL BO 131 SCREENS R 134 MINUTES

**Steve Carell (ANCHOR MAN 2, THE WAY WAY BACK, DINNER FOR SCHMUCKS, LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE)**  
**Channing Tatum (22 JUMP STREET, WHITE HOUSE DOWN, THIS IS THE END, MAGIC MIKE, THE VOW)**  
**Mark Ruffalo (BEGIN AGAIN, NOW YOU SEE ME, SHUTTER ISLAND, DATE NIGHT )**

Based on the true story of vastly wealthy John Eleuthere du Pont and his quixotic financial sponsorship of U.S. wrestling in general and the gold medalist brothers Mark and Dave Schultz in particular, *Foxcatcher* is the latest work by director Bennett Miller, responsible for *Capote* and *Moneyball*. In many ways it's his best yet.

Getting the most attention is the normally comic Carell, who, with the aid of a Cyrano nose and an altered bearing, completely turns the tables on audience expectations as the eccentric John E. du Pont, a quiet, almost diffident man, unnerving in ways that are difficult to pinpoint, someone who has more money than he knows what to do with. A lot more.

However, both Tatum and Ruffalo also undergo significant transformations to play brothers Mark and Dave Schultz, bulking up and changing both body types and the way they habitually present themselves on screen, so much so that seeing their names on the closing credits is something of a shock even if you know they're in the film.

It is somehow fitting that these three men would be brought together by Olympic freestyle wrestling, an unforgiving sport with demands and pressures that are as much psychological as physical, a naked sport that forces intimacy on its participants but finally leaves them with absolutely nowhere to hide.

Another largely wordless scene has Mark working out with his older brother and fellow gold medalist Dave, someone he admires yet seems to resent. The physicality of their interaction couldn't be more authentic (both Ruffalo and his father before him were accomplished high school wrestlers). Plus the way the actors allow their wrestling moves to reflect their relationship is so intuitively done here that Bennett said at Cannes (where *Foxcatcher* won him the director prize) that it enabled him to cut an entire scene of dialogue.

Though it never pushes an agenda, *Foxcatcher* is at its most acute in its insights into what we value in America, the deference our nominally egalitarian society pays to inherited wealth and power, how we allow ourselves to slide unawares into the most awful situations. The hardest things it tells us about ourselves may be the things we need to hear most of all.

This will rent as well as **THE SKELETON TWINS, THE ONE I LOVE, THE GIVER, WHAT IF, OBVIOUS CHILD,** and **LOCKE**. Not a huge hit, but a very worthy addition for your customers of discerning taste.





**3/3 3 THE HUMBLING COMEDY/ DRAMA**  
 \$2 MILL BO 354 SCREENS just opening R 112  
 MINUTES

**Al Pacino (SCENT OF A WOMAN, SERPICO, AND JUSTICE FOR ALL, SCARFACE)**  
**Greta Gerwig (FRANCES HA, TO ROME WITH LOVE, DAMSELS IN DISTRESS, NO STRINGS ATTACHED)**  
**Kyra Sedgwick (TV—CLOSER---FILM—THE GAME PLAN, LABOR PAINS, PHENOMENON, CRITICAL ARE)**

Probing writer Roth's standard end-of-life disquiet with narrative unreliability courtesy of its senile antihero, a stage actor named Simon Axler (Al Pacino). It's hard not to take the petite Axler, so frail and

doleful, as a bluntly autobiographical creation—a suspicion further leavened by the fact that Pacino optioned Roth's book long before Levinson came aboard. Axler struggles not just with his own career's ossification, but the theater's dwindling prestige at large, allowing for cutaway gags of the kids-these-days variety when the septuagenarian star pours his heart out in front of a listless, iPhone-shackled audience. After face-planting off the stage's edge, Axler is interred at a mental hospital where he reflects, almost too readily, on the lonely ebb of his talents—but not without first asking the paramedic throttling him to the ER if his moans of pain were believable enough.



At first, a role that should be a largesse of what they call "motivation" is, in Pacino's withered hands, mostly just a safe space for the actor's range of signature tics: outbursts of constipated truth-telling, world-weariness impossibly crammed into the day's every moment, and beyond-glazed-over eyes. For Pacino, the movie's upshot may well be the chance to play a character for whom these idiosyncrasies are, for once, appropriate. Retired, doddering around his Connecticut McMansion, he strikes up a kinship with Pegeene (Greta Gerwig), the thirtysomething lesbian daughter of some old theater friends. Soon the two are sleeping together on the regular, with Pegeene commenting: "I guess this ends my 16-year mistake." The taboo of Axler sleeping with his friends' daughter is addressed, but the all-too-visible age difference between Pacino and Gerwig is not—and when the script, written by Buck Henry and Michal Zebede, tries mining Pegeene's heterosexual "past" for cheap laughs, it's downright painful. The screenplay gives Pegeene a proper, thorough examination, but the scant glimpses of her internal logic bespeak Roth's anti-facility for writing women moreso than anything Gerwig manages bringing to the table—and that's both a shame and a waste.

Levinson takes visible pleasure in puncturing some showbiz clichés while reaffirming others, and a good handful of moments—like Axler's pained negotiations with his agent (Charles Grodin) over whether or not to do a hair-restoration commercial—teeter between comedy and tragedy with pointed, blurred ambivalence. Maybe by design, the film feels like two hours spent with a washed-up egomaniac; in one scene, Axler reflects on his weebegone career, and Levinson's camera drifts down to the floor and back up to Pacino for no intuitive reason. As the stitchwork of Axler's sanity begins to come loose, exactly no one in the audience will be surprised that the more eccentric turns in the plot were mere hallucinations, and Roth's original ending is cranked up to 11 by Henry and Zebede's on-stage climax, flattening the more interesting contours of Pacino's performance into a martyr's desperate plea for an audience's love.

If you did well with **THE HUNDRED FOOT JOURNEY, WHAT IF, IF I STAY, THE DEBT, OBVIOUS CHILD, PALO ALTO** and **FADING GIGOLO** then this will work nicely too.



### 3/6 1 THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY 1

FANTASY/ACTION \$325 MILL BO 4316 SCREENS  
PG-13 123 MINUTES FRIDAY STREET DATE

**Jennifer Lawrence (X-MEN: FIRST CLASS, THE BEAVER, SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK, THE DEVIL YOU KNOW)**  
**Josh Hutcherson (DETENTION, FINGERPRINTS, RED DAWN, THE FORGER)**

The first film in the titular franchise, failed to impress formally, what with its use of handheld cameras shakily and transparently standing in for the disorientation of entering into the instability of Suzanne Collins's post-apocalyptic world. But *Catching Fire* played more smoothly, allowing the juxtaposition between the natural beauty of Panem's outer districts and the flamboyant urbanity of the Capitol to speak for itself. And now in *The*

*Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 1*, the focus has become even tighter, the juxtaposition even more stark: The rebels have been driven underground into the previously concealed District 13, navigating a gray maze of metal and concrete, an entirely manmade world—not a dusty town square in sight—and all while the Capitol still thrives out in the open, albeit under the ominous cloud of imminent rebellion.

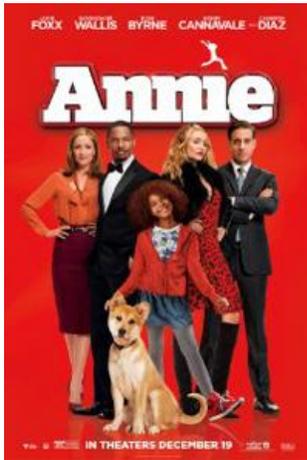
*Mockingjay - Part 1* opens immediately following the conclusion of *Catching Fire*, with Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) being treated in a District 13 hospital after having been rescued from the Games by the rebels, including turncoat Plutarch Heavensbee (Phillip Seymour Hoffman), formerly the Game Master in the second film who had purportedly been on the side of the Capitol. Lawrence is tasked with a part that's rife with PTSD stereotypes (screaming nightmares, oppressive guilt, a constant inward regression and desire to be alone), but in such a nuanced actress, we can also see decisions being made under the surface, her character weighing options and processing what has happened, is happening, and will happen, even as she remains outwardly cold and impenetrable.

Liam Hemsworth as the stalwart Gale, Katniss's friend and now also an important player in the rebellion, doesn't quite shoulder the increase in screen time here, his self-seriousness lending his character a certain level of authority, but with a distinct lack of depth. But Julianne Moore, as President Coin, political leader of the rebellion, more than adequately vacillates between skepticism and hope. And a scene in which Hoffman's character, now in District 13 and being attacked by the Capitol forces he once worked alongside, reacts with barely controlled terror as bombs are dropped above him—all resolve breaking down, his fear raw and palpable—is particularly heartbreaking.

almost comically manipulable, responding at once to Katniss's "commercials" even as the rebels worry that they might also respond to a captured Peeta's (Josh Hutcherson) call for peace on behalf of the Capitol. At one point during a visit to a rebel hospital, Katniss is even asked about what happened to her baby, referring to the fictive pregnancy that had been a part of her previous media campaign. The people in the districts seem ultimately to believe everything they're being told. And if the words of a teenager are all it takes to sway a nation toward overthrowing the government or submitting to an oppressive regime, I think we're all in trouble. But as a metaphor for the way we respond to the media, and the way our politics are funneled through the media lens, the film succeeds most when it revels in ambiguity. After all, who are we actually supposed to trust here? How much of what we're being told is true, even by those who claim to be on our side? Even Katniss herself isn't above lying to people for their own good. The less black and white the message, the more interesting the situation becomes, and by the end of *Mockingjay - Part 1*, the stage is set for a dramatic conclusion to a series of films that has managed to stand out in what has become a very, very dense crowd.



This will rent as well as **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY, IRON MAN 3, HERCULES, LUCY, FURY, NEIGHBORS, BLENDED,** and **GONE GIRL.**



**3/10 1 ANNIE FAMILY/COMEDY**  
**\$80 MILL BO 2956 SCREENS PG 118 MINUTES**

**Cameron Diaz (THE OTHER WOMAN, THE GREEN HORNET, BAD TEACHER, THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY)**  
**Jamie Foxx (RAY, HORRIBLE BOSSES 2, THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN 2, LAW ABIDING CITIZEN)**

The new ANNIE opens with a tap dance. An adorable moppet named Annie (Taylor Richardson) goes at it, smile bright, arms manic, hair curly and red. Cut to her audience: a schoolroom full of classmates. They all look bored. Next up for the year's end essay presentation, another Annie (Quvenzhané Wallis), who goes on to engage the other kids in a lively percussive performance, all about class inequality in America. It's a huge hit with the kids, who like to clap and stamp their feet on cue. The Great Depression, she sums up, was "pretty much just like now, but without the Internet."

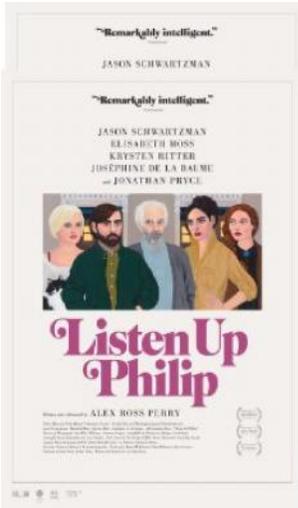
Yes, this decidedly anti-nostalgic and only clumsily cynical. Featuring cellphones, surveillance technologies, and a New York mayoral race by way of tabloid media, it's a hodgepodge of pop-cultural references, auto-tuned vocals, and dance-like numbers. Directed by Will Gluck, produced by Will and Jada Smith and Jay-Z (whose inspired appropriation of "It's the Hard-Knock Life" back in 1998 now seems like much-missed ancient history), the movie is also one of the films leaked online following the Sony hack, an unfortunate footnote to its subplotish interest in how the internets can wreak havoc with corporate schemes.

Here that scheme has to do with the revamped Daddy Warbucks character, no longer a white guy in a bad wig but now Jamie Foxx, playing a super-rich cell phone entrepreneur named Will Stacks, now running for mayor. This process means we are to assume that his genius at marketing phones ("Never drop a call!") translates to political campaigning and then, apparently, governing; not surprisingly, no one mentions what this might mean, as winning the election seems to be the only end in sight. Stacks is really a good fellow acting like a bully. His goodness is in need of better public display, which is indicated in his first encounter with Annie, when he saves her from being hit by a truck on the street. When this event is captured on cellphone video and uploaded to YouTube, Stacks' campaign manager Guy (Bobby Cannavale) determines that they must meet again, with a gaggle of news photographers on hand.

Grace's opposite—because she must have one according to this movie's feeble imagining of women—is Miss Hannigan (Cameron Diaz), the crass and avaricious foster mom who tells her young charges again and again that she's only keeping them so she can be paid—another state-systemic dysfunction the film notes in passing but can't be bothered to think through. Miss Hannigan sings noisily about her distaste for little girls, while gesturing melodramatically toward her own lamentably generic past: once a wannabe rock singer who wore lots of mascara, she met up with a series of exploitative types, leaving her angry and abusive. The girls in her charge resist as they can, sweeping and mopping to a beat, sneaking out when they can, singing lots.

This will rent as well as **DOLPHIN TALE 2, PLANES W, MALEFICENT, JERSEY BOYS, THE LEGO MOVIE,** and **STEP UP ALL IN.**





**3/10 3 LISTEN UP PHILIP COMEDY/DRAMA**  
**\$2 MILL BO 326 SCREENS R 108 MINUTES**

**Jason Schwartzman TV-BORED TO DEATH—FILM--(SAVING MR. BANKS, THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL, MOONRISE KINGDOM, RUSHMORE)**  
**Elisabeth Moss (GET HIM TO THE GREEK, DARLING COMPANION, DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MORGANS)**

Alex Ross Perry's film concerns itself with the literary world only in the sense of names and properties; no sample text from the breakout novel of its antihero, Philip Lewis Friedman (Jason Schwartzman), makes its way into Perry's dialogue. This mysterious absence seems a structural weakness at first, but later emerges as the tip of the spear in terms of Perry's satirization of a very specific, bookish Brooklyn milieu. The film isn't concerned with literature nearly so much as it is success and its discontents. Or, as Philip reprimands one of his ex-girlfriends who casually drops that word, "I'm not 'successful,' I'm notable. And I'm not even notable—noteworthy, at best." Philip's blinkered obsession with Making It doesn't make him a relatable hero, but instead becomes the guiding force of the story, shredding his relationship with his photographer girlfriend, Ashley (Elisabeth Moss), who, over the course of the film, learns there's more to life than being stuck living with Philip's overbearing, needy narcissism. While Philip retreats into his self-made image, her arc of realization belongs to a happier movie. This is a film you laugh at while you're watching it, sometimes riotously, sometimes in horror, but its overwhelming melancholy will seep in the more time you spend thinking about it.

It must be said, Schwartzman's acid-tongued Philip actually has a decent amount in common with Max Fisher; it's like the vulnerable childhood defense mechanisms of the boy genius from **RUSHMORE** have "matured" into an ongoing, all-out war with the world. Viewers will watch in breathless terror every time he strolls into a room, his churning misanthropy instantly freightening the scene with tension. Early in the film, Ashley tells him, "It's hot, you being mean"—and that's one of the only affirmations Philip can be satisfied with. Once he comes under the thumb of his writer hero, novelist Ike Zimmerman (Jonathan Pryce), the drama (and thus, the pleasure) is in watching Philip deal for once with somebody he looks *up* to. Philip and Ike form a clique of two, with Ike's overtures—inviting Philip to live in his summer home, noxiously charting the growth of his fondness for Philip in the vintage of scotch he offers the young author—drifting from a dream come true to utterly creepy and disdainful. Even as he embraces both Philip and his work, Ike seems to be giving him a kind of existential hazing. The germ of their conflict suggests that Philip wants to think of Ike as a contemporary, whereas Ike can only view the younger man as a source of resentment. It's Pryce's most sinister on-screen creation in years.

Philip is doomed to be not just disappointed by his idol, of course, but by success (or notability) in all its manifestations. If this is, in an artist's life, an unsurprising realization, it makes for hot-blooded viewing thanks to Perry's razor-sharp attenuation to the dynamics of his scenes and their performers. The cast brilliantly manage to pick out the beats (hesitation, confusion, silent persuasion) embedded in the ceaseless pitter-patter of Perry's meticulously worded, verbally diarrhetic screenplay. Just for Sean Price Williams's daringly intimate, screen-crushing close-ups, the film adds up to a dizzying experience. By putting this much weight on his characters' speech (letting it drive the relationships on screen, and thus the narrative), Perry's is an approach with honestly few contemporaries in American independent film. A quick cut from the speaker's face to the listener's can permanently alter what you think of somebody, and it makes Perry's film all the more gripping for its test of audience sympathies than for some semblance of



a plot. A case could be made that Philip ends up in the exact same place as he started, but more so; the tragedy is, he's just too solipsistic to chase anything else.

This will be enjoyed by those that liked **THE DROP**, **BOYHOOD**, **BIRDMAN**, **THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL**, **PHILOMENA** and **LOVE IS STRANGE**.



### 3/10 1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: SECRET OF THE TOMB COMEDY

\$109 MILL BO 3972 SCREENS PG 98 MINUTES

**Ben Stiller (ZOLANDER, THE FOCKERS, DODGEBALL: A UNDERDOG STORY, THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY, TOWER HEIST, THE TRIP)**

**Robin Williams (MRS. DOUBTFIRE, GOOD MORNING VIETNAM, THE KINGFISHER, PATCH, THE BIRDCAGE, HOOK, AWAKENINGS)**

**Owen Wilson (THE BIG YEAR, LITTLE FOCKERS, HALL PASS, YOU ME AND DUPREE, BEHIND ENEMY LINES, THE ROYAL TENNENBAUMS)**

In the first film, the AMNH was in the midst of declining attendance and budget cuts, until word got out about the institution's enchanted nighttime special effects — the Disneyfication of history, if you will — and lines formed around the block. And while he was the nominal hero of the piece, Stiller's Larry Daley was initially depicted as something of an ignoramus who mistook Christopher Columbus for Galileo and Sacagawea for a deaf-mute.

It seemed fascinating that such an august institution would allow itself (and its public) to be thusly depicted in a major Hollywood movie — except that, in an equally fascinating convergence of life and art, the movie sparked a 20 percent uptick in real-life museum attendance, along with a new nighttime sleepover program that continues to this day. That satiric edge was dulled only slightly in the 2009 sequel, "Battle of the Smithsonian," as a still-beleaguered AMNH willingly divested itself of some of its venerable exhibits to make room for high-tech holographic avatars supposedly more appealing to the smartphone generation (an all-too-believable depiction of how calcified arts-administration types tend to think). So it's unsurprising that "Secret of the Tomb" brings things full circle by suggesting, gently but persistently, that the true magic of history needs no hocus-pocus accoutrements.

The path to such enlightenment is paved with 90-odd minutes of CGI-enhanced slapstick mayhem, starting with a black-tie dinner from hell — a gala reopening of the Hayden Planetarium during which the museum's lauded "animatronics" (as the public believes them to be) go haywire, pitting Manhattan's philanthropic elite against a rampaging T-Rex and Attila the Hun (Patrick Gallagher). Something is amiss, it seems, with the gilded Tablet of Akmenrah, the ancient Egyptian relic responsible for the museum's mysterious powers (here seen being excavated during a 1930s archeological dig in a lavish, Indiana Jones-style flashback). Solving the mystery entails making a trip to the British Museum, home of Akmenrah's parents, Merenkahre (Ben Kingsley) and Shepseheret (Anjali Jay).

Of course, a new museum means a raft of other new characters, the standouts being "Downton Abbey" alum Dan Stevens as a vainglorious Sir Lancelot, and Rebel Wilson (clearly constrained by the movie's PG rating) as the BM's sex-starved night guard. Mostly, though, "Secret of the Tomb" serves as a reunion of old friends, like the Lilliputian-sized cowboy Jedediah (Owen Wilson) and Roman general Octavius (Steve Coogan), who find themselves deposited in a scale-model Pompeii (Coogan's second visit to the



volcanic site this year, after “The Trip to Italy”); and single dad Larry’s only child, Nick (Skyler Gisondo, replacing Jake Cherry), now a moody teen with dreams of becoming an EDM DJ in Ibiza. And if the “Night at the Museum” movies are undeniably the sort of work an actor like Coogan takes so that he can afford to make Michael Winterbottom movies — or, in Stiller’s case, work with Noah Baumbach — the actors nonetheless conjure a warm, infectious esprit de corps. Stiller in particular gets to stretch his comic muscles this time by also playing Laaa, the latest addition to the museum’s group of fire-questing Neanderthals, who recognizes in Larry a shared genetic connection (the challenges of parenthood being another of the franchise’s running themes). “Tomb” is filled with nifty visual gags, the best of which is a three-way duel set inside M.C. Escher’s physics-defying lithograph “Relativity” (a nod to the delirious museum chase from Joe Dante’s “Looney Tunes: Back in Action”).

It all works wonderfully and will rent as well as **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY**, **22 JUMP STREET**, **EDGE OF TOMORROW**, **FROZEN**, **BLENDED** and **NEIGHBORS**.



**3/17 3 BIG EYES \$14 MILL BO DRAMA**  
**\$15 MILL BO 1747 SCREENS PG-13 106 MINUTES**

**Amy Adams (AMERICAN HUSTLE, HER, MAN OF STEEL, THE FIGHTER, JULIE & JULIA)**  
**Christopher Waltz (HORRIBLE BOSSESS 2, DJANGO UNCHAINED, INGLORIOUS BASTERDS, THE ZERO THEOREM )**

There was a time in the early ‘60s when Walter Keane was making more money than any other living artist in the Western world. He was a master of sales, making himself the subject of fawning interviews and Life magazine spreads, sidling up to celebrities for photo ops whenever he could. Originals and, especially, reproductions of his “big eye” paintings were snatched up an adoring public, who didn’t care one bit about the critics who called his work sentimental garbage. His success led to admiration and dissent: Woody Allen’s SLEEPER posits a future where the paintings, like Xavier Cugat’s music, are viewed as masterpieces.

As much as that joke is premised on the paintings’ kitsch, it also has to do with their eventually revealed truth, which is that Walter never painted them. In Tim Burton’s fancifully filmed Big Eyes, we’re reminded that his wife Margaret (Amy Adams) was the artist. She’s introduced here a quiet Southern lady who’s leaving a bad marriage. Packing up her young daughter Jane (Delaney Raye) along with her paints. Margaret moves to San Francisco, circa 1958. She has one friend in town, a black-dressed willow of an artist named DeeAnn (Krysten Ritter) who encourages Margaret to spread her wings. But no sooner does Margaret start showing her paintings and doing portraits on the street than another painter gloms on to her, and even more importantly, on to her work.



Walter (Waltz) is a bon vivant with a story for every occasion and an angle on every person he meets. He romances Margaret with a borderline frightening devotion, his performance plainly over-the-top but also oddly captivating. “I’m just a Sunday painter,” he tells her, vaguely referring to much-missed days in France while admiring her work when they go on afternoon dates with their easels. Wrangling a gallery space in a North Beach jazz club, Walter realizes that Margaret’s slightly creepy paintings of big-eyed waifs grab people’s attention more readily than his own motel-room-style Parisian street scenes. Arguing that people don’t buy “lady paintings”, Walter starts telling everybody her paintings, signed “Keane”, are

his. Claiming he's a wealthy real estate broker, Walter still hustles for every scrap of business or hint of publicity, mostly via his connection to society columnist Dick Nolan (Danny Huston). Walter is a poseur's poseur, so wrapped up in his own fiction that he explodes in fury at any criticism, as though he believes the art truly is his creation.

While Margaret seems mired in '50s gender roles, in the film her situation also represents the change to come. For her, freedom is hard won: for a time Walter has her so afraid of losing their fortune that she's locked in an attic room, churning out paintings like some indentured art servant. She hides the truth from everybody, including Jane and DeeAnn, even as her paintings explode in popularity, sharing her secret only with her puffy dog. Adams plays Margaret with a whispery dignity that's subtle but utterly sympathetic and intelligent. At no point does she come off as pathetic, only understandably frightened about trying to raise a daughter alone as a single mother. Still, Walter's ferocious greed grates at her. The film starts to resemble a long fuse; you're just waiting for that moment when Margaret will finally blow.

A bit different from most films but this will rent to a diverse renter as well as **A WALK AMONG THE TOMBSTONES, A MOST WANTED MAN, INTO THE STORM, THE ICE STORM, ORDINARY PEOPLE, FADING GIGOLO, ENOUGH SAID** and **THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL**.



## 3/17 1 EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS

ACTION

\$66 MILL BO 2958 SCREENS PG-13 150 MINUTES

**Christian Bale (PUBLIC ENEMIES, FLOWERS OF WAR, AMERICAN HUSTLE, OUT OF THE FURNACE)**

**John Turturro (FADING GIGOLO, THE BIG LEBOWSKI, TRANSFORMERS, SHE HATE ME, COLLATERAL DAMAGE)**

**Ben Kingsley (LEARNING TO DRIVE, WALKING WITH THE ENEMY, THE BOXTROLLS, GHANDI. NOAH, SHUTTER ISLAND)**

Watching as his High Priestess (Indira Varma) cuts open a white bird to reveal its prophetic entrails, the Egyptian pharaoh Seti (John Turturro) can hardly wait. "What did they say?" he asks, his heavily mascaraed eyes wide with worry. "They didn't say anything," she says. "They imply."

With this early scene, the film lays out a central conflict between certainty and belief, between reading literally and reading metaphorically. While it's an apt conflict for a movie drawing from Biblical stories, it's also a messy and irresolvable one. In this particular movie, the conflict falls by the wayside almost as soon as the High Priestess so helpfully articulates it. In 1300 BC, Pharaoh's immediate concern is the same as always, namely, how to manage the power imbalance that makes the empire go. While he usually keeps his soldiers busy with warring and land-grabbing, and his slaves busy with building monuments to his own legacy, it happens sometimes that each population grows restless.

Word of such restlessness has him wondering about entrails, as well as fretful when the High Priestess can't say exactly how his sons, the blood-related Ramses (Joel Edgerton) and the adopted Moses (Christian Bale), will come out of an upcoming battle, only that "A leader will be saved". The mystery only grows when the brothers return from the field, with neither wanting to describe the moment when Moses saved Ramses, frozen with fear. This means you know somewhat more than Pharaoh, because you do see, rather repeatedly, that Ramses is incompetent in his chariot and overly interested in eating just about everything in front of him, while Moses is a serious warrior and reluctant but obviously gifted leader. That he's not precisely sympathetic with the existential plight of slaves, he does appear to understand they're unhappy.

This much is clear when he meets with a group of slaves led by Nun (Ben Kingsley), who recognizes right away that Moses isn't who he thinks he is. In fact, Moses is Hebrew, just like Nun and his fellows ("You were born a slave!"). Moses understandably tries to resist his impending identity crisis, but such effort is foiled by the self-serving shenanigans of Viceroy Hegep (Ben Mendelsohn), represented here as both a cruel slave overseer and a gay-coded lost soul (lusting after Moses, of all people). When the Viceroy exposes Moses' secret to Ramses, the two villains, both stereotypically preening, both fond of eye makeup, team up to exile the nobler brother.



It's an ugly, reductive opposition, gaining momentum throughout Exodus. Tossed into the wilderness, Moses is rescued by the tribe that will become "his people", and marries the lovely tribe member, Zipporah (María Valverde), with whom he has a lovely son, all of whom he must leave behind when God instructs him to go back and free Ramses' slaves. As Exodus: Gods and Kings has it, Moses' rebirth is something like a superhero's origin story. With Ramses' fearfully whiny dismissal of his brother, followed by repeated scenes showing his abuses of slaves who are building his pyramid, it's clear that Moses has the moral high road, even as his wife and child complain about his leaving them.

This access means that Moses make hard choices beyond leaving behind his family. These include going along with some terrible plagues that the God-Boy, impatient with the slow pace of change made by Moses and the slaves he trains up as warriors (during one brief sequence, they're setting up terrorist-like bombs). The God-Boy informs Moses that his warfare is aimed at reducing the number of enemy soldiers, but a more effective form might be to reduce the food and property available to them. And so he sends bloody water, frogs and locusts, as well as dead goats and boils.

These brutal punishments only seem to reinforce Ramses' own meanness, as he insists on fighting back, on seeking vengeance just like the God-Boy. When it comes time for the God-Boy to kill boys, just like Pharaoh once did (i.e. the scourge that led to Moses' being accepted into the royal family), it's disconcerting, certainly. As Moses puts it, "Something is coming. It is out of my control." But he has precious little time to ponder it, as he's sent out again into the desert, this time leading the tribe to freedom.

If you rented **DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, LET'S BE COPS, HERCULES, EDGE OF TOMORROW, X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS,** and **TRANSCENDENCE**, then the \$\$\$ will be fine for this one too.



**3/17 1 PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR FAMILY**  
**\$81 MILL BO 3125 SCREENS PG 92 MINUTES**

**VOICES OF John Malkovich, Tom McGrath, Benedict Cumberbatch.**

This movie does well to put more focus on delivering a plethora of jokes, imitations, zippy repartee, and sight gags than its plot's familiar machinations. Herzog narrates, in part, the origins of the titular quartet of penguins, led by Skipper (Tom McGrath), who've appeared in the three previous films as adults. The opening sequence tracks the foursome's breaking-off from their flock after saving a hatchling, Private (Christopher Knights), from certain death at the foreflippers of sea lions, and the film centers much of its action around both Skipper and Private's desire for respect.

Private gets a chance to show off his spy-like skills when the team faces off against Dave (John Malkovich), a bitter octopus who can disguise himself as a nefarious scientist. Dave's gripe has to do with cuteness, and how attention toward adorable penguins caused him to be ignored, and his solution is a humongous ray gun that turns penguins into monsters. At the same time, the script parallels his feelings

of being cast aside with Skipper's feelings of inferiority when faced with the Night Wind, a high-tech mercenary squad led by "Classified," a wolf voiced by Benedict Cumberbatch. Private, Dave, and Skipper are all tired of being snubbed, but their connection is only passingly explored by the filmmakers, which makes the entire story and all the characters feel thin and thoughtless. As the film's villain, Dave is ultimately characterized as little more than the creator of the weapon that the penguins and Night Wind must stop



This will rent as big as **THE LEGO MOVIE, THE NUT JOB, MUPPETS MOST WANTED, CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS** and **UP**.



**3/17 2 TOP FIVE COMEDY**

**\$26 MILL BO 2436 SCREENS R 102 MINUTES**

**Chris Rock (TV—EVERYBODY HATES CHRIS—FILM—2 DAYS IN NEW YORK, GROWN UPS, DEATH AT A FUNERAL, GOOD HAIR, I LOVE MY WIFE)**

**Rosario Dawson (SIN CITY: A DAME TO KILL FOR, THE CAPTIVE, RAZE, UNSTOPPABLE)**

While **TOP FIVE** shows he's still a bit shaky when it comes to his cinematic skill set, it is a triumph. It is easily his best movie ever, as well as one of the best comedies of 2014.

Paying homage to an obvious influence, Rock plays Andre Allen, a New Yorker back in the Big Apple to promote his latest attempt at being taken seriously. A famous funny man, our hero hates that he's still associated with a lowbrow action series which has made him very wealthy, and equally unhappy. He hopes to breakthrough with an epic about a turn of the century slave rebellion in Haiti. So far, however If there's one thing Chris Rock knows, it's funny. Sure, he's also insightful about race and social inequality, adept at, everyone hates it, including his manager/agent (Kevin Hart), his personal assistant and boyhood friend (J.B. Smoove), and the studio suits who are anticipating a huge flop.

Reluctantly, he agrees to an interview with New York Times reporter Chelsea Brown (Rosario Dawson), who turns out to be personable and friendly. She and Andre hit it off immediately, but there is trouble in this almost instantaneous paradise. He's engaged to be married to a Kim Kardashian-esque reality star named Erica Long (Gabrielle Union), with the cable outlet Bravo already preparing and footing the bill for a huge media event wedding. Over the course of a single day in Manhattan, Andre reveals his flaws, the best and worst times of his early career, and why he no longer wants to "be funny". He also realizes that Chelsea may be a better match for him than Erica.



Satiric and scatological, laugh-out-loud hilarious, and defiantly introspective, Top Five represents Chris Rock at near the top of his game. Near, not at. While it can't match his majesty as a stand up, it still provides the perfect vehicle for the comedian to work out his own scattered Stardust Memories issues. For those unfamiliar with that weird Woody Allen film, the narrative centered on an angst driven director attending a festival of his films and constantly attempting to dodge the ever-present battle between art and celebrity. All this fictional filmmaker wants to do is mimic the foreign greats and make important works. All his fanbase wants are "more funny movies". Even an attempt at asking God for the meaning of life ends with the punchline "tell funnier jokes".

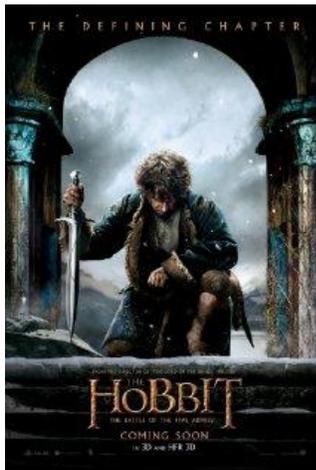
Fame is also a focus here. Andre offers up a flashback to a time in Houston where a promoter (Cedric the Entertainer) promises him a night out with a couple of hot-to-trot girls. After the Farrelly Brothers-esque tryst, they come looking for cash. One single screamed word later and our lead is locked up. Something similar is happening to him currently.

His "relationship" with Erica is false, a recovering addict's means of making sense of a sober world. While it may just be a way of deconstructing the entire reality TV type, Rock also includes a telling moment when Ms. Union must remove the media mask behind her craven character.

But the real star here is Rosario Dawson, which is unsurprising given that one tends to expect such greatness from a fine actress like her. As Chelsea, she's honest and forthright, never letting Rock's manipulative character countermand her personal or professional needs. She's also flirtatious and funny, capable of delivering one liners like a pro. Even better, she bolsters her director's intentions. This is only Rock's third time behind the lens, and he needs all the support he can get. Sure, a sequence where he visits old friends requires little finesse, with cameos from Tracy Morgan and Sheri Sheppard providing the polished adlibbing. But in those moments when the emotions are supposed to count, when we move from denouement to denunciation, it's Dawson who does the heavy lifting. She's Rock's rock.

Granted, this is one funnyman who is clearly aiming for the stars with this slightly autobiographical riff, but the main purpose of any comedy is laughs. And, as previously said, Rock knows funny. If all you care about is a good time at the movies, spending 100 or so minutes with a comedian whose been known to bring down the house as he raises his audience's consciousness, then Top Five is for you.

This will easily rent as well as **THE EQUALIZER**, **LET'S BE COPS**, **BLENDED**, **22 JUMP STREET**, **BAGGAGE CLAIM**, **THINK LIKE A MAN TO**, and **RIDE ALONG**.



### **3/24 1 THE HOBBIT: BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES ADVENTURE**

**\$237 MILL BO 4376 SCREENS PG-13 144 MINUTES**

**Ian McKellen (X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST, THE WOLVERINE, THE HOBBIT movies, THE LORD OF THE RINGS movies)**

**Martin Freeman (TV—SHERLOCK, FARGO—FILM—THE WORLD'S END, WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER, WILD TARGET)**

**Richard Armitage (INTO THE STORM, THE CRUCIBLE, CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE FIRST AVENGER)**

There's a hobbit, there's a battle, and there are five armies. The economics of war are at the forefront of the dramatic action. Greed is deemed the "dragon's sickness," gold being imbued here with an evil power to corrupt, and no sooner is the Lonely Mountain liberated, along with the treasures hoarded therein, do the various armies descend upon it, everyone eager for their share. Greed comes close to bringing the good-aligned forces of Middle-earth into all-out war, if not for the appearance of a common enemy, and the battle that ensues is epic in every sense of the word.

But, you ask, "I thought there were five armies?" The fifth one that swoops in to save the day is a pack of giant eagles. If J.R.R. Tolkien weren't so famously averse to allegorical readings of his fantasy novels, one could be so bold as to suggest an "America as savior" reading of the conclusion to the titular battle, wherein simply the appearance of the eagles seems to imply that the enemy has been vanquished. And it could also be noted that the destruction of Lake-town by fire shooting down from above is reminiscent of London's experience of the blitz during World War II. But perhaps the comparison can so easily be made because Jackson's film makes the destruction and mayhem so realistically felt, the terror

and helplessness on the faces of the fleeing residents being the focus, rather than the backdrop, of Jackson's depiction of Smaug's attack.

Other moments also captivate, most exuberantly a viscerally charged battle between the ring wraiths and Galadriel (Cate Blanchett), who Jackson renders in the scene as a glowing, almost demonic force, the sequence far darker and weirder (shades of Ken Russell) than anything from the two earlier films. The bowels of the Lonely Mountain are hauntingly conveyed, the caverns seeming to descend forever into the earth, and a sequence in which a greed-mad Thorin (Richard Armitage) imagines a nightmarish descent into a quicksand-like abyss made up of his own treasure is particularly surreal, further representing the film's willingness to distort and embellish its already fantastical world. The cities of men, both Lake-town and Dale, are also shown as intricate and believably complex, especially when they're used as set pieces for major battle scenes. Jackson ultimately plays to his strengths, orchestrating dynamic action sequences that excite in their level of detail, but also dazzle in their aesthetic design.



But the romantic subplot, absent from the source material, plays itself out ploddingly, and the admirable effort to create a female character for the films to make up for the dearth of such in the book is undercut by the one-dimensionality of Tauriel (Evangeline Lilly), an elf warrior who seems motivated entirely by the pursuit of love. But these films, and Tolkien's entire oeuvre, are most affecting in their depictions of friendship, and the performances here represent platonic male intimacy in convincing, often moving ways. Bilbo's (Martin Freeman) goodbye to the remaining members of the band of dwarves is an emotional high point, heartfelt and uncontrived as he makes an invitation to tea feel like the world's most generous confession of love. And while the conclusion to this movie ultimately feels like a bit too much table-setting for Jackson's earlier *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the ending hits a lovely, bittersweet note when Bilbo realizes, as perhaps *The Lord of the Rings* fans did when they came to the first two meandering *Hobbit* films expecting more of what Jackson had offered in his earlier trilogy, that you really can't go home again.

What can we say? This will rent to all that rented **GONE GIRL, LUCY, FURY, DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, IRON MAN 3, 22 JUMP STREET** and **DIVERGENT**.



**3/24 1 THE GAMBLER** THRILLER \$35 MILL BO  
2945 SCREENS R 111 MINUTES

**Mark Wahlberg (LONE SURVIVOR, PAIN & GAIN, 2 GUNS, TED, FIGHTER, CONTRABAND)**

**John Goodman (THE BIG LEBOWSKI, THE MONUMENTS MEN, ARGO, THE CAMPAIGN, RAISING ARIZONA)**

**Jessica Lange (TV—AMERICAN HORROR STORY-FILM--- SWEET DREAMS, THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, CAPE FEAR)**

In the original, James Caan's Alex Freed stood at the nexus of the immigrant and bourgeois experiences, his every desperate maneuver underwritten by a barely concealed resentment of both his own Jewishness and his family's money. Wyatt's rendition—in which the antihero is renamed, for whatever reason, as "Jimmy Bennett"—merely appears in the throes of existential boredom, a rich kid grown up dissatisfied with his gilded lot in life. Industry pressers would suggest Bennett has been the most demanding role of Mark Wahlberg's career, but look past the actor's diet-desiccated abs and all you'll see him bring to the table is the exact persona that made him a movie star in

the first place: a bro with a cinderblock-sized chip on his shoulder, clawing his way out from everyone else's expectations one hotheaded diatribe at a time.

Eschewing the sooty off-track joints Reisz picked out within 1970s Manhattan, Wyatt and screenwriter William Monahan instead delve into a fantasyland of luxe coastal casinos and neon-lit bathhouses, as shrug-worthy a stab at picturing the contemporary black market as could be requested. If Freed carried himself with Caan's signature volcano of rage, roiling back only occasionally to leave a scared-shitlessness in its wake, Wahlberg gives Bennett a straitjacketing anxiety from scene one, leaving his motivation essentially a MacGuffin. (The film's solitary flashback reveals nothing about its hero except that he once swam in a pool as a little boy.) In his day job as the world's most half-hearted professor of comparative literature, Bennett has exactly one disenchanting agenda to push on his students: "If you're not a genius, then don't bother." Owing an outstanding debt of \$250,000 to a wisecracking bookie named Neville Baraka (Michael Kenneth Williams) with a homicidal reputation, the question becomes not whether Bennett will find a way to pay it off (all signs point to a beleaguered "yes"), but whether or not he fits his own genius criteria.



Bennett is motivated not by self-hatred, but pride, inexplicably denying the lifelines thrown from his life's periphery—including a paid-in-full bailout from his mother (Jessica Lange) and a new lease on life from Amy (Brie Larson), a promising student with whom he strikes up an entirely predictable dalliance. Bennett's attachment to his job is so meager that he ditches it in a heartbeat to be with Amy—yet another instance of casually diffused "risk" in a screenplay that direly needed the audience to feel some. The Gambler suffers from a bloodless unwillingness to put too much on the line, made corporeal in Pete Beaudreau's editing, with music-splattered time lapse standing in for Bennett's adrenaline-fueled epiphany during a roulette binge in Reno. Substituting quantity of gambling scenes for insight into Bennett's pathology, the film renders the thrill of almost winning thoroughly impersonal, hoping the jingle-jangle of chips and the reshuffling of cards will be enough to cue audiences in to the movie's fatal attraction. Like the supporting turns by Lange, Williams, Larson, and John Goodman (as a different wisecracking bookie), these tics are a suitable-enough distraction as Bennett figures out a last-ditch solution to his dull midlife crisis all by his lonesome.

This will rent as well as **BRICK MANSIONS, NEED FOR SPEED, INTO THE STORM, A MOST WANTED MAN, EXPENDABLES 3,** and **DRAFT DAY.**



### 3/24 1 INTO THE WOODS FAMILY

\$123 MILL BO 2835 SCREENS PG 125 MINUTES

**Meryl Streep (HOPE SPRINGS, THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA, THE GIVER, DOUBT, KRAMER VS KRAMER)**

**Johnny Depp (EDWARD SCISSOR HANDS, PUBLIC ENEMIES, CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY, BLOW, NICK OF TIME)**

**Emily Blunt (EDGE OF TOMORROW, THE ADJUSTMENT BUREAU, WOLFMAN)**

This narrative begins with a Baker and his Wife who are cursed with infertility by their witch neighbor. They can only break the curse by gathering up four talismans that helpfully bring all the other characters into play: "The

cow as white as milk / The cape as red as blood / The hair as yellow as corn / The slipper as pure as gold". The prologue includes an undertone as well, when the Baker adds, "I wish we had a child," the juxtaposition typical of Sondheim's best work, layered like so many fairy tales. Some 25 years ago, however, such layering was not the sort of thing that Disney's heroes and gamines sang about. But the play's reassessing of fairy tale tropes, its reinvigorating them with old Grimm's blood and thunder, looked forward to the spunky heroines and broad-chested prince-villains who later cropped up in everything from *Beauty and the Beast* to *Frozen*.



*Into the Woods* is a richer and more energetic musical than *Sweeney Todd*. True, most of the new film uses the familiar device of interlocking storylines, here about princesses and magic beans and a certain red-caped girl whose grandmother's been eaten by a wolf. But behind all that, Sondheim has crafted a sometimes glib but also intelligent examination of dreams and the dangers of their fulfillment. The mysterious woods are something of an all-purpose metaphorical zone where anything might happen, for better and worse. The repetition of "I wish" starts to sound foreboding, opening the door to risks that materialize the kingdom-wide devastation of the final act. Other sorts of risky wishes have to do with children: songs by Red Riding Hood (Lilla Crawford) and Jack (Daniel Huttlestone) reference pubescent curiosities in obvious manners that could leave some adults queasy.

It's a smart choice, enhanced by the strong cast performing the film's lilting tunes and witty lyrics. As the hapless Baker and his smarter Wife, James Corden and Emily Blunt generate enough frustrated and loving comedy to power the film on their own. Blunt in particular makes clear the Wife's conflicting loyalties and deep yearnings, acting while singing (most everybody else does the normal thing and leaves the acting to the dialogue laced in between the big numbers). Johnny Depp's sly wolf and Anna Kendrick's plucky Cinderella are both variations on old tropes that are knowing without falling into the wink-wink category.



This will rent as well as **THE BOXTROLLS, BOOK OF LIFE, MALEFICENT, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, LEGENDS OF OZ,** and **SAVING MR. BANKS.**



**3/24 3 SONG ONE DRAMA**  
**\$2 MILL BO 365 SCREENS PG-13 86 MINUTES**

**Anne Hathaway (ONE DAY, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, BRIDE WARS, PASSENGERS, RACHEL GETTING MARRIED)**

**Johnny Flynn (SOMETHING IN THE AIR, LOTUS EATERS, CRUSADE IN JEANS)**

**Mary Steenburgen (TV—BORED TO DEATH, WILFRED, 30 ROCK—FILM—THE HELP)**

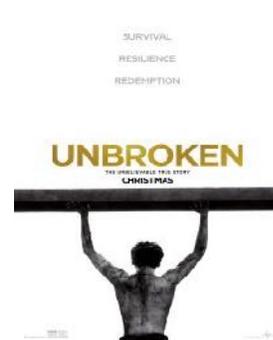
The over-the-ear headphones worn by the film's characters are a vintage indicator of the film's intimate and essential relationship to music. Henry (Ben Rosenfield) is wearing a pair that likely affects his hearing when he's hit by a car. In the wake of the accident, which lands him in a coma, his mother (Mary Steenburgen) summons his sister, Franny (Hathaway), home from Morocco, where she's studying for a PhD in

anthropology. Consumed with guilt for having broken off communication with Henry when he dropped out of college to pursue a music career, and now unable to offer him an apology, she seeks to exorcise her guilt by combing through his diary for clues in the hopes of finding a mystical way of reaching him. She listens to his music of choice and visits his preferred music venues, eventually meeting cute with his favorite musician, a singer-songwriter named James Forrester (Flynn).



"You know when you have a feeling and you don't want it to fade away, but you don't really know how to keep it?" James asks Franny during one of their heart to hearts. It might be preciously platitudinal, but it's a sentiment the story captures with a naturalistic dreaminess, connecting the transitory glory of music with the fleeting nature of the main characters' love affair. Though the soundtrack is comprised primarily of solid folk-rock tunes, the film itself often feels more like a bubblegum pop song, one whose familiar lyrics work to effusively evoke a deep-seated primal longing born of emotional agony that's temporarily remedied in these characters' soulful fling and connection to music itself. Better yet, the movie has the veracity to acknowledge that once the song ends, the real world still looms.

A really good little movie worthy of any inventory and will rent as well as **ONCE, STEP UP ALL IN, THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY, QUARTET, and PITCH PERFECT.**



**3/24 1 UNBROKEN ACTION**  
**\$110 MILL BO 2967 SCREENS PG-13 137 MINUTES**

**Jack O'Connell (300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE, THE LIABILITY, UNITED, WEEKENDER)**  
**Domhnall Gleeson (CALVARY, FRANK, DREDD, ANNA KARENINA)**

This film is an account of the Job-like tribulations of Louie Zamperini (O'Connell), a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force who barely scraped his way out of World War II. Ostensibly trumpeting the astonishing stamina of the American soldier, specifically when tasked to survive in Japanese POW camps, this has all the ingredients of a chest-puffing piece on Yankee military superiority, with paranoid fingers pointed at the exotic, one-dimensional opponent.

As opposed to painting its non-U.S. characters as subhuman "enemies," **UNBROKEN** treads very carefully with the concept, even putting the first utterance of the word into the mouth of a priest, who, in Louie's flashback to childhood mass, recites, "love thine enemy." It's a slightly trite bit of viewer hand-holding, as are most of the recollections that punctuate Louie's harrowing wartime horrors, but it sets the tone for a film less interested in blame than in illuminating commonalities.



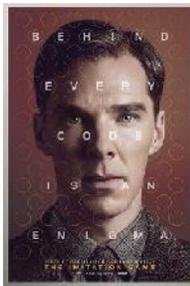
This movie deliberately zeroes in on the discrimination Louie and his family suffered as Italian-American immigrants in the early 20th century, a cruelty that led Louie to turn to alcohol and petty theft. He found a healthier outlet when his brother introduced him to track (he eventually became the "fastest high school runner in U.S. history," the movie claims), and when he makes it to the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, he nods in solidarity at both black and Japanese competitors.

After a failed rescue mission on a faulty plane leaves Louie, Phil (Domhnall Gleeson), and Mac (Finn Wittrock) stranded in the ocean for what will amount to 47 days, perspectives on death and reality aren't comfortably diluted. Soon enough it's clear that Mac has mere hours left (despite eating captured fish and drinking precious rainwater), and when he asks Louie if he's "going to die tonight," the sudden response of "maybe," however casually delivered, feels jarring in a genre wherein so many characters would have smiled and lied to their ailing cohorts. And when Louie and Phil are finally transported to a Japanese POW camp, presided over by Corporal Watanabe (Miyavi), a.k.a. "The Bird," Louie becomes the target of Watanabe's insecurity-fueled violence, the blows and blood of which Jolie never shies away from highlighting.

This will rent as well as **MAZE RUNNER, THE EQUALIZER, BRICK MANSION, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, LONE SURVIVOR, AVIATOR,** and **THREE DAYS TO KILL.**

### 3/31 1 THE IMITATION GAME DRAMA

\$51 MILL BO 2134 SCREENS PG-13 114 MINUTES



**Benedict Cumberbatch (TV-SHERLOCK HOLMES—FILM—AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, 12 YEARS A SLAVE, THE FIFTH ESTATE, THE HOBBITT movies)**

**Keira Knightly (LAGGIES, BEGIN AGAIN, JACK RYAN: SHADOW RECRUIT, ANNA KARENINA)**

Since Alan Turing, now widely considered to be the father of modern computer science, lived a life intensely shrouded in secrecy, both because of the nature of the work he did for the British government during WWII and his homosexuality, it was perhaps inevitable that *The Imitation Game* wouldn't exceed the breadth and depth of the flimsy Wikipedia entry devoted to him. At best, Morten Tyldum's biopic attests to the ferocity with which Turing (Cumberbatch) applied himself to his work, and how his perseverance was instrumental in the development of the electromechanical device that cracked the German Enigma machine and, as a result, shortened the war by as much as two years, thus saving millions of lives. At worst, it approaches Turing's homosexuality not so much with kid gloves as it infantilizes it, along with ideas of social conflict and drama, in a manner typically associated with superhero cinema.

The film begins in 1951, one year before Turing would be prosecuted for his sexuality and punished with chemical castration. Three years later he would commit suicide by ingesting cyanide, and the film rather tackily foreshadows the tragedy with a shot of Turing sweeping remnants of the poison from the floor of his home in Manchester following a robbery. Off-put by Turing's peevishness and flippancy about the crime, one of the investigators on the case, Nock (Rory Kinnear), takes it upon himself to delve into the man's background, which only leads him to a dead end after discovering Turing's curiously empty government file. "I think Alan Turing is hiding something," says Kinnear's audience proxy in a gratingly winking manner that's part and parcel with *The Imitation Game's* flatly instructive depiction of both Turing's lonely days at an independent boys school in the 1920s and no less lonelier time at Bletchley Park during WWII as part of the Government Code and Cypher School.

The film's main storyline transpires during the war years. While the Allies fight the Germans, the integrity of the quasi-Justice League that Denniston has built at the GC&CS is ostensibly compromised by Turing's incessant belief that the machine he's building will break the Enigma machine. That Winston Churchill himself bankrolls Turing's project when no one else will exudes an air of fiction given the way the narrative is prone to playing such acts of wheeling and dealing for shits and giggles, but the film's



faithful replica of the bombe doesn't evoke such frivolity. No one stands before this ominous, monolith-like beacon of promise, with its wall of rotating, ever-clacking drums, without quaking at the thought of what their persistence in cryptanalyzing the Enigma can mean to the war effort. Watching the subservience of the film's characters to the very machine they built, then seeing how this almost existential panic informs "the imitation game" that, years later, Turing plays with Nock at the police station during a battle of wills, is close to a **masterstroke**.

**Those who rented MAZE RUNNER, A MOST WANTED MAN, THE GIVER, THE RAILWAY MAN, MONUMENTS MEN, THE HUNDRED FOOT JOURNEY, and PHILOMENA will rent this one too.**



### 3/31 1 INTERSTELLAR SCI/FI

\$186 MILL BO 3783 SCREENS PG-13 169 MINUTES

**Matthew McConaughey (THE LINCOLN LAWYER, THE DALLAS BUYER'S CLUB, PAPER BOY, MUD, WE ARE MARSHALL, TROPIC THUNDER, REIGN OF FIRE)**  
**Anne Hathaway (LES MISERABLES, DON JON, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA)**  
**Jessica Chastain (ZERO DARK THIRTY, MAMA, TEXAS KILLING FIELDS, TAKE SHELTER)**

In the role of Cooper, a genius pilot asked to man a hail-mary voyage through a black hole to find a new planet for humans, McConaughey takes his place as the ultimate paterfamilias, a falsely humble alpha male who can both lead a last-ditch effort to save the human race from a dying Earth and run a corn farm almost entirely on his own. He's the best at everything, which makes for a wholly uninteresting protagonist, the perfect man roaming around the vast, stylized domains that Nolan, working with DP Hoyte Van Hoytema, has given great visual life to. But even as we pass beyond Saturn and enter into a new galaxy, where mile-high waves and frozen clouds plague various planets, the movie remains largely focused on what one chiseled, prodigious father does to save his prophetically brilliant little girl.

The film begins in the far-off future, with Ellen Burstyn's Murph, Cooper's daughter, seen as a talking head in a documentary, discussing what her father did for a living. She describes him chiefly as a farmer, and Nolan ties his vision of a not-so-far-off apocalypse to the practical struggle over retaining plentiful land and renewable agriculture. This element of the story speaks to Nolan's unfortunately continuing streak of hampering his films with a counterfeit sense of urgent realism and false importance, and the script—co-written by his brother, Jonathan Nolan—is awash in dialogue that utilizes hyper-technical and exact scientific vernacular to give vague logical shape to nonsense. This posturing, an insistence on the narrative's cultural significance, ruins the very real joys of Nolan's ambitious film, which skips from apocalyptic drama to disaster flick to psychological thriller to fantastical melodrama by the end of its nearly three-hour runtime.

The film's plot runs off of extended bouts of exposition and explanation about the logistics of the mission, doled out by Cooper and his crew, consisting of Brand (Hathaway), Romilly (David Gyasi), and Doyle (Wes Bentley). None of this talk speaks to any intimate or even witty truths about the strong bonds that tie scientific discovery to hope for humanity, a philosophy Nolan clearly believes in. It's not surprising that **INTERSTELLAR's** finer moments occur when Nolan allows his characters to actually explore, visiting the three planets where NASA sent their first wave of galaxy-hopping astronauts. The minimalist design of the alien landscapes are wondrous and act as a visual extension of the interior conflicts that denote each visit. This is especially true of the film's best sequence, involving the crew interacting with Matt Damon's Mann, an astronaut who's been living alone on a planet with a glacial sky for decades.

The film is driven by the familiar role of a father who cannot resolve his importance to the public while also being an attentive, caring parent, a notion that must hit home with McConaughey and Nolan, both fathers who split their time between family and a career of crafting or existing in imaginary worlds for the public. The regret that builds up from time spent away from loved ones fuels the film's grossly

sentimental fourth quarter, wherein Cooper takes a solo voyage to a strange planet that allows him to affect the past. It's the most risible section of a film that works too hard to provide a variety of tonally different storylines in the narrative, to the point that little of *Interstellar* feels fully resonant. The film even ends at what seems like the beginning of a love story, which is meant to suggest that Cooper's travels have also allowed him to move on from the death of his saintly wife.

Another huge renter like **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY**, **LUCY**, **NEIGHBORS** **THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN 2**, **MAN OF STEEL** and **LONE SURVIVOR**.

