

9/1 3 THE D TRAIN COMEDY

\$1 MILL BO 1009 SCREENS R 101 MINUTES

Jack Black (TV—THE BRINK—FILM—SEX TAPE, THE BIG YEAR, SCHOOL OF ROCK, BERNIE, HIGH FIDELITY, KING KONG)

James Marsden (WELCOME TO ME, THE BEST OF ME, THE LOFT, 2 GUNS, 27 DRESSES, STRAW DOGS)

Let's just get the so-called spoiler out of the way: In *The D Train*, Oliver Lawless, a badass D-list actor played by James Marsden screws Dan Landsman, a small-town schmo played by Jack Black. The big moment is a tad startling, but it occurs around the beginning of act two, almost like a second inciting incident, and there's really no way to fully unpack

this film without laying it out on the table. Without the sex, *The D Train* is just another bromance. With it, it's a groundbreaking inquiry for the post-bromance era, exploring the secret corners of male identity and relationships after a literal penetration that virtually every other film of its kind has only flirted with.

Still living in his hometown of Pittsburgh with wife Stacy (Kathryn Hahn) and son Zach (Russell Posner), Dan is the self-appointed chairman of his high school's alumni committee, which serves as both a perpetuation and a micro snapshot of his high school experience. Dan's peers still don't like him, and they still forget the nicknames he strains to assign himself, which only stokes his fiery, undying need to be accepted. With the high school's 20-year reunion fast approaching, Dan and company are manning the phones to get former classmates to attend, and when Dan sees Oliver, a fellow alum, in a Banana Boat commercial, he sees his hot, chiseled ticket to being the hero who draws the crowd. He keeps his family up watching the video on repeat, and relays his rabid enthusiasm to the committee members, who are skeptical, yet sold.



Almost immediately, *The D Train* depicts the preposterous lengths to which people will go to win someone's favor, romantically or otherwise, while that someone has no clue of the drastic inconveniences. Turns out Oliver, whom Dan calls, is free to meet for a drink, in L.A., so Dan concocts an entire phony business trip under the nose of his boss (Jeffrey Tambor), who's conveniently computer illiterate. He also lies to his wife and son about what he's doing, making the rendezvous feel like an affair long before anyone's bumping uglies. Eventually, for Dan, the implication isn't that he's queer, per se, but that his need for validation is so complete that it blurs every facet of his actions and desires. For Oliver, an unfazed pansexual whose hedonism is self-medication for lack of success, his tryst with Dan is business as usual. But there's a bond that's formed between these two incomplete men, and in terms of what we're used to seeing on screen, there's a certain vital beauty to the human ambiguities filmmakers Jarrad Paul and Andrew Mogel present after using sex as a launch pad.

It's also essential—and somewhat stunning—that there isn't a hint of gay-shaming in this movie. At one point, Dan takes a wistful, morning-after shower, but the look on his face isn't disgust; it's a heightened version of his default, existential confusion. The fateful encounter with Oliver causes Dan's life to unravel, yet it has nothing to do with his orientation. Or does it? In what might be the film's finest scene (and in what's arguably Black's finest acting moment), Zach, to whom Dan has handed down insecurities like old clothes, asks his dad what's wrong and Dan crumbles. He doesn't know and neither does the viewer. Is he gay? Probably not. Should he leave his wife? Maybe. Has his perpetual void-filling hit a fever pitch? Without question. Still, the fact that Dan had sex with Oliver—and, more specifically, was on what society decrees is the less manly receiving end of that sex—isn't depicted as rock bottom, but rather

step one of a wake-up call. In this comedy, which still wedges sharp humor between the cracks of its novel drama, Dan tumbles into a unique and cryptic life overhaul in the wake of some drastic choices. But *The D Train*'s key takeaway is that sleeping with Oliver doesn't make Dan less of a man—it helps make him a better one.

This one should rent as well as **BEGINNERS, WOMAN IN GOLD, MCFARLAND USA, FOXCATCHER, WHILE WE'RE YOUNG, STILL ALICE,** and **ST. VINCENT.**



9/1 3 I'LL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS DRAMA
\$7 MILL BO 290 SCREENS PG-13
92 MINUTES

Blythe Danner (DETACHMENT, WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER, LITTLE FOCKERS, MEET THE PARENTS)
Sam Elliott (WE WERE SOLDIERS, MASK, HULK, THE BIG LEBOWSKI, RUSH)

Explaining why he just bought himself a yacht, Bill (Sam Elliott), the sexy septuagenarian whose arrival at a retirement community creates a stir, tells Carol (Blythe Danner) that he can't understand people who wedge themselves into a rut after retirement and stay there until they die. Carol simply listens, no longer sure where she stands on the subject. Since her husband died 20 years ago, she's been living just the sort of life Bill is sneering at, so she's well aware that there are far worse ways to pass the time than reading the morning paper by the pool in your L.A. bungalow, playing bridge or golf several times a week with your best friends, or settling into bed with your pet and a glass of wine to watch some TV before falling asleep. On the other hand, a series of small but seismic changes in her life—the death of her dog, a budding friendship with the sensitive young man, Lloyd (Martin Starr), who cleans her pool, and Bill's unexpected interest in her—is altering her longstanding routine and making her wonder if she wants to spend the rest of her life doing essentially the same thing every day.

I'll See You in My Dreams is more evidence of the ways in which baby boomers keep transforming the culture to fit their needs, even as they age. More and more, in films ranging from rom-coms to hardcore action thrillers, AARP-generation actors are getting the kinds of starring roles that Hollywood almost never bestowed on people—especially women—past their mid 30s. Like most of the vehicles for older actors, this one is a solid piece of Hollywood workmanship, leavening a moderate amount of realism with a hefty helping of escapism.

This will rent as well as **WOMAN IN GOLD, THE SECOND BEST EXOTIC HOTEL, WHILE WE'RE YOUNG, FOXCATCHER,** and **THE IMITATION GAME.**





9/1 3 GOOD KILL THRILLER

\$1 MILL BO 492 SCREENS R 102 MINUTES

**Ethan Hawke (PREDESTINATION, THE PURGE, BROOKLYN'S FINEST, WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU, TRAINING DAY, ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13)
January Jones (TV—MAD MEN, THE LAST MAN ON EARTH---FILM—UNKNOWN, PIRATE RADIO)**

In this film, filmmaker Andrew Niccol seizes on an unnerving and ever-relevant subject. It's one thing to read of U.S. drone strikes daily in the papers and quite another to watch even simulated images of American pilots cramped in bunkers bombing Afghanistan, via consoles that resemble video games in aesthetic as well as mode of functioning. Real people are killed as casually as pixels in an Xbox game, and that distancing, yet another manifestation of the social media-enabled detachment that characterizes the amorality of modern life, arrives with an obvious, staggering price tag attached. With great ease comes little responsibility or accountability. If bombing 30 people from 10,000 feet above is a risk-free endeavor for the bombers, then it matters less to them, living half a world's away, whether or not those people pose an authentic threat to their domain.

Logically, Niccol has fashioned from this subject matter a chamber drama that reflects the tight confines of the drone pilot's trailer. Thomas Egan (Hawke) is a major in the U.S. Air Force who's flown six tours in the War on Terror and is now uneasily resigning himself to a job at a console in Las Vegas. Despite the safety of his new occupation, and his newfound proximity to his wife, Molly (January Jones), and children, Thomas is beginning to exhibit signs of PTSD, most explicitly in his drinking, aloofness, and inability to sleep. The guilt spurred from the physical ease of the assignment is wearing Thomas down, as he misses the risk of actual flight, which blurs the political uncertainties of his part in the war through the sheer visceral fight-or-flight sensations of battle. In physical warfare, Thomas is extending his opponents the etiquette of endangering his own life; now, he can't live with what he deems to be the cowardice of long-distance warfare.

Niccol has awkwardly shoehorned in broad talking points from various sides of the drone controversy. There are a few boorish soldiers who somewhat ironically speak of God being good while parroting the traditional sentiments of this endless war being a case of us or them. A pretty, sensitive soldier, Vera (Zoë Kravitz), says that the United States is the biggest enabler for international terrorism, with its paranoid, sometimes arbitrary killing that serves to further destabilize already anarchic regions. Eventually, the CIA takes command of the Air Force, and commences ordering a series of killings (euphemistically deemed "persecutions") that are of highly debatable justification morally and even strategically. Ambiguously straddling the line between right and left ideologies is Thomas's superior, Colonel Jack Johns (Bruce Greenwood), who strains to maintain sanity within his unit by simultaneously accommodating each pilot's sensibility.

Will rent as well as **THE HURT LOCKER, A MOST VIOLENT YEAR, TAKEN 3, INTERSTELLAR, FURY, THE EQUALIZER, A MOST WANTED MAN** and **THE LOFT**.





9/1 1 **MAD MAX:FURY ROAD** ACTION
\$151 MILL BO 30722 SCREENS R 120 MINUTES

Tom Hardy (THE DROP, THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, LAWLESS, THIS MEANS WAR, INCEPTION)
Charlize Theron (PROMETHEUS, A MILLION WAYS TO DIE IN THE WEST, HANCOCK, IN THE VALLEY OF ELAH, THE ITALIAN JOB)

Though the film fades in on an apocalyptically laconic wasteland vista with Max Rockatansky's (Tom Hardy) back to the camera, Miller quickly slaps his iconic road warrior's back to the wall. Literally from the movie's second shot on, Miller keeps his own happy feet firmly planted on the accelerator. No sooner has he finished gnawing on a two-headed lizard delicacy than Max is caught and chained up in the vast catacombs of a large, parasitic race of warriors. With translucent skin (straight out of *The Omega Man*) covered in plague buboes, the War Boys use Max and other healthy specimens as their human blood bags.

The exposition is as elemental as its visual presentation is saturated. And the same goes for *Fury Road's* core plot, which kicks in immediately as Charlize Theron's imposing Imperator Furiosa (sporting a buzzcut undoubtedly meant to recall both Sigourney Weaver's Lt. Ripley and Renée Falconetti's Joan of Arc) deviates from the warpath to make a break for the promised land with five very precious and nubile pieces of Immortan Joe's "property" in tow. Cue the dubstep chase music. (No, really: Joe's gear-grinding phalanx includes a three-story-high wall of mobile speakers seemingly driven by a metal guitarist and powered by six timpani-smashing brutes.) Max is thrust unwittingly into the thick of Joe and Furiosa's game of chicken, finding that being strapped to the front of a nightmarish, turbo-powered S&M dune buggy like some impossibly thick-necked hood ornament does a lot for settling one's usually up-for-grabs allegiances.



Miller punishes his audience with pleasure, orchestrating the rubber-burning pandemonium with the illicit smirk of someone who knows he's giving us exactly what we want—only way more of it than they ever thought they could handle. A significant chunk of the movie's copious action sequences appear heavily under-cranked, zipping from one explosion to the next like a silent Sennett comedy from the depths of hell, or like an impatient ADHD savant's DVD player caught perpetually on 1.5x mode. In an era where franchises routinely break up single chapters across two box-office-grubbing installments, *Fury Road* shoehorns enough ideas for two films into one bulging package.

The first trio of *Mad Max* films focused on the paucity of oil as a prime plot driver. *Fury Road*, in contrast, focuses on the lack of water. It's a swap that has obviously eerie prescience in California's waning years, but more to the point it belies Miller's true about-face. If oil and water are the two main signposts of Miller's symbolic concerns, their incompatibility emerges in flamboyant fashion during the film's climax when (spoiler alert!) Furiosa's distaff brigade KINGSMAlled Joe's meathead army into the suggestive folds of a rocky impasse. The resulting pileup of twisted metal and decapitated ego may well be the biggest, most muscular depiction of the masculine manifest destiny wiping out in action-movie history.

Wow, this will rent as well as **AMERICAN SNIPER, KINGMEN: THE SECRET SERICE, RUN ALL NIGHT, FIFTY SHADES OF GREY, THE EQUALIZER** and **UNBROKEN**.



9/8 1 THE AGE OF ADELINE ROMANCE
\$43 MILL BO 2134 SCREENS **PG-13** 112 MINUTES

Blake Lively (SAVAGES, THE TOWN, THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELLING PANTS)
Harrison Ford (FRANTIC, WITNESS, 42, INDIANA JONES, AIR FORCE ONE)

Given the elegant inexpressiveness of its aesthetics and the character at its center, a young woman who, having stopped aging almost 80 years ago following a horrific car accident, lives in a perpetual state of performance, *The Age of Adaline* could just as easily have been called *The Curious Case of Adaline Bowman*. Yet director Lee Toland Krieger's self-conscious vision doesn't have the anxious contours of David Fincher's sense of style. The artful aloofness of the film's images may align with Adaline's (Blake Lively) reticence toward anyone who might learn her real age, and thus force her to relocate again from her native San Francisco, yet they aren't truly keyed to her seeking of the eternal in the ephemeral. Still, this gracefully wonky melodrama is enlivened by droll bits of narrative business, beginning with the narrator who opines that it won't be until 2035 that science will explain how water and lightning conspired to keep Adaline forever young. Later, after this fetching librarian puts her dog down, she pastes a photo of the pooch into an album alongside other pictures of previous pets—and that they're all similar breeds points to her need for constancy. As in *Only Lovers Left Alive*, there are dalliances with nostalgia, yet there's less a sense of them as reckonings with the boredom of unlimited time than easily, if agreeably, sentimental displays of narrative-building. After finally agreeing to date Ellis Jones (Michiel Huisman), a handsome young philanthropist, she takes him to a chop shop that was once a movie theater and still has a constellation of stars drawn on its ceiling—and later, after agreeing to go to his parents to celebrate their 40-year anniversary, it's revealed that Adaline shares a past with Ellis's astronomer father, William (Harrison Ford). But rather than embrace the thorny, increasingly looney nature of Adaline's existential crisis, the film retreats from it in much the same way she does from love, resolving her angst with such a conventional sense of resolution that *Age of Adaline* reveals itself not as a sincerely kooky elegy to lost time, but just a slightly off-kilter acting out of familiar rom-com bona fides about commitment-phobes missing out on life.



This will rent as well as **THE BOY NEXT DOOR, THE BEST OF ME, MY OLD LADY, A MOST WANTED MAN, CHEF, and THE GRAND BUDAPEST GRAND HOTEL.**



9/15 1 CINDERELLA FAMILY
\$200 MILL BO 3848 SCREENS PG 105 MINUTES

Cate Blanchett (BLUE JASMINE, THE MONUMENTS MEN, THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG, THE AVIATOR)

Lily James (TV—DOWNTON ABBEY, WAR AND PEACE, SECRET DIARY OF A CALL GIRL)

When 10-year-old Ella (Eloise Webb) sits on her mother's (Hayley Atwell) deathbed, she gets a bit of advice about how to live life: "Have courage, and be kind." This adage is repeated ad nauseam throughout Kenneth

Branagh's Cinderella, and yet there's a noticeable absence of risk in Chris Weitz's script as well as in the overall way that Branagh depicts the classic story. The gowns are vibrant in color and the set design is teeming with detail, but the director, working with editor Martin Walsh, cuts the film to emphasize the story's familiar plot points, rather than highlight any instances of personal visual artistry.

Years after her mother's death, Ella (now played by Lily James) learns of her father's (Ben Chaplin) death during a business trip, and is quickly isolated by her stepmother (Cate Blanchett), along with Drisella (Sophie McShera) and Anastasia (Holliday Grainger), the stepsisters who nickname her Cinderella. When she's notified of the passing, Branagh frames her standing against an open doorway clutching a tree branch, a sentimental gift from her father. Branagh lights the scene with James stuck between the gray, dimming glow of the outer world and the dark chamber lighting of the home now ruled over by her stepmother. As Cinderella stares out, shaking with grief, James's eyes convey a devastating reality: Whatever the impending horror of her life under the thumb of her stepfamily, the home they inhabit also contains memories of her loving family that the world at large very simply cannot.



The prince's practice room to practice his sparring, is overrun with soldiers dueling, and Branagh shoots it as a gorgeous, rushing swirl of action, but it's utilized only to set the scene for a monotonous discussion of the prince's first meeting with Cinderella. The prince's impending ascension to the throne is the other topic of conversation, one that stirs up the inevitable pressure for him to marry before his father (Derek Jacobi) passes on. Despite the ubiquitous specter of death that hangs over the story, Branagh brings out a modicum of buoyant humor out of all the limp romance and drama, helped largely by Blanchett's peerless delivery, McShera and Grainger's kinetic exchanges, and a small cameo by Rob Brydon as a clumsy portrait artist.

A very enjoyable family film that will rent as well as **STRANGE MAGIC, THE COBBLER, PADDINGTON** and **THE PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR**.



9/15 1 FURIOUS 7 ACTION

\$351 MILL BO 3982 SCREENS PG-13 137 MINUTES

Vin Diesel (FAST AND FURIOUS, THE PACIFIER, FIND ME GUILTY, XXX, KNOCKAROUND GUYS)

Dwane Johnson (HERCULES, PAIN & GAIN, FAST & FURIOUS 6, SNITCH, GRIDIRON GANG)

Paul Walker (TAKERS, FAST FIVE, THE LAZARUS PROJECT, FAST & FURIOUS, INTO THE BLUE)

“Cars can’t fly.” But of course they can. Even as Brian (Paul Walker) cautions his young son that throwing his toy car as if it’s a plane is improper play, you know, at the beginning of *Furious 7* that it won’t be long before cars are flying everywhere.

This is in keeping with the frighteningly popular franchise presumption that each succeeding film exponentially ups the stunt ante. As Roman (Tyrese Gibson) reminds you more than once in the new movie, recent tricks moved on from mere street or even mountain road racing, to take up shooting at tanks and planes, not to mention driving off bridges, setting up all sorts of high tech business having to do with traffic, penal system or weapons-related subterfuges, engaging in lengthy bouts of fisticuffs and more elaborate martial-artsy battles, and contemplating the meaning of family, again and again and again.

The flying is gorgeous and impossible and repeated in various ways: cars parachute into the Caucasus mountains, cars plunge off cliffs, and perhaps most dauntingly, cars soar from one of the Jumeirah at Etihad Towers in Abu Dhabi to another, crashing through lots of glass to do so. The images are breathtaking, as are the ideas that any vehicle could actually handle such abuse, specifically abuse for which they are absolutely and utterly not made to handle.



All of this is cool and fun and noisy, no matter the goofy plot contriving to get from one flight location to another. Like all the other entries in the series, this one works like an old-fashioned musical: Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers might be at odds, they might be getting married, they might be the Barkleys of Broadway, all nonsense in order to get them dancing. Just so, Dom (Vin Diesel) and Letty (Michelle Rodriguez) just need to be driving, however they do it.

That their driving is a sort of dancing is not news, of course. While Letty is still recovering from the memory loss resulting from pretty much dying but then not dying, Han (Sung Kang) doesn’t have much time to grieve for Cara (Gal Gasol), who died at the end of the last film, and Brian and Mia (Jordana Brewster) are working on their family, as in kids (namely, Jack, the little boy who introduce the movie’s primary metaphor). These couples are ever damaged and perpetually working on it: Dom’s ex Elena (Elsa Pataky) returns to consecrate Letty and Dom’s painfully earnest not-quite-togetherness, while another girl, Ramsey (Nathalie Emmanuel) sets up for not-quite-competition between Roman and Tej (Ludacris).

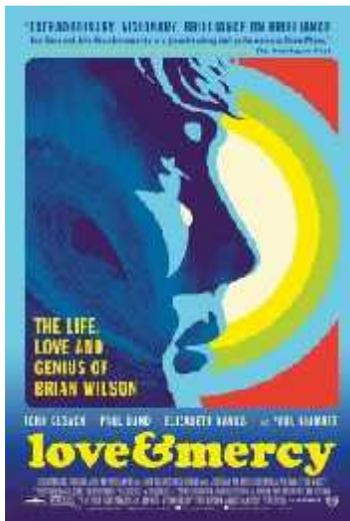
Riley’s under-use continues in the new movie, as no one comes to avenge her loss, but Owen’s brother Deckard (Jason Statham) comes a-blasting. But again, that plot point—however it sounds motivational—is irrelevant. Jason Statham is on hand to drive and kick, which he does frequently. He’s terminally cool, of course, but his eventual datedness is hinted at here by the brief appearance of Tony Jaa as a bad guy who goes after Brian. Like Fred Astaire, Jaa is a dancer in all senses of the term: he flips off walls, he catapults and cavorts over stairs and he flies—more athletically, if less loudly, than do the cars.

Jaa’s appearance, along with the Rock’s, reinforces the series’ double focus, on cars and bodies, and how they stand in for each other. Jaa has precious little thematic association with the first vehicle on which he’s riding (an armored and weaponized bus carrying a hostage), but it does what it needs to do,

giving him room to launch himself at Brian, to run and scale walls as the thing is rolling and pitching. The teammates, however, are viscerally attached to their vehicles, typed by make and model and color.

That these associations are visible but not binding is something like the family business. This does two things: it makes the idea of such connection crucial and also, not. As the franchise will roll on, without Brian and without Walker, it yet insures that you know that he is and was crucial to the premise, but also, that he's not. Loss has always been part of this series, whether in terms of crew members, cast members or characters. This time, as with the Letty storyline, the loss is a primary plot and theme, but it's written as abiding, as continuing, rather than abjection. That's not a complexity the montage at film's end can't exactly explain, but it does leave hanging.

This will rent as well as **GET HARD, AMERICAN SNIPER, FIFTY SHADES OF GREY, TAKEN 3, INSURGENT, THE HUNGER GAMES** and **NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM.**



9/15 2 LOVE & MERCY MUSICAL DRAMA
PG-13 121 MINUTES

**Paul Dano (12 YEARS A SLAVE, PRISONERS, RUBY SPARKS, LOOPER, COWBOYS & ALIENS),
John Cusack (EIGHT MEN OUT, THE GRIFTERS, SAY ANYTHING, HIGH FIDELITY, RUNAWAY JURY, SERENDIPITY)
Elizabeth Banks (EVERY SECRET THING, THE HUNGER GAMES, PITCH PERFECT, MAN ON A LEDGE)**

In *Love & Mercy*, Brian Wilson (John Cusack) is a prisoner of mental illness, drug addiction, and two emotionally abusive father figures. It's of more modest importance to the film that Wilson is also a prisoner of his own genius. With a series of brilliantly composed sound collages containing snatches of harmony, studio banter, and kernels of hooks, composer Atticus Ross gives a tangible impression of the clutter in Wilson's mind blossoming into *Pet Sounds*, an album that's simultaneously elemental and maximalist, deconstructionist and rigorously composed. Director Bill Pohlad, who seems never to have met a metaphor he couldn't bludgeon into its most rudimentary and literal interpretation, juxtaposes the first of Ross's compositions with a fade-in to a close-up of an ear. As a visualization of the mind of a *sui generis* talent reckoning with the voices in his head, this image is functional, but *Love & Mercy's* interpretation of genius is overwhelmed by its reliance on malevolent guardians as both a narrative fulcrum and an engine used to manufacture pity.

Sometime in the 1980s, a middle-aged Wilson is portrayed by Cusack, who we meet taking a shine to his future wife, Cadillac dealer Melinda Ledbetter (Elizabeth Banks). "I'm not married anymore," Wilson, flanked by handlers, says to her. "Do you have a pen?" In this section of the film, Wilson's lack of social graces is meant to convey a naïf-like purity and dedication to creative ideals. These traits are endangered by the parentage of his therapist and legal guardian, Dr. Eugene Landy, portrayed as an unrepentant tyrant by Paul Giamatti. Landy overmedicates and undernourishes Wilson into a state of near-catatonia, and Ledbetter's efforts to free Wilson from the doctor's clutches form the redemptive arc of the narrative. As an unabashed ode to the couple, the film languishes in Wilson and Ledbetter's struggles with Landy. One scene contains a lengthy argument over whether Wilson should be allowed to eat a hamburger; in



another, Landy takes great pleasure in calling Ledbetter a slut.

Pohlad's film is less infantilizing, but more scatterbrained when it turns to Wilson's efforts to record *Pet Sounds* and early versions of the songs that would later become Wilson's solo masterpiece, *Smile*. Cinematographer Robert Yeoman contrasts the antiseptic haze of his '80s footage with lusciously grainy, documentary-style shots of a younger Wilson (played by Paul Dano) masterminding recording sessions in wood-paneled rooms. Throughout, the Beach Boys themselves are ancillary to the proceedings: Mike Love (Jake Abel) occasionally appears to play the wet blanket who second-guesses the "mistakes" in *Pet Sounds*, and Dennis Wilson (Kenny Wormald) is an ephemeral advertisement for his impending death by drowning. All this while Wilson harnesses his vision with orchestra players and has a series of disappointing heart-to-hearts with the Wilsons' paterfamilias (Bill Camp), who gets a slew of lines like "Five years from now, no one is going to remember you, or the Beach Boys."

The looseness with which Pohlad portrays Wilson's creative peak is unconventional, but the film's script, by Oren Moverman and Michael A. Lerner, is slavishly adherent to biopic formula and clunky affirmations of Wilson's legacy. (In a single scene, one character remarks that "Paul McCartney said 'God Only Knows' is the greatest song ever written" a moment before another notices a dog picking up on good vibrations.) Every spark of brilliance in *Love & Mercy* is a triumph over conventional wisdom and parental disapproval, just as every bit of dialogue underlines a historical tidbit or blunt thematic metaphor visualized without a shred of imagination. "Everybody come to the deep end," Wilson says as he attempts to woo his bandmates into more experimental techniques, while floating in the deep end of a swimming pool. "We're too shallow for the deep end," one of them responds, while lounging in a deck chair. The artistic process has rarely seemed so stultifying.

The rentability of this movie will be with how you did with **THE DUFF, WHIPLASH, FOCUS, GET ON UP, FOXCATCHER, ST. VINCENT,** and **LUCY.**



9/15 2 MONKEY KINGDOM DOCUMENTARY
FOR FAMILIES \$17 MILL BO 2012 SCREENS G 81
MINUTES

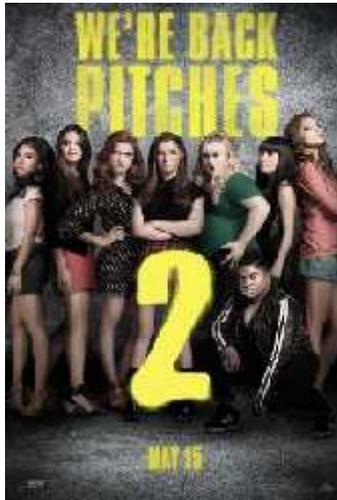
There's no proselytizing in *Monkey Kingdom*, the latest in Disney Nature's conservation-minded documentaries. Unlike the teachers' guide Disney devised to go with it, the film never mentions that the toque macaques it depicts, who live in a picturesque sacred ruin in a Sri Lankan jungle, are part of an endangered species. Instead, the doc aims to cultivate empathy and admiration for these intelligent and highly social beings by filming them at home in their world—and by focusing on Maya, a sweet-faced underdog, and her baby, Kip, whose huge earlobes, gigantic eyes, and squeaky cry make him the epitome of helpless innocence, *Gremlins*'s Gizmo minus some of the fur.

The main plotline, Maya's ascension to a higher status within the troop, appears to be the result of a lucky mating (she teams up with a young male who joins the troop as a low-status outsider and works his way up to the top), but the script repeatedly describes it as her "fight" to "beat the odds." There are also times when you may wonder if some drama was created in the editing room. In one sequence, Kip is supposedly taken from Maya by one of the high-born sisters who lord it over her. Maya is then shown wandering the jungle searching for him for what we're told is hours while the sister plays with Kip, until she finally loses interest and he sneaks off into the jungle, where he's reunited with his mother. Each individual scene—the sister plucking Kip off a tree he's clinging to and playing with him, Maya calling out as she wanders through the jungle, mother and baby coming together and clinging to one another—is clearly unstaged, yet it's unclear whether they happened for the reasons described or in that particular sequence. What's more, the story sounds a bit dubious: If she couldn't find

Kip, wouldn't Maya look for him on the rock that's the center of their social world, where the sister is shown playing with him?

Despite unvarnished dangers like the hunters and turf battles, however, this G-rated film remains upbeat. The jungle, often shot in lambent light, seems sometimes perilous and sometimes homey, but always fully alive, the site of magical sights like a leopard on the prowl and an annual invasion of winged termites. And interspersed with scenes from the day-to-day lives of Maya and her fellow macaques are glamorous close-ups of family members huddled together, slow-mo or backlit scenes of the monkeys at play, and pop-scored montages (the first is set to the theme song from *The Monkees*). The cumulative effect is cheerily life-affirming, a bracing infusion of macaque-style joie de vivre.

This will rent as well as **STRANGE MAGIC, PADDINGTON, BIG HERO 6, INTO THE WOODS,** and **PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR.**



9/15 1 PITCH PERFECT 2 MUSICAL COMEDY
\$183 MILL BO 3066 SCREENS PG-13 135 MINUTES

Rebel Wilson (PAIN & GAIN, PITCH PERFECT, WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING, STRUCK BY LIGHTNING)

Anna Kendrick (INTO THE WOODS, THE VOICES, DRINKING BUDDIES, END OF WATCH, THE COMPANY YOU KEEP)

Romy and Michelle return to their high school reunion determined to be viewed as successes, even as the film's context is female-on-female bullying alongside the relentless pursuit of the popular jock. And the Judd

Apatow brand of relationship comedy asks its female characters to nag, berate, and belittle their male counterparts (often played by lovable doofuses who can't seem to figure out how to be adults) while still being totally hot and perennially willing sexual partners. Even the recent *Bachelorette* and *Bridesmaids*—both being films that gamely continue a tradition of a mostly all-female cast begun in the 1930s with *Stage Door* and *The Women*—unfortunately rely heavily on the conventions of marriage as their backdrop, as if women only get together to celebrate the acquisition of a husband.

Three national titles later, *Pitch Perfect 2* opens with the Bellas performing for President Obama's birthday celebration at Lincoln Center. But their performance comes to an abrupt conclusion when "Fat Amy" (Rebel Wilson) fumbles a daring acrobatic maneuver during a rendition of "Wrecking Ball" and, after an unfortunate wardrobe malfunction, accidentally reveals her lady parts to the entire audience while suspended several feet above the stage. Countless cellphone pictures and videos later, the group is publicly shamed and suspended from further competition—unless, rather conveniently, they can become the first American group ever to win a major global competition, thus earning their reinstatement as a team.

The slut-shaming element (or body-shaming at the very least) is subtle but powerful, and the women gamely enter into an unfair battle to regain their integrity in the eyes of the public, even as they receive buckets of hate mail (including, hilariously, a death threat from Sonia Sotomayor) and utter disdain from the rest of the cappella community. The film then rather stiffly jumps



between set pieces that sometimes feel absurdly staged, such as a secret underground competition which mimics the more seamlessly integrated "riff-off" in the previous film. But as we watch Beca navigate her entry into adulthood, balancing her music career with her friendships and her responsibilities to the Bellas, the film feels less like a circus and more like a meditation on the obstacles that women must overcome in order to succeed on their own terms.

After the group laments the lack of fun during the stressful build-up to world competition, Beca comes home late one night to the house she shares with the other Bellas—after finishing up work at her new music production internship—and finds her teammates engaged in a massive pillow fight in the living room. "You've just set women back 30 years," she quips, a joke that also brings society's expectations about women's behavior squarely to the forefront. She's basically saying, "If we have too much fun, we won't get shit done, and then no one will take us seriously." This is, after all, a movie about an incident in which a young woman makes a mistake that sexualizes an otherwise benign musical performance. Rather than be individually chastised (or, God forbid, have the mistake be understood as simply that, and having everyone just move the fuck on), the entire group of women with whom she associates is punished, as if one woman's error brings all of womanhood down—a wrecking ball made literal.

This will be a big rental as **PITCH PERFECT**, **INTO THE WOODS**, **LUCY**, **DOLPHIN TALE 2**, **MALIFICENT**, **TAMMY**, and **JERSEY BOYS**.



9/22 3 RESULTS ROMANTIC COMEDY
R 105 MINUTES

Guy Pearce (IRON MAN 3, LAWLESS, PROMETHEUS, DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK, THE KINGS SPEECH)
Kevin Corrigan (TV—THE FRINGES, THE MENTALIST, COMMUNITY—FILM-- CYMBELINE, WINTER'S TALE, UNSTOPPABLE)

Recent divorcé Danny (Corrigan) relocates to Austin, Texas with a ton of inheritance money but no one to spend it with. Danny is so lonely in his vacant mansion that he's willing to pay \$200 for a stranger off Craigslist to hook-up his TV set, his only interaction with a human that day. He decides to visit a local gym, mostly because he's bored out of his mind and just wants company. His lack of motivation is clear from the beginning, "I'm hoping to get in shape a little bit," he says to gym owner Trevor (Guy Pearce). Lucky for him, the trainer assigned to him is the strong-willed and gorgeous Kat (Cobie Smulders). As with most romantic comedies, it's not hard to see where the story is heading.

A few workout sessions into his new regimen and Danny develops an attraction towards Kat, and although she can do a million times better than this overweight depressed guy, she seems into him. But Danny doesn't have a beat of romantic rhythm in his bones, and is about as smooth as sandpaper. On a night scheduled for a workout, he surprises Kat with an intimate candlelit dinner and live music. For Kat, it feels more like an ambush, and she makes a beeline for the exit.

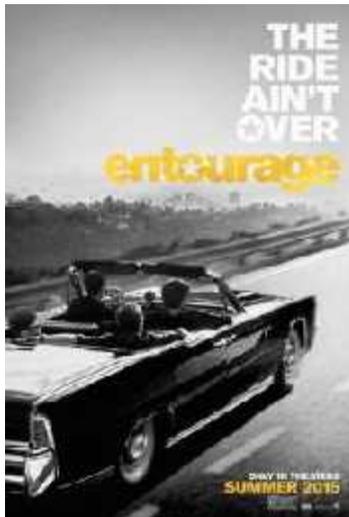
Director Bujalski reveals Kat's habit of crossing the line in professional relationships from the beginning. If a client skips out on payment or threatens to drop her as their trainer, she stands her ground and refuses to accept no for an answer. At other times, her cute looks and welcoming spirit leads her into dicey situations; it's not surprising to discover she once had a fling with her boss Trevor, a revelation which makes for awkwardness when the three start hanging out.

While **RESULTS** doesn't follow standard genre tropes



by forming a love triangle and pitting the three characters against each other, the film's alternative isn't necessarily better. An unlikely circle of friendship develops too conveniently, and no one is held accountable for their actions. It's far-fetched enough that Kat would make a move on Danny in the first place, but it's worse when she's quick to forgive him for every mistake. Even more implausible is the dynamic between Trevor and Danny. Their polarizing personalities and shared love interest in Kat make them perfect rivals, and yet they become best friends despite any convincing logic.

This will do OK as did **INHERENT VICE**, **IF I STAY**, **FADING GIGOLO**, **A MOST VIOLENT YEAR**, **THE HUMBLING**, **LISTEN UP PHILIP**, and **SEX TAPE**.



9/29 1 ENTOURAGE COMEDY

\$33 MILL BO 3108 SCREENS R 104 MINUTES

Adrian Grenier (TV—ENTOURAGE—FILM—THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA, A PERFECT FIT)

Kevin Dillon (TV'S ENTOURAGE)

Jeremy Piven (TV'S ENTOURAGE, MR. SELFRIDGE, FILM—SMOKIN' ACES, KEEPING UP WITH THE STEINS, RUSH HOUR 2, SERENDIPITY)

Picking up a good few years after the close of the HBO show's eighth and final season, *Entourage* starts by plunking its rapacious quartet onto a yacht straight from the docks of *The Wolf of Wall Street*. To the extent that writer-director-creator Doug Ellin wants you to focus on anything beyond the topless porn stars and free-flowing Cristal, it becomes clear that Vincent Chase (Adrian Grenier) is riding high on an ever-mounting crest of success, and his hangers-on are unabashedly feeling the lift from his tailwind. Turtle (Jerry Ferrara), fresh off what appears to be a crash tapeworm diet, is rolling in green from a liquor-branding coup. Vince's half-ish brother, Drama (Kevin Dillon), only has to pay for sex maybe once or twice a month. And E (Kevin Connolly) has graduated to the Tinseltown big leagues, netting the chance to produce Vince's upcoming self-directed vanity project that, thanks in part to the largesse of newly crowned head of production Ari Gold (Jeremy Piven), is spiraling wildly over budget.

Unsurprisingly, the film positions women as the most conspicuous roadblock to their success. Whether actively or indirectly, the men of *Entourage* find their aspirations constantly thwarted, sidelined, or sabotaged by their "better" halves and ingénues. E's pregnant ex keeps him on the hook of "maybe" getting back together, thereby absolving him of any guilt he might feel for banging supermodels. Ari's spouse has a long list drawn up of qualifications for allowing him to go back to work in the industry, one which might as well include the dictum "Don't breathe." And when Vince's production gets held up by its chief financiers (a swaggering father-son pair of Texas blowhards played by Billy Bob Thornton and a lip-licking Haley Joel Osment), it doesn't take long before the group realizes it's not artistic differences fueling their animosity, but macho turf wars.

Fun film that will rent as well as **PAUL BLART 2**, **GET HARD**, **THE DUFF**, **TAKEN 3**, **GROWN UPS 2**, and **DUMB AND DUMBER 2**.





9/28 1 MAX FAMILY

\$34 MILL BO 2870 SCREENS PG 111 MINUTES

Thomas Hayden Church (WE BOUGHT A ZOO, JOHN CARTER, SIDEWAYS, SPIDER MAN 3, THE BADGE)

Max, a kewpie-eyed Belgian Malinois, is the right-hand pup for Kyle Wincott (Robbie Amell), helping his master sniff out illegal weapon stockpiles in Afghanistan until an ambush leaves the marine dead and his canine charge suffering from PTSD. The pooch is brought back to the States, where bitten and scratched military officials unload him onto Kyle's only sibling, Justin (Josh Wiggins). The younger Wincott is everything his brother wasn't: sullen, scrawny, and skeptical of the soldierly principle. In

other words, the antagonist. He even mutters, during one of the last Skype sessions Kyle enjoys before his death, a slightly softened-down version of "How many civilians did you kill today?" while remaining fully engrossed in his first-person POV shooter video game. Oh, the irony.

Hokey though this all is, at this point the film is still on solid ground, and in spite of what appears to be a valiant tandem effort at sabotaging the entire affair by way of Justin's parents, played by Thomas Haden Church and Lauren Graham—the former sporting the most ludicrous Texas drawl this side of James Van Der Beek, the latter apparently auditioning for a role in some speculatively forthcoming Paula Deen biopic. Both Wiggins, one of the hot new acting prospects on the block thanks to his performance in last year's *Hellion*, and the dog are fine enough actors that Justin's reluctant bid to rescue Max from his psychological torment, and possibly make psychic amends with his departed brother, is rendered in humane gestures, no more so than when Justin, while watching Fourth of July fireworks on Main Street, intuits that a caged Max is flashing back to Afghanistan and runs back home to comfort the trembling beast.



This one will rent as well as **MCFARLAND USA, ALEXANDER AND THE TERRIBLE NO GOOD VERY BAD DAY, PADDINGTON, GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY, WHEN THE GAME STANDS TALL** and **INTO THE WOODS**.



9/28 1 POLTERGEIST SCI/FI

\$32 MILL BO 2012 SCREENS PG-13 93 MINUTES

Rosemarie DeWitt (KILL THE MESSENGER, TOUCHY FEELY, PROMISED LAND, THE ODD LIFE OF TIMOTHY GREEN,

Sam Rockwell (LAGGIES, BETTER LIVING THROUGH CHEMISTRY, THE WAY WAY BACK, COWBOYS & ALIENS, IRON MAN 2)

Kendra (Saxon Sharbino) sulks in the back seat of the family car, her face grim as she gazes out the window. "There are power lines," she says as the camera cuts to confirm her observation, showing towers and wires stretching into the distant horizon. "I can feel the tumors already."

So begins the 2015 remake of *Poltergeist*. While Kendra's dad, Eric (Sam Rockwell), does his best to laugh off her dread, he misses his turn, en route to the house that you know is built on top of dead people. (The new film changes out the "ancient Indian burial ground" for "old cemetery," for reasons unexplained but not hard to guess.) When the family arrives at the house, the real estate agent reveals she'll cut the price and so, within minutes, they're on their way to tumors.

Or, less poetically, they're on their way to a series of harrowing encounters with a poltergeist. The logic here is vague, as it must be. These spirits don't constitute a "classic haunting", according to Dr. Brooke Powell (Jane Adams), the paranormal specialist they call in once six-year-old Maddy (Kennedi Clements) is sucked into the closet, through a seemingly solid wall. Instead, they're a remarkably cohesive conglomerate of violent spirits, determined to use the little girl, whose own young spirit is at its "purest point", as a means to regain entry into the above-ground world.

These spirits actually seem pretty adept at manipulating that world before they capture Maddy, as a long series of scenes showing tricks reveal: they roll baseballs, slam chairs and tables, entice a tree to crash through a window to snatch Maddy's brother Griffin (Kyle Catlett), or poke their own gooey hands up through the garage floor to seize Kendra's ankle. All of this happens before Eric and his wife Amy (Rosemary DeWitt) notice, let alone believe, Griffin's descriptions of events. Once they do notice, when Maddy speaks to them from inside their staticky widescreen TV, Eric convinces his wife not to call the cops because, he reasons. "There's got to be someone who's gonna believe us," Amy wails. And voila, there it is.

This will rent as well as the original did in '82, **SEVENTH SUN, THE VOICES, INTO THE WOODS, HORNS, INTO THE STORM,** and **VERONICA MARS.**

