



9/6 3 A BIGGER SPLASH CRIME DRAMA
\$3 MILL BO 478 SCREENS R 125 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

**Tilda Swinton (TRAINWRECK, HAIL CAESAR!, SNOW
 PIERCER, BURN AFTER READING)**

**Ralph Fiennes (HAIL CAESAR!, SPECTRE, THE GRAND
 BUDAPEST HOTEL, SKYFALL, THE WRATH OF THE
 TITANS)**

A Bigger Splash, is high concept from the get-go, introducing Tilda Swinton as Marianne Lane, a Bowie-sized rock legend who, it's implied, has blown out her vocal cords at one packed stadium show too many. Following surgery, Marianne convalesces in a hillside mansion on Pantelleria—the gorgeous island between Tunisia and Italy—with her sullen documentarian paramour, Paul (Matthias Schoenaerts), himself recovering from a botched suicide attempt and a decades-long drinking problem.

The pair's sense of escape is barely established before it's under attack by a drop-in from Marianne's histrionic ex, Harry (Ralph Fiennes), accompanied by a daughter, Penelope (Dakota Johnson), about whose existence he only just found out. Harry wastes no time in his go-for-broke crusade to win Marianne back, while Penelope—ostensibly bored by the scenery and lived-in luxury of her new "family"—wastes hers making eyes in Paul's direction.

If Marianne is the film's brittle foundation, then Harry its malfunctioning nerve center—rapacious in his obnoxiousness, yet the de facto life of ever party he happens to crash. Fiennes's performance ties itself into knots making all the contradictions land plausibly, giving perhaps too much life to a character as beholden to the good old days (producing Stones records, doing blow in the green room with Marianne) as he is desperate to convince the people around him that there's still some sand left in the hourglass.



The air is rife with shame and sex. The filmmakers take inventory of their seductions (fame, glamor, artistic sublimity, unselfconscious youth, that second chance at life, and so on), only to autopsy them the morning after as overripe delusions of the avant-rich. What intrigues, if in a lurid sort of way, is the film's fudging of projected viewer desires with its characters': The filmmakers stake a position too close to these excesses to finger-wag anybody on either side of the camera, which zooms, whip-pans, rack-focuses, and settles with a lusty, manic intentionality to match the scatterbrained, anything-goes mentality of the story's gilded seaside milieu.

For all the hand-wringing that follows Penelope's frank overtures and the concurrent possibility of David successfully wooing Marianne, Paul's decision to sleep with the ingénue takes place entirely off screen—one of many wasted opportunities for the filmmakers to give Schoenaerts something to do beyond squinting and pouting like a hurt Great Dane. In an epoch when consumers are increasingly looking to their superstars of choice for self-worth and political solidarity, the film asks a timely question (intentionally or otherwise): What price would *you* pay to be a part of a famous person's drama?

This one will rent as well as **HARDCORE HENRY, EYE IN THE SKY, THE FINEST HOURS, 10 CLOVERFIELD LANE, PRECIOUS CARGO, and STAND OFF.**



9/6 2 THE DARKNESS THRILLER
\$12 MILL BO 1298 SCREENS **PG-13** 92 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Kevin Bacon (DINER, JFK, COP CAR, CRAZY STUPID LOVE, MYSTIC RIVER)

One doesn't expect to encounter bright, proactive families in haunted-house thrillers, but *The Darkness's* protagonists still manage to distinguish themselves with their flabbergasting cluelessness. We learn early that Peter and Bronny Taylor (Kevin Bacon and Radha Mitchell) are having marital problems, and that their children are teetering on the precipice of disaster. Michael (David Mazouz) is autistic, and, since the family camped at the Grand Canyon a few months earlier, he's been exhibiting increasingly severe signs of psychosis that Peter and Bronny are steadfastly determined not to notice, most gallingly when they somehow manage to rationalize Michael setting his room on fire, letting it pass without any action taken. Meanwhile, Michael's sister, Stephanie (Lucy Fry), is discovered to have an eating disorder, and is having pronounced problems with Michael, who may or may not be sneaking into her room and leaving ashy handprints on her bedspread.

So how do Peter and Bronny handle this smorgasbord of misery? They leave the children alone in their clearly haunted house to wine and dine Peter's piggish boss (Paul Reiser). Contrary to what many believe, fictional characters don't have to be likeable to command a narrative, but they do have to be interesting, and their struggles have to have stature. Peter and Bronny are such self-absorbed nitwits that it's hard for us to have much stake in what happens as demons work them and their kids over in a series of redundant, generic horror-movie set pieces that rip off [Insidious](#) by way of [Poltergeist](#).



The Darkness has its chilling images, particularly a silhouette of a demonic entity seen through a window from the outside of the Taylors' house, but there's little hint here of the ferocious visceral craftsmanship that director Greg McLean exhibited throughout [Wolf Creek](#) and even *Rogue* and [Wolf Creek 2](#). The filmmaker seems handcuffed by the strictures of über-producer Jason Blum, the horror genre's new William Castle, which usually require a PG-13 rating and an abundance of predictable fake scares accompanied by bludgeoning stomps and shrieks on the soundtrack. This enterprise is so listless that one can't even work up a proper head of self-righteous steam over the spooky Native American clichés that drive the plot.

This will rent as well as **CRIMINAL, HARDCORE HENRY, THE FINEST HOURS, STAND OFF,** and **THE LAST WITCH HUNTER.**



9/6 3 GENIUS DRAMA

\$2 MILL BO 152 SCREENS PG-13 104 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Colin Firth (KINGSMEN: THE SECRET SERVICE, MAGIC IN THE MOONLIGHT, THE KING'S SPEECH, MAMMA MIA!, MAIN STREET)

Jude Law (SPY, BLACK SEA, DOM HEMINGWAY, THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL, THE AVIATOR)

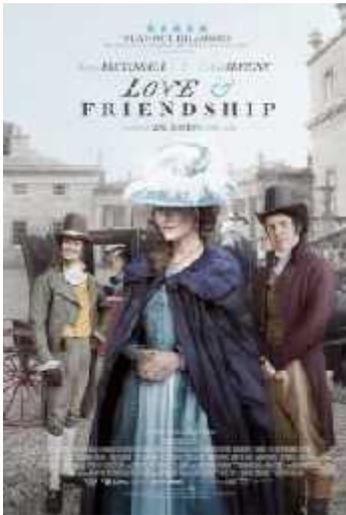
Michael Grandage's *Genius* is a deeply romantic film, albeit the kind one rarely sees on screen: a romance of the written word. Centering on the relationship between Thomas Wolfe (Jude Law), one of America's greatest (and woefully underrated) writers, and his famous literary editor, Maxwell Perkins (Colin Firth), the film recognizes the publication of Wolfe's masterpieces, *Look Homeward*, *Angel* and *Of Time and the River*, as having been impossible without the tumult of their relationship—or that of the Great Depression. *Genius* locates the prominent themes of Wolfe's novels—the never-ending search for one's spiritual father, the destruction of boundaries between our internal and external worlds, prose as the superlative medium for capturing the human experience—in the relationship between these two wholly different men connected by their love for the sublime power of the word.

Curiously, this quintessentially American story about two men who helped define our national literature is populated with a cast of largely British and Australian actors. Rather than compromising the film's verisimilitude, their foreignness captures Wolfe's outsider status in the era's New York-centric literary scene. While the author's Rabelaisian gregariousness is shown to be deeply individualistic, his North Carolina roots nevertheless stand out in sharp contrast with the mid-Atlantic accents and well-bred reserve of Perkins, the famous editor's irrepressibly bourgeois wife, Louise (Laura Linney), and author F. Scott Fitzgerald (Guy Pearce), depicted as a sad and broken man who never lost his gentlemanly manners and quiet decency. Aline Bernstein (Nicole Kidman), Wolfe's Jewish lover, further emphasizes his outsider status, as the film contrasts their highly theatrical public rows with the Perkins's private quarrels, which are quietly conducted away from prying eyes.



Genius makes a convincing argument for viewing Wolfe's work as a product of the excess and exuberance of the 1920s, his celebration of the gargantuan life force of the individual perfectly captured by the film in a scene where Wolfe has several men deliver the 5,000-page manuscript of his latest novel to Perkins's office in a seemingly endless series of boxes and crates. While both Ernest Hemingway (Dominic West) and Fitzgerald imply that such boundless individualism is no longer appropriate during the Great Depression, the film suggests that Wolfe's irrepressible accumulation of words was a kind of never-ending prayer of benediction to the vast, infinite pleasures and possibilities of the American experience. The Walt Whitman of prose, Wolfe saw himself and his nation as one endless body, coterminous and infinite, and his quixotic mission to encapsulate America in his novels was a testament to the fire and energy that made the country what it was and would be again after his untimely death in 1938, on the eve of the nation's resurgence.

This one will rent as well as **BY THE SEA, 45 YEARS, EYE IN THE SKY, LADY IN THE VAN** and **CONCUSSION**.



9/6 2 LOVE & FRIENDSHIP ROMANCE
\$9 MILL BO 1292 SCREENS PG 92 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Kate Beckinsale (CONTRABAND, EVERYBODY'S FINE, PEARL HARBOR, WHITEOUT, NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH, BROKEDOWN PALACE)

Chloe Sevigny (TV—BLOODLINE, BIG LOVE, AMERICAN HORROR STORY---FILM—THE WAIT, LOVELACE, ZODIAC, MELINDA MELINDA, THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO)

The film's protagonist, Lady Susan Vernon (Kate Beckinsale), wields etiquette and obligation like a master swordsman. Widowed and forced to rely on the kindness of everyone in her social circle to get by, she's perfected the exploitation of the dizzyingly intricate class rules of her time. Arriving on the doorstep of friends, distant relatives, and anyone else who will take her, Susan immediately ingratiates herself as an indefinite fixture in households and assures her new caretakers that any discussion of payment for this favor "would be offensive to us both," a line she repeatedly says so quickly that any objections are immediately overridden by bafflement.

Where other Austen heroines chafe against the limits of their age, Susan simply twists them to her own ends. She uses her charms and beauty to connive the sort of dull, rich, "appropriate" men that the likes of *Pride and Prejudice*'s Elizabeth Bennett seek to avoid altogether. She targets the spineless affability of her brother-in-law, Charles (Justin Vernon), so thoroughly that even as the chaos of Susan's presence mounts he finds ways to justify her behavior, as does her other brother-in-law, Reginald de Courcy (Xavier Samuel), whom she seduces and cajoles in one of her many simultaneously running chess games to secure a husband and, more importantly, his salary. Watching her talk to men feels less like flirtation than cross-examination, in which she systematically finds every inconsistency and loophole in speech to solidify her position in society.



If the men stumble and gawp at Susan's blatant power plays, women present tougher mental fronts to her schemes. Susan's sister-in-law, Catherine (Emma Greenwell), sees through her right away, but sits helplessly as Susan mooches off of her husband and woos her brother. Even Susan's daughter, Frederica (Morfydd Clark), struggles against her mother. In a traditional Austen story, Frederica would be the protagonist, a relatively plain, intelligent young woman openly resistant to the idea of the marriage of station that Susan proposes in the form of Sir James Martin (Tom Bennett), a show-stealing dolt who cluelessly leans into every conversation with gleeful expectation only to ruin it with his air-headed interjections and attempts to follow a train of thought. Frederica's horror at this match is logical, but for once this defiance is the antagonistic force of an Austen story instead of the motivation, forever driving Susan crazy as Frederica foils her mother's best-laid plans.

Susan doesn't fight everyone, though, and ironically the film's most acidic scenes may be the ones that display her camaraderie with friend Alicia Johnson (Chloë Sevigny). Their typical chats consist of mutual commiseration over the failure of gout to send Alicia's old, dour husband (Stephen Fry) to his final resting place and a shared prayer for the end to come soon. Stillman films their conversations with efficiently mounted and edited shots, a far cry from the pastoral beauty that categorizes most productions of Austen's work. But the blunt functionality of the direction stresses that *Love & Friendship* isn't an escape into gentility, but a depiction of social trench warfare in which inherently powerless women gain strength and placement through attrition. No Austen adaptation, even the most revisionist ones, has ever felt so vicious. And perhaps none has ever gotten the author so right either.

Renters who rented **EYE IN THE SKY, 45 YEARS, TUMBLEDOWN, BROOKLYN, GRANDMA** and **TRUMBO** will like this one.



9/6 1 MONEY MONSTER THRILLER
\$42 MILL BO R 98 MINUTES DVD/BLU RAY

George Clooney (UP IN THE AIR, THE DESCENDANTS, MICHAEL CLAYTON, THE PERFECT STORM, OUT OF SIGHT)

Julia Roberts (SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY, DUPLICITY, PRETTY WOMAN, THE MEXICAN, MICHAEL COLLINS, SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT)

Every weekday, Lee Gates (George Clooney) storms onto the set of his cable news finance show, the titular *Money Monster*, with the tacky bravado of a boxer ready for fight night. The show is a barely witting ode to hyperbole: Gates enters in a gold stovepipe hat with two gyrating fly girls on either side of him before dispensing his daily “Can’t Miss Stock Pick of the Millennium.” His director, Patty Fenn (Julia Roberts), struggles mightily to prep him for interviews and keep him on script, but Gates is a kid in a toy store, enamored of his power and the dopey morning-radio sound effects at his disposal. When intruder Kyle Budwell (Jack O’Connell) walks onto the studio of Gates’s live broadcast with a loaded gun and two bomb-strapped vests, the film girds us to thrill to the sight of the media being taken down a peg.

Money Monster sets its sights both higher and lower than the hacky punditry of a cable news blowhard. It’s at once a pressure-cooker hostage drama and a revenge fantasy targeted at the media’s willingness to buy into corporate obfuscation, but director Jodie Foster doesn’t succumb to didacticism until the film’s final moments. Until then, her film is wildly effective as a comedy of optics, observing how each of her characters reacts to the fact that they’ve become, for just a moment, part of the only news story that matters.



There aren’t really any heroes in *Money Monster*, not even Kyle, the working-class parcel driver from Queens who styles himself a class warrior when he invades the set of Gates’s show. Following a crash in the stock of a company called Ibis Clear Capital, the entirety of Kyle’s \$60,000 inheritance is part of \$800 million that vanishes into thin air, a result of what the company calls an algorithmic “glitch.” Kyle demands accountability from Gates, who trumpeted the stock on air, and Ibis’s CEO, Walt Camby (Dominic Cooper), who can’t be located on any of his fleet of private jets. Aware he’s headed to prison, Kyle tries to make a moral crusade of his moment in the limelight, but the criminal is diminished when the NYPD arrange for him to be publicly humiliated on live television by his pregnant girlfriend, Molly (Emily Meade). O’Connell, summoning determination with every flare of his nostrils, manages to muster some soul out of his quick decline from cult hero to lifelong dupe.

The optics are more nuanced, if equally far-fetched, in the cable show’s production booth, where Fenn and her staff have to engage in proper journalism in order to keep her host alive and her captor appeased. Fenn unearths a willing mole, Diane Lester (Caitriona Balfe), among Ibis’s highest ranks, just as she directs one producer toward quants and hackers in far-flung capitalist meccas. She sends another lackey, who’s just been testing an erectile dysfunction salve, scurrying across the city to dig for documents. All the while, Fenn calmly recites talking points in the ear of Gates, who has to overcome his outrage at being emasculated on his own television show in order to perform an honest public service.

This one will rent as well as **THE BIG SHORT, EYE IN THE SKY, THE MARTIAN, JOY, CONCUSSION** and **BLACK MASS**.



9/6 1 NOW YOU SEE ME 2 THRILLER
\$63 MILL BO 2354 SCREENS PG-13 129 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Jesse Eisenberg (AMERICAN ULTRA, THE END OF THE TOUR, THE SOCIAL NETWORK, TO ROME WITH LOVE, THE DOUBLE)

Mark Ruffalo (SPOTLIGHT, THE AVENGERS, FOXCATCHER, IRON MAN 3)

Jon M. Chu's *Now You See Me 2*, more so than its predecessor, both recognizes and condescends to our desire to pinpoint the mysteries of the Four Horsemen's elaborate magic tricks. If you think you know how J.

Daniel Atlas (Jesse Eisenberg) is able to defy the laws of physics and make the rain that falls throughout London actually rise toward the heavens, in the lead-up to the group's final trick on the River Thames, you're probably wrong. In every case, even the seemingly simplistic variation of three-card monte that Jack Wilder (Dave Franco) performs at a nearby city square, the audience's resistance is futile. Until the point where one of the Horsemen details the intricacies of a trick, you're implicitly tasked with accepting yourself as just another slack-jawed member of a sensation-happy mob.

If it weren't so totally and compulsively obsessed with laying the groundwork for the Four Horsemen's ruses, *Now You See Me 2* could be understood as a conscious commentary on the Hollywood blockbuster model and how it banks on your subservience. One plot contortion follows the next as the Horsemen, having returned from their self-imposed exile, seek to pull the wool over the eyes of Walter Mabry (Daniel Radcliffe), a tech genius who faked his death and enlists the group to steal for him the very computer chip he invented which grants its owner the ability to hack into every computer system on the planet. Naturally, the implications of such power are less of a concern to the film than, among other things, rationalizing Lizzy Caplan replacing Isla Fisher as the Horsemen's Manic Pixie Dream Girl and both sentimentalizing the death of Dylan Rhodes's (Mark Ruffalo) father and further complicating Thaddeus Bradley's (Morgan Freeman) relationship to the group.



Now You See Me 2 splits its time almost evenly between London and Macau, the hustle and bustle of which is rendered with a backlot-seeming anonymity that's of a piece with Chu's unexpectedly pop-less direction; the elaborate pilfering of the computer chip hinges on the Horsemen foisting between them a playing card whose sad CGI-ness distracts from the actors' otherwise slick body movin'. One expects a sequel to up the ante on audiences, but the sheer amount of people and incident indifferently presented throughout this film, from Merritt McKinney's (Woody Harrelson) evil twin to Caplan's Lula throwing herself at Jack, suggests only an obligation to quota-filling. It also accidentally gives credence to Thaddeus's homily about the emptiness of experiencing a magic trick whose required setup has been so transparently laid bare.

This will rent as well as **ALLEGIANT, BATMAN V SUPERMAN, ZOOTOPIA, JOY, THE BIG SHORT,** and **SPOTLIGHT.**



9/13 1 CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

ACTION \$404 MILL BO 4387 SCREENS PG-13
107 MINUTES DVD/COMBO

Chris Evans (THE AVENGERS, PLAYING IT COOL, ANT MAN, CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER)
Robert Downey, Jr. (IRON MAN, THE JUDGE, THE AVENGERS, SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS, TROPIC THUNDER)

The last *Captain America* film, [Winter Soldier](#), was simultaneously the most promising and frustrating entry in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. It opened up rarely explored avenues of self-examination in superhero movies by calling into question the value of S.H.I.E.L.D. operating under a vague notion of “the greater good,” only to throw out any actual criticism by revealing the agency’s increasingly fascistic operations to be the result of Marvel’s approximation of Nazis. *Captain America: Civil War* operates similarly, confronting the immense collateral damage left by the Avengers across various missions, only to find ways to duck answering its own ethical questions.

Civil War actually has a scene in which the Avengers are made to watch footage taken by normal, everyday civilians of their homes being turned into ash and rubble as a result of the Avengers’ battles in various cities. One of these skirmishes, from earlier in the film, takes place in Lagos, with Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen) stopping a suicide bomber from killing Steve Rogers, a.k.a. Captain America (Chris Evans), by containing the blast, only to lose control and release the explosion among civilians. The sequence is, in the moment, exciting and filled with intricate choreography, but news reports of the event are sobering in their clear documentation of the damage caused.



Marvel movies stress the efforts that heroes make to minimize casualties, but for once the characters must face the possibility that they do as much harm as good. The film doesn’t even trot out the usual strawman of an impotently jealous liberal politician to voice these concerns, instead placing them in the reasonable words of United Nations delegates and international leaders who understand that the Avengers wish to help, but simply require more oversight.

This solid foundation gives way, however, when *Civil War* introduces, then immediately discredits, the possibility that Steve’s best friend, the brainwashed Winter Soldier Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan), is responsible for an attack and assassination. As in [Winter Soldier](#), the film quickly nullifies its conceit, pinning blame on the mysterious Helmut Zemo (Daniel Brühl). In the process, this revelation dismisses the darker implications of the Captain’s obdurate refusal to answer to others by justifying his destructive efforts to keep his friend from being captured. This quickly turns the narrative into a straightforward fight of positions between proud Captain America and his allies on one side and a guilt-ridden Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) on the other. The question of who’s right falls to the wayside in favor of a reductive selection of sides based solely on hero preference.

The fun of the action scenes exacerbates the failure of the narrative to adequately contend with its own themes.

Nonetheless, the undeniable fun of the action scenes only exacerbates the failure of the narrative to adequately contend with its own themes. Though it lacks the stultifying somberness that weighs down [Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice](#), *Civil War* in way ways shares ties with Zach Snyder’s film a willingness to decry collateral damage while causing even more; it also uses personal loss to motivate characters who apparently cannot care about destruction unless it happens to someone they know. Whether it’s Steve’s overriding loyalty to Bucky or the seen and unseen deaths that spur Black Panther and

Spider-Man to don their masks, intimate tragedies compel the heroes in ways that the broader issues of their global impact never do.

Oh yeah, this will be huge. It will rent as well as **THE AVENGERS**, **BATMAN V SUPERMAN**, **ZOOTOPIA**, **STAR WARS VII**, **HOW TO BE SINGLE** and **THE REVENANT**.



9/13 2 POP STAR: NEVER STOP NEVER STOPPING COMEDY \$11 MILL BO 795 SCREENS R
87 MINUTES DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Andy Samberg (TV---SNL, BROOKLYN 9—FILM—NEIGHBORS, THE TO DO LIST, GROWN UPS 2)

The Lonely Island comedy group—consisting of Andy Samberg, Jorma Taccone, and Akiva Schaffer—has devoted much of their career to spoofing pop-music and music-video clichés through viral videos and full-length albums, so it was inevitable that they would eventually broaden their satirical reach into a feature-length package. And with *Popstar: Never Stop Never*

Stopping, the result feels bracingly limitless in its comic invention—a music-industry satire that finds humor in music-video parodies, throwaway verbal jokes, and visual gags scattered across the entirety of the frame. Half the fun of *Popstar* lies in its escalating “can you top this” sense of comic brio.

But *Popstar*'s template isn't so much the joke-book style pioneered by *Airplane!* as it is the *This Is Spinal Tap* mockumentary model, which digs deep into the lives of its subjects while milking their behavior for laughs. The subject here is Conner4Real (Samberg), a white rapper who was once the star attraction of the Style Boyz, a rap trio he formed with Owen (Taccone) and Lawrence (Schaffer), before they broke up and he struck out on his own. Though his first solo album was a huge hit, Conner4Real's follow-up is tanking on the charts—not exactly because the music is terrible (even if it's truly and hilariously so), but because of failed publicity stunts that have led the public to turn on him. He makes a deal with an appliance company to have his new album play out of refrigerators, toasters, blenders, and such—a marketing ploy that causes a near-nationwide blackout. His attempt to counteract bad press with a public proposal to his girlfriend, Ashley (Imogen Poots), goes disastrously awry thanks to a bunch of unruly wolves, one of which attacks the singer Seal (one of countless star cameos in the film).



The film's lampooning of a business built on pure surface extends to its riotous original songs.

A fun movie that will rent as well as **PITCH PERFECT 2**, **BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING 2**, **THE BOSS**, and **ROCK THE KASBAH**.



**9/13 1 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2:
OUT OF THE SHADOWS FAMILY**
\$79 MILL BO 2781 SCREENS PG-13 112 MINUTES

VOICES OF: Will Arnett, Tyler Perry.

Dave Green's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows* is based on the multimedia juggernaut about a group of pizza-gulping reptiles who were raised by a rodent sensei to protect New York City, but what the film really recaptures is the lunatic excess of American blockbusters before they were tamed by Disney to fit a mold of earnest interchangeability. Like [Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles](#) before it, the film is loud, sleazy, and amoral at best, to the point that it's fair to wonder, as other critics have, who this series is for.

Out of the Shadows's intended audience appears to be those hovering right on the boundary separating Gen X from Millennial, who remember the original *TMNT* comics, television cartoon, and run of films with mild amusement, if not exactly nostalgia. Viewers of this age are also old enough to remember a wilder and woolier kind of blockbuster, such as the early films of Michael Bay (a producer on the new *TMNT* film series), and Joel Schumacher's neon-camp nightmare *Batman & Robin*, which sent the superhero picture scurrying into realms of fan-pandering caution that it's yet to vacate.

Which isn't to say that *Out of the Shadows* is good, but its badness occasionally exudes a kind of lurid integrity. Green, whose direction suggests he's been instructed by Bay to approximate a Diet Coke-version of the latter's sometimes amazing aesthetic, mounts canted angles that sporadically contain a whiff of real geometric awe, framing the Turtles as they tumble through otherworldly cityscapes. A Bay-esque highway battle that sets the film's pretense of a narrative in motion has admirably bizarre grace notes, including the weaponized accessories on the Turtles' garbage truck-cum-hero vehicle, which include a pair of robotic hands that wield nunchucks, out of homage to the weapon favored by Michelangelo (Noel Fisher), the vulnerable jokester Turtle who serves as the mutant quartet's "heart."

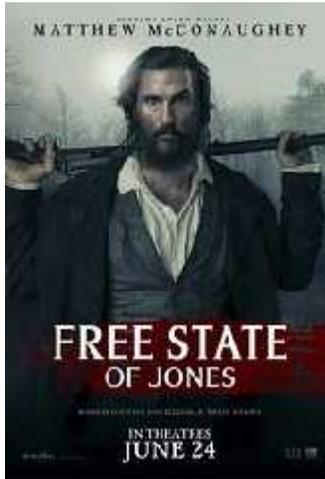


Out of the Shadows approximates the coked-up frenzy of a particularly chaotic Saturday-morning cartoon.

Later, a prolonged skydiving/river-rafting sequence, which makes room for a working tank manned by a talking warthog and rhino, is executed with the same sense of escalating invention that informed the first *TMNT's* snowy mountain-chase climax. At its best, *Out of the Shadows* approximates the coked-up frenzy of a particularly chaotic Saturday-morning cartoon, crossing it with the hardness of something like Simon West's *Con Air*.

Most strikingly for a film that's also obviously courting children, *Out of the Shadows* looks seamy, offering a New York City out of a 1980s-era vigilante movie. The sets are loud, deliberately fake, and abounding in neon, and there are distractingly crass close-ups of actress Megan Fox, who's afforded little human agency even by the standards of a Fox/Bay collaboration. One of the craziest villains of the *TMNT* universe, a talking, disembodied alien brain called Krang (voiced by Brad Garrett), has been brought on to serve co-villain duties with the reliably evil Shredder (Brian Tee), and its surpassingly vile presence kicks the film's already dirty-minded id into overdrive.

This will rent as well as **MINIONS, ZOOTOPIA, KUNG FU PANDA 3, GOOSEBUMPS, HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 2** and **ANT-MAN**.



9/20 1 FREE STATE OF JONES ACTION
\$21 MILL BO 2815 SCREENS R 139 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Matthew McConaughey (INTERSTELLAR, MAGIC MIKE, MUD, WE ARE MARSHALL, TROPIC THUNDER)

Its first scenes, of a chaotic battle between Union and Confederate soldiers, immediately dispel the thick mist of manufactured romance that surrounds so many depictions of the Civil War. Within seconds of the film's start, cannon fire turns men into chunks of meat as soldiers march over the bodies of their fallen comrades. And as he drags an injured rebel to safety, Confederate army deserter Newton Knight (Matthew McConaughey) shuffles past pigs feasting on a dead man's intestines.

It's a bracing opening, albeit one swiftly muted by the quick recalibration from a panorama of senseless carnage to Knight's disgusted perspective as he speaks aloud the cynicism that the early images convey so clearly without words. We meet the man as a jaded, streetwise figure who counters his peers' talk of honor with the more caustic (and more accurate) claim that they're fighting to protect rich men's cotton, not their own dignity. After watching his son get slaughtered during the Siege of Corinth, Knight becomes sick of the war and goes AWOL, returning home and marshalling locals into fighting back against usurious Confederate tax collectors who strip poor farmers bare for the war effort while leaving plantations unmolested.

Secreted away to the swamp outside his county by friends, Knight finds himself shackled up with runaway slaves, with whom he forms an instant bond and even helps to kill a band of slavers. Knight is depicted with the unprejudiced respect and loyalty of a present-day progressive, who sees the races as equal victims of the class war. As with all such proclamations, that thought is broadly true, but fails to account for the role that race plays in that conflict, which is an understandable shortcoming of an impoverished 1800s farmer, though less forgivable when ardently believed by the 21st-century filmmaker chronicling him. The racism that can be seen within Knight's own camp is treated like a distraction from his utopianism instead of proof of his shortsightedness.



Battle scenes of Knight's insurgency laying waste to bigger and better armed foes recall similar skirmishes in *The Patriot*; they provide an easy catharsis in their brutality, but that satisfaction leaves a sour aftertaste. Worse are the stabs at elegance: A fade-out gently intimates Rachel (Gugu Mbatha-Raw), a slave and Knight's love interest, being raped by her master, while a long shot of Knight crying at the suspended feet of a black comrade's mutilated and hanged corpse is almost lovingly composed. Such images capture only the somber white dejection at recognizing a broken system, and they make props of people of color to better call attention to Knight's moral fiber.

This will rent as well as **HARDCORE HENRY, LONDON HAS FALLEN, JARHEAD 3, 10 CLOVERFIELD LANE, EYE IN THE SKY** and **13 HOURS**.



9/20 1 NEIGHBORS 2 COMEDY \$56 MILL BO
2893 SCREENS R 92 MINUTES DVD/COMBO
28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Seth Rogen (THE NIGHT BEFORE, THIS IS THE END, THE GUILT TRIP, 50/50, OBSERVE AND REPORT)
Zac Efron (DIRTY GRANDPA, NEIGHBORS, PARKLAND, 17 AGAIN, HAIRSPRAY)

As enlightened sequels go, this isn't exactly [Magic Mike XXL](#), but the film does a serviceable job depicting the difficulties increasingly square adults encounter in their efforts to convey some wokeness. Mac and Kelly are hip to the tenor of their cultural moment, but their house is in escrow, and any party next door represents a threat to their upwardly mobile trajectory. At the same time, a uniquely Gen-X defeatism (symbolized by Mac's Pearl Jam T-shirt) nags at them: They're no longer good at being cool and, as with a bong-laden household and an infant that totes around a pink vibrator, they fear they're also bad parents. The familiar prank war that ensues between Mac and Kelly and the ladies of Kappa Nu only heightens their raging insecurity.

Despite its au courant social commentary, the *Neighbors* franchise remains a safe haven for exposed skin and raunchy gross-out comedy. Along with the anticipated, mostly satisfying revivals of gags involving airbags and inept spy games, there are strong bits involving weaponized sexuality and outrageous crotch-centric humor. *Neighbors 2* has the same genial, ultimately villain-free tone of the original, but the filmmakers fail to give the action at Kappa Nu a confident comedic pitch. Moretz's Shelby is quick to deploy accusations



of sexism to gain an argumentative upper hand, but the film dances around the idea that her actions are more emblematic of millennial selfishness than progressive politics. Perhaps even worse, the film marks a rare squandering of Byrne's comedic firepower, flubbing repeated opportunities to complicate the relationship of an expectant mother to the entitled girls next door.

The most potent figure in this generational feud turns out to be the one major character who's caught between them. While his best buds have attained respectable white- and blue-collar jobs, Efron's Teddy is stuck wearing a fuzzy sweater at Abercrombie & Fitch after the store backs away from its use of shirtless models. Too old to be a mere Adonis and too dim and naïve to follow a career path, Teddy sinks into poignant desperation: All he wants is to be "of value" to someone, anyone. Shorn of the aimless aggression that made his performance in the original [Neighbors](#) such a surprise, Efron transforms Teddy into a beacon of lovable empathy, smoothing out a few of the rough patches attendant in the sequel's transition from bro-centric raunch to an open-minded take on gender equality. *Neighbors 2* doesn't achieve much parity in its comedy, but the film is consistently elevated whenever Teddy is in the room, playing the social justice warrior or just learning how to hard-boil eggs.

This will rent as well as **GET HARD, THE BOSS, DEADPOOL, JOY, DIRTY GRANDPA, WHISKEY FOXTROT TANGO, HOW TO BE SINGLE** and **DADDY'S HOME**.



9/27 1 WARCRAFT SCI FI FANTASY
\$41 MILL BO 2876 SCREENS **PG-13** 123 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Ben Foster (THE FINEST HOURS, THE PROGRAM, LONE SURVIVOR, KILL YOUR DARLINGS)
Travis Fimmel (TV—VIKINGS, OUTLAW COUNTRY, THE BEAST)

Warcraft's opening stretch assumes fan-level knowledge of the material, which for the uninitiated means that names and concepts are bandied around and key locations visited with such speed that keeping up is impossible. Following a good half-hour of head-scratching confusion, two main plot threads finally come into focus, a process aided considerably by the ultimate superficiality of their construction. An orc army presided over by evil sorcerer Gul'dan (Daniel Wu) is making incursions into the world of humans to lay the groundwork for a future orc colonization, with a portal powered by human life force that enables passage between realms, a dangerous reliance on black magic that noble orc chieftain Durotan (Toby Kebbell) frowns upon. A young human mage named Khadgar (Ben Schnetzer) duly gets wind of this plan and informs both knight Anduin Lothar (Travis Fimmel) and King Llane Wrynn (Dominic Cooper), who exchange troubled looks before seeking out the assistance of magician Medivh (Ben Foster), a mysterious, ambivalent figure tasked with protecting the kingdom.



Attempted alliances, infighting and betrayal on both sides, and numerous discussions about honor and strategy pave the way to the inevitable big battle between humans and orcs, with extra frisson meant to be imparted by the nascent romance between Lothar and Garona (Paula Patton), a feisty orc-human crossbreed obviously predestined to mediate between the sides. Yet the cursory attention given to these tediously simplistic finale-delaying subplots prevents any of them from feeling consequential, a problem compounded by the fact most of them will only find payoff in the sequel anyway, should there be one. It also doesn't help that the dialogue is laughably functional, consisting of various modern-sounding platitudes irregularly couched in ye olde worlde inflections, whereby character shading or nuance are superfluous. The actors flail at being asked to deliver such utilitarian utterances, with declamatory woodenness across a range of accents, aside from Foster's half-hearted attempts to chew the scenery.

All in such good fun though. Not be taken seriously will have this rent as well as **ALLEGIANT, 10 CLOVERFIELD LANE, THE 5TH WAVE, 13 HOURS, JURASSIC WORLD, THE REVENANT** and **CRIMSON PEAK**.