

9/5 3 LOWRIDERS DRAMA
\$7 MILL BO 789 SCREENS PG-13 99 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Gabriel Chavvaria (TV—AQUARIUS, GANG RELATED, SOUTHLAND, PRIME SUSPECT)

More grounded in reality, **Lowriders** is nonetheless still stuffed with a heightened sense of drama, blended this time with an earnest desire to educate outsiders and celebrate car culture. The original script by Elgin James and Cheo Hodari Coker lays out the archetypes clearly, mostly following Danny Alvarez (Gabriel Chavarria), an artistic-minded young man who sprays graffiti at night and works reluctantly in his father's garage during the day.

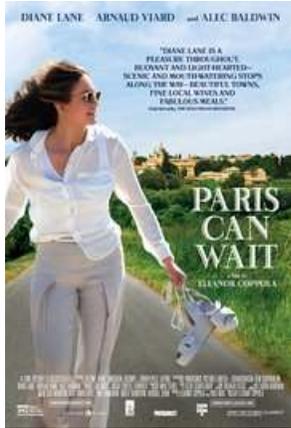
Danny dreams of making a living as an artist and is proud to make the city his canvas, as it were. Meanwhile, he lives with his father Miguel (Demian Bichir), his stepmother Gloria (Eva Longoria) and his younger sister Isabel (Montse Hernandez) in a modest home near Elysian Park in Los Angeles, where he can freely grumble about his father's shortcomings.

One night, Danny's older brother Francisco (Theo Rossi) arrives out of the shadows. Newly freed after eight years in prison, he instantly begins waging a quiet battle for Danny's soul, seeking to wrestle him away from their father.

Danny is ready for independence, and that same night meets Lorelai (Melissa Benoist), a Caucasian photographer. She, too, is ready-made to take Danny away from his roots and into an exciting new world.

This will do as well as **THE PROMISE, TABLE 19, BEFORE I FALL, GOLD, THE FOUNDER** and **SPACE BETWEEN US.**





9/5 **2** PARIS CAN WAIT COMEDY
\$6 MILL BO PG 92 MINUTES

Alec Baldwin (BEETLEJUICE, THE BOSS BABY, CONCUSSION, IT'S COMPLICATED, THE AVIATOR)
Diane Lane (TRUMBO, INSIDE OUT, KILL SHOT, MURDER AT 1600, SECRETARIAT)

Toward the end of *Paris Can Wait*, Jacques (Arnaud Viard) makes a comment to Anne (Diane Lane), admiring the photographs on her digital camera, praising her restraint, and her willingness to let people imagine what's outside the tight frame of the pictures she snaps. The scene represents a pretty transparently self-congratulatory gesture: Anne, the wife of harried film producer Michael (Alec Baldwin), is modeled on Coppola herself, and *Paris Can Wait*, by the director's own admission, is an autobiographical film.

This forthrightness is sometimes an asset in Coppola's film, as it allows for the dynamic of the central relationship—Anne's flirtation with Jacques, her husband's bubbly French business associate—to be conducted on the frank, morally unburdened terms of a self-defining married woman. But often the director over-explains and belabors her best ideas, betraying Jacques's meta suggestion of a commitment to ambiguity and supplanting the breezy, in-the-moment chemistry between the two principals with dutiful plot points.

Sometimes, a certain obliviousness just seems to be inherent in *Paris Can Wait*. This is, after all, a film about two successful, wealthy people eating prohibitively expensive cuisine and drinking fine wines all through the French countryside. It's also a film that demonstrates a troubling tendency to characterize people of the service class as nuisances: Anne let's out a sigh of frustration when a bellhop fails to answer a call to a hotel's front desk, leaving her with the responsibility of carrying luggage downstairs herself, and an antagonistic security guard at a textiles museum sternly confiscates Anne's camera only to return it remorsefully when he's smooth-talked by Jacques.



Anne and Jacques are often the only people in the spaces they inhabit, from restaurants to a Roman aqueduct. It's almost uncanny how isolated they are from the rest of the world, but that isolation makes sense in that *Paris Can Wait* is at its best when the film carries itself as a more distinctly feminine take on Richard Linklater's *Before* trilogy, or even Abbas Kiarostami's *Certified Copy*: as a frequently real-time story that explores the frictions between two people captivated by each other. Lane is given a tough role here, as Anne tows the line between resistance to and indulgence of Jacques's flirtations. And while Lane's articulation of Anne's transitioning feelings isn't seamless, she projects the right kind of caustic humor to turn a line like "Guilt is bad for your digestion" into an empowering act of destabilization.

This will rent as well as **TABLE 19, A DOGS PURPOSE, KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES, and UNFORGETTABLE.**



9/5 **2** **ROUGH NIGHT** COMEDY
\$23 MILL BO 2125 SCREENS R 101 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Scarlett Johansson (GHOST IN THE SHELL, AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON, LUCY, HITCHCOCK, LOST IN TRANSLATION)

They haven't let loose in a decade, but when they do, it results in someone dying. Scarlett Johansson proves a great comedic straight woman as the bride-to-be. The always-funny Jillian Bell ([22 Jump Street](#), [The Night Before](#)) gets the co-lead role she deserves as the self-anointed BFF. Kate McKinnon does her usual mix of quick quips and funny faces at half the speed of SNL. (She also sports a good Ozzie accent 90% of the time, though goofs on the other 10%.) With all that [Broad City](#) experience, Aniello knows exactly when to snap Ilana Glazer out and pull her back in like a comically sharpened Swiss Army Knife. Zoë Kravitz feels watered down in comparison, but her character's shamelessly high maintenance ways still earn some chuckles.

It's a shame the actual storytelling couldn't have been better. The film spends a lot of time pulling the 'How are they going to get out of this?' card only to tear it up when the script throws out a number of convenient coincidences to solve their problems. At a certain point, the film stops pushing the plot forward and instead repeatedly throws it like a boomerang. At that stage, nothing really progresses and there aren't enough jokes to pick up the slack. If you feel the film dragging in the mid-section, this is why.

But this only holds a good comedy back from being a great one. With lines that don't feel like half-assed improv and R-rated humour that isn't just crass for crassness's sake, [Rough Night](#) is the tequila shot you won't painfully regret in the morning.

This will rent as well as **OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY**, **WHY HIM**, **THE GIFTED**, **UNFORGETTABLE**, and **BAD MOMS**.





9/12 3 BEATRIZ AT DINNER DRAMA
\$7 MILL BO 492 SCREENS R 82 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

John Lithgow (LOVE IS STRANGE, THE CAMPAIGN, NEW YEAR'S EVE, RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, LEAP YEAR)

Salma Hayek (GROWN UPS, EVERLY, SPY KIDS 3, WELCOME TO HOLLYWOOD, HERE COMES THE BOOM)

The obvious comparisons to our current national disgrace don't do the film any favors. Though the motivating tension of this small ensemble chamber piece lies between Beatriz (Salma Hayek), an alternative healer and massage therapist born in Mexico, and Doug Strutt (John Lithgow), a businessman who's blithely made his fortune bulldozing indigenous communities into luxury resorts and golf courses, *Beatriz at Dinner* does succeed at depicting more nuanced social and economic ties. Beatriz only finds herself in the company of Strutt and a handful of high achievers after she drives from Los Angeles to a gated community in Newport Beach for a massage appointment with a longtime client, Cathy (Connie Britton). Cathy adores Beatriz, who helped her college-age daughter recover from a cancer scare years ago, and when Beatriz's car breaks down after their massage, Cathy presses her husband, Grant (David Warshofsky), to allow her to stay for a dinner party celebrating the impending close of a mammoth real estate development deal.

From the outset, there's something grave about Beatriz. She's mourning the recent murder of one of her city-dwelling goats, but Hayek's performance also suggests a more persistent unease about the path of the world. When Cathy's other guests arrive, this discontent bubbles to the surface; Beatriz is aware that she's an outlier, and her game attempts to ingratiate herself with the others are futile. Jay Duplass and Chloë Sevigny play strivers who perceive Beatriz's profession as an engagement with wellness trends; Strutt asks her if she's a legal immigrant, as his wife (Amy Landecker) and everyone else shudders. As a skewering of the frivolity and casual cruelty of the filthy rich, the film is a failure, but perhaps that's because the social class it depicts is beyond parody. Much of what's meant to be subtle about the film—how Beatriz is set apart from other characters, and how conversations are cut to reveal how she's outnumbered—is just sad and inevitable.



This should do as well as **THE PROMISE, TABLE 19, BEFORE I FALL, MISS SLOANE, and LOVING.**



9/12 1 CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS FAMILY
\$73 MILL BO 2698 SCREENS PG 89 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

VOICED BY Kevin Hart, Ed Helms

Joyously juvenile and unapologetically scatological, director David Soren's *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie* captures the spirit of being an eight-year-old boy about as well as any film ever made. Packed with mirthful pranksterism, a vigorous anti-authoritarian streak, and literal potty humor (the big finale involves an enormous toilet), this animated adaptation of Dav Pilkey's popular children's book series is true to the crudeness of its source material, smoothing out some of the rough edges in the author's sketchy character designs and discursive storytelling style while preserving the books' relentless unseriousness and anarchic vitality.

Mixing together the plots of several of Pilkey's books, the film centers on two hyperactive elementary schoolers, George (Kevin Hart) and Harold (Thomas Middleditch), who write and draw their own comic books. In an effort to avoid punishment for one of their pranks, they hypnotize their cruelly autocratic principal Mr. Krupp (Ed Helms) into thinking that he's Captain Underpants, the superhero protagonist of their comics. Clad only in tighty whities and a cape, Captain Underpants bounds around the city with enthusiasm and limitless confidence despite his total lack of super powers. He is, though, subject to arbitrary, *Gremlins*-style rules, as the sound of a finger snap turns him into Captain Underpants and getting wet reverts him to his normal state. One scene in which George and Harold torment Krupp by switching him back and forth in rapid succession is an energetic animation highlight of the film.



Merely stating the full name of Captain Underpants's mad-scientist antagonist, Professor Pee-Pee Diarrheastein Poopypants, Esq. (Nick Kroll), highlights the film's gleefully puerile sense of humor, but it's executed with such wit, verve, and even inventiveness that it manages to give childish vulgarity a good name. From the Strangelovian accent that Kroll brings to his demented role to the husky-voiced intonation of Kristen Schaal's lovelorn lunch lady, the voice cast's comic brio is of a piece with the refreshing playfulness of Soren's direction. A variety of animation styles is employed throughout, including sock puppetry, line drawings, and Flip-O-Rama (a hallmark of Pilkey's books, in which a simple animation effect is created by flipping quickly between two similar drawings). Based on Pilkey's original drawings, the character designs are slightly generic, but Soren renders their simple facial expressions with a litheness that amplifies the comedy.

While heavy on jokes about burping, robots, and whoopee cushions, Nicholas Stoller's screenplay also manages moments of satirical insight targeting the creativity-deadening effects of America's under-funded and overly restrictive public schools. Kids march in sullen lockstep, teachers drone on in a dull monotone, and any sense of fun is treated as an affront to adults' authority. Within this stultifying context, George and Harold emerge as defiant rebels simply by maintaining a sense of humor. They aren't terribly complex or even particularly well-defined characters, but their friendship is depicted with an admirable sense of balance and an idealistic lack of conflict.

This will rent as well as **STORKS, SING, MOANA, SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE, and TROLLS.**



9/12 2 IT COMES AT NIGHT HORROR
\$16 MILL BO 1738 SCREENS R 91 MINUTES DVD/BLU
RAY

Joel Edgerton (LOVINIG, MIDNIGHT SPECIAL, JANE GOT A GUN, EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS, ZERO DARK THIRTY)

Like [The Witch](#), *It Comes at Night* is an object lesson in how to stylize asceticism. Writer-director Trey Edward Shults's second film is a survivalist parable, and though it aggressively traffics in the iconography of pop horror and sci-fi, it subverts the world-building impulses of those genres. *It Comes at*

Night is set in a cabin in the woods with a menacing red door, and its post-apocalyptic near-future is imperiled by some kind of bacterial plague, but all of the film's suspense derives from how little the audience knows about the circumstances its characters are trying to survive. *Something* is going to come knocking on the heavily secured red door, but not knowing what form the titular "it" will take is terrifying and, at least for a little while, liberating.

What's even more exciting is how Shults leads us to that door. He and DP Drew Daniels make perfect use of widescreen: The cabin's narrow hallway feels squat and cramped, but the frame's extra width allows us to scan the family photos on the walls on a search for clues about the home in which we're trapped. There are none, so maybe those distractions just help to relieve the uncanny tension of the camera's movement, which is aloft and gliding, headed slowly but surely to whatever is banging the hell out of the door. Shults and Daniels use this trick repeatedly, inside and in exterior scenes, in a motif that essentially flips the script on a horror film with a similar title. In [It Follows](#), death and (sexually transmitted) disease can take the shape of any human being, and it comes for us unrelentingly; the finest shots in Shults's film suggest that we're inexorably drawn toward this very thing.



This will rent as well as **THE LOST CITY OF Z, THE BELKO EXPERIMENT, A CURE FOR WELLNESS, RESIDENT EVIL: THE FINAL CHAPTER, and UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS.**



9/12 1 THE MUMMY SCI/FI/ADVENTURE
\$79 MILL BO 3245 SCREENS **PG-13** 110 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Tom Cruise (TOP GUN, RISKY BUSINESS, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, THE COLOR OF MONEY, RAIN MAN)
Russell Crowe (MYSTERY ALASKA, THE NICE GUYS, MAN OF STEEL, GLADIATOR, A BEAUTIFUL MIND, THE INSIDER)

In a snapshot of our present moment, director Alex Kurtzman's *The Mummy* begins in earnest when Nick Morton (Tom Cruise), a recon soldier who moonlights as a treasure hunter, tracks an artifact to an insurgent-occupied village in Mesopotamia (a.k.a. modern-day Iraq) and ultimately calls in a drone strike that reveals a forgotten Egyptian tomb. The film swiftly moves on to Nick's discovery of a sarcophagus containing the demonic princess Ahmanet (Sofia Boutella), who awakens and seeks to sacrifice her inadvertent savior to make corporeal the Egyptian god of death, Set, but the depiction of military intervention in the aid of tomb-raiding raises uncomfortable questions that the film never remotely answers.

After this chaotic opening, the film's action settles into a measured pace redolent of Universal's classic monster films from the 1930s and '40s. There's a surprising sophistication to the dread that patiently builds as Nick, along with buddy Chris (Jake Johnson) and Egyptologist Jenny Halsey (Annabelle Wallis), uncover the sarcophagus held down in a lake of mercury believed by Egyptians to ward off evil spirits; the lake is surrounded by statues of Anubis that stand facing toward the sarcophagus, not away from it, sending a message that they're watching it. Plagues slowly amass around the stone coffin, with bugs crawling en masse from rocks and crows gathering in waves that cover the skies in pointillist walls. And when the mummy ends up in England in search of a curved dagger and the accompanying red stone needed to conjure Set, what ensues is a series of eerie scenes that embrace imagery one associates with a European brand of horror, from plague-ridden rats that swarm around Nick and foggy streets that look primed for the Ripper.



This successful throwback, however, succumbs to a flurry of constant action that not only counteracts the tone of the first act, but clashes with Cruise's naturally attention-hogging star power. The actor plays Nick on autopilot, never finding any chemistry with Wallis throughout their characters' flirtations, and despite Nick's plot-justified resilience to damage as Ahmanet's cursed but protected sacrifice, he just comes off as another in a long line of indestructible Cruise characters. Far more engaging is Russell Crowe, who, in Universal's attempt to use this film to reboot all of its classic movie monsters, plays Dr. Jekyll, here the ringleader of a clandestine organization devoted to fighting evil. Crowe, too, plays to his stock type, but he gives Jekyll a collected, wizened tone that nonetheless bristles with the character's deep reservoirs of rage. Crowe doesn't shy away from playing to the silliness of this monster mash, and his ability to balance a lighter, more fantastical element with the darker, more contemporary tone of the rest of the film is striking.

This will rent as well as **KONG, JOHN WICK 2, XXX:RETURN OF XANDER CAGE, and GHOST IN THE SHELL.**



9/19 2 THE BIG SICK COMEDY
\$18 MILL BO 698 SCREENS R 120 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

**Kumail Nanjiani (TV—SILICON VALLEY, BOB’S BURGERS—
FILM—CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE)**
**Ray Romano (TV—EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND,
PARENTHOOD, VINYL, MEN OF A CERTAIN AGE)**

Michael Showalter’s *The Big Sick* puts a thoughtful spin on the rom-com—though maybe it’s more accurate to call the film a rom-com interrupted. It certainly starts off striking familiar chords, focused on the adorable but forbidden courtship between Kumail (Kumail Nanjiani), a nerdy, aspiring comedian, and Emily (Zoe Kazan), a bubbly psychology student. Kumail comes from a stern Pakistani family that wants him to marry a Pakistani girl of their choosing, leading him to hide Emily and his family from each other. By the film’s 30-minute mark, though, Emily has not only broken up with Kumail over the frustrations of their situation, but she also falls into a coma because of a mystery illness. And as Emily’s parents, Beth (Holly Hunter) and Terry (Ray Romano), arrive at the hospital to find Kumail refusing to leave her side, the film winds into thornier and decidedly dramatic terrain.

Nanjiani and Emily V. Gordon’s script, based on the couple’s actual romance, is a comedy through and through, but much of it is as sad as you’d expect a story of forbidden romance centered on a comatose twentysomething to be. Emily’s worsening condition is the plot’s center of gravity, and the protracted focus on struggle and illness lets *The*



Big Sick go beyond the usual duties of the rom-com in the depth of its emotional explorations. Kumail is charming, funny, and respectful, but deadlocked between his own desires and his family’s demands that he devote himself to his culture; his immaturity, unlike that of many rom-com protagonists, isn’t that of the perpetual high schooler. As tough as his situation is, his initial unwillingness to even address it leaves him feeling adrift, neither comfortable in the Pakistani culture he grew up in nor able to fully live in the American one he’s adopted.

It’s in the face of Emily’s illness that Kumail finally confronts this impasse, grappling with how to juggle the vagaries of the heart—death, love, family, and independence—while trying to keep a straight face through it all. The film brings the severity of the conflict weighing on Kumail into sharper focus by framing it against that of Emily’s parents. Beth and Terry would prefer that Kumail stopped visiting their daughter, given that they were broken up when she fell into her coma, but he refuses, forcing the three into a tense intimacy. Beth is a Southern military daughter, in your face and headstrong but with a heart of gold. She’s the opposite of the ill-at-ease but smartass Kumail, and by her own confession, she couldn’t be further from her husband—all cringe-worthy dad humor and therapist’s-couch oversharing. And yet, side by side, these seemingly disparate individuals come to make sense as a family.

The Big Sick works because it leans on human feeling for its brand of open-vein humor, neither drowning in it nor shrugging off its darker tendencies. In a time of near-constant panic, the film’s ultimately warm outlook veers toward the escapist, but its willingness to confront painful themes in the same breath also makes it a welcome corrective to an emotionally complacent genre.

This movie will rent as well as **NORMAN, THE PROMISE, TABLE 19, THE FOUNDER, and MISS SLOANE.**



9/19 **3** **THE HERO** COMEDY
\$4 MILL BO 447 SCREENS **R** 93 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Sam Elliott (I’LL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS, DRAFT DAY, THE COMPANY YOU KEEP, THE BIG LEBOWSKI)

With his sonorous voice and trademark horseshoe mustache, Sam Elliott has long been an icon of masculinity, a world-weary figure whose knowing smirk betrays a sly self-awareness beneath his rugged exterior. While he’s often been restricted to splashy but small supporting roles, *The Hero* casts him in the lead as Lee Hayden, a lonely old actor facing his own mortality after he’s diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Peppered with references to Elliott’s own life and career (it opens on Lee recording a slogan for barbeque sauce in a playful nod to Elliott’s voiceover work for Coors, Ram trucks, and beef), the film has been designed not just as a vehicle for its venerable star, but as a comment on his long and not always auspicious career.

Lee at one point remarks that he’s done only one film he’s really proud of, a western (also called *The Hero*) that he made 40 years ago. By building a film entirely around Elliott’s grizzled persona, director Brett Haley attempts to do the same for the actor at the opposite end of his career: to provide a lasting showcase of the full range of his acting abilities. On that score, *The Hero* is a success, trading on Elliott’s grizzled cowboy persona while allowing him to hit subtler notes of self-doubt and melancholy—and even just plain goofiness in scenes of Lee and his buddy Jeremy (Nick Offerman) sit around smoking weed, eating Chinese, and watching Buster Keaton movies. A scene in which Lee runs lines for a key role in a young-adult sci-fi movie rivals Naomi Watts’s audition scene in [Mulholland Drive](#) for show-stopping actorly virtuosity.



This will rent as well as **NORMAN, THE PROMISE, FENCES, THE HOLLARS, and TABLE 19.**



9/19 1 WONDER WOMAN SCI FI/ACTION
\$367 MILL BO 4367 SCREENS **PG-13** 132 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Gal Gadot (Film Debut)
Chris Pine (STAR TREK BEYOND, HELL OF HIGH WATER, JACK RYAN: SHADOW RECRUIT)

Wonder Woman has always straddled the line between pin-up girl and symbol of female empowerment. Created by psychologist William Moulton Marston as “psychological propaganda for the new type of woman who...should rule the world,” the superhero emerged as a utopian feminist. At the same time, the character’s visual design was inspired by erotic cheesecake, and the early comics abound with highly suggestive images of bondage. What began life as a fascinating, highly idiosyncratic vision of the New Woman has run through countless iterations since, not all of them as interested in women’s liberation as Marston’s original creation.

If it eschews the bondage fixation and star-spangled panties of the character’s origins, Patty Jenkins’s *Wonder Woman* is, like Marston’s original conception, a deliberate attempt to define the character as a symbol of female empowerment, a brilliant, headstrong warrior uninterested in playing by the restrictive rules of a man’s world. Hailing from Themyscira, a mystical island inhabited solely by an all-female race of Amazonians, Diana (Gal Gadot) grows up in an idyllic paradise of horseback riding, impossibly blue waters, and all-day battle-training sessions. She’s never even seen a man in the flesh until Steve Trevor (Chris Pine), an American doing counter-intelligence work during World War I, crashes into the ocean near her home.



After Steve reveals to her the horrors of the war, including the German military’s plans to use chemical weapons developed by a plaster-faced scientist known as Doctor Poison (Elena Anaya), Diana accompanies him to London to deliver intelligence to Britain’s top brass. But when the Brits fail to do anything to stop the attack, Diana and Steve step in, bringing together a rag-tag group of outcasts and charging toward the front lines. And along the way, Diana continues to believe that she will find Ares, the god of war, and by killing him put an end to mankind’s eternal cycle of violent conflict.

As the first studio film centered on a female superhero in over a decade and the first directed by a woman, *Wonder Woman* carries a significant weight on its shoulders, but its greatest asset is a willingness to go light. This is, particularly in the first hour, a remarkably buoyant and even laidback film, allowing a long conversation between Diana and Steve to play out uninterrupted, simply basking in the atmosphere of thick sexual tension between them. Gently edited and genuinely funny, it’s the kind of scene that would be hacked to pieces and laden with ominous portent in a film like [Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice](#).

At its core, *Wonder Woman* is about watching a badass female kick some ass. And on this score, the film delivers, offering up lithe, supple fight sequences featuring Diana gliding through the air, punctuated by painterly smears of light and fire. And it creates at least one indelible image: Diana calmly but determinedly striding across a no man’s land as German artillery fire whizzes around her. However, as in so many superhero films, the final battle is an overcomplicated jumble of CGI explosions and ubiquitous blue lightning, waged against a seemingly arbitrary villain—in this case an armor-suited giant who looks like he stepped off the cover of a Molly Hatchet album.

You name the movie; this will rent as well as all of the biggest titles of the last year or so. Make sure you have enough copies.



9/26 1 BABY DRIVER COMEDY
\$76 MILL BO 2875 SCREENS R 112 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Ansel Elgort (INSURGENT, PAPER TOWNS, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS, DIVERGENT)
Jon Hamm (TV---MAD MEN, WEB THERAPY, PARKS AND RECREATION—FILM—KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES, MILLION DOLLAR ARM)

June 24, 2017 The technical sophistication of Edgar Wright's artistry reaches new heights with the heist-cum-musical *Baby Driver*, which fully weds the filmmaker's signature flair for rapid but precise editing patterns with his propensity for carefully chosen soundtracks. As robbers carry out a bank job in the opening scene, the camera stays with wheelman Baby (Ansel Elgort) as he listens to the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's "Bellbottoms," swaying to the melody and even popping the windshield wipers on the downbeats. The camera moves with Baby's taps and grooves, with the cuts likewise timed on the song's twos and fours, so as to add kinetic energy to images of the driver simply waiting for his crew to leave the bank. In the ensuing chase, this synthesis of on-screen movement, editing, and musical timing coalesces into a balletic tour de force, complete with wry visual gags like Baby hiding among cars of a similar color and make on the highway so as to dupe a police helicopter.

Compared to the grid layout of so many metropolises, Atlanta's streets were constructed around largely defunct railroad lines, leaving thickets of curved and angular intersections and dead ends, all hemmed in by four intersecting interstates that, when viewed on a map, look suspiciously like the anarchy symbol. Making a car-chase movie in the bottleneck capital of the United States is like crafting a submarine thriller in Lake Tahoe: theoretically possible but so fundamentally constrained as to be absurd. Wright uses this to his advantage, however, structuring his chases around necessary drifts and sharp turns that better fit the soundtrack's beats. As in the Toronto-set [Scott Pilgrim vs. the World](#), the director takes a tax-break shooting location on its own terms, exploring the idiosyncrasies of a city's unique construction.



The gnarled schematic of Atlanta's streets leads to vehicular interactions between Baby, cop cars, and civilian obstacles that play out as delicate dances more than wanton carnage. Each major sequence in *Baby Driver* has a distinct sense of choreography to match the disparate styles of the soundtrack's songs, which range from the Damned's caterwauling punk to the anthemic roar of Golden Earring's "Radar Love." The prevalence of the songs is justified by Baby's long-standing tinnitus affliction, a scar of a tragic childhood accident that's clouded his head in more ways than one.

With its music-dependent protagonist blasting away the physical reminder of childhood trauma, *Baby Driver* literalizes Wright's fascination with people's emotional overreliance on pop culture as a cover for arrested development. Yet the film approaches the theme from a different angle, presenting in Baby not a stunted man-child, but a boy forced to grow up too soon, who's on a quest for innocence rather than one to shed it. This flipped dynamic stresses the film's scenes of softer introspection, as evidenced by the equal prominence of gentle soundtrack choices like the gossamer filigrees of Dave Brubeck's "Unsquare Dance" alongside heart-pumping jams. Befitting a director so preoccupied with the necessity to grow while never losing sight of one's benign obsessions, Wright continues to hone his skills. He's no longer the idol-aping synthesist of the VCR Generation. Now, he looks increasingly like the most original action filmmaker of his generation.

This will rent as well as **JOHN WICK 2**, **CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**, **THE GIFTED**, **PASSENGERS** and **THE FATE OF THE FURIOUS**.



9/26 1 THE HOUSE COMEDY

\$27 MILL BO 2686 SCREENS R 88 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Will Ferrell (DADDY'S HOME, ANCHOR MAN 2, GET HARD, THE CAMPAIGN, BLADES OF GLORY)
Amy Poehler (TV—PARKS AND RECREATION, THE AWESOMES, WET HOT AMERICAN SUMMER)

Nonsensical characterizations abound throughout *The House* without ever dipping into unbridled absurdity as suburban couple Scott (Will Ferrell) and Kate Johansen (Amy Poehler), upon realizing that their daughter's college fund and potential scholarship opportunities have evaporated, take a trip with Frank (Jason Mantzoukas), their depressed, newly single friend, to Las Vegas in an effort to win back some of their lost earnings. After almost mopping up a windfall during a game of craps, the Johansens hatch a scheme to open a casino in Frank's basement and recruit people from the surrounding neighborhoods to come and feed their insatiable gambling habit.

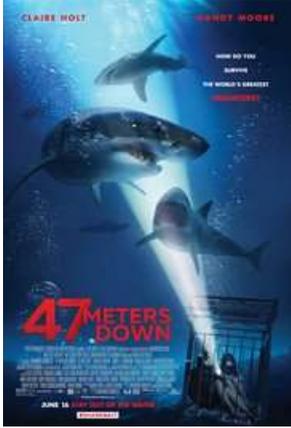
Much of the humor in *The House* relies on the premise that Scott and Kate have spent the last 20 years repressing their younger urges in order to raise a child. Faced with the prospect of needing to fill an "empty nest," as Scott puts it, the couple jokes with one another about how they'll be going to "Fucktown" once Alex (Ryan Simpkins) leaves for school, all before trailing off at the realization that they're likely kidding themselves. In effect, the casino becomes their means to reinvigorate their social lives, so that Kate is once again smoking pot and urinating on lawns at two in the morning like she did back in college, while Scott discovers his masculinity by threatening to chop off the limbs of gamblers who owe their new casino a debt.

Flashes of rudimentary satire briefly deepen Scott and Kate's desperation over having to tell Alex that she won't be able to attend college. In the film's best scene, the couple slowly realizes that they're incapable of bending to the will of their financial reality but have also pampered Alex to such an extent that they're ready to risk prison in order not to disappoint her. But instead of then exploring the social and economic complexities of a parent-daughter relationship predicated on ideological difference like in [Toni Erdmann](#), the filmmakers use these dynamics as a pretense for a series of sight gags and enervated spoofs of everything from *The Sopranos* to *Fight Club*.

The film's idiocy extends to its aligning of Scott and Kate's transformation into axe- and blowtorch-toting badasses with hip-hop and black culture, so that one of their debt-collecting rampages is scored to Snoop Doggy Dogg's "Gz and Hustlas." The pairing of act and music isn't so much farce as inane fodder for ensuring *The House's* removal from anything resembling genuine social commentary, but it also indulges the laziest form of cultural fantasy, where the awkward, middle-aged white couple is allowed to engage in cultural appropriation for a spell before returning to their dull middle-class lives, and all without consequence. After all, it's not the parents, but Bob (Nick Kroll), head of the town council, who's ultimately to blame for Alex's educational deprivation, since he siphoned the funds from her scholarship as a means to shower Dawn (Allison Tolman), a fellow council member, with expensive gifts.

This will rent as well as **CHIPS**, **WHY HIM**, **OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY** and **BRIDGET JONES BABY**.





9/26 1 47 METERS DOWN ACTION
\$44 MILL BO 2678 SCREENS PG-13 99 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

MANDY MOORE (TV—THIS IS US, RED BAND SOCIETY, TANGLED: THE SERIES, HIGH SCHOOL USA)

Lisa (Mandy Moore) is so boring that her boyfriend breaks up with her on the eve of a romantic getaway along the Mexican coast, thus sparing himself further contact with her banality. Lisa is so boring, in fact, that her more adventurous, globe-hopping sister, Kate (Claire Holt), who joins her on the trip at the last minute, uses this Achilles' heel that's plagued Lisa since childhood to convince her to go shark-cage diving with a couple of randos they met at a club the previous night. This fairly standard trope of the wounded protagonist fighting to bounce back from trauma by moving outside her comfort zone plays a large role in the opening act of Johannes Roberts's *47 Meters Down*. Yet for all the effort the film puts into setting up Lisa's general trepidation and tepid personality, those behavioral traits fail to build to a fulfilling emotional arc of redemption or empowerment.

When Lisa and Kate arrive at a pier and catch a glimpse of the rickety ship that will take them diving, Kate has to practically drag Lisa to go face to face with the great whites lurking beneath the water just off the coast. Despite the boat's obvious state of disrepair and the less-than-legal nature of their expedition, the sisters are given state-of-the-art scuba gear that contains internal microphones and speakers so the women can communicate with each other and the men above. Given the quality of the dialogue, a technological malfunction may have been a wiser narrative development.



The appearances that the great white sharks make throughout are nonetheless impactful, aided by the surprisingly well-rendered CGI, though it's nothing short of a contrivance how these enormous beasts repeatedly appear out of nowhere only to clumsily miss the girls' limbs by inches. As silly as much of *47 Meters Down* is, when its characters keep silent, the film imparts a palpable sense of dread surrounding the sisters' increasingly desperate attempts to make their way to the surface. But like Lisa and Kate's pendular swings between hope and despair, Roberts's film can't help alternating between the genuinely terrifying and the just plain dumb. Even the conclusion, which by its very construction should be purely thrilling, is needlessly complicated and confounded by a callback to a warning given to Lisa and Kate early in the film. For every moment of tension-filled clarity here, there are two that leave you thinking: Have they all got the bends?

This one will rent as well as **GHOST IN THE SHELL, XXX: THE RETURN OF XANDER CAGE, GET OUT, SLEEPLESS, NOCTURNAL ANIMALS, and DEEPWATER HORIZON.**



9/26 **1** TRANSFORMERS: THE LAST KNIGHT

SCI/FI/ACTION

\$123 MILL BO **PG-13** 142 MINUTES DVD/COMBO

Mark Wahlberg (PATRIOTS DAY, DADDY'S HOME, LONE SURVIVOR, 2 GUNS, TED)

The franchise that single-handedly imbued the word “Hasbro” with a sense of looming dread is back on the map, and Michael Bay’s latest assault on viewers’ attention spans is perhaps the most frivolous and empty work of his career. *Transformers: The Last Knight* certainly represents a step back from

Bay’s recent films, which displayed bursts of visual ambition and, at times, refreshing self-awareness. Even the prior *Transformers* movies evinced more imagination, if for no other reason that Bay’s first work in 3D found him toning down his scattershot editing to avoid sending concession snacks hurling into trash cans. Improvements in 3D projection have lessened the inherently nauseating effect of his trademark aesthetic, but as science fiction teaches us so often, our technological advances shall doom us all, and *The Last Knight* finds Bay comfortably back in the realm of total incomprehensibility.

If the thought of a *Transformers* film updating an A.P. European history lesson sounds torturous, that’s nothing compared to the convoluted narrative arcs that bog down in slapdash characterizations. The MacGuffin here is a staff—given to Merlin by one of the early Autobots—that can drain Earth’s life force and restore Cybertron. The impossibly named Cade Yeager (Mark Wahlberg) is again caught in the middle of the Transformers drama, bestowed with a robotic talisman that marks him as a defender of the staff. And aiding him throughout are Izabella (Isabela Moner), a scrappy young orphan who acts and talks like a mechanic, and Viviane (Laura Haddock), a multiple-doctorate Oxford professor and polo champion who’s Merlin’s last descendant.



Throughout, Wahlberg reliably (and lazily) delivers the screenplay’s heaps of exposition with an exaggerated “can you believe this?” intonation. The only actor, though, who gets away clean from this mess is Anthony Hopkins, who cranks the eccentricity meter past the breaking point as the masonic nobleman Edmund Burton. All but holding up his paycheck to the camera with relish, the actor consumes more scenery than the planet-killing behemoth that tears gashes into the Earth during *The Last Knight*’s climax, delivering gobs of ludicrous backstory with endearing flippancy.

This will rent as well as **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY 2, THE FATE OF THE FURIOUS, JOHN WICK 2, THE GREAT WALL, and ROUGE ONE: STAR WARS.**