

9/4 ADRIFT THRILLER

\$36 MILL BO 2482 SCREENS PG-13 96 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL CODE WITH THE COMBO
28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX

Shailene Woodley (SNOWDEN, ALLEGIANT, INSURGENT, THE FAULT IN OUR STARS)

Director Baltasar Kormákur's *Adrift* is a simple, acutely observed love story that also happens to be a rousingly stripped-down tale of survival. Loosely based on the true story of Tami Oldham (Shailene Woodley) and Richard Sharp (Sam Claflin), who in 1983 set off from Tahiti to deliver a yacht to San

Diego only to sail directly into a ferocious hurricane, this lithe and affecting melodrama ping-pongs between the couple's picture-perfect Polynesian courtship and their grueling ordeal drifting on the open ocean.

Tami and Richard are almost too perfect for each other: She's a California-bred free spirit who's been hopping from one beachy paradise to the next since she graduated high school, while he's a dashing Brit who's sailed the world over in a boat he built with his own hands. If Tami and Richard's romance seems too good to be true, Woodley and Claflin manage to bring them down to earth with gentle nuances—shades of uncertainty, self-effacement, even melancholy—that evoke the sense that these two individuals didn't even know they were looking for love until they found each other.



Adrift's bifurcated narrative structure also provides a friction that keeps the couple's romance from becoming too sickly sweet: For every envy-inducing moment of island splendor—such as Tami and Richard jumping off a ridge into a crystal-clear lagoon—there's an opposing image of the couple looking gaunt and frail as they struggle to find land before starving to death.



After disastrous encounter with the hurricane, Richard spends the rest of the film bruised and broken, convalescing in the back of the yacht. That means that the responsibilities of keeping them alive falls on Tami, a relative sailing neophyte, who singlehandedly repairs their vessel, pumps gallons of water out of the cabin, navigates with a sextant, and scrounges up sustenance—forgoing her own vegetarianism to do a little underwater spearfishing. These survival sequences bring to mind J.C. Chandor's similarly themed *All Is Lost*, but with that film's blank-faced austerity replaced by Kormákur's wide-eyed inquisitiveness about how people adapt to extreme situations.

This will rent as well as **CHAPPAQUIDICK, THE HURRICANE HEIST, 15:17 TO PARIS, THE COMMUTER, and ACT OF VIOLENCE.**



9/4 HEREDITARY HORROR
\$44 MILL BO 2572 SCREENS **R** 127 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Toni Collette (THE YELLOW BIRDS, XXX: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE, IMPERIUM, MISS YOU ALREADY)

There's no denying the frequent blunt-force effectiveness of writer-director Ari Aster's smugly agitating feature debut, *Hereditary*, which begins with a showoffy shot that slowly rotates around the studio of professional diorama artist Annie Graham (Toni Collette). The camera eventually pushes into one of Annie's models, which imperceptibly becomes a life-size bedroom inhabited by her husband, Steve (Gabriel Byrne), and their pothead son, Peter (Alex Wolff). This isn't the last time spaces, and the spaces within them, will be utilized in unnerving, disorienting fashion. (Note, for instance, the many establishing shots of the Grahams' isolated woodland home that alternate between real-world and miniature exteriors.) Yet the overall effect is gloomy and humorless, as if Aster is doing a stone-faced gloss on the Wes Anderson-parodying *SNL* skit "The Midnight Coterie of Sinister Intruders."

Aster is clearly out to mirror his protagonist's volatile headspace with such disruptive visuals. Annie is reeling from the death of her mother, whom she never much liked but who still had a—hint, hint—bewitching effect on the family. It's been barely a week since the woman's burial and everyone is still on edge. Annie throws herself into prep for a gallery show and reluctantly attends a grief support group to blow off steam. Steve gets a call from the cemetery where Annie's mom is interred and hides some upsetting news from his wife: that the woman's grave has been desecrated. And Peter acts the rebelliously dazed and confused adolescent, though there's something amiss in his glazed expression, as if dope isn't the only demon on his shoulder.



It certainly would be easiest to blame a Satanic influence for the fateful night when Annie forces Peter to take his sickly, mentally challenged younger sister, Charlie (Milly Shapiro)—whose habit of clucking her tongue occasions a few memorable jump scares—to a high school party. Charlie has an allergic reaction after eating a piece of cake with nuts in it. Spaced-out Peter rushes her to his car, hightailing it for a hospital. And then something gruesome occurs that pushes an already troubled brood into a deranged red zone.

This section of *Hereditary* impressively puts any supernatural sturm und drang on the back burner and unflinchingly charts the fraying family bonds. There are a few snake-tongued confrontations between Annie and Peter that are particularly bracing as long-held resentments come to the fore, such as Annie's revulsion at ever having children in the first place. Collette's jittery performance is on the fine line between ridiculous and sublime, and she's best suited to these scenes in which the horrors her character faces are of the shadowy variety, the paranormal occurrences seeming to spring from a psychologically tangible and turbulent place. Is Annie actually seeing her dead mother in a dark corner of the room, for example, or is it a mere manifestation of her fractured subconscious? It's best left imprecise.



Once it becomes apparent that the Graham family truly is a target of otherworldly malevolence, however, the film loses its menacing power and becomes a monotonous schlockfest. If the images and sounds maintain a baseline competence—a dread-inducing hum underscores a number of scenes, and the climax goes inventively topsy-turvy with the laws of gravity—they never seem anything other than derivative. Aster's influences are legion,

from *The Exorcist* (an evil spirit literally and figuratively tearing a family apart) to *Onibaba* (specters hiding near-subliminally in the darkness). But the film's patron saint is Roman Polanski, the holy text *Rosemary's Baby*. A shamelessly shifty Ann Dowd, overdoing the "is she or isn't she evil?" act as an occult-obsessed acquaintance from Annie's therapy group, is essentially Ruth Gordon 2.0. And *Hereditary's* resoundingly silly conclusion reworks the subtle Mephistophelean poignancy of *Rosemary's Baby's* finale into a shallow, Shyamalan-lite reveal that negates the story's fevered emotional undercurrents. The devil is certainly in these hackneyed details.

This will rent as well as **STRANGERS: PREY AT NIGHT, ANNIHILATION, INSIDIOUS: THE LAST KEY, BEASTS OF BURDEN and RED SPARROW.**



9/11 OCEAN'S EIGHT THRILLER/COMEDY
\$128 MILL BO 2845 SCREENS **PG/13** 110 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX
DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO

Sandra Bullock (SPEED, THE BLIND SIDE, MISS CONGENIALITY, CRASH, TWO WEEKS NOTICE, THE PROPOSAL)

Upon her release from prison, Debbie (Sandra Bullock), the estranged sister of legendary conman Danny Ocean, puts together a team of unstoppable crooks to pull off the heist of the century. Their goal is New York City's annual Met Gala and a whopper of a diamond necklace worth more than \$150 million, which will be worn around the neck of famous

movie star and socialite Daphne Kluger (Anne Hathaway). Debbie assembles a group of talented female scam artists, including bar owner Lou (Cate Blanchett) jewelry expert Amita (Mindy Kaling), petty thief and street hustler Constance (Awkwafina), hacker Nine Ball (Rihanna), washed-up fashion designer Rose (Helena Bonham Carter), and big rig cargo thief Tammy (Sarah Paulson).

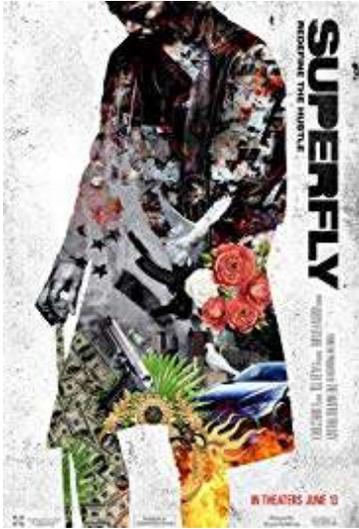
The chemistry between the actors is engaging and entertaining, and the all-female sequel works because its feminist slant never feels like a cheap gimmick. The cast is so crowded, however, that the film fails to create even one standout character. These are all appealing actresses but this movie still manages to make them feel wasted. Bullock and Blanchett carry the story with their cool poise and even cooler outfits. If you're already irritated by Hathaway (as I almost always am), this film serves up a generous helping of everything that makes her annoying. Her take on her self-absorbed diva character is by far the most unpleasant onscreen element.



Adding to the problem is that the big heist isn't creative (and is so implausible that it becomes unintentionally funny), there's zero conflict, and there's not even a real villain in the story.

In a better year for movies, "Ocean's 8" would rank towards the bottom of the stink heap. But here we are in June of 2018 and somehow this has emerged as one of the more entertaining films I've seen in months. It's a lighthearted, bland crime caper that is enjoyable enough to warrant a mild recommendation, especially if you're seeking a lazy way to beat the summer heat.

Fun movie that will rent as well as **DEN OF THIEVES, GIRL'S TRIP, GAME NIGHT, THE COMMUTER, PROUD MARY, and A BAD MOM'S CHRISTMAS.**



9/11 SUPERFLY ACTION
\$21 MILL BO 2145 SCREENS **R** 116 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY
DIGITAL COPY WITH BOTH THE DVD AND THE BLU RAY

Trevor Jackson (TV---GROWN-ISH, BLACK-ISH, AMERICAN CRIME, EUREKA)

Director X brings hyperbolic swagger to the remake story of Priest (Trevor Jackson), a stylish, impressively coifed coke dealer whose quest to go straight is stymied by crooked cops (Jennifer Morrison and Brian Durkin), a reckless employee (Jacob Ming-Trent), and a rival gang called Snow Patrol, whose all-white aesthetic extends from the clothes they wear to the caskets they use to bury their members. Priest wants nothing more than to run his high-class art gallery and have steamy shower sex with his

two girlfriends (Lex Scott Davis and Andrea Londo), but first he has to move a massive amount of cocaine he purchased directly from the head of a Mexican cartel (Esai Morales).

Priest's yearning to leave behind the hustling life for good ostensibly drives the plot, but the film never makes it feel like a particularly urgent concern. Director X is too busy showing off his characters' flashy designer duds and luxury sports cars to spend much time letting us get to know them. Such depthless characterization isn't inherently a problem for a film

that's cynical by design, concerned as it is with people's addiction to wealth, but the thinness of the screenplay is highlighted by the inconsistency of the direction, which alternates between the glossily stylized and the aimlessly generic. Director X's handling of action is especially erratic—a mix of car chases that pass by in confusing blurs, *Scarface*-style bloodbaths, and a slow-mo fight scene that looks like it was dropped in from *The Matrix*.



SuperFly only hits its stride when Director X channels his music-video work, pairing seductively hedonistic images with the sultry, stoned-out grooves of Future's original songs. It's no accident that the film's most memorable scene is set inside a strip club, the natural home for the rapper's signature brand of trap music. Director X fills the frame with writhing naked bodies and uses a heavy purple light to offset the practically glowing white parkas worn by Snow Patrol's members, who rain bills down on the club's dancers from their perch high up on a balcony. It's a scene of shiny, synthetic sleaze, like something out of a Hype Williams video.

This will rent as well as **ACRIMONY, TRUTH OR DARE, PROUD MARY, THE COMMUTER, and BLADE RUNNER 2049.**





9/18 JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM ADVENTURE

\$386 MILL BO 3891 SCREENS PG-13 128 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO 28 DAYS BEFORE REDBOX
DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO

**Chris Pratt (GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY 2, THE
MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, JURASSIC WORLD, DELIVERY
MAN, HER)**

If you're excited to see yet another "Jurassic Park" movie, you likely want nothing more than to see dinosaurs causing rampant mayhem and chaos while destroying everything around them (including chasing and eating people). On those points, "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom," the sequel to 2015's "Jurassic World," won't disappoint.

It's been three years since the theme park was destroyed by dinosaurs who broke out of their cages, and the isolated jungle paradise of Isla Nublar is abandoned with no inhabitants except the last surviving dinosaurs. Claire (Bryce Dallas Howard), the former corporate greed monger, has seen the error of her ways and now devotes her life as an animal activist. When a wealthy benefactor (James Cromwell) promises a pristine habitat for the creatures to live out their days, Claire enlists the help of former dino trainer Owen (Chris Pratt) to relocate them. The suits seem preoccupied with finding the very smart and very rare dinosaur Blue, and a conspiracy soon unfolds that leads to near-tragic results.

With just as many moral dilemmas as there are explosions, the film asserts a surprisingly angry metaphor for the current state of the country. It's one that is thinly veiled, with an evil Trump look-alike character (Toby Jones) and a few digs and jabs at the current administration (pay close attention to the news scroll in one of the early scenes). It's a cautionary tale told through a haunted funhouse vehicle of popcorn entertainment.



While the story may be sorely lacking, the dazzling special effects are not. They're top shelf across the board, including a truly breathtaking extended scene of a volcanic eruption that may leave some viewers with a lump in their throat. The dinosaurs look as real as ever, and director J.A. Bayona packs in several impressive, showy bits to ramp up the fun meter. This is a summer movie that almost manages to keep its momentum from start to finish. Even the darkly compelling ending has me inexplicably eager for the compulsory next installment.

This isn't a great movie and at times its dialogue and performances are laughable, but it's awfully entertaining, consistently thrilling, often scary, sometimes touching, and delivers a high-intensity energy that's nearly impossible not to at least *mildly* enjoy — if you agree to accept this sequel for what it is.

This will rent as huge as **JUSTICE LEAGUE, RAMPAGE, PACIFIC RIM: UPRISING, MAZE RUNNER: THE DEATH CURE, and JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE.**



9/18 SOLO: A STAR WARS STORY FANTASY
\$215 MILL BO 3287 SCREENS **PG-13** 135 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY DIGITAL COPY WITH THE BLU RAY

Alden Ehrenreich (THE YELLOW BIRDS, HAIL CAESAR, BEAUTIFUL CREATURES, RUNNING WILD)

Ron Howard's *Solo: A Star Wars Story* lives up to its namesake's high-risk, higher-reward reputation. Given the unceremonious mid-shoot departure of the original directors—Phil Lord and Chris Miller, whose claims to fame include, lest we forget, a 100-minute toy commercial and a reboot of a beloved 1980s television series—one could hardly be blamed for wondering if Disney's strategy of releasing at least one *Star Wars* film per year until the formula was no longer profitable had been accelerated into premature overdrive. After all, the current era's Disney/Marvel/Lucasfilm/DC studio blockbusters bear less resemblance each summer to actual narratives and more to product demos made of nothing but digital trade-show razzle dazzle.

For a boardroom executive, there may be no less threatening a pinch hitter in Hollywood than Howard, under whose guidance *Solo* succeeds well enough at fulfilling this minimum obligation. Lawrence and Jonathan Kasdan's script adds a few creative doodles to the margins of a beyond-stale template, itself an obvious rip-off of the inciting spectacles of early-20th-century cinema: the war picture, the cowboy shoot-'em-up, the lurid exotica. *Solo* introduces canonical characters as improbably younger selves, making for a surreal remake-as-prequel: Han Solo (Alden Ehrenreich) and Lando Calrissian (Donald Glover) perform not just as established action figures, but as sly riffs on Harrison Ford and Billy Dee Williams's performances in *The Empire Strikes Back*. (Mel Brooks's *Spaceballs* could never have guessed the prescience in its kiss-off joke about "Spaceballs II: The Search for More Money.")



Having escaped his home-planet of Corellia, but not without being separated from his childhood sweetheart, Qi'Ra (Emilia Clarke), Solo begins a long apprenticeship under Tobias Beckett (Woody Harrelson), a petty thief disguised as an imperial officer. Beckett's crew of rip-off artists includes a wisecracking alien, Rio (voiced by Jon Favreau), and Val (Thandie Newton), Beckett's sometimes girlfriend. In this transient, filthy new life, Solo's sole mission is to earn enough to buy his own ship, so he can return to Corellia and find Qi'Ra, but they're reunited within *Solo*'s first act, as Beckett and Solo begin doing work for a very unsavory organization Crimson Dawn, lorded over by a space-alcoholinated mercenary named Dryden Vos (Paul Bettany)..



Since Han Solo always represented the sneering, cynical flipside to the Skywalker clan's gee-whiz journey of Jedi self-discovery, spiritual breakdown, and forgiveness, much of *Solo* concerns its namesake figuring out how to tell actual good guys from the bad ones. This theme is driven home in the film's worst passages of dialogue, most of them between Solo and Qi'Ra, who ominously assures him she's not the same girl he once knew. Eventually their association with Vos leads Solo to discover an oppressed desert community, Howard's film picking up the thread of belabored wokeness that marked *The Last Jedi*'s most frantic fumbles in the name of political urgency.

The more you remember from the original movies, the more ingenious this maneuver is: spinning the sow's ear of Lucas's casually racist outer-space evocations into a silk purse of 21st-century populism, complete with shout-outs to anticolonial freedom struggles and against arms trafficking. Representation indeed leaves an impact, but boycotting Disney would leave a bigger one. It's hard to say what really results from these corporate winks at global inequality,

but they will doubtlessly date the new *Star Wars* films more conspicuously than any hairdo or hemline from Lucas's original trilogy.

Solo's rapport with Lando, whose younger self is revealed as something of a robo-sexual, is the most winning through line of Howard and the Kasdans' approach. It doesn't merely make obvious the comfort-food imperative of keeping this mythology alive—which is to say, profitable—but also proves it can still find ways to be legitimately satisfying. It's not enough to hide the obvious ideological problem of willfully retreating to childhood in the face of real-world problems, nor the consolidated efforts of an unwieldy and arch-conservative private company to make said retreat into a national pastime; *Solo's* best moments are almost entertaining enough to make you forget about all that. Otherwise, it feels like what it appears to be: another quarter-billion-dollar installment in the world's longest and most expensive screensaver. There's no doubt the abundant computer graphics were already mid-render when the original filmmakers were fired, and so the human components come off as interchangeable as they probably were.

This one will be as good a renter as **TOMB RAIDER, PACIFIC RIM: UPRISING, MAZE RUNNER: THE DEATH CURE, and JUSTICE LEAGUE.**



9/18 SICARIO: DAY OF THE SOLDADO THRILLER
\$46 MILL BO 2653 SCREENS R 122 MINUTES
DVD/COMBO DIGITAL COPY WITH THE COMBO

Benicio Del Torre (INHERENT VICE, THOR: THE DARK WORLD, SAVAGES, SIN CITY, THE USUAL SUSPECTS, GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY)

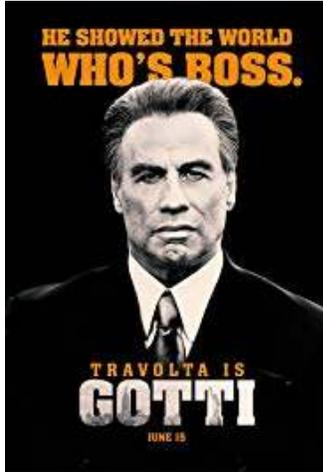
Continuing the bullet-riddled adventures of lawyer turned mercenary Alejandro Gillick (Benicio del Toro) and Department of Justice consultant Matt Graver (Josh Brolin), *Sicario: Day of the Soldado* is a lugubrious procedural about employees on both sides of the law whose allegiances to their employers have submerged them in a state of psychological blankness, their ethics or ideals displaced by the directive of accomplishing their missions by whatever means necessary. The structure of the film, directed by Stefano Sollima and written by Taylor Sheridan, is in lockstep with characters who find themselves shuffled from one locale to another, the protocol of their jobs interrupted and contradicted by the whims of their superiors.

Day of the Soldado begins as a basic mission movie—Gillick and Graver must disrupt some cartels—but by the end, the heroes are removed from the events leading up to that mission's impetus as much as they are from each other. After a Kansas City supermarket comes under attack by suicide bombers, Graver is called into action, his ugly expertise in clandestine matters leading him into the office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense, James Riley (Matthew Modine). Under the austere supervision of Cynthia Foards (Catherine Keener), Graver is to apply a "lesson" the U.S. learned in Iraq by creating infighting within Mexico's drug cartels, making things easier for the U.S. military. Enlisting Gillick, Graver's team kidnaps Isabel Reyes (Isabela Moner), the teenage daughter of the region's most powerful kingpin, making it seem like rivals carried it out. The plan is botched after Mexican police escorts turn on the Department of Defense caravan in a hellacious shoot-out that shakes with claustrophobic tension, as most of it is set inside the vehicle carrying the film's scrambling antiheroes. Isabel flees into the desert and is pursued by Gillick, as Graver's team moves on to Texas with a plan to rendezvous later.



Because the center of moral consciousness—and audience proxy—played by Emily Blunt in *Sicario* is absent here, fans of Denis Villeneuve's original have reason to be wary that *Day of the Soldado* could be an exploitative macho romp of military men painting the desert red by exacting revenge on both drug dealers and Islamic terrorists (who are being smuggled across the border by cartels). But this film's violence isn't cathartic. *Day of the Soldado* finesses the stridency of its predecessor, which felt like it was patting itself on the back with its gloomy observations about the drug war and U.S. military policy. As the bureaucratic superiors complacent about passing the buck for heinous decisions, Modine and Keener are rendered with an almost undead pallor, their characters sucking the life out of those under their watch. Looking at such ghostly countenances juxtaposed against the haggard wornness of antiheroes Gillick and Graver, the state of moral dread works on a tacit level that's much more disconcerting than the verbal exhortations of *Sicario*.

This one will rent as well as **TRUTH OR DARE, DEATH WISH, PACIFIC RIM: UPRISING, RED SPARROW** and **DEN OF THIEVES**.



9/25 GOTTI THRILLER

\$6 MILL BO 1732 SCREENS R 112 M INUTES
DVD/BLU RAY DIGITAL COPY WITH THE BLU RAY

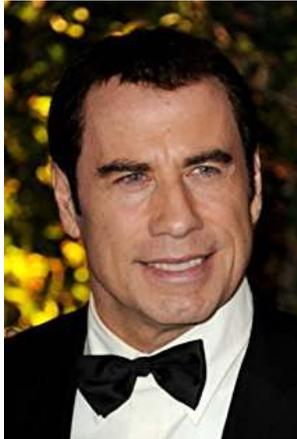
John Travolta (SAVAGES, MICHAEL, THE PUNISHER, SWORDFISH, GET SHORTY, PULP FICTION, BLOW OUT)

John Travolta stars as infamous crime boss John Gotti, a powerful man who rose to the top of the Gambino crime family in New York City. The film spans three decades of his life, from his home persona as a family man to his multiple jail sentences, is recounted by his son John Jr. (Spencer Rocco Lofranco) in a series of confusing flashbacks. The movie tries to cram way too much into less than two hours and manages to barely touch the surface

of the more interesting aspects of Gotti's life.

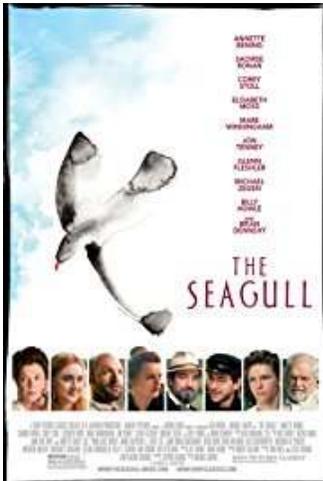
The end result is an incoherent jumble not unlike that of puzzle pieces thrown together in a bag, shaken up, and heaved on the screen in an astonishing display of haphazard incompetence. There's a wealth of captivating and lurid material about the famous "Teflon Don," but the bullet points of Gotti's life presented in this film are so cluttered that everything gets lost. Little makes sense, the erratic chronology doesn't work, and Kevin Connolly's dreadful direction is full of excruciatingly poor choices that include moments like when Gotti's son gets run over by a neighbor (blame editor Jim Flynn for lending a helping hand in this scene, a bumbling series of handheld close-ups and rapid cuts between a bicycle, the glare of the sun, squealing tires, and a simmering pot roast) and when a surprise car explosion is set to "West End Girls" by the Pet Shop Boys. *Huh?*

Adding to the fray of the storytelling method are misplaced archival footage clips of the real Gotti in action, and the unsettling feeling that the filmmakers idolize their subject as some kind of folk hero. At several points in the story they actually try to make you feel sorry for this murderous mobster.



Sometimes the performances break through with a glimmer of entertainment, but only because they are unintentionally funny. This most often occurs whenever Kelly Preston (as Gotti's wife Victoria) is onscreen with her bad wig and even worse fake accent. I failed to contain my laughter at one point in the film when she looks directly at her husband and, with all sincerity, says "I love youse." Ditto for the whiny, wide-eyed blunder of a performance from Lofranco. The actors deliver their lines so poorly that this film begs to be destined for a future of audience participation screenings, shown ironically at midnight to a packed house of college kids who yell back and throw props at the screen.

This one will rent like **BEIRUT, 12 STRONG, HOSTILES, THE COMMUTER, and AMERICAN MADE** did.



9/25 THE SEAGULL DRAMA
\$3 MILL 211 SCREENS PG-13 98 MINUTES
DVD

Elizabeth Moss (CHUCK, HIGH RISE, GET HIM TO THE GREEK, DAY ZERO)

One of the characteristics that makes Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* so timeless is its message about the friction between the avant-garde and the traditional. In the play, Chekhov used symbolism—an avant-garde approach in 1896—to draw parallels between natural and metaphysical worlds. By infusing this conceit into the conventional scenario of a family melodrama, Chekhov showed the limits of the prevailing aesthetic mode of naturalism while simultaneously revealing naturalism's unrealized potential for exploring new ideas unleashed by the purveyors of the Symbolist movement.

Michael Mayer's film adaptation, while certainly reverential to Chekhov's classic, feels utterly conventional in today's cinematic landscape. The dialectic between the new and the old, the present and the future, remains at the heart of the plot. And the primary representatives of these two poles are still aspiring symbolist playwright Constantine (Billy Howle) and established naturalist writer Trigorin (Corey Stoll). The two fight about the future of literature as well as the hearts of Irina (Annette Bening), Constantine's mother and Trigorin's lover, and Nina (Saoirse Ronan), Constantine's teenage muse.

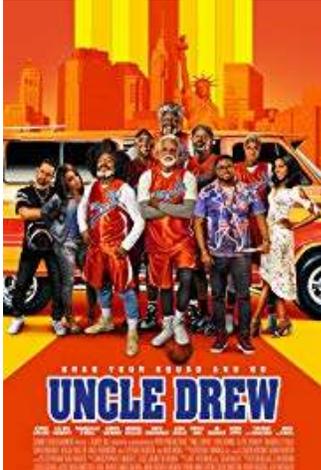


Throughout *The Seagull* and this latest adaptation, both Irina and Nina gravitate toward Trigorin,

who's considered to be the better artist. But where Chekhov questions Trigorin's ostensible superiority by showing him to be morally inferior to Constantine, Mayer conveys the tension between the conventional and the avant-garde in the film's surface narrative without identifying and exploring its further implications for contemporary art.

Doctor Dorn (Jon Tenney), whose views most closely align with Chekhov's, is the only character in *The Seagull* who professes to enjoy Constantine's work. The doctor encourages Constantine after his mother humiliates him by heckling his latest play; it's a symbolic castration of the Oedipal variety that marks one of many forms of intertextuality between Chekhov's play and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, the filmmakers do little to explore this connection, content to let it lie on the surface. This is one of many ways in which Mayer's film is content to merely present Chekhov's ideas rather than grapple with their provocative and complex subtexts.

This will rent as well as **TULLY, RIDER, MIDNIGHT SUN, WONDER WHEEL, and BRAD'S STATUS.**



9/25 UNCLE DREW FAMILY COMEDY
\$44 MILL BO 2634 SCREENS PG-13 103 MINUTES
DVD/BLU RAY

Shaquille O’Neil (BLENDED, THE LEGO MOVIE, GROWN UPS 2, THUNDER STRUCK)

I expected little from “Uncle Drew,” a film that looked like a one-trick pony filled with a roster of non-actors. Boy, was I surprised! This family-friendly, feel-good movie is a cheery ray of positivity that we could use more of right now.

After draining his life savings to enter a team in the Rucker Classic street ball tournament in Harlem, Dax (Lil Rel Howery) is dealt a series of unfortunate setbacks, including losing his team to his longtime rival (Nick Kroll). Desperate to win the tournament and the cash prize, Dax stumbles upon the legendary player Uncle Drew (Kyrie Irving) and convinces him to return to the court one last time. The two men embark on a road trip to round up Drew’s old basketball squad (Shaquille O’Neal, Chris Webber, Reggie Miller, Nate Robinson, and Lisa Leslie) and prove that a group of septuagenarians can still win the big one.

The film has a positive message about the joys of basketball and the value of senior citizens and longtime friendships. Life lessons for kids and adults are highlighted too, from respecting your elders to never being too stubborn to apologize. The clichéd underdog tropes like “you’ll miss 100% of the shots you don’t take” of course make an appearance, but they’re presented with earnestness. By casting real-life athletes who live and breathe basketball, director Charles Stone III fosters an atmosphere of sincerity that shows how sports can make the world a better place.



Everything isn’t a slam dunk, however. There’s an unusually bland and unfunny performance from it-girl Tiffany Haddish (that feels more like an extended cameo than a meaty role), and a general corny vibe throughout. Some of the jokes land with a thud. But the biggest surprise here is that a crew of NBA All-Stars turn out to be great comedic actors. They’re funny (if sometimes a little stiff with the line delivery), and it’s extra satisfying to delight in the sports action shots. There isn’t much better than watching Shaq, in full geriatric makeup, toss basket after basket against other legendary players. Basketball fans need to see this movie as they are the intended audience, but even non-athletic types can find plenty to enjoy. “Uncle Drew” is a delightful summertime surprise in the sports film genre.

This will rent as well as **ISLE OF DOGS, SHERLOCK GNOMES, PETER RABBIT, PADDINGTON 2, and DESPICABLE ME 3.**