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Also Out This Month

- *Dark Skies* - a family has a fearsome close encounter with aliens
- *A Late Quartet* - a team of musicians band together during a personal crisis
- *The Odd Life of Timothy Green* - a husband and wife grow a child in their back garden, and learn how to be good parents
- *The Gatekeepers* - Oscar-nominated documentary about the Israeli Shin Bet
- *Love Is All You Need* - Pierce Brosnan headlines the Danish rom-com
- *Promised Land* - Matt Damon and John Krasinski co-write and co-star in Gus Van Sant's drilling drama

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## MOVIE OF THE MONTH: *IRON MAN 3*

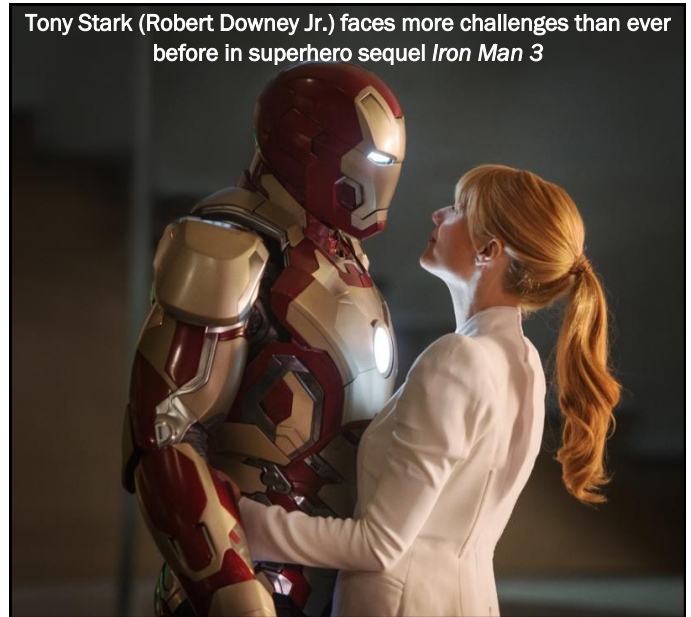
One year ago, the huge superhero team-up we had all been waiting for finally opened to rave reviews and more than phenomenal box office (it's currently the highest non-James Cameron film of all time worldwide).

But *The Avengers* was only the start of a much bigger journey, and we now move into Marvel's "Phase 2" stage of its cinematic universe, starting with the third film of one of the studio's most popular characters. *Iron Man 3* has a lot of weight on its back, what with being the first major Marvel film to come out after that juggernaut (*The Amazing Spider-Man* was released by different people, so that doesn't really count), but if there's anything we can count on, it's that there's going to be much more stakes for Tony Stark and his allies this time round than ever before.

That's right, even throwing a nuclear missile into space and developing a taste for Shawarma can't compete with the stuff that happens in the third outing for Ol' Shellhead.

Jon Favreau, director of the first two *Iron Man* films, steps down as director this time round to allow Shane Black (*Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*) to take the helm, as well as contribute heavily to the

Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) faces more challenges than ever before in superhero sequel *Iron Man 3*



film's screenplay.

Favreau, however, returns as Stark's chauffeur Happy Hogan from those other films.

Re-joining him in the much larger roles are Robert Downey Jr. (*Tropic Thunder*), Gwyneth Paltrow (*Shakespeare in Love*) and Don Cheadle (*Crash*), while new faces this time around include Guy Pearce (*Memento*), Rebecca Hall (*The Town*), James Badge Dale (*Shame*), and Ben Kingsley (*Gandhi*).

What's Mr. Stark up to this time round? Not that much, when we first meet him - finding himself traumatized after the events of *The Avengers* (I guess saving the city of New York does have its disadvantages after all),

Tony Stark (Downey Jr.) is struggling with his own identity. Things become even more complicated when the mysterious leader of an evil terrorist organization, known as The Mandarin (Kingsley), orders an attack that completely destroys Stark's personal world. As he sets out to find those responsible, Stark comes across the answer to a question that has secretly haunted him: does the man make the suit, or does the suit make the man?

*Iron Man 3* is only the beginning of a new series of films that will eventually lead to the *Avengers* sequel in 2015. But if this **April 26th** release is anything to go by, then 2015 cannot come soon enough...

## News Round-Up

- Gary Oldman, Keri Russell and Judy Greer join *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*
- Daniel Radcliffe is in talks to play Igor in Paul McGuigan's *Frankenstein*
- *Anchorman: The Legend Continues* adds Harrison Ford and Greg Kinnear to the cast
- Joe Wright will direct Neil Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*
- *The Hobbit: There and Back Again* shifts its summer release date to December 2014
- Steven Spielberg is to make a miniseries about Napoleon, based on Stanley Kubrick's 1961 script
- Halle Berry will return as Storm in *X-Men: Days of Future Past*
- Sam Mendes won't return to direct *Bond 24*, but producers hope to bring him back for another entry
- Giovanni Ribisi, Liam Neeson and Sarah Silverman join director Seth MacFarlane's *A Million Ways To Die In The West*
- Disney plans a sequel to *Oz The Great and Powerful*, but Sam Raimi may not direct
- Christopher Nolan's next film *Interstellar* will be released late 2014
- Jay Roach will direct the Lance Armstrong scandal biopic
- Jason Bateman, Charlie Day and Jason Sudeikis are confirmed to return for *Horrible Bosses 2*
- Work has begun on a script for a sequel to the *Evil Dead* remake
- Danny Boyle projects *Porno*, the sequel to *Trainspotting*, to be released by 2016
- *Jane Got A Gun* loses Michael Fassbender and director Lynn Ramsay, but gains new director Gavin O'Connor (*Warrior*)
- Disney plans reimaginings of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Pete's Dragon*

The last couple of times that Tom Cruise tried out sci-fi, it worked quite well (*Minority Report*) and also not so well (*War of the Worlds*).

But his next attempt at breaking through in the genre seems like it could really pay off, or at least this is how many are hoping *Oblivion* turns out.

The newest film by Joseph Kosinski (*Tron Legacy*) is perfect material for the Hollywood A-lister to do what he does best: partake in dangerous action scenes and yet still retain that strange charm all the way through (no matter what you think of him, you can't not agree).

He is joined in the cast by actors who have great talent in their own right, including Morgan Freeman (*The Shawshank Redemption*), Olga Kurylenko (*Quantum of Solace*), Andrea Riseborough (*Brighton Rock*), Nikolaj Coster-Waldau (*Game of Thrones*), Melissa Leo (*The*

## OBLIVION

Tom Cruise works on an abandoned Earth in director Joseph Kosinski's newest sci-fi film *Oblivion*



*Fighter*) and Zoe Bell (*Death Proof*).

Cruise plays former-Marine Commander Jack Harper, one of the last few remaining drone repairmen working on an abandoned Earth in the year 2073, which was nearly destroyed by an alien invasion sixty years ago. Jack works as part of a massive operation to extract the planet's remaining vital resources, and we catch up on him as his mission is nearing its completion.

However, his soaring existence literally comes crashing to Earth, in the form of a spacecraft carrying a strange young woman (Kurylenko). Her arrival triggers a series of events that force Jack to question the invasion that happened all those years ago, and its aftermath.

Can *Oblivion* deliver the goods, even with Tom Cruise in the starring role? Find out from **April 12th** to see if they've cracked it...

## SCARY MOVIE 5

The *Scary Movie* spoof franchise has had a fair amount of mixed results in its lifetime thus far, but after a seven-year hiatus the series is back once again to riff on today's most popular horror franchises.

David Zucker (*Airplane!*), the director of the last two films, here takes a writing credit as he paves the way for new director Malcolm D. Lee (*Undercover Brother*) to take on this supposed reboot of the horror-comedy parodies.

Gone, however, are franchise regulars Anna Faris and Regina Hall, who appear to have moved on to bigger and better things (well, Faris anyway...).

Instead, we now have the likes of Ashley Tisdale (*High School Musical*), Simon Rex (*Scary Movie 3*), Molly Shannon (*Analyze This*), Heather Locklear (*Hot in Cleveland*) and Jerry O'Connell (*Piranha 3D*) starring, but also be on the lookout for cameos by celebrities like Terry Crews (*The Expendables*), Chris Elliott

Charlie Sheen and Lindsay Lohan appear as themselves in a parody of *Paranormal Activity* in *Scary Movie 5*



(*Groundhog Day*), and current tabloid fodder Charlie Sheen and Lindsay Lohan.

"What are the films parodied this time round," I hear you not asking? They include the *Paranormal Activity* films, *Black Swan*, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, *Inception*, *The Hunger Games* and even the book phenomenon *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

In this spoof, a happily-married couple (Rex and Tisdale) notice some strange activity

when they bring their new baby home from hospital. When it begins to affect their careers - hers as a ballet dancer, his as an ape researcher (guess which parody is which) - they discover a nefarious demon to be haunting them. The couple, with help from experts and numerous cameras, decide to get rid of it before it's too late. Will *Scary Movie 5* be up there with its predecessors from **April 12th**? Eh, we're not betting on it...

## EVIL DEAD

Ah, April. The time of year for daffodils, leftover Easter eggs, and evil demonic ghouls possessing teenagers before killing them in the sickest, goriest ways imaginable.

So delightful...

Okay, so there's not really much to find that's delightful in something like the new remake of *The Evil Dead*, but for some reason they decided it would make good April entertainment, so here we are.

This is, of course, a remake of the classic Sam Raimi horror from 1981 that starred Bruce Campbell. But before the cynics start piling on to it, it's actually being produced by Raimi and Campbell themselves so at least some of the original's vision may be in tact, to help new director Fede Alvarez (in his feature directorial debut) along the way.

**Demonic spirits haunt teenagers in the delightful April release of the remake of *Evil Dead***



New stars brought on board for the new version are Jane Levy (*Fun Size*), Shiloh Fernandez (*Red Riding Hood*), Jessica Lucas (*Cloverfield*), Lou Pucci (*Thumbsucker*) and relative newcomer Elizabeth Blackmore.

The horror sees a group of students holed up in a remote cabin (what a shock), where they discover a Book of the Dead. When

they start reading from it, like the stupid teenagers that they are, they unwittingly manage to summon up dormant haunted demons that live in the nearby woods. The demons then possess the youngsters until only one is left to fight for their own survival.

*Evil Dead* opens in cinemas on **April 19th**.

## SPRING BREAKERS

Thankfully, this month is not just about evil spirits coming back from the grave, as above.

If you're in America, then now is surely the time for spring break which means a lot of hard partying with bikini-clad girls getting drunk and doing other, better stuff. While our envy wears off, we bring your attention to a film that even diminishes the joys of spring break called, oddly enough, *Spring Breakers*.

An indie film that has caused a bit of a stir recently for its racy attitudes towards sex, drugs and violence (you'll understand in a bit), it is destined to perhaps become something of a cult classic amongst teens and maybe even adults.

Directed by Harmony Korine (*Trash Humpers*, and also wrote the highly-controversial 1995 film *Kids*), this new one features actors like

**A group of partying girls get on the wrong side of the law in *Spring Breakers***



James Franco (*127 Hours*), Selena Gomez (*Monte Carlo*), Vanessa Hudgens (*Sucker Punch*), Ashley Benson (*Bart Got A Room*), and Rachel "yes, she's married to the film's director" Korine (*Trash Humpers*).

We follow four college friends, Faith (Gomez), Candy (Hudgens), Brit (Benson) and Cotty (Korine), who are struggling to get funding for their annual spring break getaway. They decide to rob a convenience

store, which they manage to do successfully but are soon caught and arrested. They are bailed out by a hustling gangster known as Alien (Franco), who takes the girls under his wing and into the vast criminal world. As the girls are seduced by Alien and his ways, it becomes unclear as to how far they are willing to go to have the best spring break ever.

*Spring Breakers* starts the party across the country from **April 5th**.

## News Round-Up

- A Christmas 2015 release is targeted for the next *Tintin* film
- A long-mooted *Veronica Mars* film is finally being made
- Colin Trevorrow (*Safety Not Guaranteed*) signs on to direct *Jurassic Park 4*
- Dave Bautista is Drax The Destroyer in *Guardians of the Galaxy*
- Christian Bale is sought for Ridley Scott's biblical flick *Exodus*
- Tom Cruise is up for Guy Ritchie's *The Man From U.N.C.L.E*
- David Goyer plans a new version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*
- Dwayne Johnson could be the focus of a seventh *Fast and Furious* film
- Antoine Fuqua may reteam with Denzel Washington for *The Equalizer*
- Alan Ritchson, Jeremy Howard, Pete Ploszek and Noel Fisher are cast as the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* in the reboot
- Robert Redford and Georges St-Pierre eye roles in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*
- The 86th Oscars will be held on March 2nd 2014, while the 87th will be on February 22nd 2015
- Nicola Peltz is confirmed for *Transformers 4*
- Tom Hiddleston is set to cameo in *The Muppets... Again!*
- Kate Mara (*House of Cards*) joins Johnny Depp in Wally Pfister's *Transcendence*
- Matthew Vaughn's *The Secret Service* will be made at 20th Century Fox
- MGM teams with GK Films to produce the *Tomb Raider* reboot
- Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo will return in the *Vacation* sequel/reboot
- Miramax and Martin Scorsese is developing a TV series based on *Gangs of New York*



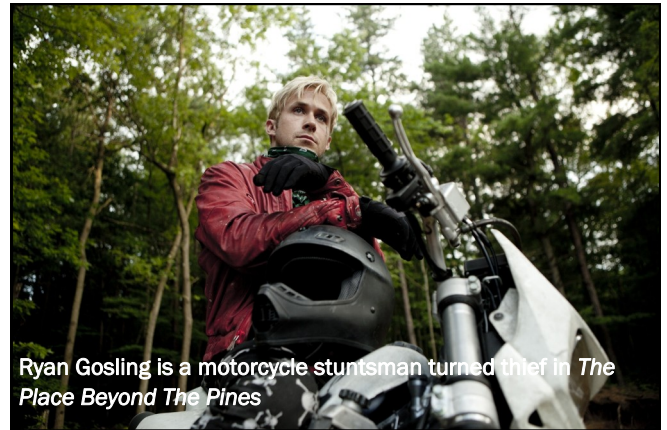
## THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES

There's no doubt that Ryan Gosling and Bradley Cooper are two of the industry's most appealing leading men at the moment, both with Oscar nominations to their name - for *Half Nelson* and *Silver Linings Playbook* respectively - and a growing fanbase for each.

Now, put them in the same movie, and you'll potentially have fireworks.

Said film is entitled *The Place Beyond The Pines*, the new film from acclaimed filmmaker Derek Cianfrance (*Blue Valentine*), which has already picked up some buzz from its debut at the Toronto Film Festival last year and is destined to pick up even more by the time it debuts in cinemas.

Gosling reunites with Cianfrance after their last collaboration on *Blue Valentine*, while joining him and Cooper are Eva Mendes (*Hitch*), Rose Byrne (*Bridesmaids*), Ray Liotta (*Goodfellas*), Dane DeHaan



Ryan Gosling is a motorcycle stuntman turned thief in *The Place Beyond The Pines*

(*Chronicle*), Bruce Greenwood (*Flight*) and Ben Mendelsohn (*Killing Them Softly*).

In a multi-generational story spanning fifteen years, Luke (Gosling) is a mysterious motorcycle racer who travels with a carnival as he performs dangerous stunts. He is also trying to reconnect with former lover Romina (Mendes), especially after the revelation that she recently gave birth to his biological son without his

knowledge. Determined to provide for his new family, Luke begins to commit a series of bank robberies which only puts him on a collision course with Avery (Cooper), a rookie cop navigating through a police department riddled with corruption, as led by dodgy detective Deluca (Liotta). Sounding more and more like a classic in the making, *The Place Beyond The Pines* comes out in cinemas on **April 12th**.



## OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN

Believe it or not, the White House is not going to have a good 2013.

Before it gets the full Roland Emmerich treatment in the director's action flick *White House Down*, out later this year, the President's official address is going to be taken over by terrorists in *Olympus Has Fallen*.

Directed by Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*), the action film is no doubt going to strike a chord with the American public, given its setting and pro-US emotions.

The question is, will the film prove effective with British audiences? Well, if *Lincoln* didn't seem to do much for us, we wouldn't count on it that much.

Either way, it should be a fun escapist action flick that has a rather decent cast including Gerard Butler (*300*), Aaron Eckhart (*The Dark Knight*), Morgan Freeman (*The Shawshank Redemption*),



Gerard Butler aims to take down terrorists who have seized the White House in *Olympus Has Fallen*

Angela Bassett (*Malcolm X*), Dylan McDermott (*The Campaign*), Melissa Leo (*The Fighter*), Rick Yune (*Die Another Day*), Ashley Judd (*Frida*), Robert Forster (*Jackie Brown*), Cole Hauser (*Good Will Hunting*) and Radha Mitchell (*Man on Fire*).

On just another day in the (oval) office, a North Korean terrorist mastermind is able to capture the White House and hold the President (Eckhart) hostage. It also happens that the only man

who can stop the terrorists and avert an even bigger disaster, disgraced secret service agent Mike Banning (Butler), is also trapped inside the building, and proceeds to go *Die Hard* on the situation.

Will *Olympus Has Fallen*, out on **April 19th**, be a better *Die Hard* movie than the actual recent *Die Hard* movie? As a preliminary answer, yes it will be. Will that answer be correct? Look out for my review next month to find out.



# BERNIE

If you thought Jack Black was only good for boyish gross-out comedies or animated films about bears that do martial arts, then *Bernie* is bound to take all of you by surprise. Certainly darker than the comedian's normal attire, it's based on a series of true events which makes the story all the more outrageous when you learn what it is. Black reunites with his *School of Rock* director Richard Linklater, who also co-wrote the film with debuting screenwriter Skip Hollandsworth, and delivers a performance that nabbed him a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor (Comedy/Musical). The film is light on its supporting cast, with the two main other actors being Shirley MacLaine (*Downton Abbey*) and Matthew McCounaughy (*Magic Mike*), but that's generally to be expected from a film that cost so little to make (\$6



Jack Black befriends an elderly woman with dire consequences in Richard Linklater's dark comedy *Bernie*

million, which may sound like a lot but in this day and age in Hollywood, it really isn't). The story follows a man named Bernie Tiede (Black), a local assistant mortician in a small Texas town who is a beloved member of the community. One day, he decides to befriend the wealthy, recently-widowed Marjorie Nugent (MacLaine), an elderly woman hated by the rest of the town for her apparent coldness and

unpleasant attitude. Bernie and Nugent soon become inseparable, but her growing dependency on him starts to become more and more abusive which forces Bernie to take extreme measures that attract the attention of the local District Attorney (McConaughy). Already a cult favourite in America after its release last year, *Bernie* hopes to do the same with British audiences from April 26th.



# THE LOOK OF LOVE

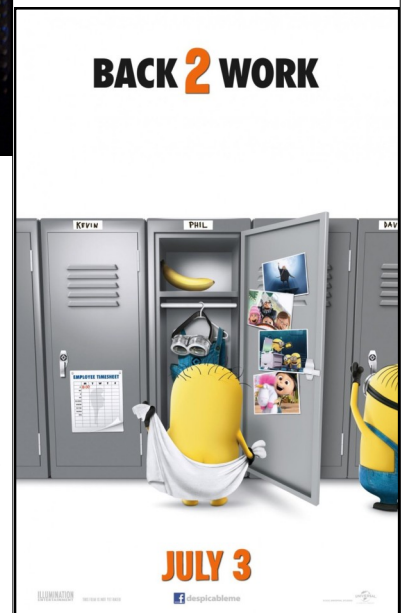
When it comes to listing the many British icons of the 20th century, one would most likely forget to include Paul Raymond on that list. Now, we know what you're thinking: who in Christendom is Paul Raymond? Not only was he one of the richest men in the world thanks to his controversial entrepreneurship, but he is also now the focus for the new biopic *The Look of Love*. It is the latest project by acclaimed British director Michael Winterbottom (*24 Hour Party People*), and he has once again reunited with regular collaborator Steve Coogan (*Tropic Thunder*) to bring the film to the big screen. Coogan headlines the film, which also stars Anna Friel (*London Boulevard*), Tamsin Egerton (*St. Trinian's*), Imogen Poots (*Fright Night*), Matt Lucas (*Alice in Wonderland*), Chris Addison



Steve Coogan rocks the screen as famed porn baron Paul Raymond in Michael Winterbottom's *The Look of Love*

(*In The Loop*), David Walliams (*Dinner for Schmucks*) and Stephen Fry (*V For Vendetta*). The film charts the rise of Paul Raymond (Coogan), better known throughout the media as the "King of Soho" due to the opening of his strip club - the first of its kind in the UK during the latter half of the 20th century - and property business which, along with his pornography business, netted him a

fortune of billions that made him one of the richest men in the world. The film also explores his differing relationships with three women: his long-suffering wife (Friel), his sultry lover (Egerton) and his tragic daughter (Poots). *The Look of Love* is bound to be yet another breakout hit for both the director and the star, and is out in cinemas from April 26th.



# STILL SHOWING: MARCH



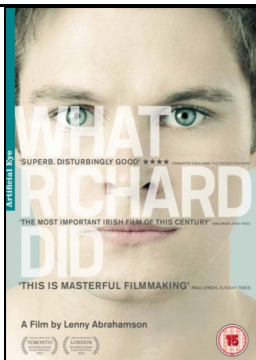
The Man with the Iron Fists

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 01/04/13



Silver Linings Playbook

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 01/04/13



What Richard Did

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 08/04/13



The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey

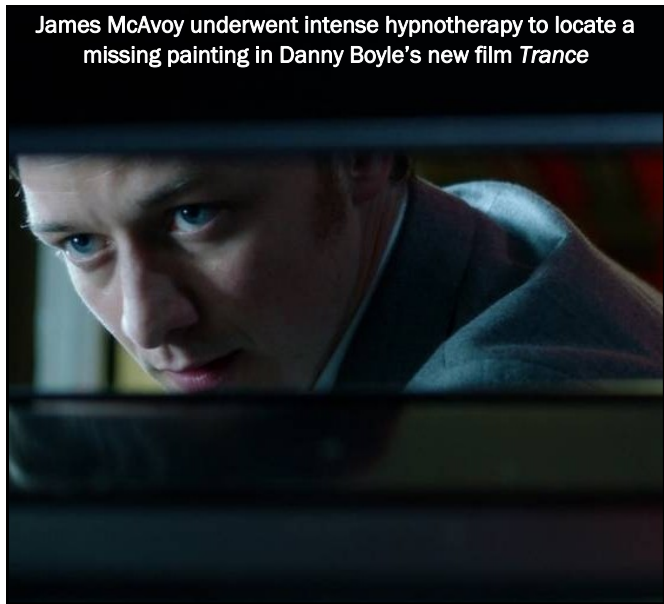
- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 08/04/13

March may be gone for another year, but its large share of films will live on in our memories (okay, probably not, but there was still quite a few...).

We had a large batch come in on the 1st of the month, including Richard Gere as a detestable financier (aren't they all?) in *Arbitrage*; Mark Wahlberg going against slimy mayor Russell Crowe in *Broken City*; Julianne Hough and Josh Duhamel playing lovey-dovey in romance *Safe Haven*; and a look inside a warped family in *Stoker*.

The next lot, which came out on the 8th, included action-thriller *Fire With Fire*; Seth Rogen went on a road trip with mother Barbara Streisand in *Guilt Trip*; James Franco became the wonderful wizard of Oz in Disney's CG-filled prequel *Oz The Great and Powerful*; Jason Statham and Jennifer Lopez - together at last! - in action flick *Parker*; Frank Langella and a robot - also together at last! - planned a heist in *Robot and Frank*; and Jude Law prescribed danger for Rooney Mara in Steven Soderbergh's final film *Side Effects*.

It didn't stop there, with even more big releases coming our way on the 15th. Amongst them were Steve Carell and Jim Carrey as rival



James McAvoy underwent intense hypnotherapy to locate a missing painting in Danny Boyle's new film *Trance*

magicians in comedy *The Incredible Burt Wonderstone*; Elijah Wood as a mannequin-obsessed murderer in *Maniac*; Zac Efron and co teamed up with a sultry Nicole Kidman in *The Paperboy*; teens fought back as evil terrorists invaded the country in *Red Dawn*; and James McAvoy sought out wanted criminal Mark Strong in *Welcome To The Punch*.

Thought it ended there? Think again! The ones that came on the 22nd included creepy thriller *Compliance*; the latest animated DreamWorks film about prehistoric family *The Flintstones* *The Croods*; Jason Bateman sought out Melissa McCarthy after she stole his identity in *Identity Thief*; and Nicholas Hoult led a kingdom to defeat their literal giant enemies in *Jack The Giant Slayer*. Wrapping up the month (thank goodness!) on

the 29th day of the month, we were given a wide selection of choices. For instance, we had a 3D re-release of the Disney/Pixar classic *Finding Nemo*; the delayed action sequel *G.I. Joe: Retaliation* finally made it to the big screen; the adaptation of the only decent Stephanie Meyer book *The Host*; and Danny Boyle came back to our screens after a busy summer for psychological thriller *Trance*.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, was all that there was for the film releases for March 2013.

If you're anxious to hear our opinions on just some of these many films that came out over the past month, then see pages 8-12.

But in the meantime, most of these films are still showing in cinemas - go out and see them, while you can...

# COMING SOON: MAY

As we will see in April, *Iron Man 3* will ignite the summer blockbuster season for 2013, which will continue on in to May as proven by its many high-profile flicks.

First, on the 3rd, we have rite-of-passage comedy *21 and Over*; kids' dance flick *All Stars*; DisneyNature is back with its new film *Chimpanzee*; Colin Farrell and Noomi Rapace star in thriller *Dead Man Down*; and Pedro Almodovar returns with his new Spanish-language comedy *I'm So Excited*. It's packed on the 10th, with Eric Bana and Olivia Wilde as part of an ensemble in crime drama *Deadfall*; Matthew McConaughey is a mysterious stranger in *Mud*; a naïve young Pakistani man is thrust into the world of Wall Street in Mira Nair's film *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*; and the crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise are back as they face their most deadly opponent yet in J.J. Abram's sci-fi sequel *Star Trek Into*



Kirk and Spock deal with a powerful and highly illogical villain in J.J. Abrams' sequel *Star Trek Into Darkness*

*Darkness*. The 17th is a little more light on the film releases, rather refreshingly, with some of them including music documentary *Beware of Mr Baker*; and Baz Luhrmann's long-awaited star-filled adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's famous book *The Great Gatsby*. The 24th is special, for on this date we get not one, not two, but THREE major summer releases all in one! They are all big in their own right, and they are Blue Sky's newest animated film *Epic*; the latest in the car-themed action series *Fast and Furious 6*; and the Wolf Pack make their final stand in the

outrageous comedy sequel *The Hangover Part 3*. Finally, the 31st brings us the starry comedy *The Big Wedding*; Gemma Arterton and Saoirse Ronan are a vampire duo in *Byzantium*; the creators of *Scary Movie* are back with *A Haunted House*; and the delightful French comedy *Populaire*. That appears to be it for what's coming out next month in May, but it should once again be a packed summer if this month is anything to go by!



Seven Psychopaths

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 15/04/13



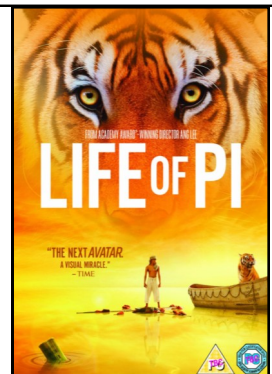
Pitch Perfect

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 15/04/13



Jack Reacher

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 22/04/13



Life of Pi

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 29/04/13

# REVIEWS

## STAR RATING SYSTEM



JUST DON'T



I WOULDN'T



MEH



WORTH A LOOK



RATHER ENJOYABLE



SEE IT NOW!



**DIRECTOR:** Danny Boyle

**CAST:** James McAvoy, Vincent Cassel, Rosario Dawson, Tuppence Middleton, Danny Sapini

**RUNNING TIME:** 101 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 15

### ONE-SENTENCE PLOT

A fine-art auctioneer (McAvoy) gets mixed up with a criminal gang, and seeks a hypnotherapist (Dawson) to help him recover a missing painting...

### BASIC SUMMARY

Trance returns to the feel of Danny Boyle's earlier, darker flicks with its heavy plotting, bizarre imagery, and mind-boggling twists and turns.

### WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?

This is a very difficult film to talk about without giving anything away, because it's one of those films where the less you know about it going in, then the more effect it will have on you when it ends. However, I shall do my best in divulging my thoughts on it while skewing through as few plot points as possible.

Any film tackling the interior of the mind is almost guaranteed to be complex and demanding of your full attention so you don't miss a beat. With every manoeuvre that the film performs, Boyle keeps the focus of the audience firmly on the events happening on-screen, beginning the film with a craftily-made robbery sequence that appears to have been cut-and-paste from another heist film - think Heat meets the National Gallery, and you have it. Entertaining as it is thrilling, it manages to set the story in motion quickly and easily enough to introduce the audience for the wild ride it's about to go on. And all before the title appears, too.

The rest of the film is dedicated to the hypnotherapy, which is where the psychological notions come into full play. Boyle manages to

make each session stand on its own in terms of style, pacing and editing, and not only do they prove highly effective and - dare I say - hypnotic, but thanks to cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle's luscious lens work, they are hard to leave the memory.

The three leads all do great work in their many-layered parts. James McAvoy easily has the most difficult performance to pull off here, especially as we dive deeper into his mind. However, his mental breakdown only adds to the sheer complexity of the character, and results in one of the actor's most accomplished roles yet. Vincent Cassel also does unexpected turns with his antagonist, starting off as just another hard-boiled criminal fiend - albeit one with a love for football and Chinese takeaways - but gradually reveals a softer, more human side to his goals. You may or may not start to side with him at certain times (again, without giving the game away). Rosario Dawson, in her biggest and best part in a long time, is a luxuriant and alluring presence that brings another side to her acting abilities that even long-time fans would have never thought were possible from her.

The over-lapping mystery of the missing painting - the result of an ill-timed attempt of double-crossing during the opening robbery - is something that does keep you guessing at many moments, but it becomes less and less important as we dive deeper into the minds of these three people, and it becomes more a psychological character study more than anything else.

The real star of the film is probably Boyle himself. Here, he makes a film that treats its audience with great regard without ever dumbing down while also get them still talking about the events of its running time long after they leave the cinema. Above all, he proves that in an age where he's wider known for more crowd-pleasing efforts like his Oscar-winning Slumdog Millionaire, 127

Hours and, of course, last summer's Olympics opening ceremony, he can still re-tread the feel of his earlier days as a filmmaker (films like Shallow Grave, Trainspotting and A Life Less Ordinary) and still feel right at home, success be damned. It's a good reminder that those darker early years are not lost on the director, and it's a welcome antithesis to his more public feel-good work.

### WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?

Although the pacing is fine throughout, there are one or two moments which are perhaps not thought out as much as it thinks. For instance, a romantic triangle seems to form (two guys, one woman - come on, it was inevitable) but when two members of said triangle decide to get together, it just seems to come out of nowhere with no hints of it beforehand. One could argue that it's all to do with the mind (again, being as vague as possible with the purpose of not giving anything away) but its sudden appearance is rather strange, even for a psychological film.

The third act of the film, which strong and bringing some form of closure to the overall narrative, is troublesome in its own right. I've gone on long enough throughout this review without bringing up the Inception comparisons, but screw it: fans of Christopher Nolan's film will probably point out the similarities in each film's big reveal, only here with a few role reversals and perhaps an even grimmer solution. Other than that, it may feel a tad generic for a thriller and slightly lacking in logic in its explanations, but they do nothing to kill its pacing and drama which proves to be rather strong.

### BOTTOM LINE

Boyle works his magic once again with Trance, a thriller that will stay in your mind forever.







**DIRECTOR:** Jon M. Chu  
**CAST:** Dwayne Johnson, Bruce Willis, DJ Cotrona, Lee Byung-hung, Adrienne Palicki, Ray Park, Jonathan Pryce, Ray Stevenson, Elodie Yung, RZA, Walton Goggins, Channing Tatum

**RUNNING TIME:** 110 mins  
**CERTIFICATE:** 12A

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**  
 When the GI Joes are attacked and wiped out, a small group of survivors fight back...

**BASIC SUMMARY**  
 Just another generic, overblown, logic-free and just plain stupid all-American action blockbuster.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**  
 Dwayne Johnson nowadays seems to be the go-to guy for sparking some life into dying franchises (you know, when he's not cringing his way through various family flicks). It worked with Fast Five, and his presence here certainly makes it more enjoyable, as he gives a confident and assured performance with what little material he has to work with.

The film's strongest action scene - and trust me, as you'll find out that's saying a lot - is the one that's been plastered all over the promotional material: a rope-laden sword battle on top of a snowy mountain, which involves the mute Snake Eyes (another cool character, by the way), a body bag, and LOTS of slow-motion. It's just a shame they couldn't keep it

a surprise because it's pretty cool, silly though it may be.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**  
 A trend I've noticed in movies based on previous Hasbro toy products like Transformers and Battleship is that loud, mindless action often outweighs a basic plot that keeps things going. The trend continues here, with a thin storyline which already feels familiar after the likes of Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol to accompany a long series of nonsensical and misguided explosions and gunfire.

Its constant use of shaky-cam makes things worse since we can't even see what is going on half the time, and the film makes no time to explain what the purpose of each action scene was so we have no idea why they were even doing it.

The 3D conversion - which stands as the official reason for its sudden nine-month delay from last year - adds absolutely nothing to the mix, aside from maybe giving you an even bigger headache.

The film also utterly fails with its characters because, alarmingly, we are never given the chance to really know any of them. Take DJ Cotrona, who plays... actually, I have no idea what his name is. In fact, who IS this guy? What can be said about him, aside from the fact that he exists? These are questions that are never answered, and we are left to figure

out why he was given any screen time in the first place if he does absolutely nothing.

Even the ones that they do attempt to explore are so rushed and woefully executed that we forget about them shortly after. In the opening minutes, we see that Johnson's character has kids but then they're never seen or mentioned again. Adrienne Palicki's character describes overcoming sexism, particularly from her dead father, but the problem is that she gives the monologue HALF-NAKED. More than a mixed message from the filmmakers, there.

The GI Joe brand has always been associated with American patriotism, but this movie goes out of its way to shove it in our faces without subtlety. For instance, a passcode to a secret gun vault (owned by an underused Bruce Willis) is shown to be 1776. History buffs will have already caught on to that, and are therefore surprised the film didn't start chanting "USA! USA!".

Add on top of that villains that do nothing, character motivations that come out of nowhere, and anti-climactic showdowns, and there you have the film's problems summarised.

**BOTTOM LINE**  
 You would've thought that Hasbro would have learned their lesson after Battleship, but no...



**DIRECTOR:** Sam Raimi  
**CAST:** James Franco, Mila Kunis, Rachel Weisz, Michelle Williams, Zach Braff, Joey King, Bruce Campbell

**RUNNING TIME:** 130 mins  
**CERTIFICATE:** PG

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**  
 An man named Oscar (Franco) is transported to the land of Oz, where he becomes the famous wizard...

**BASIC SUMMARY**  
 As with its main protagonist, *Oz The Great and Powerful* is not a great film, but a good one.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**  
 Going into this film, I was aware that it could either be good or *Alice in Wonderland*. Luckily, it's not near what Tim Burton's film "accomplished", but it's not an instant classic like the 1939 film, either. It drifts somewhere in the middle, with perhaps slightly more of a lean towards the better side.

Like Burton's film, however, the film looks marvellous. Yes, it may be over-excessive with its CGI but for this kind of story and setting it's appropriate enough. There's a great amount of depth and beauty into the world of Oz that they've recreated which allows for some nice creativity and instant likableness. From an audience perspective, it's great to look at, even in 3D (that, in turn, paves the way for some nice pop-out moments).

I found myself smiling at the film's various references to the original film that we've all ingrained into our heads. The black-and-white footage at the start before we go to Oz, the design of the Emerald City, any scene involving the green-skinned Wicked Witch of the West (some brilliant make-up on display there, by the way) and the appearance of the Wizard's form as seen in that classic Judy Garland film. They were just some of the many moments throughout that brought me back a little bit to the films of my childhood, and I liked their use more than I thought I would.

We get some new characters as well, including Zach Braff as a flying monkey and Joey King as a young China doll figurine. Both are very likable and decent characters for the film's younger audience members, with Braff getting a few funny lines as well, including one involving bananas that had me chuckling.

We also have the three witches including Glinda, as lovingly portrayed by Michelle Williams, Rachel Weisz having a lot of fun as Evanora, and Mila Kunis who perhaps gives the most quietly powerful performance of the film as Theodora, the love-struck witch who eventually takes a tragic turn.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**  
 While I did enjoy most of the scenes in the movie, there were some truly frightening ones as well, at least for

younger kids. A forest scene, already spooky enough, is inhabited by creatures that look about as scary as anything from Raimi's *Evil Dead* films. There are also a few scary moments involving the winged baboon henchmen of the Wicked Witch. So, it might be a bit traumatising for some children, with that PG rating well deserved.

As much as I liked the rest of the cast, it felt like James Franco was truly out of place as our main character. Maybe someone with a tad more charisma and charm would have done the trick - perhaps Hugh Jackman might have been better, or even Johnny Depp who I heard was lining up to play him early on but for some reason didn't even though he seems like a better choice for the role. Like I said, Franco isn't horrible, he's not even that bad, it's just a mild case of miscasting.

It can also be very predictable at times. I'm finding out more and more that the main weakness to prequels are that we already know what's going to happen to these characters, so the suspense is made redundant as a result. It is the same here, without giving any plot points away, but at least the film was fun enough to keep us invested.

**BOTTOM LINE**  
 An entertaining, colourful adventure back into the world of Oz.





**DIRECTOR:** Andrew Niccol  
**CAST:** Saoirse Ronan, Jake Abel, Max Irons, Chandler Canterbury, Frances Fisher, Boyd Holbrook, Diane Kruger, William Hurt, Emily Browning

**RUNNING TIME:** 125 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 12A

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

In a world where aliens inhabit human bodies, one of them becomes obsessed with the romantic memories of one young woman (Ronan)...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

A long, dull, incredibly tedious and overall failure of a sci-fi in any shape or form.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

Erm..... It looks nice? No seriously, that's about it.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

Although there are thankfully no sparkly vampires or shirtless werewolves in sight, we are treated to a strange alien race that inhabit human bodies and roam the world. Now, this would be interesting if we learned more about them and what their reasons are for doing so, but we never do. We're just introduced to the idea and their existence, as shown through painfully awkward contact lenses that make the eyes in Twilight seem more natural in comparison, and we never learn any more from them.

Apart from maybe the fact that they

are incredibly stupid - we learn that they can just give things to other aliens with full trust, and believe anything they say to each other. This advanced alien race not at all understanding the concept of lying is one of many contrivances which I frankly don't have enough room for here, but trust me when I say it's only the tip of the iceberg.

Saoirse Ronan has proven herself to be far better than the material given to her, and this comes off as she unfortunately gives the weakest - certainly the most one-dimensional - performance of her career. In fact, no-one seems to give a credible performance in this film: Diane Kruger is a pretty bland villain; William Hurt pops up as a dull cowboy (no, really); it's very disappointing for these actors who have proven themselves elsewhere to not give a crap here.

It also suffers from some serious pacing issues. Not only does nothing happen for most of it, leaving us completely bored and confused, but it never bothers to hold our full attention. I saw people in the cinema continuously looking at their watches more than the screen itself; it was that dull.

On top of that, the ending is a total cop-out after a large build-up where consequences are bound to be made, but never are.

But let's get to my main gripe with this movie: the main romance, as is

expected by now from Meyer. While the main girl (Ronan) gets some points for having more personality than Bella Swan, it's the lead male that makes this aspect unbearable. The boy she pines for - a guy named Jared (Jake Abel) - is possibly the worst romantic lead I have ever seen. The first time they meet (this is when she is still wholly human, mind you), he suddenly forces a kiss on her, which amps up the creep levels faster than Gary Glitter at a One Direction concert. When they next meet, and the girl is inhabited with the alien spirit, he proceeds to punch her unconscious like Chris Brown on steroids. Dude, I understand why you're pissed, but it's still your girlfriend's body that you're hitting, you dick. He even starts calling her "it" (nice!) and even tries to kill her at one point for reasons which aren't directly her fault. All the while, I was sat there thinking "Jesus, this is the guy she's meant to be in love with?! He's doing and saying all this horrible, horrible stuff! Why are we supposed to like this guy, at all?!" At least with Edward Cullen we got something to laugh at because his character was so ridiculous, but this guy was just so despicably unlikable and horrible that we wonder what she ever saw in him.

**BOTTOM LINE**

It's official: the work of Stephanie Meyer is completely unredeemable.



**DIRECTORS:** Kirk DeMicco, Chris Sanders

**CAST:** Nicolas Cage, Emma Stone, Ryan Reynolds, Catherine Keener, Clarke Duke, Cloris Leachman

**RUNNING TIME:** 98 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** U

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

A prehistoric family ventures outside of their secluded cave to find a new home...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

Fast-paced humour mixed with gorgeous animation and great vocal performances make *The Croods* a fascinating prehistoric discovery.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

Unlike some of DreamWorks' most recent animated films, including their last effort *Rise of the Guardians*, this one seems to take more advantage of the fact that it's a cartoon. Its first and second acts are filled with moments of slapstick and all-round goofiness from its characters, and while not all the jokes work, they are still very creative with a lot of passion thrown into them. In that sense, it's more *Madagascar* than it is *How To Train Your Dragon*.

The animation is just stunning to look at. Ranging from atmospheric one minute to colourful the next, it gives the audience a lovely-looking world to indulge ourselves in for the entire ride. I saw in the credits that famed cinematographer Roger Deakins was

brought on board to assist in how the film looks on screen, and judging by how fantastic it all looks then the mind boggles as to why he isn't an Oscar winner by this point (nominated ten times, most recently for *Skyfall*, never won - travesty if I ever saw one, but I digress...).

It's also helped by some surprisingly great voice performances. Nicolas Cage is the alpha papa Grug, who may look like a prehistoric descendant of Wreck-It Ralph but he brings all the madness and heart that we know and love from the man into his character. Emma Stone also does wonders with the teenage daughter Eep, proving that her charm and likability stretches further with her voice acting as opposed to her live-action presence. The same can be said for Ryan Reynolds as nomad Guy, who turns what could have been a one-dimensional character and makes him a lot of fun and interesting to boot. The other voice actors did fine too, but those three stood out for me the most.

Although the first and second acts of the film are fun enough, it really started to stand out by the time it got to its third act. Heavily leaning towards more dramatic territory than before, which could prove distracting to some with its sudden shift in tone, it becomes more character focused and unpredictable in places. I was actually concerned about what was

going to happen to certain characters and although it eventually succumbed to the typical happy ending of such animated films, it was still tense to watch.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

If there are a few weaknesses, one would be that there isn't much of a story to it. Don't get me wrong, there is a basic storyline being told, but it just feels kind of bare and not that interesting compared to the rest of the film.

The character development is pretty thin, too. Aside from the three characters mentioned earlier, we don't really get to know them that well which is a shame seeing how much physical stuff the film has them do. Perhaps more of a chance to become accustomed to this family would have been appreciated.

We are also subject to character and story traits that feel way too familiar in (ahem) modern animated films. From the over-protective father (e.g. *Finding Nemo*) to the jealousy of another character (e.g. *Toy Story*), it gets old pretty fast and leaves us pining for something a little more original and refreshing to be done with them.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Fun for any family of any (stone) age, *The Croods* is great fun with good performances and animation to die for.





**DIRECTOR:** Don Scardino

**CAST:** Steve Carell, Jim Carrey, Steve Buscemi, Olivia Wilde, Alan Arkin, James Gandolfini, Brad Garrett

**RUNNING TIME:** 100 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 12A

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

A famed Las Vegas magician (Carell) must rediscover his passion for magic if he is to compete with a rising talent (Carrey) who could put him out of business...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

An un-magical comedy with very few laughs, detestable characters and a jumbled story.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

Contrary to what you may have just read, the film does have one or two big laughs here and there, even if they are rare.

Most of them come from Jim Carrey, who features in his biggest film role in ages and savours every minute of it. As a Blaine-esque street magician, his stunts allow the actor the freedom to indulge in the bizarre physical comedy that made him a legend in the first place. One such memorable stunt involves a twist on the old card trick (let's just say it involves a punch-up), and it's just one of the many few moments where this movie shines. The only other two actors who seem to be having fun with what they do are Alan Arkin and Olivia Wilde, both of

whom are funny and have good moments whenever on-screen.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

It's a shame that there are a good chunk of comedic performers in this film, because it really isn't that funny. The jokes are either too obscure and not well thought through, or come across as being overly harsh and not pleasant to watch. When we see Carell and Buscemi perform as partners onstage, it doesn't feel like true chemistry and instead is beyond awkward to watch (which, to be fair, was probably the point since they can't stand each other once they're offstage). There are many other moments like that which leave you wondering if you're supposed to laugh or cringe.

Perhaps it's hard to laugh at the comedy when it presents us with deeply unsympathetic characters. Carell plays our main character, an egotistical and self-involved magician who is meant to rediscover his passion for magic. The problem is, he's too egotistical and self-involved to care about, and we start to hate him instead of root for him. When he stays in Wilde's character's apartment, he criticises the flat, the food, and even her gender when she reveals her talents as an aspiring magician. It does not come off as charming in the slightest, but rather as a mean-spirited attack by someone who it's idiotic to think is

the guy we're supposed to like. Buscemi, who appears to be on standby-mode for most of the movie, is wasted in what should be a much bigger role but isn't because the filmmakers wanted more development for the main character we already don't like.

This is also another one of those films where the story is way too predictable. It's the typical "riches to rags to riches again" story which is in need of a clever update sooner rather than later because it's getting old and fast.

The script is lazy. Late in the film, a character appears to have had a stroke and is presumed to have died shortly after. But we see him again in the climax, fresh-faced and lively as ever. Whatever the point of that previous scene was, I guess we'll never know.

Its tone is also very muddled. One moment, it's a dark comedy. Then, it's a screwball. Then, it's a kid's film (sort of). Then, it's a hero's story. Oh my God, it's way too lost. If it could have just picked one genre and stuck to that all the way through, then we may have something. Unfortunately, it doesn't, and it suffers a lot because of that.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Abraca-sod off, *The (Not So) Incredible Burt Wonderstone*.



**DIRECTOR:** Bryan Singer

**CAST:** Nicholas Hoult, Eleanor Tomlinson, Stanley Tucci, Ian McShane, Bill Nighy, John Kassir, Eddie Marsan, Ewan McGregor

**RUNNING TIME:** 114 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 12A

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

Farm boy Jack (Hoult) grows a giant beanstalk which leads to a vicious world of giants...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

A forgettable and illogical fairy-tale fantasy flick that ironically does nothing imaginative with its material.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

I will give the film some credit for its production design - even if most of it is CGI, but more on that later - which does look quite good if a bit conventional.

Some of its 3D is also impressively done, but in a way I wasn't quite expecting. There are one or two POV shots of the giants looking down on certain figures, and the 3D helps them really stand out from this upward angle. But like I said, it's only a couple of shots that are like this and otherwise the 3D is just okay.

The film also has a decent third act, in that it's action-packed with a few cool moments with its CGI and, once again, its production design.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

One of the main problems with this

supposed update to the fairy tale is that its story doesn't feel new and updated in itself. It is simply the basic "rescue the princess" story that we've all seen millions of times before - which, to its credit, may have been director Bryan Singer's intention to recapture the fairy tale feel - and in this day and age it's really bland and one-dimensional. Perhaps some more thought could have been placed in the script to make it stand out more, but it is as it is, I'm afraid.

The exact same criticism has to be reserved for its characters and the performances. Nicholas Hoult doesn't really bring anything to the boring titular role that he hasn't done before. Eleanor Tomlinson's only job seems to be the princess who must always be rescued (yeah, you can wear that bad-ass armour all you want, you're still a damsel, missy). Ewan McGregor is a pretty pointless choice - and I think the only reason he was hired was so he could say the script's painful *Star Wars* reminder line "I have a bad feeling about this" - and Ian McShane looks bored out of his mind as the King... although Stanley Tucci at least has fun despite being the most blatantly-obvious villain in recent memory.

As if we have enough characters to not give a toss about, the film goes out of its way to make us feel bad for certain characters who we don't even know. For instance - SPOILER

ALERT - it's no shock that Eddie Marsan's character gets bumped off after like only one line of dialogue, but the film makes time to give him a funeral scene. Why should we care about a character we know nothing about or even did that much to begin with? I don't know, but it's frustrating as hell and stops the movie dead.

The film's CGI is truly atrocious, especially on the giants. The whole point of using it to create living things with the technology is to make them look as realistic as possible, but I was always aware that I was watching computer graphics rather than actual characters like they're supposed to be. It's not only a distraction, it's insulting when you take into account that this cost about \$200 million to make.

Whilst on the subject on giants, the world that we enter is not at all creative, even ripping off *Avatar* in places, and even lacks in decent logic. Isn't the point of the giants' world in *Jack and the Beanstalk* being that EVERYTHING is bigger than normal? In that case, why are there lambs and bees that are the same size as our world? How are there even lambs in a land above the clouds? Whose bright idea was it to not re-read the script?! It all makes no sense, I tells ya! And the film suffers immensely for it.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Fee, fi, fo, fum, *Jack The Giant Slayer* is pretty dumb.





**DIRECTOR:** Steven Soderbergh  
**CAST:** Jude Law, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Rooney Mara, Channing Tatum  
**RUNNING TIME:** 106 mins  
**CERTIFICATE:** 15  
**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

A young woman (Mara) is prescribed a new medication by her psychiatrist (Law), but things soon take a dark turn when its side effects become apparent...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

A thrilling dive into the dark world of pharmaceutical practise, with excellent performances all round.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

*Side Effects* is thought to be director Steven Soderbergh's last film before his retirement, and by God has he gone out on a high note.

Having not been as impressed with his last few films as I would have liked to have been (although *Magic Mike* was pretty entertaining), this was a great jump back up to his high level of directorial greatness that we will surely miss from him.

The way that this film is paced, shot, edited, framed, it all feels like the filmmaker decided to go all out with this one. Judging by how wonderful it all looks and feels, it's a major success on his front.

It is clear, from the film's very first shot which echoes *Psycho*'s opening footage, that his main source of



inspiration is that of the work of Alfred Hitchcock. As we dive deeper into the mystery and the characters behind it, there are twists and turns around everywhere which remind one of, say, *Vertigo* in the sense that it cleverly throws its audience in a loop without a hint of predictability. There is also one major plot point earlier in the film - don't worry, I won't dare give it away here - that literally made people in the cinema I saw this in gasp loudly. It was a beautiful moment of clarity, and one that proved the audience was invested enough to actually give a damn when such-and-such happens around these people - always the sign of a good movie.

We have four major performances on display, and all of them get the job done. Jude Law is the lead and he does a great job, probably one of his more impressive roles I've seen from him; Rooney Mara makes her complex character even more tangled up with her stunning performance; Channing Tatum continues his meteoric rise to credibility with his charming and likable role as Mara's husband; and Zeta-Jones, although perhaps the weakest of the bunch, has some good moments as well.

It has a story that's gripping enough to the point that I was legitimately curious to find out what was going to happen next. This isn't the sort of movie that you can guess where it's

headed in the first five minutes, and the characters were interesting enough to keep me guessing. As it becomes apparent that there may be more to the situation than first realised, the film is clever enough to tease us with the answers and the truth will only be revealed when you go further down the rabbit hole.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

As good as the film is, it too manages to fall victim to some overused plot points and story beats. Once it transpires that there may be a conspiracy in the corporate side of things, the film uses some elements that we've seen quite a few times in thrillers like this before. Blackmail? Check. Character placing pictures of figures on his wall in order to connect the dots, to perhaps symbolise his growing obsession? Check. The use of a hidden wire on a body to reveal the true criminal behind the picture? Yup, that's there too. Just these and a couple others really got to me, but honestly, that's just a minor nit-pick.

That, and there are a few moments which use the hand-held camera effect in ways which feel a little bit distracting but no so much that it damages its impact.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Soderbergh saves the best for last, as *Side Effects* is now my new personal favourite film of the departing director.



**DIRECTOR:** Park Chan-wook  
**CAST:** Mia Wasikowska, Matthew Goode, Nicole Kidman, Dermot Mulroney, Jacki Weaver, Lucas Till, Alden Ehrenreich  
**RUNNING TIME:** 99 mins  
**CERTIFICATE:** 18  
**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

After her father dies, India (Wasikowska) meets Uncle Charlie (Goode) who moves in with her and her unstable mother (Kidman)...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

Expertly shot and hauntingly acted, but its hollow surface is a major setback for this gothic tale.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

Something you may find me saying a lot in this review is that *Stoker* looks absolutely stunning. Its production design, costumes, cinematography are all outstanding and deserve a good chunk of credit. Right from the first shot of the movie, you are drawn into the atmosphere and how appropriately bare everything seems. But colour does start to seep in eventually, just as the cleverly-designed credits come in, and the contrasts on everything look great when they do.

For his first English-language film, it's not a bad attempt by Park Chan-wook. It maintains the disturbing nature of his previous film *Oldboy*, and may or may not even continue some of that film's themes. His attention to detail



is precise and it serves the story well for as long as it can.

The cast is basically made up of three people - yes, there are obviously more actors, but these three are always dominant - and they are all great. Mia Wasikowska is especially excellent as the teenage girl brought into the dark world of her Uncle Charlie (Matthew Goode, in a very creepy performance). Her beauty and external innocence is both frightening and hypnotic all at once. Nicole Kidman also gets some nice subtle moments as the grieving mother, but she isn't given a lot to do.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

At times, the film can get a bit clumsy and even lazy for its own good. Early on, we're introduced to a plot element of a mysterious key which eventually turns out to be one of those MacGuffin keys. The problem is, it's introduced a bit too early and by the time it's brought in to further the plot, we've almost forgotten about it to the point that we don't exactly care. There are a few other moments like that, where a certain plot device is introduced, ignored for most of the movie, and suddenly dropped back on us. Perhaps a little more development in those sort of areas would have been appreciated, but it just felt too clustered to focus on them.

The story, and the characters, can also get rather predictable in places.

The big revelation that we're supposed to be shocked by when we discover Uncle Charlie's origins isn't all that shocking - if anything, we figured out what he had gotten up to from the first time we get that creepy look at him from afar. It's during a funeral scene and he's standing over on the hill from a distance. If that doesn't scream "I may or may not have had something to do with this" then I don't know what does.

The film's climax is very by-the-books and reminiscent of some of the lesser thrillers we've seen in the past. It's especially disappointing given some of the build-up which, to its credit, is rather well done, but it's kind of a cop out. It's as if it was going to go out on something more high-profile, but they may have run out of money before they could shoot it (which would be weird, seeing as they got someone like Nicole Kidman to appear in it... but who cares?).

I also want to point out that, despite Jacki Weaver's rising presence in films (with two Oscar nominations to her name already), the actress is barely used here. I point this out because she can be a great screen presence, and to see her wasted like this is insulting to say the least.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Severe underdevelopment in the story department harms this dark, luscious-looking gothic story. But it'll do.



# UK Film Release Dates

## APRIL

### 5TH

- All Things To All Men
- Dark Skies
- A Late Quartet
- The Odd Life of Timothy Green
- Spring Breakers

### 12TH

- The Gatekeepers
- Oblivion
- The Place Beyond The Pines
- Scary Movie 5

### 19TH

- The Evil Dead
- Love Is All You Need
- Olympus Has Fallen
- Promised Land

### 26TH

- Bernie
- Iron Man 3
- The Look of Love

## MAY

### 3RD

- 21 and Over
- All Stars
- Chimpanzee
- Dead Man Down
- I'm So Excited

### 10TH

- Deadfall
- Everyone Has A Plan
- The Hijacking
- Mud
- Our Children
- Reluctant Fundamentalist
- Star Trek Into Darkness

### 17TH

- Beware of Mr Baker
- The Great Gatsby
- Hummingbird
- The Liability

### 24TH

- Easy Money
- Epic
- Fast and Furious 6
- The Hangover Part III
- Something In The Air

### 31ST

- The Big Wedding
- Byzantium
- A Haunted House
- Populaire

All release dates are  
correct as of time of  
press.

## JUNE

### 7TH

- After Earth
- The Company You Keep
- The Iceman
- The Last Exorcism: Part 2
- Therese

### 14TH

- Call Girl
- Man of Steel
- Much Ado About Nothing
- Summer in February

### 21ST

- Before Midnight
- R.I.P.D
- The Seasoning House
- World War Z

### 28TH

- Despicable Me 2
- Honour
- This Is The End

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