

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

|   |      |
|---|------|
| <i>The Hangover Part III +<br/>The Great Gatsby</i> | 2    |
| <i>Fast and Furious 6 + Epic</i>                    | 3    |
| <i>I'm So Excited + Mud</i>                         | 4    |
| <i>Byzantium + Dead Man<br/>Down</i>                | 5    |
| <i>Summary of April</i>                             | 6    |
| <i>Coming in June</i>                               | 7    |
| <i>Reviews</i>                                      | 8-12 |
| <i>Release Dates</i>                                | 13   |

Also Out This Month

- *21 and Over* - a coming of age party goes horribly wrong for three young men
- *All Stars* - a group of kids form a dance troupe
- *Deadfall* - Eric Bana and Olivia Wilde are on the run
- *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* - Mira Nair's adaptation of the political thriller novel
- *Hummingbird* - Jason Statham is an ex-soldier trapped in a criminal underworld
- *The Big Wedding* - an all-star cast assembles for a nuptial farce
- *A Haunted House* - the Wayans spoof the current trend of hand-held horror flicks
- *Populaire* - French comedy about an aspiring secretary

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## MOVIE OF THE MONTH: *STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS*

Who would've thought that not only would JJ Abrams' reboot of the *Star Trek* franchise be hugely successful, but would have also netted the director the position of another "Star" franchise that filmmakers would have killed for?

But before Abrams can get to work on returning audiences to a galaxy far, far away, he's returned to where no man has gone before in the long-awaited follow-up to his 2009 film. *Star Trek Into Darkness*, as it is called, has reassembled most of the cast and crew from the last film, as well as added some new ones, and has amped up the action, the drama and, of course, the story.

Returning writers Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman are behind the latter, but so is an intriguing new addition to the writing team: Abrams regular Damon Lindelof (co-creator of the Abrams-produced *Lost*) also has a writing credit, so there is some mystery abound behind its walls. Then again, the guy also wrote *Cowboys and Aliens* and *Prometheus*, so it's fully understandable that fans may be wary about entrusting the USS Enterprise to him.

Either way, the leading crew of said starship is also back, including Chris Pine (*This Means War*),



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

Zachary Quinto (*Margin Call*), Karl Urban (*Dredd*), John Cho (*Harold and Kumar*), Zoe Saldana (*Avatar*), Anton Yelchin (*Like Crazy*), Simon Pegg (*Hot Fuzz*) and Bruce Greenwood (*Flight*). The new additions to the expanded cast are just as impressive, with Benedict Cumberbatch (*Sherlock*) leading the likes of Alice Eve (*Starter For 10*), Peter Weller (*Robocop*) and Noel Clarke (*Kidulthood*) into a universe of warp zones, phasers set on stun, and freaky alien women that the captain needs to bonk every now and then.

The new sequel - also the twelfth in the long line of *Star Trek* movies - sees the continuing adventures of the crew of the USS Enterprise, led by Captain

James T Kirk (Pine) and his first mate, the Vulcan Spock (Quinto).

The Enterprise is suddenly called home in the wake of a horrific terrorist attack from within its own organization. Defying regulations with his own personal score to settle, Kirk decides to lead the crew on a manhunt to find and capture a supposedly unstoppable force of nature and bring them to justice. But as they play an epic game of life and death, love is challenged, friendships are torn apart, and sacrifices must be made for the only family that Kirk has left: his crew.

Promising to be an exciting, emotional overhaul, *Star Trek Into Darkness* opens in cinemas on May 9th

## News Round-Up

- A third *GI Joe* movie is planned by Paramount
- *The Avengers 2* will be filmed in the UK in early 2014
- The sequel to *Finding Nemo*, entitled *Finding Dory*, is set for a late 2015 release
- Will Arnett joins *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*
- Tim Burton will direct Christoph Waltz and Amy Adams in biopic *Big Eyes*
- Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway board Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*
- Zoe Saldana, Michael Rooker, Ophelia Lovibond and Lee Pace join *Guardians of the Galaxy*
- *Fast and Furious 7*, to be directed by James Wan (*Insidious*), will be released in summer 2014
- Guillermo Del Toro's ghost film *Crimson Peak* adds Benedict Cumberbatch and Jessica Chastain
- Veteran film critic Roger Ebert dies aged 70
- Bradley Cooper takes on the vacant villain role in the troubled *Jane Got A Gun*
- Jim Carrey will headline new comedy *Ricky Stanicky*
- Bryan Cranston, Mads Mikkelsen and Rebel Wilson join *Kung Fu Panda 3*
- Ericson Core (*Invincible*) will direct the *Point Break* remake
- Glen Mazzara (*The Walking Dead*) is in talks to write *The Shining* prequel *The Overlook Hotel*
- Children's book parody *Go The F To Sleep* is being made into a film
- Morgan Freeman and Cillian Murphy join *Transcendence*
- DreamWorks Animation is making a film about popular toy range *Trolls*
- Stanley Tucci joins the cast of *Transformers 4*
- Craig Zadan and Neil Meron will return to produce the 86th Oscars

# THE HANGOVER PART III

In 2009, a group of friends drank way too much and had to deal with the bizarre consequences the next morning.

In 2011, the same group of friends drank way too much and had to deal with the bizarre consequences the next morning... in Thailand. But the makers of what is now known as the *Hangover* trilogy have decided not to complete the hat trick for the third and final film in the comedy series.

Instead, they're keeping a tight lid on the crazy shenanigans this time round but one thing's for certain - we're in for the wildest and most dangerous ride yet. It's down to director and co-writer Todd Phillips (*Due Date*) to let the series go out on a high note, and he appears to have clearly learned his lessons from the last film, namely simply cutting and pasting the plot and jokes into the sequel.

The Wolf Pack return to Las Vegas in the finale to the popular comedy series *The Hangover Part III*



The film, of course, also sees the return of the Wolf Pack including Bradley Cooper (*Silver Linings Playbook*), Ed Helms (*Cedar Rapids*) and Zach Galifianakis (*The Campaign*), in addition to other returning cast members like Justin Bartha (*The Rebound*), Ken Jeong (*Knocked Up*), Heather Graham (*Boogie Nights*), Jeffrey Tambor (*Arrested Development*), Sasha Barrese (*Let Me In*), Jamie Chung (*Sucker Punch*) and Mike Epps (*Guess Who*). Also

be on the lookout for special appearances by John Goodman (*Argo*) and Melissa McCarthy (*Bridesmaids*).

Although not much is really known about the plot, what we do know is that there isn't a wedding this time, and therefore no bachelor party; the Wolf Pack are hitting the road; and one character must deal with an overbearing loss.

To make sense of all this, go see *The Hangover Part III* from **May 24th**.

# THE GREAT GATSBY

Earning his reputation as one of the most divisive filmmakers of recent times, Baz Luhrmann has crafted out films like *Romeo + Juliet*, *Moulin Rouge* and *Australia* which each have their fans and their harsh critics.

But where will his new take on F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel *The Great Gatsby* stand amongst his collection of films?

Skeptics have already chastised the Australian auteur for making what is essentially a timeless story with 3D cameras and having none other than Jay-Z contribute to the film's music (i.e. things that will not age that well in the long term). But it is still a new version of the story, and there's no doubt that people's curiosity is high with all the hype surrounding it.

Least of all because of its starry cast, which includes Leonardo DiCaprio (*Titanic*),

Leonardo DiCaprio leads an all-star cast in Baz Luhrmann's brand-new version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*



Tobey Maguire (*Spider-Man*), Carey Mulligan (*An Education*), Joel Edgerton (*Warrior*), Isla Fisher (*Wedding Crashers*), Jason Clarke (*Zero Dark Thirty*), Adelaide Clemens (*X-Men Origins: Wolverine*), Elizabeth Debicki (*A Few Best Men*) and Indian actor Amitabh Bachchan who makes his Hollywood debut here.

For any of you who aren't familiar with the plot for *The*

*Great Gatsby*, allow me to fill you in: taking place during the prosperous era of the Roaring Twenties in America, a young ex-soldier named Nick Carraway (Maguire) becomes involved with the past and obsessions of his mysterious rich neighbor, Jay Gatsby (DiCaprio).

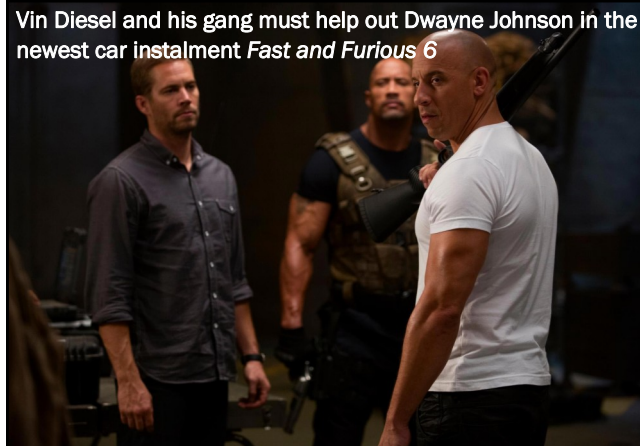
Baz Luhrmann's brand-new take on *The Great Gatsby* arrives on May 17th, just after it opens this month's Cannes Film Festival.

# FAST AND FURIOUS 6

I have to be honest, I never saw the appeal for the *Fast and Furious* franchise. I didn't think much of the first two, and I remember the third being a bit of a bore. But the fourth one came out and that made a serious amount of money. And the fifth, well, that one did absolute gangbusters and is supposed to be an incredibly enjoyable thrill ride no matter what you may think of the others.

So, perhaps for the first time in this franchise, my curiosity for the next film simply entitled *Fast and Furious 6* is on display, but whether it will be yet another giant leap forward or a giant step backwards has yet to be revealed.

Justin Lin, the director of the last three *Fast and Furious* films, is back again behind the camera, while also returning in front of the camera are Vin Diesel (xx), Paul Walker (*Into The Blue*),



Vin Diesel and his gang must help out Dwayne Johnson in the newest car instalment *Fast and Furious 6*

Michelle Rodriguez (*Avatar*), Jordana Brewster (*Annapolis*), Dwayne Johnson (*G.I. Joe: Retaliation*), Tyrese Gibson (*Transformers*), Chris Bridges (*Crash*), and Sung Kang (*Bullet to the Head*). Some new cast members include Luke Evans (*The Three Musketeers*) and Gina Carano (*Haywire*).

Following on from the events of the last film, professional criminal Dominic Toretto (Diesel) and his crew are

extremely wealthy, but their criminal records prevent them from returning home to America. Soon, DSS agent Luke Hobbs (Johnson) arrives to offer the crew a deal: he will pardon their crimes if they help him take down a lethal mercenary operation led by a criminal mastermind (Evans) and Dominic's thought-dead lover Letty Ortiz (Rodriguez). *Fast and Furious 6* swerves into cinemas on **May 24th**.

# EPIC

This summer, 20th Century Fox presents the animated tale of a human shrunk down to miniature proportions and must then bond with the protectors of the forest to save it from harm.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the world of *FernGully: The Last Rainforest*— wait, what's that? It isn't? Oh... you sure? Okay, just needed to clarify but... you're absolutely certain? Alright...

I have just learned that this is in fact Blue Sky's latest animated film *Epic*. At the moment, I'm failing to see the difference in either but whatever...

Director Chris Wedge is behind this newest entry from the makers of *Ice Age*, and he's also assembled a starry voice cast to provide his characters with vocal chords. Featured in this rather impressive cast are Amanda Seyfried (*Les Misérables*), Josh Hutcherson (*The Hunger Games*), Colin Farrell (*In Bruges*), Beyoncé Knowles (*Dreamgirls*),



An all-star cast come together to help save the forest from forces of evil in *Epic*

Christoph Waltz (*Django Unchained*), Aziz Ansari (*Funny People*), Chris O'Dowd (*Bridesmaids*), rapper Pitbull in his acting debut, Jason Sudeikis (*Horrible Bosses*), and Aerosmith singer Steven Tyler.

If you haven't already caught onto the story, I'll remind you of it here: we focus on a young woman named Mary Katherine (Seyfried), who lives with her scientist father (Sudeikis) who has been studying a legendary group of warriors who protect the nearby forest. When he

doesn't return one day, she goes out to find him and is inexplicably shrunk down in the middle of a storm. She soon discovers the warriors that her father was studying, known as the Leafmen, and is drawn in to help them fight in a war with evil creatures known as the Boggans, while also trying to figure out a way to get back home and back to normal.

*FernGully*—er, I mean *Epic* is out in time for half-term, specifically on **May 24th**.

## News Round-Up

- A new *Star Wars* film will be released every summer from 2015, with the trilogy films alternating with the standalone films
- *The Croods 2* is being developed
- *21 Jump Street 2* has a 2014 release date
- Will Smith is in final talks for con artist film *Focus*, but Kristen Stewart drops out
- Universal is planning a remake of *Weird Science*
- Tom Hiddleston may play *The Crow* in the reboot
- Vince Vaughn and Ben Stiller plan another round of *Dodgeball*
- An animated film starring video game characters Ratchet and Clank is set for a 2015 release
- Patrick Hughes is chosen to direct *The Expendables 3*
- Emma Stone and Colin Firth join Woody Allen's next film
- Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Channing Tatum are being sought for the *Guys and Dolls* remake
- Armie Hammer joins Tom Cruise in Guy Ritchie's *The Man From U.N.C.L.E*
- A film starring Shaun The Sheep will be released in 2015
- Luke Evans stars as Dracula in an origin tale set for release next summer
- Johnny Depp and Meryl Streep are in talks for Rob Marshall's *Into The Woods*
- Colin Firth will play a secret agent in Matthew Vaughn's *The Secret Service*
- Jeremy Irvine and Phoebe Fox will headline *The Woman in Black: Angel of Death*
- Jamie Foxx is set to play Benjamin Stacks in the *Annie* remake
- Michael Fassbender and Natalie Portman land the lead roles in a new version of *Macbeth*
- *Downton Abbey*'s Lily James is cast as Sir Kenneth Branagh's *Cinderella*



## I'M SO EXCITED

Okay, be honest, folks: raise your hand if you have heard of director Pedro Almodovar? If you are one of the few who didn't, allow me to educate: Almodovar is one of Spain's leading auteurs, having made many acclaimed films including his Oscar-winning duo *All About My Mother* and *Talk To Her*.

But his newest film, *I'm So Excited*, contrasts from those dramas for being an all-out comedy - a rare genre switch for the director most commonly associated with drama, romance and even thrillers (see his most recent film, *The Skin I Live In*, for clarification on that last one). However, this one could be classed as more of a dark comedy, but I'll let you be the judge of that once you read the plot.

As is with most of his films, it is entirely in the Spanish language (so yes, that means reading subtitles - which can't be a bad thing,



after all it's a movie that's ironically encouraging viewers to read) and features Spanish actors mostly recycled from *Talk To Her* including Javier Cámara, Cecilia Roth, and Lola Dueñas. Raúl Arévalo (*Summer Rain*) also stars. In addition, look out for cameos by Antonio Banderas, Penelope Cruz and Paz Vega. The film's story takes place almost entirely on a flight to Mexico City. However, a technical failure endangers

the lives of everyone on board, and it is up to the flight attendants and chief steward to make the flight as enjoyable as possible for the passengers while the pilots find a solution.

Having read some of the early feedback, perhaps it isn't wise to go in expecting the next big comedy. But hopefully *I'm So Excited* will find its audiences for those wanting fun and light-heartedness come its release on **May 3rd**.

## MUD

Matthew McConaughey is a mysterious fugitive who befriends two young boys in *Mud*



Matthew McConaughey, much like Ben Affleck, has gone through a personal reinvention in recent years, foregoing the cheesy rom-coms in favor of acclaimed roles in *The Lincoln Lawyer*, *Killer Joe*, *Magic Mike*, *The Paperboy* and last month's *Bernie*.

Now, he hopes to continue the trend with his title role in *Mud*.

And it seems that he has a very good chance of doing so, seeing how it debuted at last year's Cannes Film Festival to high acclaim from critics and audiences alike. Much of the praise went to McConaughey's portrayal of a mysterious figure in the vein of Mark Twain's work - in particular, his 1876 novel *Tom Sawyer* - but other people working on the film such as director Jeff Nichols (*Take Shelter*), here making his third feature film, were

also well-regarded.

It also features a small supporting cast with some big names including Reese Witherspoon (*Walk The Line*), Michael Shannon (*Revolutionary Road*) and Sam Shepard (*The Right Stuff*), while also featuring young actors Tye Sheridan (*The Tree of Life*) and debutant Jacob Lofland. Described as an Arkansas-set coming-of-age story as told through the eyes of

friends Ellis (Sheridan) and Neckbone (Lofland), the story sees them encounter a boat lying up in the trees, which happens to be the hideout of a fugitive known as Mud (McConaughey). The two young boys befriend him, and help him evade the authorities while Mud tries to reconnect with his true love Juniper (Witherspoon). Already destined to be an American classic, *Mud* is released on **May 10th**.

# BYZANTIUM

As if the world didn't already have enough vampire flicks... But it seems that *Byzantium* is made by someone with a bit of past experience with the bloodsuckers.

Director Neil Jordan (*The Brave One*, and also won an Oscar for *The Crying Game*) has previously directed cult classic *Interview with the Vampire* - you know, the one with Tom Cruise as Lestat and the one where a pre-pubescent Kirsten Dunst snogged Brad Pitt - so that certainly gives him enough credibility to bring this new tale to the screen (only sacrificing Dunst's, who apparently resents her kiss at such a young age).

Jordan has also gone to lengths to make it seem as unique as possible. A setting in his native Ireland? Done. The focus being on a mother-daughter vampire duo? An interesting new take on it, yes. A plot point is of a vampire running a hotel? May be too close to *Hotel*



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

*Transylvania*, but always a fun concept.

It also boasts a small but eclectic British-Irish cast including Saoirse Ronan (*Atonement*), Gemma Arterton (*Tamara Drewe*), Sam Riley (*On The Road*), Jonny Lee Miller (*Dark Shadows*), Tom Hollander (*In The Loop*), Daniel Mays (*Made in Dagenham*), Caleb Landry Jones (*X-Men: First Class*) and Maria Doyle Kennedy (*Downton Abbey*).

*Byzantium* sees two mysterious women, Clara (Arterton) and Eleanor (Ronan), arrive in a run-down coastal town. While Clara renovates a derelict seafront hotel named the Byzantium into a brothel, Eleanor befriends a local boy (Jones) and lets him in on their vampire nature. It isn't long, however, until their past catches up with them.

*Byzantium* comes out on **May 31st**.



# DEAD MAN DOWN

How do you follow up an international hit that made your leading lady an overnight sensation in the industry?

The logical answer surely has to be to reteam with said actress for an all-American thriller, and that is exactly the case for the new film *Dead Man Down*.

It's the newest directorial effort by Danish auteur Niels Arden Oplev, whose previous gift to cinema was the Swedish-language version of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and also his first film since that successful Stieg Larsson adaptation.

Noomi Rapace (*Prometheus*) - who played hacker Lisbeth Salander in that film for Oplev - reunites with the director for this new film, but she's joined this time by leading man Colin Farrell (*In Bruges*) and a supporting cast that includes Dominic Cooper (*Mamma Mia*),



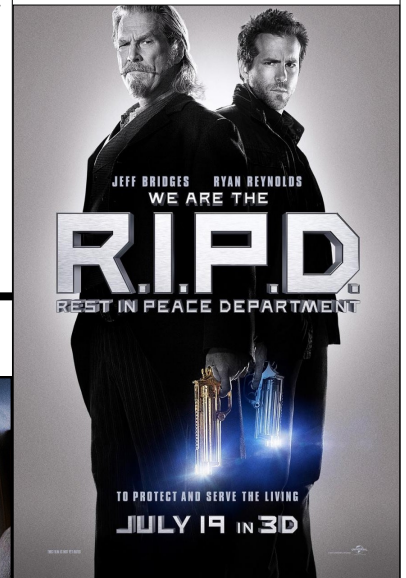
Noomi Rapace and Colin Farrell are on a collision course for retribution in *Dead Man Down*

Terrence Howard (*Crash*), Isabelle Huppert (*Amour*), James Biberi (*Drive*) and F. Murray Abraham (*Amadeus*).

The story follows Victor (Farrell), a rising gangland player who has successfully infiltrated the criminal empire overseen by ruthless kingpin Alphonse (Howard), with the intention of making him pay for destroying his once-happy life. As he plans his revenge, he finds himself watching and being watched

by a young woman named Beatrice (Rapace), who lives in the apartment across from his. Once she catches wind of his true motives, she threatens to expose him unless he assists her in carrying out her own line of vengeance. As both of their paths collide, they concoct a plan that will change them forever.

*Dead Man Down* arrives in cinemas on **May 3rd**, so make sure it's checked out!

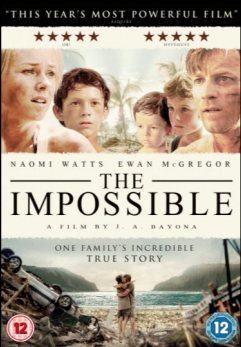


# STILL SHOWING: APRIL



Quartet

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 06/05/13



The Impossible

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 06/05/13



Les Misérables

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 13/05/13



Django Unchained

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 20/05/13

Although the bizarre weather continued right on into April (seriously, can Spring come out from hiding now?), we still got a fair share of exciting film releases for us to escape to in desperate times of need.

The first batch arrived on the 5th of the month, and that lot included British crime thriller *All Things To All Men*; domestic alien horror flick *Dark Skies*; starry musicians drama *A Late Quartet*; the whimsical tale of a boy grown from a plant (yes, really) in *The Odd Life of Timothy Green*; and Selena Gomez and Vanessa Hudgens shunned their Disney image with wild sex'n'drugs tale *Spring Breakers*. Our next lot arrived on the 12th, and they included the Oscar-nominated Israeli documentary *The Gatekeepers*; Tom Cruise was one of the last people on Earth in sci-fi *Oblivion*; the teaming of Ryan Gosling and Bradley Cooper in *The Place Beyond The Pines*



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

was responsible for mass-flooding of womens' seats and knickers; and *Paranormal Activity* was one of the many films satirized in *Scary Movie 5*. The 19th brought us a more concentrated batch which meant even more value for their products - we were treated to a remake of the classic Sam Raimi horror *Evil Dead*; Pierce Brosnan showed up for some reason in Danish rom-com *Love Is All You Need*; Gerard Butler went in to a captured White House to take down the evil terrorists and save the President in *Olympus Has Fallen*; and Matt Damon was an energy businessman in

*Promised Land*. Finally, on the 26th, not only were Marvel nice enough to give us the hotly-anticipated *Iron Man 3*, which once again saw Robert Downey Jr. occupy the metal suit to take down the bad guys, but we also got high-caliber releases like dark comedy (and US box office hit) *Bernie*, and seedy biopic of entrepreneur Paul Raymond entitled *The Look of Love*. All this, and perhaps a bit more, was on the menu for April 2013, and for what we got it was extremely satisfying. But if you want a bit more bite, then check out reviews of some of these releases on pages 8-12.

# COMING SOON: JUNE

Astonishingly, we are one month away from it being summer, and to celebrate June offers not only some of the biggest releases of the summer, but also some of the most exciting films of the year.

Starting off big on the 7th, Will Smith once again teams with real-life son Jaden Smith for director M. Night Shyamalan's sci-fi *After Earth* (will it make up for the past decade? We'll see...); Robert Redford is an ousted radical on the run in *The Company You Keep*; Michael Shannon plays notorious Mafia hitman Richard Kuklinski in crime drama *The Iceman*; and Audrey Tautou takes on a dark role in the final film by late director Claude Miller, *Therese Desqueyroux*.

The 14th is an extremely special, for it sees the long-awaited return of Superman on the big screen, via a darker, more realistic (or as real as you can get with an alien man growing up with



Superman really DOES return in Zack Snyder's reality-based superhero reboot *Man of Steel*

many superpowers) take on the legend in *Man of Steel*. Also out on that date, we have Tina Fey comedy *Admission*; Steven Soderbergh's Liberace film *Behind The Candelabra* gets a theatrical release; Joss Whedon's new version of the Shakespeare comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*; and former *Downton Abbey* star Dan Stevens stars alongside Dominic Cooper and Emily Browning in English drama *Summer in February*.

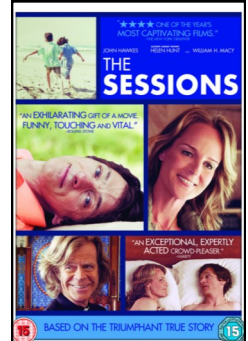
Next up, on the 21st, we return to the lives of lovers Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy as established in *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset* in the trilogy closer

*Before Midnight*; and Brad Pitt and his family are caught right in the middle of a major zombie epidemic that threatens to wipe out the human race in *World War Z*. The month closes on the 28th, which sees the releases of animated comedy sequel *Despicable Me 2* (and yes, there will be many more Minion antics); old-age crime comedy *Stand Up Guys*; Sarah Polley's new documentary *Stories We Tell*; and the apocalyptic laugh-fest *This Is The End*. If these don't whet your appetite for the coming summer months, then I don't know what will!



Doctor Who: Series 7 Part 2

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 20/05/13



The Sessions

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 20/05/13



Gangster Squad

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 27/05/13



The Last Stand

- Also available on Blu-Ray
- Released: 27/05/13

# REVIEWS

## STAR RATING SYSTEM



JUST DON'T



I WOULDN'T



MEH



WORTH A LOOK



RATHER ENJOYABLE



SEE IT NOW!



**DIRECTOR:** Shane Black

**CAST:** Robert Downey Jr., Gwyneth Paltrow, Don Cheadle, Guy Pearce, Rebecca Hall, James Badge Dale, Jon Favreau, Ben Kingsley

**RUNNING TIME:** 130 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 12A

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

Tony Stark (Downey Jr.) faces a powerful enemy in the form of The Mandarin (Kingsley), who is responsible for destroying his private world...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

The biggest and best out of Tony Stark's solo films, it sets the bar high for what's to come in Marvel's near future.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

After the worldwide juggernaut that was The Avengers, which saw Tony Stark suit up as Iron Man along with other Marvel superheroes, the pressure was on to create a film that was not only as good as that film but also just as enjoyable. It comes down to franchise newcomer Shane Black bringing his trademark action, humour and plot twists into the mix that solidifies the original goal set by Marvel. Black, who also co-wrote the screenplay, brings more edge to the character than previous director Jon Favreau - returning as a producer and as frequent character Happy Hogan - did in his outings. By taking away all of his toys, essentially stripping him naked and flinging him into the real world, Stark's dynamics change and he is forced to rely on tactfulness as well as his brain. It thereby makes him more unpredictable and, coupling that with some moments of PTSD following his experiences with The Avengers, makes him an even stronger character.

Robert Downey Jr., as always, kills it as Tony Stark. His wit, delivery and charming arrogance is amped up to maximum levels here - and given he

gave a similar performance in Black's Kiss Kiss Bang Bang, he's got even more of a safety net here than before - and he gives it his all in what could turn out to be his final solo outing (his original contract as the character expires with this film, but he is still expected to show up in The Avengers 2 in 2015).

Gwyneth Paltrow and Don Cheadle, returning as Pepper Potts and James Rhodes respectively, are also good but they take more of a backseat to some of the newer characters. The best example would definitely have to be Ben Kingsley as new foe The Mandarin, who menaces his way through some of the film's more tense scenes but also keeps a hidden secret that, once revealed, turns out to be one of the biggest surprises of the movie. Some comic-book fans may not like it, but I think it works in its own right.

That secret is one of many plot twists that keep the film from completely descending into predictability. It makes the drama more suspenseful while also giving some really funny moments. For instance, when Tony befriends a young boy who reveals that his father had abandoned him, the typical outcome would be a schmaltzy reflection on fathers and sons. Instead, Mr. Stark delivers one hell of a zinger that may seem mean-spirited to some but it's completely in character while also providing some much-needed hilarity. It's those kind of moments that the film scores high in, and thankfully it doesn't slow down from there.

There is also some nice connectivity with the other Iron Man films as well. To give one example, we see Stark's doomed mentor Yinsen from the first movie during the opening scenes, and although it's just a brief cameo it calls back to a conversation they shared in that film.

Also, make sure you stay till after the end credits - there's a great little cameo by another well-known Marvel character. It's one of the highlights.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

The villains have always been the weakest part of any Iron Man movie, and this one is no different. It will come as a shock to no-one that Guy Pearce is one of the villains, as he plays a scientist who has created something called the Extremis virus, which can apparently regrow any human limb but has some quite explosive side-effects. At the end of the day, it's another one of those "mad scientist" villains with a weak motivation and an even weaker cloak to cover himself as the bad guy. Hell, he's so obviously evil that he LITERALLY breathes fire like a dragon - I am not even joking, that really does happen. It's every bit as silly as it sounds.

After such a strong two-thirds of a movie, it shamefully comes undone during its climax. Although fun and over-the-top, it's needlessly complicated - first they need to rescue someone, then there's a shootout, then things start exploding, then I slap my head in confusion until it goes numb, it's non-stop - and extremely underwhelming when you put it next to the thrilling, gritty and intentionally funny action that came just before it.

A good chunk of the characters also get sidelined to make way for Downey Jr., Paltrow, Pearce et al. Don Cheadle is tastelessly shoved aside for most of it and Rebecca Hall does next to nothing in a pretty thankless role. Whether their deleted scenes will emerge off the cutting room floor and see the light of day on a DVD/Blu-Ray release is anyone's hopeful guess. For now though, it's a sad waste of two great actors.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Marvel's "Phase 2" is off to a strong start. Now let's see what Thor's up to...







**DIRECTOR:** Joseph Kosinski

**CAST:** Tom Cruise, Olga Kurylenko, Andrea Riseborough, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Morgan Freeman, Melissa Leo, Zoe Bell

**RUNNING TIME:** 124 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 12A

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

A drone repairman on an abandoned Earth discovers some shocking secrets that make him question everything he knows...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

A nice-looking sci-fi film that unfortunately gets lost in its complicated and familiar story, as well as its two-dimensional characters.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

Even if the rest of the film's flaws overshadow it at times, there is no denying that the film looks absolutely gorgeous. Turning a derelict post-apocalyptic world with mostly grey-ish colours is no easy challenge, but Joseph Kosinski - here re-using his good eye for such visuals - makes it work. The film's use of visual effects, when they're not entirely on display, only enhance its lovely imagery (for instance, a shot of a pool in the main characters' house in the clouds is breath-taking).

Out of the film's lead actors, I found Olga Kurylenko to be giving the more engaging and heartfelt performance. Having appeared to have shaken off that "Bond Girl" curse, Kurylenko

quietly dominates any scene she's in with her subtle emotions of grief and love creating an extra dimension for an admittedly-thin character.

The score, provided by French electronic band M83, has a grand, epic feel to it and perfectly creates the appropriate mood within the film while also standing strong on its own.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

The film's narrative structure suffers from "too many cooks" syndrome, which is what you can expect from a film with four credited writers (yes, four!). Half of the time, it's near impossible to piece together what is actually going on because it introduces so many plot elements that it's hard to keep track. The idea of not reserving any plant life from Earth is touched upon, but is never brought up again. A plot to construct a bomb to destroy the enemy disappears entirely until the third act, and even then we're like "what the hell?" due to it being too long for it to stick in our memories.

It's way too overcrowded in plot elements, but what makes it even more frustrating is that they are too familiar in the genre. For example: a lone repairman scavenges a deserted Earth, retreats to a home filled with everyday items, and has a romantic relationship with a woman who literally fell to Earth. Did I just describe *Oblivion* or *WALL-E*? Either way, you can't tell the difference.

Another similar plot point that's hard to ignore is from Duncan Jones' *Moon*, but for the sake of keeping spoilers to a minimum I won't elaborate (although anyone who's seen that film will know what I'm talking about...).

Tom Cruise is, well, Tom Cruise, and while he's not bad he's just too recognisable in this role. I mean, you don't see the character, you just see Tom Cruise playing him. It's pretty distracting.

As for the rest of the casting, it's pretty lacklustre. Andrea Riseborough has very little character to work with, and Morgan Freeman isn't in it for as long as the previews may have you think. And as a *Game of Thrones* fan, I'm disappointed the film didn't make more use of its Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, but while he does get to do at least SOMETHING, he's undeservedly wasted.

I should also say that the ending is a cop-out. Again, no spoilers here, but at first it seems that they've taken a very bold route to end on, especially for a Tom Cruise movie. But then it's undone by a painfully obvious cheat of a conclusion which I admit did make me a little angry. They were doing so well, but then they undid everything to make it stand out.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Don't expect much; it's just another visually-stunning Tom Cruise flick.



**DIRECTOR:** Malcolm D. Lee

**CAST:** Ashley Tisdale, Simon Rex, Erica Ash, Molly Shannon, Heather Locklear, Charlie Sheen, Lindsay Lohan, Terry Crews, Sarah Hyland, Snoop Dogg

**RUNNING TIME:** 86 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 15

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

*Paranormal Activity*, *Black Swan*, *Evil Dead* and, erm, *Inception* are just some of the films parodied in this fifth instalment of the spoof series...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

The final nail in the coffin for the dying *Scary Movie* franchise, and also the freshly-dug grave.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

As is with the *Scary Movie* franchise, it seems to hit a high with its opening sequence before tumbling far, far down the scales. Despite being way overhyped simply due to the fact that it features both Charlie Sheen and Lindsay Lohan in a *Paranormal Activity* knock-off, it is the closest to mildly amusing that this film gets including when it rips into their legal woes.

The only other element that came closest to making me laugh was the narration by an uncanny Morgan Freeman impersonator, primarily because of how absolutely stupid it was but still slightly funny at the same time.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

The film's biggest crime, especially since it's part of a successful comedy series, is that it is just not funny. The very first scene after that marginally funny opening skit with Sheen and Lohan is a PAINFULLY unfunny, prolonged scene with Snoop Dogg strolling in the woods with his friend. Nothing they say even warrants a smile. It's a perfect foreshadowing of what's to come: a loosely strung-together set of vignettes that seem to think that the words "parody" and "spoof" only translate to "carbon copies of those films, with added nut shots and weed jokes".

That, incidentally, leads into the film's next big problem. Before in these movies, the spoofs were mostly minor and focused on them serving the plot. It's all over the place with this one: at the film's core is *Mama* spliced with *Paranormal Activity*, then it swerves into *Black Swan* (which admittedly gets a bit of a laugh when it mimics that film's editing style), then *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* is dragged in (what?), then they somehow force in *Inception*, then *127 Hours*, then *Evil Dead* (I actually felt bad for *Modern Family* star Sarah Hyland in that latter part; someone as talented as her does NOT need to be dragged down to this level), and the most bizarre one of all, they even got a *Fifty Shades of Grey* "parody" in

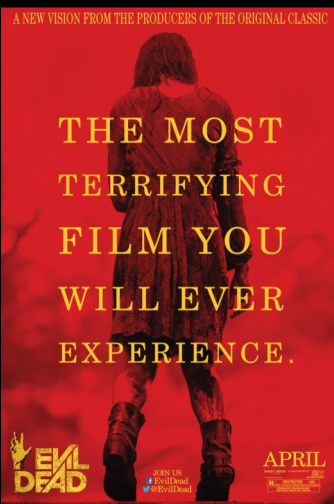
there. It's bizarre in the fact that not only has the film not been made yet, but it will be a good long while before they even start casting the damn thing - though after this film, I doubt anyone will want Jerry O'Connell as Christian Grey.

Following on from being the first spoof film to make fun of a movie that hasn't been made yet, it also falls back in relying way to heavily on the physical abuse of its paper-thin characters. The ones that spoof those in *Mama* proved to be the most difficult to watch, for they include a young girl being punched, a baby being set on fire and - God, I can't believe I'm actually typing this - a young girl shoving a toothbrush up her own behind. I swear to God above, I had never felt so unclean in a cinema until that moment. It was also the moment that I realised that the *Scary Movie* franchise is finally dead in the water. Nothing can resurrect it after those few seconds of low-brow humour. It's hit such a low that it's now deep underground, close to the friggins' centre of the planet. I was sorely, sorely disgusted by what I saw on that cinema screen and I hope to NEVER witness anything like it again. It's still better than *Keith Lemon: The Film* though...

**BOTTOM LINE**

You know your film is toxic and an ungodly abomination when Lindsay Lohan is the best thing in it.





**DIRECTOR:** Fede Alvarez

**CAST:** Jane Levy, Shiloh Fernandez, Jessica Lucas, Lou Taylor Pucci, Elizabeth Blackmore

**RUNNING TIME:** 92 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 18

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

Students read from the Book of the Dead, which unleashes demons that possess and destroy them all...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

A sub-par remake that favours gore over character and uses every genre cliché possible.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

One thing you should know before you read this review is that I have NOT seen the original Sam Raimi classic. So, anyone expecting comparisons here will be disappointed but should have fun reading it anyway.

With that said, it is both an advantage and disadvantage that the film is so heavily clichéd when one puts it against so many other horror flicks. It is advantageous, however, because picking apart every single "seen it" moment in its fairly short running time made it a more enjoyable experience for me, and provided a few laughs that kept me going through all the violence and scary moments.

Speaking of which, the many scenes that involve gore are a great ton of fun to watch because of how over-the-top goofy they can get. We have

amputation, improper usage of nail guns and Stanley knives, and perhaps the bloodiest lesbian kiss you'll ever stomach. Topping that with some impressive make-up artistry, it's gore you will find hard to watch but easy to love. But maybe that's because we're all sadists at heart.

There is also a very special mini-treat for die-hard fans of the original films. But it requires having to sit through the entire end credits first, so if you can do that then the reward is even more golden.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

Although I did mention that picking apart this movie's obvious uses of horror clichés was fun, the fact that there were so many really does irk me. Again, I haven't seen the original so I don't know if that version used so many - although from what I gather it didn't - but if it were made today like this, I guarantee it would not stand out as much. I mean it, every done bit is right here: isolated cabin in the woods; jerky, idiotic young adults; creepy cellar with dead things in it; token minorities; and so on and so on. These are plot points that even *The Cabin in the Woods* would point and laugh at.

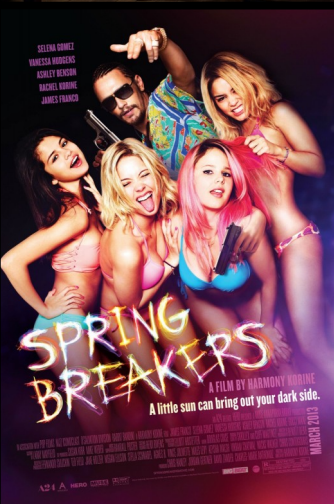
But recyclable stock characters can work if they have decent people to play them, right? Right? As you may have guessed, the acting is not very good all around with perhaps only Jane Levy as a possessed drug

junkie just about shining through a cloud of woodenness. Aside from her and perhaps her brother - an infuriatingly weak Shiloh Fernandez playing what appears to be a poor clone of Bruce Campbell's Ash from the original movies - we never get any real development or even figure out who they even are. For example, there's another random girl about who does next to nothing in the first act and suddenly becomes important. Movie, you can't expect us to follow or care for someone we don't know and aren't even properly introduced to. She's just there to die like the rest of them, just let her play our her role in this movie and get on with it.

I will also say that despite some of the gore being entertaining, it is a very unpleasant film to watch overall. Part of the reason I believe the original *Evil Dead* is so adored was because there was a sense of fun to it as well as terror. That is sorely lacking in this version, apart from maybe the one odd comedic line but even then it's out of place. None of the deaths, possessions, imagery or even the violence have much life to them (sorry!) and it results in a hollow piece of modern horror that is difficult to embrace.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Despite some fun moments of gore, *Evil Dead v.2* is not as "groovy" as it desires to be.



**DIRECTOR:** Harmony Korine

**CAST:** James Franco, Selena Gomez, Vanessa Hudgens, Ashley Benson, Rachel Korine

**RUNNING TIME:** 93 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 18

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

Four college students perform a robbery to pay for spring break, but they soon find themselves on the wrong side of the law...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

A strangely put-together arthouse film that borders on exploitation and bad taste.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

Although the movie's main focus is the young girls on spring break, and while they are fine on their own, the real standout performance is by someone neither young nor a girl. James Franco, as the drug-dealing rapper known as Alien, practically steals the show with yet another bizarre role to add to his CV. His on-screen antics, loosely disguised by a gangsta-style accent that perhaps Eminem may cringe at, are very entertaining while also hinting at much darker and, ironically for someone named Alien, human empathies within him. Plus, where else are you going to watch the guy from Spider-Man fellate a gun and play a Britney Spears song on the piano?

Speaking of the latter, the singer's

ballad "Everytime" is central to one of the film's few outstanding set-pieces, and nowhere is a song by the troubled pop star better featured than in this film. Another memorable scene is the robbery near the film, shot entirely from the point of view in the getaway car where we see the interior action inside through the windows. It's an interesting way of shooting such a pivotal scene, but although I'm certain it's been done before it still proves effective here.

The neon style to the film's cinematography evokes good memories of films like *Drive*, and it's done very nicely here too as it gives it personality and perseverance.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

Sadly, personality and perseverance are sorely lacking within the four main female protagonists. Aside from perhaps Selena Gomez, who plays a religious "good girl", we don't get to know them other than the fact that they're horny as hell and desperate to go on spring break. In addition, any likability for most of them go out of the window as the robbery takes place, and we're left with shallow, self-serving human beings. Don't get me wrong, it's good to see people like Gomez and Vanessa Hudgens branch out to projects like this, but they could have perhaps gone with adding a little more meat to their wafer-thin characters.

To be honest, the real problem I

have with this movie is the direction. Harmony Korine already tortures us with injecting the movie with an incredibly slow pace (perhaps to make up for the fact that not much actually happens in the movie), but by the time it becomes very repetitive with its various motifs, imagery, sound effects (there's the sound of gunfire whenever there's a transition, which is very bizarre) and especially its voiceovers and slo-mo, you're ready to punch it in the face. In fact, all of this led me to the conclusion that this film is the X-rated version of *The Tree of Life*. Think about it: a plotless visual wonder with strange images, whispered voiceovers, repeated dialogue, how can you NOT see it? I'm surprised they didn't put a friggin' dinosaur into this picture.

We are also treated to various shots of people enjoying spring break, including women in bikinis, some without a bra et cetera. Heck, all that the four girls wear throughout most of it are skimpy bikinis. If there is indeed some social commentary laying beneath all this, then I don't get it; instead it all feels a little sexist and especially exploitative of the opposite sex. Though I will give them some points because they are just so damn attractive.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Bit of a missed opportunity here; if it wasn't so jumbled then it would be a spring break worth remembering.





**DIRECTOR:** Derek Cianfrance  
**CAST:** Ryan Gosling, Bradley Cooper, Eva Mendes, Rose Byrne, Ray Liotta, Dane DeHaan, Bruce Greenwood, Ben Mendelsohn  
**RUNNING TIME:** 140 mins  
**CERTIFICATE:** 15  
**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**  
 A motorcycle stuntman (Gosling) robs banks to provide for his infant son, while a rookie cop (Cooper) operates within a web of corruption...

**BASIC SUMMARY**  
 An evenly-paced tale of fathers and sons, with extraordinary acting and dramatic poignancy.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**  
 The film is essentially split into three parts, focusing on different characters in each one. In the hands of someone of a lesser talent, this could have been very jumbled and clumsily put together. What Cianfrance manages to do is not only make each of them tie very closely to one another without any seams, but he makes them all very gripping, exciting and may or may not even get you a bit teary-eyed. I think it's an interesting story layout that works wonders here, and it all comes down to the director's ballsy decision to tell the story (or stories) in this format. Anyone else could have made it a kind of *Les Miserables* in a small American town - minus the singing, of course - but not Cianfrance, he knew exactly what to

do. It also boasts some of the finest performances I have seen all year so far. Ryan Gosling and Bradley Cooper, both leading men in their own right, are at career-best levels here, with Gosling combining his usual quiet emotion with tense confrontation and Cooper making the transition from naive cop to hard-boiled politician much easier and believable than it sounds.

But while I knew to expect good things from them, the real surprise came from Dane DeHaan who takes centre stage in the film's final third. As the son of one character (identity veiled due to spoilers), his plight is more tragic once you know his roots and you kind of emphasise with him at certain vengeful points, even if the stuff he does is not very heroic. As great as Gosling and Cooper are, DeHaan's performance was - to my eyes, at least - the more complex and heartfelt.

The style in which this film was shot is also unique in its own right, even if it does get a little distracting at times. Mostly done via hand-held cameras, some of the inevitable shaky-cam - used mainly during Gosling's heist and getaway scenes - adds great feelings of tension and realism to the situation while also fitting in a suave sense of style to it as well.

Some of the imagery is also great fun to look at: the opening shot is

done in one take, and shows the back of Gosling's head as he walks through a carnival to perform in a motorcycle stunt show. Not only does it set up the tone and toughness in the rest of the film, but it reminds us that no matter how you film him Gosling will always get your attention. Equally affective is the final shot of the film, which along with its final line of dialogue will stay with you long after you leave the screen.

At its core, it is a tale of fathers and sons which the film does keep its steady focus on. By the end, it will leave you with an appreciation for your own fathers - if any - and the sacrifices that they make to provide you with the easiest transition into the real world as possible. It's a great theme which may be overdone in many other films but here, it's served the right amount onto us without overfeeding it.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**  
 The downsides are very minor, in my opinion: the film may be a little bit too long for its own good; and the female roles (occupied by Eva Mendes and Rose Byrne, both of whom are wonderful) don't add anything that spectacular to the narrative.

**BOTTOM LINE**  
*The Place Beyond The Pines* is a superb film with regards to its acting, storytelling and powerful themes of the father-son relationship.



**DIRECTOR:** Antoine Fuqua  
**CAST:** Gerard Butler, Aaron Eckhart, Morgan Freeman, Angela Bassett, Dylan McDermott, Melissa Leo, Rick Yune, Ashley Judd, Robert Forster, Radha Mitchell  
**RUNNING TIME:** 120 mins  
**CERTIFICATE:** 15  
**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**  
 North Korean terrorists take over the White House, and an ex-agent (Butler) must stop them...

**BASIC SUMMARY**  
 A thrilling popcorn action flick with lots of gore, swearing and the good old American patriotism thrown in for good measure.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**  
 This is certainly one of the first action genre films in a while that has genuinely gotten me excited about what was happening on-screen. Its first and second acts are filled to the brim with it: gunfire, explosions, the destruction of iconic landmarks... it was like Roland Emmerich's wet dream (ironically, he has his own White House takeover film out later this year entitled *White House Down*... it has a tough act to follow, in the action department anyway).

To top all of the exciting set-pieces, it refreshingly does not play things safe either. In an ideal Hollywood world, this would be devoid of any blood despite rapid gunfire, its language would be squeaky-clean, and the

sadistic torture of certain hostages would be handled in an extremely safe manner. To which director Antoine Fuqua must have cringed at, and has instead amped all the violence and swearing up to 11. Limbs are shot off, people are stabbed in the head, the f-word is thrown about relentlessly, and that's just skimming the surface. It's so good to have a proper adult action film like this grace cinemas after such a long time dealing with the 12A crowd, and it's even more awesome for that.

The main villain of the piece, a North Korean terrorist named Kang - sadly no Kodos by his side - is a pretty intimidating villain. Played devilishly by Rick Yune, he is an evil piece of work who kills and tortures to get what he wants (the standout victim of the latter is the Secretary of State, played by Melissa Leo who during those scenes and others is rather badass, and actually made me want her to get out okay) and yet he does this all with a calm and calculated sense of relaxation. He's a sadist, and loves every second of it.

On the subject of North Korea, it's very interesting to see a film like this come out at a time where tensions between the United States and North Korea are at an all-time high. I doubt that if the police state got hold of this film it wouldn't exactly help the situation, but positioning them as the main enemy over more obvious

choices like al-Qaeda makes this a product of its time. This may hurt it in the future when it ultimately becomes dated, but it's pretty interesting to watch with this background. Just don't go in expecting intelligent discussion about the matter: it's only a popcorn movie.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**  
 The film is let down slightly with a weak third act, which is where it brings out the usual clichés and irritating plot contrivances to resolves it quicker than it needs to do. It also seems to borrow from other films way too often: *Die Hard*, *Zero Dark Thirty* and every movie with a time-bomb were ones I counted, so it's not entirely original. While the cast do alright in their roles, Butler can't help but feel like a clone of John McClane and Eckhart, as the President, isn't given that much to do other than be rescued. Meanwhile, thespians like Freeman and Forster only exist in this movie to provide exposition for the characters and the audience and, again, are limited in what they are given to do.

The feeling of American patriotism constantly on display may be a bit off-putting for international audiences, especially Korea who may be offended by their negative portrayal here.

**BOTTOM LINE**  
 Turns out we DID get a proper *Die Hard* film in 2013 after all...





**DIRECTOR:** Richard Linklater

**CAST:** Jack Black, Shirley MacLaine, Matthew McConaughey

**RUNNING TIME:** 104 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 15

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

A man (Black) befriends a demanding old woman (MacLaine), but their relationship soon takes a dark turn...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

A dark and intelligent dive into the depths of American communities, with a strong performance by Jack Black.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

As you'll read in a moment, *Bernie* is a film that will stay with you in ways you never thought it would. Most of that is down to how Richard Linklater presents what is undoubtedly a bizarre real-life story through the film medium. Aside from the dramatic portrayals of certain characters, it is presented in documentary style with actors representing townsfolk (or at least I think they're actors...) relaying their view of the events. While the knowledge that most of them are probably actors does make it lose its credibility slightly, it is still effective and certainly steers it towards what I feel the film is truly about... but we'll see to that in a moment.

In the titular role, Jack Black is truly at his best. I would actually like to see him in more drama than straight comedy after this, because I feel

there is great potential within him (perhaps he took lessons from that song he did at the 2007 Oscars - find it on YouTube, it's funny). Continuing his recent acting resurrection, Matthew McConaughey also stands out as a sheriff hoping to seek justice for Bernie's crime as he makes what could have been a one-dimensional stick-in-the-mud a quirky but likable presence. The same can be said for Shirley MacLaine, except for the "likable" part.

In fact, that's where I choose to segue into the next major pro point, which I consider to be the film's strongest. MacLaine plays an absolutely detestable character, in that she's anti-social, controlling, needy, any other connotation you can think of. It is no spoiler when I say that Bernie eventually kills her around the mid-way mark - but the way we see these people, it's disturbing that we are more on the side of the murderer than we are the victim.

By this point, we have seen that Bernie is one of the nicest people around with a very likable personality and eager figure in his Texas community, while we grow to hate and hate the elderly widow he begins seeing. The documentary scenes with the "townsfolk" only push this point further, as they go on and on about how nice a man Bernie

is, despite the murder. Even when he is eventually arrested, they deny his guilt even though it's clearly him; they trash talk the despised victim while praising the murderer; they even seem distraught and driven to tears by his eventual sentence. All this I found absolutely fascinating because it shows how a community such as this can twist the way you feel about someone you should hate and have pity for, respectively. It's a little like *Broadchurch* in that sense, in how the most effective thing about it all is not the murder but rather the widespread reaction to the murder. Gripping as it is surprising that it all came from the director-star duo who brought you *School of Rock*, this is what made *Bernie* stand out more for me than I could have ever predicted.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

What I do have to say about is mostly very nit-picky - for instance, they have iPhones when it's supposed to be the 90s; the more comedic scenes feel out of place sometimes (a musical numbers comes right after the murder); and the film's court scenes add nothing especially new to how they have been shown before in film. Like I said, very nit-picky but also very brief at the same time.

**BOTTOM LINE**

*Bernie* is the most intriguing film you'll see for a while, I am dead serious.



**DIRECTOR:** Michael Winterbottom

**CAST:** Steve Coogan, Anna Friel, Tamsin Egerton, Imogen Poots, Chris Addison, David Walliams, Simon Bird, Matt Lucas, Stephen Fry

**RUNNING TIME:** 101 mins

**CERTIFICATE:** 18

**ONE-SENTENCE PLOT**

A look into the life and times of entrepreneur Paul Raymond (Coogan), and his relationships with his wife (Friel), his lover (Egerton) and his daughter (Poots)...

**BASIC SUMMARY**

Although it boasts some fine acting and some solid directing, it can't help but feel somewhat jumbled.

**WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?**

If *The Look of Love* proves anything, it's that Steve Coogan is not a force to be dismissed. His fourth pairing with director Michael Winterbottom - after *24 Hour Party People*, *A Cock and Bull Story*, and *The Trip* - provides the comedian/actor with perhaps his most impressive performance to date. Capturing the persona, sleaze and even the voice of Paul Raymond absolutely perfectly, he also gives his own spin in this character study of Britain's wealthiest entrepreneur.

Take for instance the opening scene where an older Raymond, emotionally stricken by recent events [undisclosed here due to spoilers], cannot even comprehend the right words in front of the press. This is in

stark contrast to when we see him in his earlier years when he's smiling and joking with them, a true attention-seeker. It is through Coogan's performance that we see the more delicate side of a man living entirely in the public eye.

But that's not to say that everyone else falters in their work in the film, either. Every major player has some great stuff here, in particular Tamsin Egerton who provides a likable and sweet nature to the woman who would become better known as Fiona Richmond, and also shares an interesting and healthy chemistry with Coogan.

Egerton is also one of the many women in the film who bare all in various scenes, in keeping with the erotic and exploitative empire that Raymond helped to build. But the nudity, although frequent, is shot very delicately and even has an artistic flavour to it all. This is thanks to steady direction by Winterbottom, who keeps the focus where it needs to be while also acknowledging that the nakedness is essential to the story; after all, it is Raymond's world and we need to see it ourselves.

**WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?**

The narrative structure seems to be out of control at times, which nearly salvages the film to a point where it just becomes confusing. There is a constant sudden move to backwards in time, then forwards briefly, then a little bit back again, and so on

without a clear passage of time. In one scene, a character says they'll do such and such, and it instantly just cuts to them doing it without exploring anything that happens in between. It's hard to fully comprehend the events of the film if it won't let us have one or two moments to let it sink in.

Another problem is that it tries to cram in the entire story of Paul Raymond's reign as the "King of Soho" in the short running time. This means that there are some parts that should be important but are so rushed to make way for other elements. For instance, a character finds out they have breast cancer. Such a heavy topic would take up a good chunk of the time, but it's all resolved only a few seconds later without diving into the emotional experiences of any of the characters. It's a symptom I like to call "Iron Lady syndrome", where a biopic tries to cram everything into one movie but it results in a jumbled execution.

As much as I liked the performances, I found Imogen Poots to be the weakest actress. A tragic story such as Debbie Raymond's needs someone who can deliver the goods despite the clichéd drug scenes, but I felt underwhelmed by her delivery and presence. She's not terrible, just a bit disappointing.

**BOTTOM LINE**

While not perfect, *The Look of Love* is a decent character study of the King of Soho.



# UK Film Release Dates

## MAY

### 3RD

- 21 and Over
- All Stars
- Chimpanzee
- Dead Man Down
- The Eye of the Storm
- I'm So Excited

### 10TH

- Deadfall
- A Hijacking
- Mud
- Our Children
- Reluctant Fundamentalist
- Star Trek Into Darkness

### 17TH

- Beware of Mr Baker
- Fast and Furious 6
- The Great Gatsby
- Hummingbird
- The Liability

### 24TH

- Easy Money
- Epic
- Everyone Has A Plan
- The Hangover Part III

### 31ST

- The Big Wedding
- Byzantium
- The Comedian
- A Haunted House
- No One Lives
- Populaire
- The Purge

## JUNE

### 7TH

- After Earth
- The Company You Keep
- The Iceman
- The Last Exorcism: Part 2
- The Stone Roses: Made of Stone
- Therese Desqueyroux

### 14TH

- Admission
- Behind The Candelabra
- Man of Steel
- Much Ado About Nothing
- Stuck in Love
- Summer in February

### 21ST

- Before Midnight
- World War Z

### 28TH

- Despicable Me 2
- Honour
- The Seasoning House
- Stand Up Guys
- Stories We Tell
- This Is The End

All release dates are  
correct as of time of  
press.

## JULY

### 5TH

- The Bling Ring
- The Call
- Chasing Mavericks
- A Field in England
- The Internship
- Now You See Me

### 12TH

- The Deep
- Monsters University
- Pacific Rim
- Trap for Cinderella
- We Steal Secrets: The Story of Wikileaks

### 19TH

- Breathe In
- The Conjuring
- Wadjda
- The World's End

### 26TH

- Frances Ha
- Girl Most Likely
- Romeo and Juliet
- The Wolverine

Next Issue: June 2013