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from his family life with his mother (Kathy Bates), and surreal confrontations with FBI agents who come to suspect him of planting the bomb. (When the story moves away from Jewell, as it does in the sexist portrayal of journalist Kathy Scruggs, she loses her focus.) Eastwood's spiky, idiosyncratic films about unlikely heroes often embody the ambiguities and contradictions that his most intense critics accuse him of avoiding, tone is often more and funny, aware of the absurdity at surface level, by the pompous or didactics. Along with the exciting Sully of 2016 and last year's even more quirky 15:17 in Paris, Richard Jewell covers an indescribable trilogy of films about bravery in modern American life. Where to watch: Rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, and YouTube (Watch the trailer) This browser does not support the Label. Claudette Barius/Universal Pictures24. UsRelease date: March 22Cast: Lupita Nyong'o, Winston Duke, Elisabeth Moss, Tim HeideckerDirector: Jordan Peele (Get Out) Why it's great: The double, the doppelgänger with questionable intentions and mysterious origins, is a powerful concept for both horror and comedy. Appropriately, writer and director Jordan Peele uses the device to cause scares and laughs at us, his sophomore feature for a family, led by intrepid parents Adelaide (Nyong'o) and Gabe (Duke), facing off against their jumpsuit-wearing, scissor-wielding counterparts in the middle of a leisurely holiday. What begins as a disturbing home invasion thriller with socio-political tones in the vein of Michel Haneke's Funny Games gives way to a more frenzied, twist-filled sci-fi brain-teaser that tunnels deep into feelings of paranoia like an episode of Lost or The Twilight Zone. Peele's theme-park ride feel of pacing, particularly in a mid-film sequence scored with the music of the Beach Boys and N.W.A., keeps you from challenging some of the leaps in narrative logic. (The fee, which goes to great lengths to explain certain aspects of the world and avoids others, could be a deal-breaker for some viewers.) Less elegant than the conceptually airtight Get Out, Us explodes in a million directions and raises questions that simply can't be answered. Unrethereing ideas becomes half the fun. Where to watch: Stream on HBO Go? rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, and YouTube (Watch the trailer)Sony Pictures Classics23. Pain and GloryRelease date: October 4 Cast: Antonio Banderas, Penélope Cruz, Leonardo Sbraglia, Asier Etxeandia Director: Pedro Almodóvar (Talk to her) Why it's great: Although it's filled with bright colors and moments of passion, pain and glory it's not a vivid movie. Playing Salvador Mallo, an aging director who faces a number of serious health problems, Antonio Banderas brings a soft-spoken warmth and calming stillness to a role that other less confident actors might have found bitterness or resentment in. Mallo is an artist who has achieved a lot, allowing him to live a life with great comfort and financial stability, but he's still faltering: Exploring the mistakes of his past, turning away from creative opportunities, and using heroin to fade the physical discomfort of his various circumstances. Almodóvar tackles this semi-autobiographical material, including some flashbacks to Mallo's childhood, with an alternating arch and soft touch, leaving plenty of room for Banderas to keep the camera's attention with his skillfully shaped performance. You can't Your eyes on him. Where to watch: Rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, and YouTube (Watch the trailer)Focus Features22. Dark WatersRelease date: November 22Cast: Mark Ruffalo, Anne Hathaway, Tim Robbins, Bill CampDirector: Todd Haynes (Carol)Why it's great: The dangerous, mass-produced chemicals that Mark Ruffalo's persistent lawyer Robert Blott fights against can be found in drilling objects such as non-stick pots and pans. There's a stunning mundanity to the real-life horrors explored in Dark Waters, the ripped-from-the-headline story of a lawyer waging a decade-long legal war against DuPont, one of the most powerful companies in the world. The kitchen table, where families gather to break bread and discuss their day, becomes the crime scene. To tell the often disheartening story, which mostly plays out in Ohio and West Virginia, director Todd Haynes highlights the domestic and social aspects of the legal thriller, shooting a tough corporate holiday party and a conversation outside a Benihana with all the President's men's levels of tension and his own sense of melodrama. As the years go by, the script of Mario Correa and Matthew Michael Carnahan resists many of the triumphant, fist-pumping moments usually associated with the genre, where wit is often enough to expose hypocrisy and subvert evil. Instead, Dark Waters suggests the pursuit of justice is a grid that slowly plunges crusaders into Manila envelops and file cabinets, leaving little room to breathe. Where to watch: Rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu and YouTube (Watch the trailer)Netflix21. Wedding StoryRelease date: November 6Cast: Scarlett Johansson, Adam Driver, Laura Dern, Alan AldaDirector: Noah Baumbach (The Meyerowitz Stories)Why it's great: Returning to the subject of the caustic 2005 comedy The Squid and the Whale, which tracked the fallout of a divorce from the perspective of children, writer and director Noah Baumbach again finds laughter and pain in the often excruciating personal details of ending a relationship. This time, the bickering couple -- a Brooklyn-based actress and a theater director played with tenderness and anger by Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver -- are at the center. Instead of watching the two fall in and out of love, the story opens with the separation already moving, allowing Baumbach to focus on the soul-sucking, money-draining legal storm that follows. While Driver and Johansson are both excellent in difficult, emotionally demanding roles, some of the sharpest moments come courtesy of their lawyers, associates and extended families. (Laura Dern and Alan Alda have rightly won praise for their parties, but I'd like to watch gruff divorce expert Ray Lyotta in his own spin-off.) Showing how divorce ripples outward, Married Story complicates its own simple affair as it unfolds. Where to watch: Stream on Netflix (Watch the trailer)STX Entertainment 20. HustlersRelease September 13Cast: Constance Wu, Jennifer Lopez, Lili Reinhart, Keke Palmer Director: Lorene Scafaria (The Meddler) Why he's great: So flashy in his presentation and meticulous in his making, Hustlers, a true docudrama crime for a group of strippers ripping off careless Wall Street customers, understands the intricacies of his arrangement. Constance Wu's Destiny, new to possession, takes every detail along the way. Course, there's the light-strewn stage with the pole where ringleader Jennifer Lopez Ramona makes her screen debut in a Fiona Apple song while the money piles around her, but there's also the chilly roof where employees go for smoke breaks, the cramped dressing room where inside jokes to share, the cavernous bar where overpriced drinks get mixed, and the forecast office where the tips are distributed. In the simultaneously miserable and glamorous world of Hustlers, all these places matter. With empathy and humor, writer and director Lorene Scafaria maps out of the ground, using voiceover storytelling, painful time-jumps, and the occasional whip-pan reveal to tell a story of ambition, greed, and friendship. Cash rules everything, but the women of hustlers find ways to make money work for them. Where to watch: Rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu and YouTube (Watch the trailer)Netflix19. American FactoryRelease date: August 21StPresites: Julia Reichert and Steven Bognar (A Lion at Home)Why it's great: When Chinese company Fuyao Glass opened a new factory in Dayton, Ohio, there was so much hope in the air. Billionaire President Cao Dewang arrived at his new facility with the intention of writing a bold new chapter in the expansion of global capitalism, providing prosperity in a struggling region while getting rich in the process. That was the plan, at least. Over the course of two hours, American Factory follows the slow exhaustion of this hope as the corporate culture of Chinese management butts heads with the customs, attitudes, and economic priorities of the American workforce. Reichert and Bognar directors put their cameras everywhere: laconic board meetings, noisy union organization meetings, occasional break-room discussions, and, in an apocalyptic sequence, a business trip to a Fuyao factory in China. Despite sounding extremely bleak, American Factory has more humor and humanity than your average magazine article about the challenges facing Middle America. For a film about the intricacies of mechanical construction, it feels refreshingly handmade. Where to watch: Broadcast it on Netflix (Watch the trailer)Neon18. Amazing GraceRelease date: April 5Diters: Alan Elliott and Sydney PollackWhy are great: Aretha Franklin's voice has the power to carry the listener through time. In Amazing Grace, a captivating concert film shot from footage shot in 1972 during live recordings of her favorite album of the same name, she transforms Los Angeles' New Temple Missionary Baptist Church into a musical flashback to her childhood spent singing gospel music, performer and musician, rearranges old songs, passed through generations of preachers and singers, into refreshing new texts. Similarly, this film, once considered a lost document of her artistic process, now emerges in the present, reshaped by footage shot by cinematographer Sydney Pollack, and the act of watching can turn your humble, local cinema into one by one holy house of worship. While Franklin is undoubtedly the star here, commanding attention with her every move and speech, the film itself is also a record of other lesser-known faces from the past. We see the session musicians working to praise her soulful vocals, the backup singers swaying in their seats as they accompany her, and the adoring fans stationed in the canopies, testifying to her genius. There are so many layers of memory and artifacts to untangle, adding poignancy and complexity to an already strong performance. Where to watch: Stream on Hulu? rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, and YouTube (Watch the trailer) Music Box Films17. TransitRelease date: March 1Cast: Franz Rogowski, Paula Beer, Godthard Giese, Maryam ZareeDirector: Christian Petzold (Phoenix)Why it's great: Everything is slippery in Petzold's meticulously bizarre psychological thriller. As in his latest film, the transfixing Hitchcockian World War II-era Phoenix era rift, there is an element of mistaken identity in the game. On-the-run German refugee Georg (Rogowski) arrives in Marseille with the documents of a famous writer and soon finds himself pretending to be the famous man in exchange for safe passage to Mexico. Meanwhile, the author's wife (Beer) searches the city for her husband, crossing paths with his double in bars and in the streets. The thorny, complicated story is adapted from a 1942 novel by Anna Seghers, which was set during the 1940s, but Petzold films the set-up of most period-specific ensign and stages of intrigue-filled drama in a slightly skewed, destabilizing version of the present. (For example, no one has cell phones, but fascist troops carry large assault rifles and dress in SWAT gear.) As a conceptual game, the question of when we are creates exciting moments of discomfort and asymmetry, on an emotional level, it can make the twists and turns in the plot feel slightly removed, like a mathematical proof of an unknown (potentially unresolved) problem. Petzold's confident direction, pure and economical despite the narrative nodes, evokes the romance of the past and evokes the contradictions of the present. Sticking out in time has rarely felt so uniquely enjoyable. Where to watch: Stream on Amazon Prime? rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, and YouTube (Watch the trailer)20th Century Fox16. Ad AstraRelease date: September 20 Cast: Brad Pitt, Tommy Lee Jones, Ruth Negga, Liv UllerichDirector: James Gray (The Lost City of Z)Why it's great: Despite the galaxy-spanning, humanity-saving mission at its center, romantic James Gray ad Astra feels spare, like a rocket stripped of all its fibrous parts. There are exciting moments of suspense you'd expect from a blockbuster - like a buggy-chase sequence that explores the alien landscape of a planet's surface. But the film's real strength lies in its quiet, intimate moments. Sam Claflin, Baykai Ganambarr, Damon HerrimanDirector: Jennifer Kent (The Babadook)Why it's Great: Revenge is a painfully common theme in Hollywood movies, often used as a way to provide the threadbare motivation of a gunslinging protagonist on a path of violent destruction. On the surface, Nightingale, director Jennifer Kent's relentlessly brutal sequel to her horror breakout hit Babadook, is another familiar tale of revenge and bloodshed. Claire, a 21-year-old Irish convict played by newcomer Aisling Franciosi, faces incredible difficulties at the hands of cruel, ruthless British officers in 1825 Tasmania. After being raped multiple times and seeing her family killed before her eyes, she was left dead. But she survives, queuing her attackers across the harsh Australian landscape with the help of Indigenous tracker Billy (Ganambarr), whom she initially treats with contempt and condescension. Shooting in a box-like aspect ratio, Kent zeroes in on the hypocrisy of colonialism with a stunning sense of purpose. Her camera often locks into the characters' faces, refusing to look away and encouraging the viewer to face truths that most films would prefer to keep hidden. Where to watch: Stream on Hulu? rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, and YouTube (Watch the trailer)Fox Searchlight12. A Hidden LifeRelease date: December 13Cast: August Diehl, Valerie Pachner, Michael Nyqvist, Jürgen ProchnowDirector: Terence Malick (The Tree of Life)Why it's great: Terence Malick movies face some of the most challenging ethical questions with an immediacy that can alienate some viewers. His latest work A Hidden Life, which was inspired by the true story of Austrian farmer Franz Jägerstätter (August Diehl) and his refusal to fight for the Nazis in World War II, is mainly shot in the lyrical, late career style more closely related to 2011's The Tree of Life: the camera rolls in images of natural beauty, leaning towards the sky, and pushes up the light-strewn faces of the actors; the characters whisper simultaneously intimate, quizzed, and philosophical voice-over; events unfold in carefully crafted, symbolically weighted editing looking into time. Uses this approach deepen the motivations of a conscientious objector, dramatizing an internal struggle that becomes a physical test and a family crisis as the war intensifies. It's overwhelming at times - themes reappear in a way that can be repetitive, numbing yet - but in the best sections of A Hidden Life recalls Malick's masterpiece The New World, the Thin Red Line and the Days of Paradise. Where to watch: Rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, and YouTube (Watch the trailer)The Orchard11. Birds of passageEnao: February 13Thaid: Carmiña Martínez, Natalia Reyes, José Acosta, Jhon NarváezDirectors: Cristina Gallego and Ciró Guerra (Embrace the Snake) Why it's great: The expansive gangster saga, complete with harrowing gun battles and reinforcing double crosses, gets a thoughtful redesign in this chronicle of a wayuu domestic family in northern Colombia that get lured into the marijuana trade of the late 1960s and 70s. (It all starts with some long-haired American Peace Corps volunteers high.) As is often the case in these stories, the influx of cash and uptick in violence within the community has destabilizing implications: historical traditions, codes of honor, and family ties being abandoned in pursuit of empire building. We follow Rafayel (Acosta) as he tries to keep his soul in the middle of the uncontrollable, unnamed chaos of the free market. What makes this story of greed and betrayal stand out from every Goodfellas hit you've ever seen? The filmmakers have a special control over gait and style, letting the story unfold through large chapters and nail-biting suspense sequences. By the end, you're fully immersed in the world. Where to watch: Stream on HBO Go? rent on Amazon, iTunes, Vudu, and YouTube (Watch the trailer)Lionsgate10. John Wick: Chapter 3 - ParabellumInscription: May 17Cast: Keanu Reeves, Halle Berry, Laurence Fishburne, Mark DacascosDirector: Chad Stahelski (John Wick: Chapter 2) Why it's great: If he's slamming an enemy in the face with a book in a library or dodging stray bullets while galloping down a Manhattan street on horseback, John Wick remains calm. 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The comedy that comes from watching Awwkafina's New York City-dwelling Billi trip to China, where she cares for her cancer-stricken grandmother (Shuzhen) without revealing the nature of her illness, is just as well observed as the more conventionally dramatic moments that arrive later in the film as her relatives try to untangle the ridiculous, tragic moral situation they find themselves in. There is an impressive degree of balance in Wang's style, an opening to finding striking images in quiet moments and the discovery of visual grace notes in more chaotic sequences. Similarly, Awwkafina, both cheery and explosive in films like Ocean's 8 and Crazy Rich Asians, gives a confident performance that disturbs the delicate balance of the story. Melancholy without veering into schmaltz and insightful historical traditions, codes of honor, and family ties being abandoned in pursuit of empire building. 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