

Streaming Feature: Best of New to Netflix January 2014

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 3, 2014 - 11:45am

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Welcome to 2014! It's freezing in most of the United States. It's almost the weekend. You NEED a full Netflix queue! This is one of our favorite "New to Netflix" columns to date with an even 5x5 — 5 new films that you may have missed and 5 old films that you might not have seen yet. Add all ten. Now with previews!



3 Women

[“3 Women](#) [16]”

Netflix Description:

Seemingly meek Pinky gets a job at a nursing home and befriends the loquacious Millie. Their unusual friendship turns strangely eerie when they decide to be roommates and begin to change in surprising and unexpected ways.

Why:

Because Robert Altman. You've probably seen the most well-known works of one of the best directors of all time — “Nashville,” “The Player,” “Gosford Park” — but this little gem from 1977 might have slipped under your radar. Moody, atmospheric, strange, and with two of my favorite performances from Shelley Duvall and Sissy Spacek, it's a fascinating film. To be fair, the quality on Netflix is kind of weak and if you're interested in the movie, you should pick up the GREAT Criterion Blu-ray release but maybe sample here first before committing to that kind of expense.



The Apartment

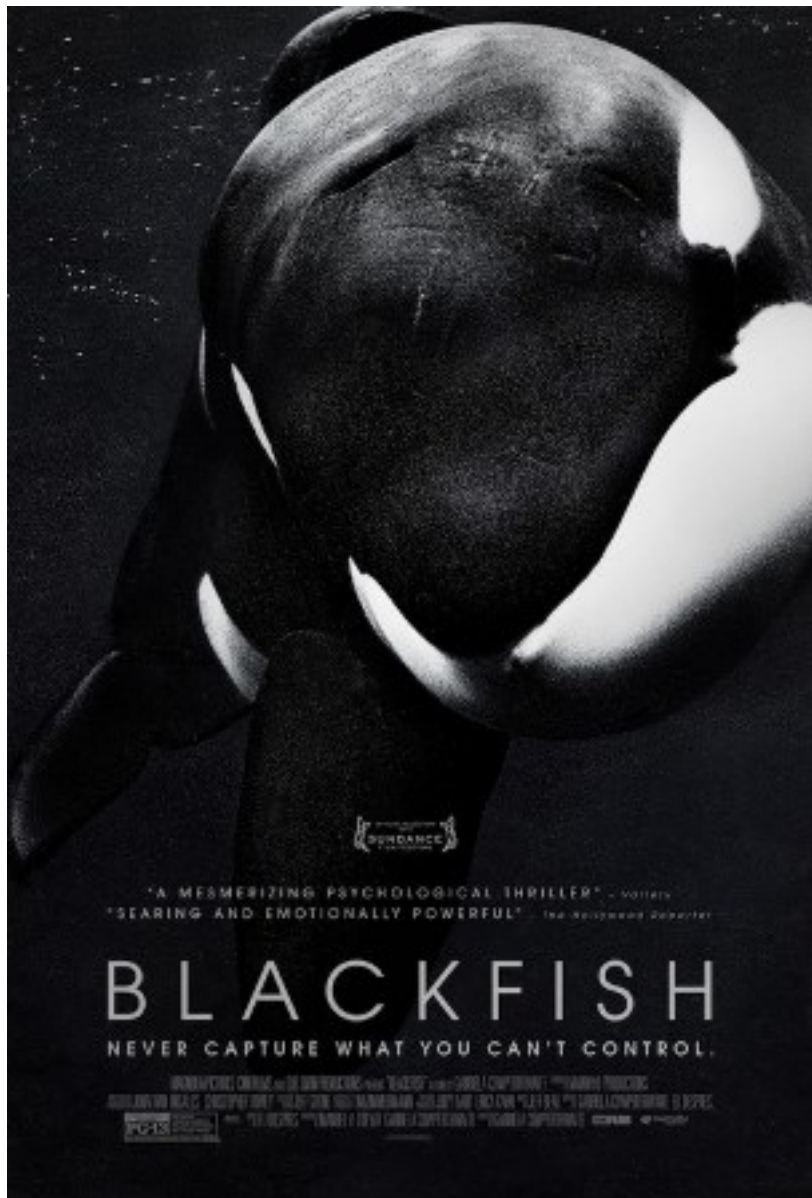
["The Apartment" \[17\]"](#)

Netflix Description:

With furthering his career in mind, an insurance clerk lends his apartment to his adulterous higher-ups for their amorous affairs. But his fast track to an executive suite gets derailed when he becomes involved with his boss's latest conquest.

Why:

Because it's one of the best movies ever made. Yep. I said it. Billy Wilder's Oscar-winning film is a masterpiece, a delicate balance of traditional romantic comedy with a darker edge that would influence generations to come, particularly Woody Allen and Cameron Crowe. This is one of my favorite movies of all time. Watch it.



Blackfish

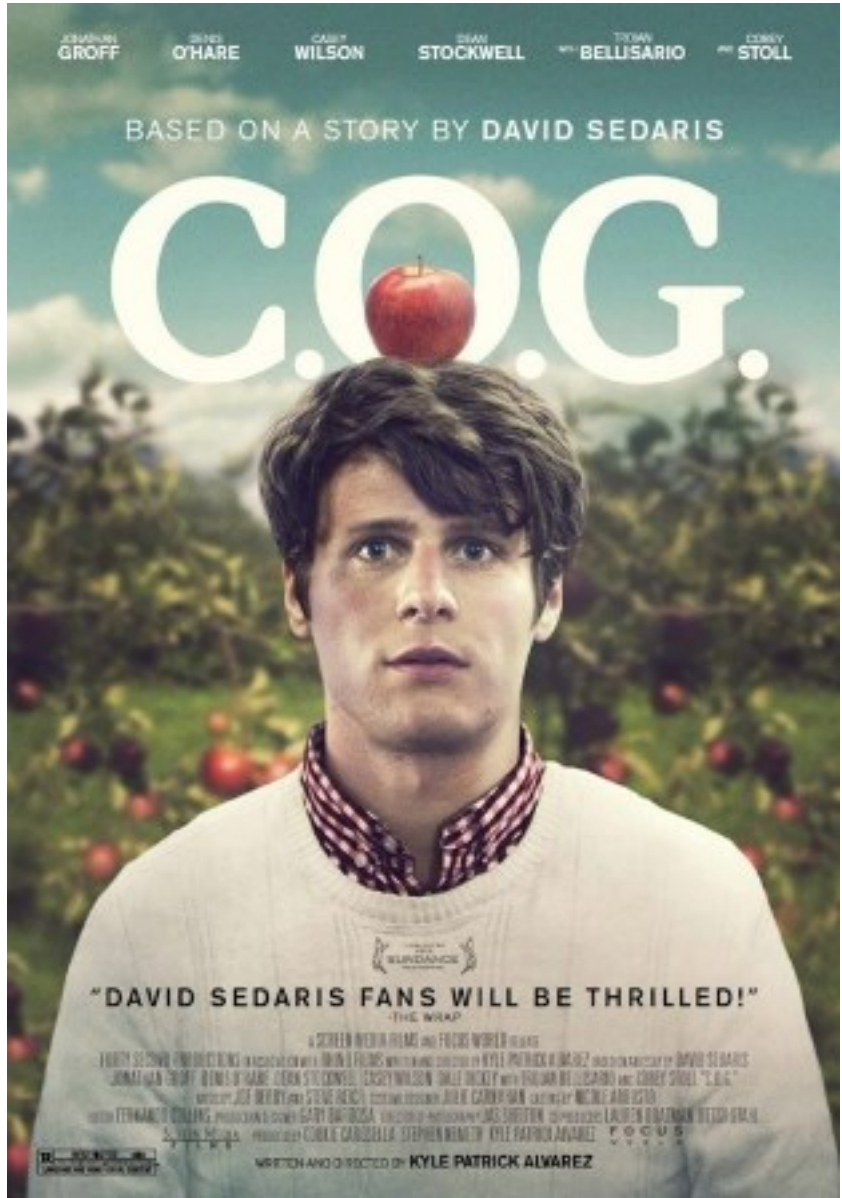
“[Blackfish](#) [18]”

Netflix Description:

This fascinating documentary examines the life of performing killer whale Tilikum — who has caused the deaths of several people while in captivity — and questions the safety and humaneness of confining these intelligent creatures.

Why:

Because it's important. A potential Oscar winner for Best Documentary, this eye-opener pulls back the curtain on the awful torture that is Sea World and similar water parks. And it's changing minds every time it plays. See it. Share it. Tell your friends. It's only a matter of time before Sea Worlds are shut down forever and future generations are stunned that they ever existed in the first place.



C.O.G.

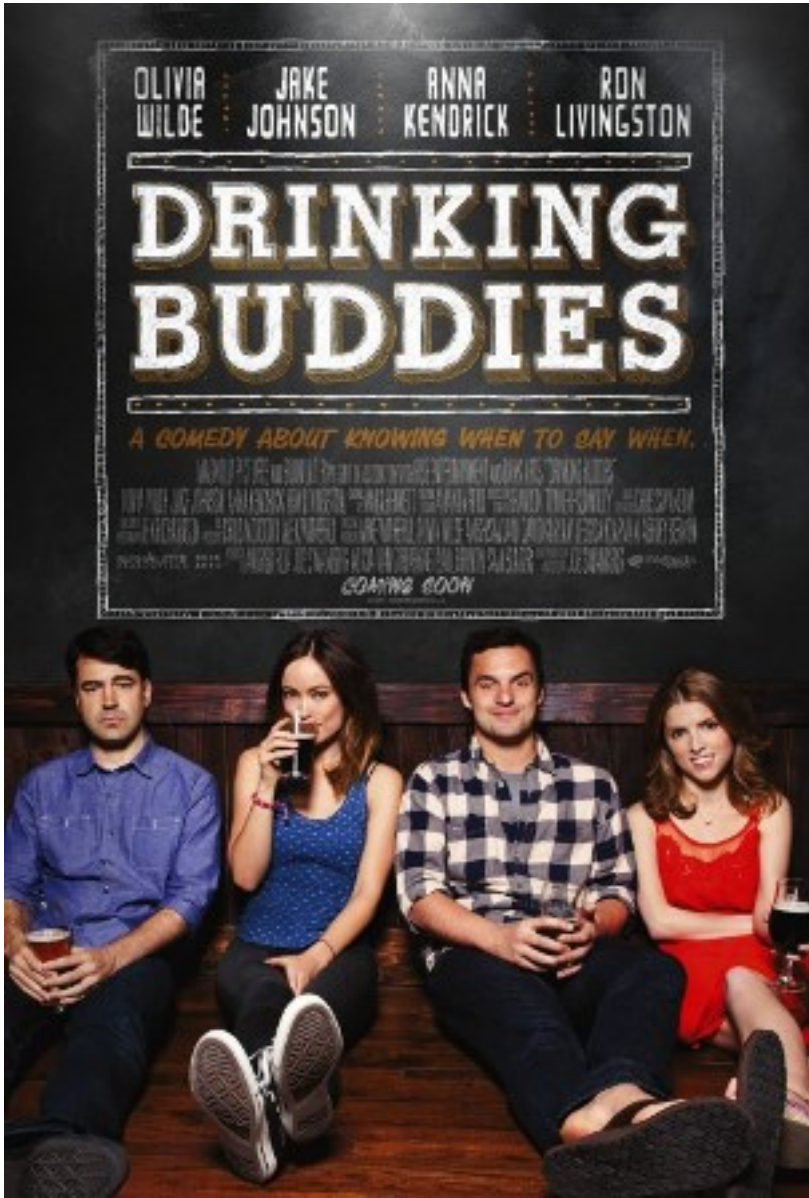
“[C.O.G.](#) [19]”

Netflix Description:

Based on a short story by David Sedaris, this comedy follows the brash young author as he travels to Oregon to work on an apple farm. The journey exposes him to all sorts of culture clashes, but what awaits him at the farm is far worse.

Why:

Because David Sedaris. The first and only film based on the writing of the beloved essayist is a gentle, interesting comedy that played at Sundance last year and didn't get nearly a wide-enough release. It's surely the least-seen feature in this month's New to Netflix. It's imperfect but there's a lot to like here thematically, courtesy of Sedaris' unique worldview, and the performances from Jonathan Groff, Denis O'Hare, and Corey Stoll deserved a wider audience.



Drinking Buddies

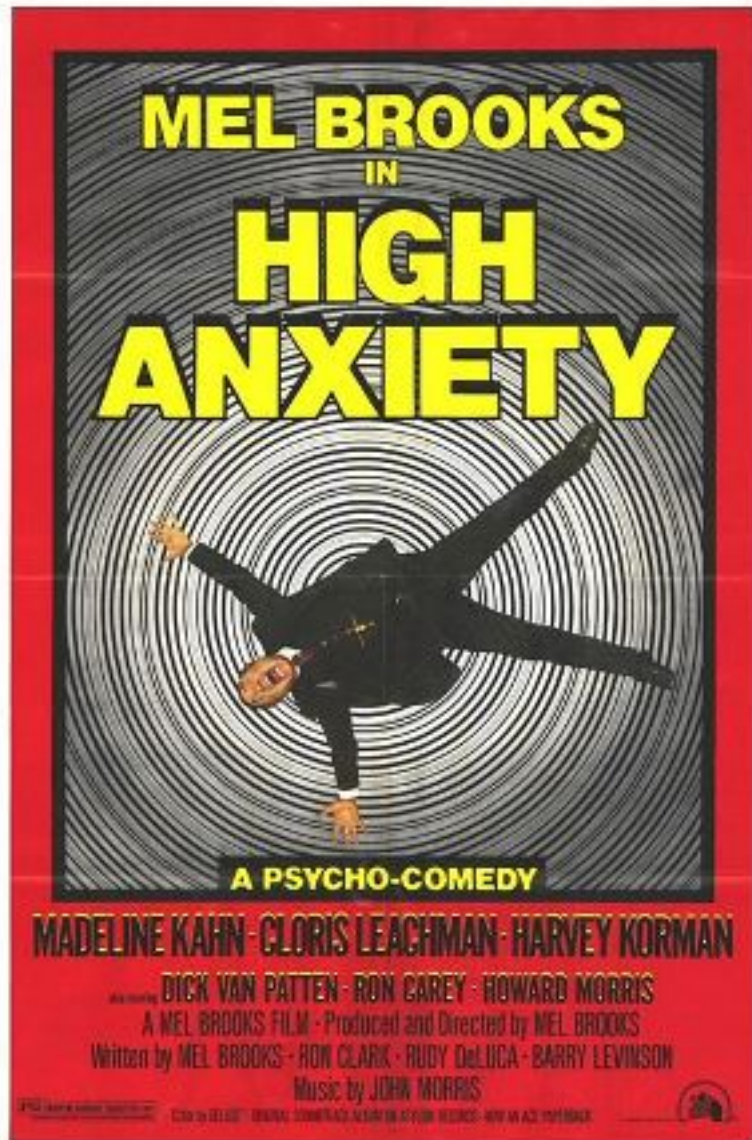
[“Drinking Buddies \[20\]”](#)

Netflix Description:

Workmates at a small Chicago brewery, Luke and Kate are romantically involved with others but also the best of friends — on and off the clock. Things get complicated, however, when the couples spend a weekend together at a lakeside retreat.

Why:

Because Swanberg. The Chicago writer/director broke through to another level with his most mainstream effort and FINALLY proved that Olivia Wilde can be an intriguing, talented lead actress (she’s great in “Her” too, by the way, in a small role). This film, shot mostly at Revolution Brewing Company, is a delightful comedy of relationships and how the line between friend and “more” between two people can get very blurry over time. And yet Swanberg doesn’t fall into typical “When Harry Met Sally” clone traps. He keeps it light, fresh, believable, and very engaging.



High Anxiety

[“High Anxiety”](#) [21]

Netflix Description:

Psychiatric administrator Dr. Thorndyke finds some bizarre shenanigans occurring at the Psychoneurotic Institute for the Very, Very Nervous. But when he’s framed for murder, Dr. Thorndyke must confront his own neurotic demons to clear his name.

Why:

Because it’s funny. “High Anxiety” was actually my gateway drug to the rest of the career of Mel Brooks and I now consider “Blazing Saddles” and “Young Frankenstein” among the best comedies ever made. This isn’t THAT good but it is a funny, quick-paced, witty take on the career of Alfred Hitchcock that works even better for those who bow at the altar of the master of suspense.



The Keep

[“The Keep \[22\]”](#)

Netflix Description:

German soldiers are slain by an ancient spirit after they commandeer a Romanian castle during World War II. A Jewish scholar wants to unleash the demon to decimate the Nazis, but an enigmatic wanderer intends to keep the evil contained.

Why:

Because it's hard to find. This totally weird (in a good way) sci-fi action film from Michael Mann (“Heat,” “Public Enemies”) isn’t available on DVD or Blu-ray, largely because the score by Tangerine Dream has had rights issues for three decades now. I know. Silly. I believe the score on this version isn’t even the theatrical one, which is disappointing, but at least there’s a way to see the actual movie now until it gets a proper home release other than hard-to-find VHS versions. Better than nothing.



Not Fade Away

“[Not Fade Away](#) [23]”

Netflix Description:

Inspired by the music of Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, three 1960s high-schoolers form a rock band in the New Jersey suburbs. James Gandolfini co-stars in this debut feature from “Sopranos” creator David Chase.

Why:

Because James Gandolfini. David Chase’s directorial debut is a tender ode to ’60s rock and the era when The Beatles and The Rolling Stones convinced everyone of teenage years that they could start a band in their garage. Gandolfini shines in a small role as one of the lead boy’s fathers and the film, despite its narrative flaws, has a wonderful sense of time and space. And a beautiful ending.



Prince Avalanche

“[Prince Avalanche](#) [24]”

Netflix Description:

While repainting traffic lines along a burnt-out stretch of rural highway, a mismatched pair — straightlaced Alvin and his girlfriend’s harebrained brother, Lance — form an unlikely bond that builds upon their differences.

Why:

Because David Gordon Green deserves another chance. The writer/director who made so many arthouse waves with beloved films like “All the Real Girls,” “Snow Angels,” and “Pineapple Express,” took some deserved shit for the one-two stinker of “Your Highness” and “The Sitter,” but he returns at least close to form with this gentle comedy about two guys in the middle of nowhere. Paul Rudd spreads his dramatic wings a bit but the strength of the piece is the unforced tone brought to it by DGG. Once again, it’s exciting to think about what he’ll do next.



Sightseers

“[Sightseers](#) [25]”

Netflix Description:

Newly coupled Chris and Tina embark on an RV road trip to take in England's unique sights and rolling countryside. But as events and people inadvertently raise Chris's ire, the trip takes a gory wrong turn.

Why:

Because it's twisted. Ben Wheatley's DARK comedy is beloved by some critics (I've even seen it on a few top tens) and should make a wonderful cold weather alternative this weekend. Hate the cold but love that it keeps you away from the annoying people of this world? We have a movie for you...



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Source URL (retrieved on **Apr 19 2024 - 10:07pm**):

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