

What to Watch: Mar. 11-24, 2014

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 18, 2014 - 4:47pm

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An Oscar winner, a major Oscar nominee, two more pieces of Oscar bait, and a few movies that never got anywhere near Oscar. Welcome to What to Watch. We don't play favorites. Oh, wait, yes we do. You should *definitely* rent or buy the titles on this first page. The second page is more optional.



Frozen

Photo credit: Disney

“Frozen”

The best Disney movie since “The Lion King” (Disney, not Pixar), “Frozen” gets the lavish Mouse House treatment. There’s no better studio for family releases and they’re not about to slack on one of the biggest moneymakers of their existence. We are JUST getting started with “Frozen”. You know how “Beauty & The Beast” and “The Lion King” became industries unto themselves? Spawning Broadway musicals, theme park rides, new shows, straight-to-DVD sequels, etc.? “Frozen” will end up the same way. If you have a kid, you won’t be able to avoid picking it up and you won’t be disappointed. Heck, you should think about grabbing it if you MIGHT have a kid someday. Just plan ahead.

From my [film review](#) [28]: *“Disney’s marvelous “Frozen” fits snugly in the lineage of princess stories that the studio has been crafting for decades while also looks forward to empower girls in ways that its predecessors never considered. It is a remarkably fun movie, especially in 3D, alive in ways that so many of its peers in this lackluster year for animation simply are not. With great voice work, fantastic music, and a script that feels like its themes emerge naturally from its story and characters instead just being forced upon them, “Frozen” is Disney’s best animated feature since “The Lion King.”*

Synopsis:

Walt Disney Animation Studios presents a chilly twist on one of the most humorous and heartwarming stories ever told. “Disney Animation’s best since The Lion King,” (William Bibbiani, CraveOnline) will melt your heart. Fearless optimist Anna sets off on an epic journey — teaming up with rugged mountain man Kristoff and his loyal reindeer Sven — to find her sister Elsa, whose icy powers have trapped the kingdom of Arendelle in eternal winter. Encountering Everest-like conditions, mystical trolls and a hilarious snowman named Olaf, Anna and Kristoff battle the elements in a race to save the kingdom. Bring home Frozen on DVD and Blu-ray - featuring cool bonus extras with gorgeous animation, memorable characters and unforgettable music. It’s dazzling fun for the whole family!

Special Features:

- o The Making Of Frozen
- o D’frosted: Disney’s Journey From Hans Christian Anderson To Frozen
- o Deleted Scenes
- o Let It Go (End Credit Version)
- o “Get A Horse!” Micky Mouse Short

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Vudu, Amazon Instant Streaming, iTunes



American Hustle

Photo credit: Sony

“American Hustle”

It’s kind of sad that the story of David O. Russell’s once-beloved ensemble piece may now be rewritten as the movie that earned an amazing TEN Oscar nominations but went home empty-handed. It almost makes you want to see the final votes. I would bet money that Amy Adams came close to Best Actress and that the Best Original Screenplay and Best Costume Design trophies nearly went here as well. But history doesn’t remember the movies that almost won the Academy Award. Oh, wait, sure it does. Forget the Oscars. PLEASE forget the backlash that turned on this movie in increasingly ignorant ways as the hype built. This is an often-great film with an amazing cast working at the top of their game. And it’s a great Blu-ray with solid special features and a Sony-caliber transfer.

From my [film review](#) [29]: *“There are some structural issues early in “American Hustle.” Irving, Richie, and Sydney all get to narrate, leading to a slight feeling of being overwhelmed instead of interested in the story they’re telling, but when the true con – the story that became known as Abscam for those of you old enough to remember it – gets going, Russell’s film clicks. The film moves like a cat, pushed along by Russell’s*

great music choices, the performances he helped craft, and the undeniable influence of Scorsese hanging in the background like a forged piece of art."

Synopsis:

A fictional film set in the alluring world of one of the most stunning scandals to rock our nation, *American Hustle* tells the story of brilliant con man Irving Rosenfeld (Christian Bale), who along with his equally cunning and seductive British partner Sydney Prosser (Amy Adams) is forced to work for a wild FBI agent Richie DiMaso (Bradley Cooper). DiMaso pushes them into a world of Jersey powerbrokers and mafia that's as dangerous as it is enchanting. Jeremy Renner is Carmine Polito, the passionate, volatile, New Jersey political operator caught between the con-artists and Feds. Irving's unpredictable wife Rosalyn (Jennifer Lawrence) could be the one to pull the thread that brings the entire world crashing down. Like David O. Russell's previous films (*The Fighter*, *Silver Linings Playbook*), *American Hustle* defies genre, hinging on raw emotion, and life and death stakes.

Special Features:

- o The Making Of *American Hustle*
- o Deleted And Extended Scenes

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Vudu, Amazon Instant Streaming, iTunes



Kill Your Darlings
Photo credit: Sony

"Kill Your Darlings"

Absolutely none of the hype that put "*American Hustle*" on a pedestal and then smashed it to the ground got anywhere near another Sony film, the arguably superior "*Kill Your Darlings*," a unique biopic that I saw in Park City at Sundance this year and really hoped would find a deserving audience. This is an unusual, energetic, vibrant piece of work, carried by great performances from Daniel Radcliffe and Dane DeHaan. Don't miss it.

From Pat McDonald's [film review](#) [30]: "*This film is also an essential lesson in the contrast between our era and the college freshman of 1944. That generation was tempered by war, with a knowledge of how short life could actually be – there were 420,000 American casualties between 1942 and 1945. The purpose of discovery, as embodied by the "new vision" that sprung from the Beat Generation, was born of an attitude after that bloody war. The urge to say "f**k you" to the nuclear age was powerful in these genius folks, whether fueled by drugs or not.*"

Synopsis:

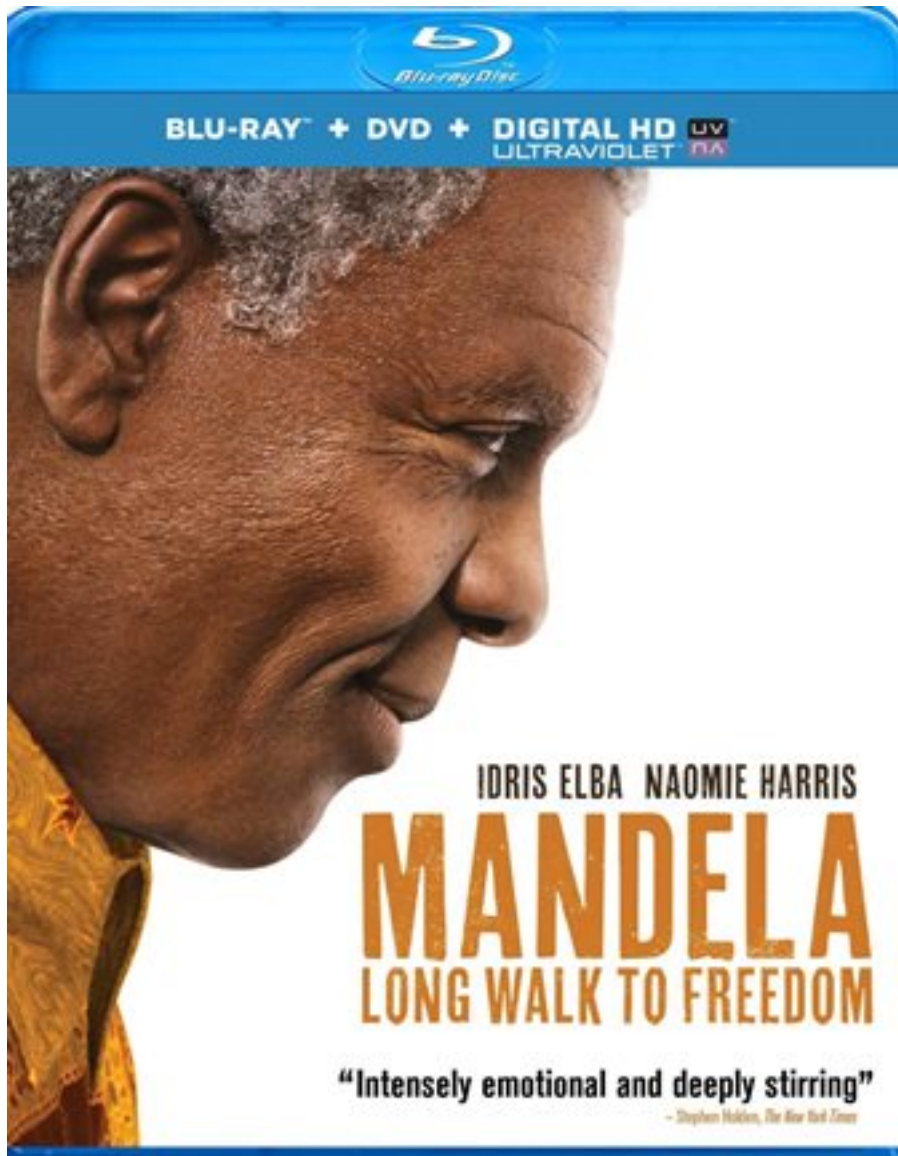
When Allen Ginsberg (Daniel Radcliffe) is accepted at Columbia, he finds stuffy tradition clashing with daringly modern ideas and attitudes - embodied by Lucien Carr (Dane DeHaan). Lucien is an object of fascination for shy, unsophisticated Allen, and soon he is drawn into Lucien's hard-drinking, jazz-clubbing circle of friends, including William Burroughs (Ben Foster) and David Kammerer (Michael C. Hall), who clearly resents Allen's position as Lucien's new sidekick. A true story of friendship, love and murder, *Kill Your Darlings* recounts the pivotal year that changed Allen Ginsberg's life forever and provided the spark for him to start his creative revolution.

Special Features:

- o Commentary With Daniel Radcliffe, Dane DeHaan, John Krokidas And Austin Bunn
- o Deleted Scenes
- o Q&A With John Krokidas And Austin Bunn

- o In Conversation With Daniel Radcliffe And Dane DeHann
- o On The Red Carpet At The Toronto Film Festival

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Vudu, Amazon Instant Streaming, iTunes



Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom

Photo credit: Weinstein

“Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom”

Perhaps Nelson Mandela's life is just too well-known or too complex to successfully adapt into a film but this potential Oscar bait never really clicked with critics or audiences despite a hit song by U2 and a solid lead performance from the always-solid Idris Elba. It's the kind of drama that could find the audience at home that it never did in theaters. Maybe the next attempt at a Mandela biopic will be the smash the world leader deserves.

From Pat McDonald's [film review](#) [31]: “*The memory of South Africa freedom fighter Nelson Mandela, who passed away on December 5th, is filled with deserved accolades and iconography. Director Justin Chadwick and actor Idris Elba brings the man to human life in the essential “Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom.”*”

Synopsis:

Nelson Mandela's extraordinary journey to becoming one of history's most iconic figures is brought to life in *Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom*. “Idris Elba powerfully conveys Mandela's charisma and impassioned dedication” (Claudia Puig, USA TODAY) as a political leader and human rights advocate. The film chronicles his early life, education, marriage to Winnie Mandela (Naomie Harris) and 27 year prison sentence before becoming South Africa's first democratically elected president and working to rebuild the country's once segregated society.

Special Features:

- o Mandela: The Leader You Know, The Man You Didn't
- o Behind-The-Scenes Featurettes
- o Tribute Video Gallery
- o Feature Commentary With Director Justin Chadwick

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Vudu, Amazon Instant Streaming, iTunes



Saving Mr. Banks

Photo credit: Disney

“Saving Mr. Banks”

Even more than “Mandela,” this Disney-fied retelling of the making of “Mary Poppins” had Oscar written all over it. In fact, its two leads—Emma Thompson and Tom Hanks—were both winners and it told the saga of one of the world’s most beloved family films. What happened? I think the backlash here actually worked as writers and historians started to question the veracity of “Banks,” noting that it didn’t really connect with history. And then deeper questions about why audiences should embrace a movie that turns a woman who just wanted her personal vision to remain intact into a villain had to be raised. Once a film like “Banks” is branded with being sexist, it’s tough to shake. While I have some SERIOUS issues with a movie that downright discourages female screenwriters in an era when they’re already far too rare, Thompson and Hanks are both solid, as always, and it’s the kind of decent drama that can be enjoyed if you don’t approach it as truth. As usual, Disney stacks it with interesting special features, which is always nice.

From Pat McDonald’s [film review](#) [32]: “*The world of creation, and the imagination behind it, gets an honorable and elegantly performed treatment in the fascinating “Saving Mr. Banks.” What seems like a “making of” film about the legendary “Mary Poppins,” becomes much more rich in symbolism and consideration.*”

Synopsis:

Tom Hanks and Emma Thompson bring to life the untold true story about the origins of one of the most treasured Disney classics of all time. John Lee Hancock (The Blind Side) directs this acclaimed film, which reveals the surprising backstory behind the making of Mary Poppins. Determined to fulfill a promise to his daughters, Walt Disney (Hanks) tries for twenty years to obtain the rights to author P.L. Travers’ (Thompson) beloved book. Armed with his iconic creative vision, Walt pulls out all the stops, but the uncompromising Travers won’t budge. Only when he reaches into his own complicated childhood does Walt discover the truth about the ghosts that haunt Travers, and together, they set Mary Poppins free!

Special Features:

- o The Walt Disney Studios: From Poppins To The Present
- o “Let’s Go Fly A Kite”
- o Deleted Scenes

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Vudu, Amazon Instant Streaming, iTunes



The Visitor

Photo credit: Drafthouse

“The Visitor”

Drafthouse Films has become one of the most impressive and enjoyable small companies in the business right now. If you haven't seen one of the recent films they “unearthed,” the terrifying “Wake in Fright,” you owe yourself a trip to your Netflix queue. After that, stop by this oddity, a '70s sci-fi/horror piece that stars Glenn Ford, John Huston, and Lance Henriksen (yes, you're reading that cast list right). Psychedelic '70s horror has never really been my thing. However, if it's yours...

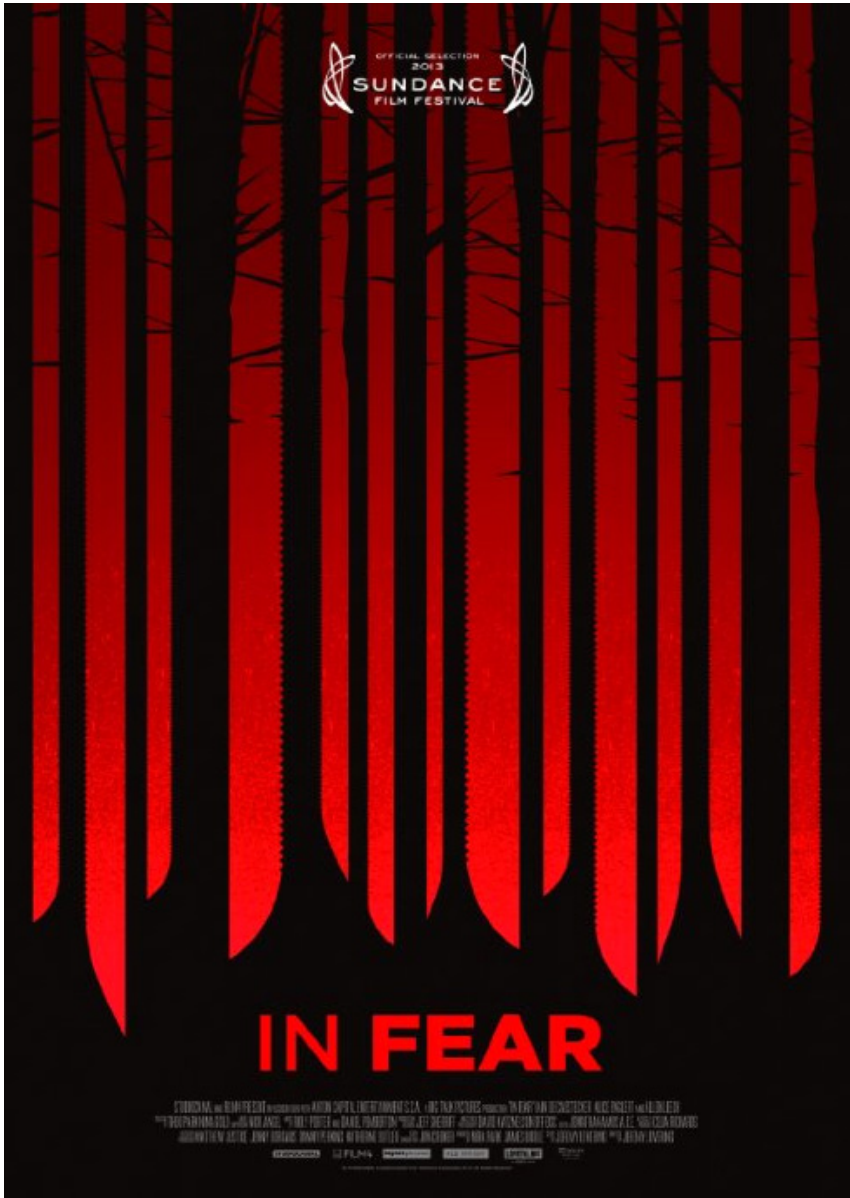
Synopsis:

In this unforgettable assault on reality - fully restored and presented completely uncut for the first time ever in HD - legendary Hollywood director/actor John Huston (The Maltese Falcon: Treasure of the Sierra Madre) stars as an intergalactic warrior who joins a cosmic Christ figure in battle against a demonic 8-year-old girl and her pet hawk, while the fate of the universe hangs in the balance. Multi-dimensional warfare, pre-adolescent profanity and brutal avian attacks combine to transport the viewer to a stat unlike anything they've experienced... somewhere between Hell, the darkest reaches of outer space, and Atlanta, GA. The Visitor fearlessly fuses elements of The Omen, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, The Birds, Rosemary's Baby, The Fury, and even Star Wars, creating the most ambitious of all 70s psychedelic mindwarps. Its baffling all-star cast includes Shelley Winters (Night of the Hunter), Glenn Ford (Superman), Lance Henriksen (Aliens), Franco Nero (Django) and Sam Peckinpah (director of The Wild Bunch).

Special Features:

- o Interviews With Star Lance Henriksen, Screenwriter Lou Comici And Cinematographer Ennio Guarnieri
- o Theatrical Trailer
- o 16 Page Booklet

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Vudu, Amazon Instant Streaming, iTunes



In Fear
Photo credit: Anchor Bay

“In Fear”

I love a good home invasion flick and “In Fear” basically plays like a home invasion flick in a car when a poor couple gets lost and terrorized well off the beaten path. The problem comes down to execution. The art of the slow burn requires a deft hand or it slides into boredom and I long ago stopped caring what would happen to these characters before anything did.

Synopsis:

Experience the film being hailed as “chilling, tense, and scary” (Screen Daily). Young couple Tom (Iain De Caestecker of Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.) and Lucy (Alice Englert of Beautiful Creatures) are driving to a festival in the remote Irish countryside. When they leave the main highway to look for their hotel, they quickly lose their way along the back-roads. Lost and tormented as night falls, Tom and Lucy’s primal anxieties of the dark and the unknown start to take hold. When the couple discovers they are not alone, they realize that their worst fears lay in the road ahead. Allen Leech (Downton Abbey) co-stars in this shattering debut feature by writer/director Jeremy Lovering.

Special Features:
o None

Where to Watch: Blu-ray, DVD, Vudu, Amazon Instant Streaming, iTunes



[33]

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