

Rockabill Film Society
Movie Shortlist Spring 2015

100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out The Window And Disappeared, The

Hundraåringen som klev ut genom fönstret och försvann

Dir: Felix Herngren 2013 Sweden 114 mins Cert: 15A
Starring: Robert Gustafsson, Iwar Wiklander, Mia Skaringer, David Wiberg, Jens Hulten, Alan Ford
Language: Swedish
Available to programme: January
Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wTWSrxJQ9M>

May Screening Day Rating: 82% from 17 responses

It might take a while to say the title, but it's only seconds before this Swedish comic gem gets a laugh. That's when Allan Karlsson (Robert Gustafsson) blows up the fox who killed his cat, by hiding sticks of dynamite inside a pack of sausages. Like much of the humour of this film, it's broad verging on slapstick, but delivered with such deadpan panache that it's irresistible.

The film itself could be the same. With the current enthusiasm for all things Scandinavian, it only takes a little shrewd marketing for this to enjoy a breakout, international distribution.

Based on the Swedish bestseller by Jonas Jonasson, it follows the many misadventures past and present of a man who, a little like Forrest Gump, succeeds in life despite evident drawbacks. Karlsson isn't the brightest bulb in the box, nor is he particularly sane – that fox is only the latest victim of his penchant for explosives - but he has an innate common sense and a good heart, that over his long life has earned him some surprising friends and allies.

The fox incident lands him in a retirement home. But as the staff prepare to celebrate his 100th birthday, the indefatigable and restless chap climbs out of the window, takes himself to the bus station and gets the first ride out of town. He manages to board with a stranger's suitcase full of cash, and for the next two hours murderous crooks and an inept policeman will be on his trail.

"Many have shouted at me over the years, from stationmasters to dictators," Allan declares. While on the road he recalls the famous people he's met – Franco and Stalin, Truman and Reagan, Gorbachev – and the historic moments in which he's played an unlikely role: the Spanish Civil War, the invention of the atomic bomb, the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. His funniest companion, though, is fictional: Albert Einstein's idiot brother, a fellow gulag inmate whose dim brain can't compute Allan's simple plan for escape.

While Gump lived through his mother's dictum that "life is a box of chocolates", Allan frequently pulls out his mother's deathbed observation that "life's what it is, and will be what it will be." His stoicism, while all around him is chaotic and absurd, is beautifully captured by Gustafsson. One of Sweden's most popular comedians, as well as an actor, he easily delineates the character from a teenager through to his century.

Another comedy that this evokes, of course, is Zelig. It may not have the technical or narrative sophistication of Woody Allen's film, but adapter and director Felix Herngren keeps things moving pretty seamlessly between the past and present, has a good eye

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for the madcap, and maintains a constant breezy mood. At its Berlinale Special screening, the laughter often went through the roof. - *Demetrios Matheou / Screen International*

Bright Days Ahead

Les beaux jours

Dir: Marion Vernoux 2014 France 94 mins Cert: CLUB
Starring: Fanny Ardant, Laurent Lafitte, Patrick Chesnais, Jean-Francois Stevenin, Fanny Cottencon, Catherine Lachens
Language: French
Available to programme: January
Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OLL5PtU6T0>

Finally! Caroline has retired, at last. A new life lies before her: time to take care of her children, of her husband, and of herself, above all.

She soon comes to realise that this new freedom is synonymous with dreadful tedium. Especially when she receives for her birthday free membership to the neighbourhood's senior club where ceramics and amateur theatre classes are the order of the day. Against her better judgment she accepts the gift and takes the plunge. Oddly enough, she meets great people there, starting with the young computer science teacher, who is far from being insensible to her charms...

Caroline will gradually take control of her life again and live a second youth: taking a new lover, living new experiences, breaking the rules, not doing what's expected... Who said that retirement was the beginning of the end?

Starring French screen legend Fanny Ardant as soul-searching Caroline, Laurent Lafitte as her younger beau, and the superb Patrick Chesnais as her mildly suspicious husband, *Bright Days Ahead* is a warm and convincing portrait of love. - *Alliance Francaise French Film Festival 2014*

Camille Claudel 1915

Dir: Bruno Dumont 2013 France 95 mins Cert: CLUB
Starring: Juliette Binoche, Jean-Luc Vincent, Robert Leroy
Language: French
Available to programme: January
Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxsJFBXNywo>

The brutally austere films of the French director Bruno Dumont scrutinize human behavior with a chilly, quasi-scientific detachment that borders on misanthropy. His characters are pitiable creatures whose baser instincts are in conflict with their spiritual aspirations.

When Mr. Dumont fixes his gaze on Juliette Binoche in his newest feature, *Camille*

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Claudel 1915, the disparity between his dispassion and her overflowing humanity generates warmth, a rare quality in his films. One way to describe the movie is as a passionate dialogue between science (Mr. Dumont) and art (Ms. Binoche), in which art comes out ahead.

The story takes place over three days in 1915, two years after Camille, a brilliant sculptor and the former protégée and mistress of Auguste Rodin, was confined to a church-run mental hospital by her younger brother, the Christian mystic poet Paul Claudel. The cast includes real patients and their caretakers. The other patients' twisted postures, garbled speech and blank expressions make a painful contrast to Camille's hypervigilant anguish. What could be lonelier than to be imprisoned in a madhouse with people who can't communicate?

The film, much of whose dialogue was adapted from letters exchanged by Camille and Paul, as well as medical records, couldn't be more different from Bruno Nuytten's turbulent 1989 melodrama, *Camille Claudel*. Isabelle Adjani was nominated for an Oscar for her work in that film. Mr. Dumont's movie picks up more or less where the earlier one left off.

The film raises questions, which it never answers, about Camille's mental state. She is around 50, and although her relationship with Rodin ended two decades earlier, she still believes he instigated a plot to kill her. She may be paranoid and possibly schizophrenic, but she is fiercely intelligent and articulate. The severity of her illness isn't comparable to that of the disorders of the other patients, who clearly couldn't function in the outside world.

Ms. Binoche's portrayal of Camille is one of the most wrenching performances she has given. Without makeup, tears streaming down her face, ambling around the hillside property with nothing to do and nowhere to go, she is a woman desperately trying to maintain a grip. The loneliness and boredom of being forced to live in such an environment, I imagine, would be enough to drive anyone mad.

The movie suggests that Camille, however unstable, was a brilliant artist punished for not knowing her place. Camille claims that Rodin was jealous of her talent. In a revealing remark, her doctor pompously declares, "There is no worse trade than art." That observation sends a shiver of dread through a film that asks age-old questions about the relation between art and madness.

The story revolves around a rare visit to the hospital by the stiff, unsmiling Paul (Jean-Luc Vincent), who Camille hopes will rescue her from hell. He seems much less stable than his sister, especially when he goes on at length about his spiritual revelations, inspired by the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, and describes his smugly self-punishing interpretation of Christian belief. He hypothesizes that Camille's illness may be "a case of genuine possession."

Camille Claudel 1915 brings to mind the cases of Vivienne Eliot, Zelda Fitzgerald, Frances Farmer and other women from more restrictive times who flamed too brightly for comfort. Some have theorized that they were locked away as punishment by men.

The movie's saddest words are voiced by the anguished Camille amid a flood of tears: "I'm no longer a human being."

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She remained hospitalized until her death, at 78, in 1943. - *Stephen Holden / The New York Times*

"A mesmerizingly intense yet controlled lead by Juliette Binoche." - *Jonathan Romney, Screen International*

"Heartbreaking." - *Guy Lodge, Variety*

Chinese Puzzle

Casse-tête chinois

Dir: Cédric Klapisch **2014** **France** **117 mins** **Cert: 15**
Starring: Romain Duris, Audrey Tautou, Cécile de France, Kelly Reilly, Sandrine Holt, Margaux Mansart, Pablo Mugnier-Jacob, Flore Bonaventura, Benoît Jacquot
Language: French
Available to programme: January
Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDuUDKl1Ays>

May Screening Day Rating: 78% from 8 responses

When last we saw Xavier (Romain Duris) in *Russian Dolls*, the middle entry in director Cédric Klapisch's "Spanish Apartment" trilogy, he was a relationship-hopping wannabe novelist writing trash and threatening to run aground on turning 30. As the film ended, however, he embraced Wendy (Kelly Reilly), a fellow writer for whom he had fallen, signaling a real want of settling down. Indeed, as *Chinese Puzzle* opens, he and Wendy are married with two children, though on the verge of a divorce that will send her fleeing for New York City and him proceeding to the same city to maintain contact with his offspring.

A mere three years separated the trilogy's first two films, but Klapisch held out another eight before returning to its capper, so as to peer at Xavier crossing the threshold of middle age. Klapisch intensifies the stakes by ascribing kids to each central character, making the potential consequences more palpable, but without losing any of the playful buoyancy on display throughout the earlier films. In fact, Xavier, having legitimately become a working author, is penning a book about the complications of life, and the subject of his fiction blends with the film's themes to illustrate that, while solving the puzzle of his existence is perhaps an impossibility, managing and even coming to embrace the rigmarole of attempting to assemble it is not.

Like its predecessors, the movie is abundant in filmmaking chicanery, but here the use of split screen, time lapse, and quick cuts delightfully underscore the spirit of its setting, the story galloping at a brisk pace evocative of New York living. A melting pot of personalities, French and Chinese and American, intermingle and the dialogue bounces from one language to the next, often within the same scene, as *Chinese Puzzle* becomes an effervescent variation on the time-honored story of striking out for the American dream.

Klapisch's concerns, however, are emotional, not social. True, Xavier enters a fake marriage to acquire a green card, but his make-believe bride's enthusiastic willingness to help and their heartfelt behavior in close quarters represent the film's ideals more than the scheme. At the same time, he provides a sperm donation for his old lesbian chum

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Isabelle (Cécile De France), now living in Brooklyn, a farcical situation that bypasses broadness by honestly depicting the blurred lines between friend and blood. Once Audrey Tautou's Martine, Xavier's girlfriend in the trilogy's first film, *L'Abuerge Espagnol*, turns up with her two kids in tow for a visit and perhaps an extended stay, everyone combines to create a movingly modern twist on the immigrant family.

Even with so many characters and story threads, Klapisch effortlessly builds to the inevitable third-act collision, the myriad of complications coming to a head simultaneously and comically. That not all of them are resolved feels perfectly on point, depicting leftover pieces of life's puzzle, as does the freeze frame, typically a hackneyed interference, to close the film and, in turn, the trilogy. "New York is on a mathematical grid," explains Xavier in a voiceover meant to evince the contrast between that perfect concrete framework and all the chaos contained within. That these people will never overcome nor do away with that tumult is okay, because they've determined how to exist amidst it and seize individual moments of clarity for all their worth. - *Eric Prigge / Slant Magazine*

Grand Seduction, The

Dir: Don McKellar	2013	Canada	115mins	Cert: 12A
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Starring: Brendan Gleeson, Taylor Kitsch, Gordon Pinsent, Liane Balaban, Mark Critch, Mary Walsh
Language: English
Available to programme: TBC
Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q17Vgb9HrSY>

In order to secure a vital factory contract, the residents of a small Newfoundland fishing village conspire to charm a big-city doctor into becoming the town's full-time physician in this sparkling comedy from director Don McKellar (*Last Night*) and screenwriter Michael Dowse (*The F Word*).

Like many affected by the collapse of the fishing industry, residents of this once-thriving settlement are driven to seek employment in the city, or, worse, queue for government assistance. Their future begins to look brighter when a plastics manufacturer proposes to set up shop – until they learn that the contract calls for a resident doctor. Enter Dr Lewis (Taylor Kitsch), an ethically suspect cosmetic surgeon. In a riotous attempt to charm him, the villagers fall over themselves trying to persuade him that their seemingly sleepy hamlet is secretly a hotbed of cosmopolitan sophistication.

The Grand Seduction's gentle, whimsical reflections are poignant and uproarious by turns, and brought to life through superb performances from Brendan Gleeson and Canadian icon Gordon Pinsent. Shot on location in Trinity Bay, the film is certain to delight even the saltiest cynic. - *Toronto International Film Festival 20*

Human Capital

Il capitale umano

Dir: Paolo Virzi	Italy	2014	110 mins	Cert: Club
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Starring: Fabrizio Bentivoglio, Valeria Golino, Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi, Fabrizio Gifuni, Matilde Gioli, Giovanni Anzaldo, Guglielmo Pinelli
Language: Italian
Available to programme: January

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Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VnEFuYWND4>

Paolo Virzì's *Human Capital* gives the tired trope of cutting between overlapping stories a welcome shot of adrenaline, using it not just to compare and contrast tangentially related stories, but to show how people caught up in their private dramas can overlook or misinterpret the people around them—especially those who have less power, whether because of their gender, their class, their age, or some combination of the three.

The film's prologue reveals a worker cleaning up a banquet hall and who leaves early to bike home on a cold winter night before being hit by an SUV. The car keeps going, leaving the man badly hurt and unconscious on the side of the road. Three chapters follow, each telling different parts of the story of the accident's cause and aftermath from the viewpoint of a different character. Each chapter layers on new information that deepens—and sometimes upends—our understanding of the main characters. One segment often brings words or actions that played out in the background of another to the foreground, revealing that they meant something very different than we had first assumed. Meanwhile, the man on the bicycle, the most powerless of them all, remains in the background of all three stories.

The first chapter follows Dino (Fabrizio Bentivoglio), an obnoxious social climber desperate to get in with his daughter's rich boyfriend's father, Giovanni (Fabrizio Gifuni). It's clear to everyone but Dino that the two will never be friends, but Dino pursues him avidly, a smelly, matted-haired mutt trotting after a sleek and supercilious Weimeraner. Dino's teenage daughter, Serena (Matilde Gioli), is often literally in the background of his shots, jumping into a pool at Giovanni's palatial house with his son, Massimiliano (Guglielmo Pinelli), while Dino worms his way into a tennis game with Giovanni or running up to her room while he sits fretting downstairs.

In chapter two, we get to know Celia (Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi), Massimiliano's mother and Giovanni's wife. A sweet, sad beauty in early middle age, she has almost no sense of self left after years of working at nothing but pleasing her imperial husband. When she calls off a brief affair with her former theater professor, he blasts her with both barrels, saying she's not a serious person, but "an amateur" who took the easy way out when she married a rich man—and she agrees. Bruni-Tedeschi plays Celia as immaculately pulled-together on the surface, but psychologically tenuous, so insecure and eager to be liked that she sometimes trembles or stammers a bit when she speaks. The two alpha dogs in her house, Giovanni and Massimiliano, don't bother to talk to her much, but she pays close attention to them. We learn a lot more in her segment than we did in Dino's about Massimiliano and Serena, the young people who are at the center of this story, but even she sees very little of who they are or what's going on between them.

Chapter three is reserved for Serena, and it's a revelation. A beautiful teenage girl, she's relegated to a minor supporting role as Massimiliano's supportive girlfriend in the other two stories, but she emerges here as a strong-willed, sensitive, and sensible young woman who's dealing with a more serious problem, and acting far more responsibly, than either of the two adults. Even her love story feels as solid and mature as Celia's dalliance was impetuous and childish. What's more, Serena turns out to be the engine behind most of the action, setting wheels in motion with her constant efforts to help and protect other people. Serena's chapter deftly weaves together the revelation of who drove the SUV and why she's defending him with the unfolding of her love story,

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wrapping up this cleverly told mystery and finding new ways to illustrate its organic and unpreachy moral: Never write anyone off. Elise Nakhnikian / Slant Magazine

Ida

Dir: Pawel Pawlikowski **2013** **Poland** **80 mins** **Cert: Club**

Starring: Agata Kulesza, Agata Trzebuchowska, Dawid Ogrodnik

Language: Polish

Available to programme: January

Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xyxFsg_rrY

Pawel Pawlikowski's acclaimed career includes both documentary work and features, among them *Last Resort* and *My Summer of Love*. But the award-winning *Ida*, which premiered at the Telluride Film Festival, is the first film he's made in his native Poland.

Anna, an orphan raised in a convent, is preparing to take her vows when she's sent to visit Wanda, her aunt and only living relative. A cynical, hard-drinking Communist Party judge, Wanda reveals that Anna's real name is Ida and that her parents were Jews murdered during the Nazi occupation. So the two embark on an unusual journey through the wintry countryside to unearth their family's dark history.

An astonishing work, both graceful and haunting, the film's beautiful black-and-white imagery is so artfully composed that every frame belongs in an exhibition. The setting—a somber, 1960s Poland—suggests an austere combination of Catholicism, Communism, and the Holocaust, but *Ida* is vibrant and intimate, a subtle portrait of two fascinating, contrasting women: the sheltered Ida, who is exploring her faith, and Wanda, who—having seen the worst of humanity—has no faith left. - *Sundance Film Festival 2014*

Winner - Best Film, London Film Festival 2013

In Order of Disappearance

Kraftidioten

Dir: Hans Petter Moland **Norway** **2013** **116 mins** **Cert: Club**

Starring: Stellan Skarsgård, Bruno Ganz, Pål Sverre Hagen, Birgitte Hjort Sørensen, Anders Baasmo Christiansen, Gard B. Eidsvold

Language: Norwegian

Available to programme: January

Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cG-exglwPQ>

From its double-digit body count to the Dirty Harry-like intensity with which its protagonist (Stellan Skarsgård) goes about avenging his son's murder, "In Order of Disappearance" feels more like an American crime thriller than virtually anything Scandinavia has produced before. Slick, clever and powered by the conviction that sooner or later justice will be served, Norwegian director Hans Petter Moland's darkly comedic picture — his fourth collaboration with Skarsgård — could certainly pass for a Hollywood studio release in all technical respects, and if only the dialogue were in English, "Disappearance" might be looking at some serious domestic box office. Pic should still do nicely for the right specialty label.

Nils Dickman (Skarsgård) doesn't get worked up about much in life. An even-keeled

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Swede living in an iced-over Norwegian backwater, he dutifully spends his days clearing the roads with his giant yellow snowplow — which, incidentally, turns out to be one of the world's most cinematic professions, sending huge sheets of white powder arching high into the air as it powers through the frozen landscape. Nils' job is also the very picture of futility: a thankless task in which nature always has the upper hand, as echoed by the pic's beautifully fatalistic electric-guitar score.

At any rate, Nils is the last person one would imagine getting mixed up in a massive drug war, but that decision is wrested out of his hands when some low-ranking hoods decide to snuff his only son, Ingvar, rigging the death to look like an overdose. Nils is unconvinced by the police report, but doesn't know what to do about it, going so far as to wrap his lips around the barrel of a loaded rifle when he suddenly receives proof that the young man was murdered — proof that turns this mild-mannered civil servant into a Charles Bronson-style score-settler.

Having very nearly taken his own life, Nils now has nothing to lose, making him far more dangerous than the lunatic criminals he's up against. It's an incredibly satisfying role in which to encounter Skarsgard, who fashions himself as the human equivalent of his unstoppable snowplow, confronting even the most seemingly insurmountable obstacles head-on. With each casualty, the film solemnly presents a black screen etched with the poor fella's name — a gesture that becomes increasingly comedic as the bodies pile up, precious few of them innocent.

Meanwhile, screenwriter Kim Fupz Aakeson could have invented any sort of lunatic to play the crime boss responsible for ordering Ingvar's death, but settles for a ponytailed dandy known as "the Count" (Pal Sverre Hagen, looking like a Scandi version of Richard E. Grant). The Count is a second-generation mobster, having inherited both the business and its pastry-making cover organization from his dad, and one detects a certain bratty impetuosity any time trouble arises.

The script is constantly undermining the Count's authority, whether it involves the disappearance of his henchmen or an ongoing skirmish with his ex-wife (Birgitte Hjort Sorensen) over custody of their son. He's little more than an overgrown child himself, and though he may be ruthless, he's no match for either Nils' blue-collar efficiency or the rival gang of Serbians he unwittingly upsets after misreading the situation and sending them an unnecessary "message." They're overseen by a soft-spoken godfather sort everyone calls "Papa" (Bruno Ganz, looking downright huggable as the film's least forgiving figure).

Schemes like this have a way of spiraling out of the characters' control, but Moland and Aakeson maintain a firm grasp on the pacing, progressively building both carnage and suspense as the situation escalates toward a Mexican standoff of which even Sam Peckinpah would be proud. Whereas the film previously managed to tick off the names of its victims in order of their disappearance, it must now resort to crowding multiple casualties onscreen at once. Audiences would do well not to grow too attached to any of the characters, for hardly any of them make it out of this highly uncharacteristic Norwegian affair alive. - Peter Debruge / Variety

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Kon-Tiki

Dir: Joachim Rønning, Espen Sandberg **Norway,** **UK** **2012**

118 mins **Cert:** CLUB

Starring: Pål Sverre Hagen, Anders Baasmo Christiansen, Tobias Santelmann, Gustaf Skarsgård, Odd-Magnus Williamson, Jakob Oftebro, Agnes Kittelsen

Language: Norwegian, English

Available to programme: January

Trailer: No available yet

Google the name "Thor" and of the 140 million results — give or take — most of the highest-ranking ones concern the hammer-wielding Marvel superhero, founding member of The Avengers and protagonist of the 2011 franchise-building feature film and its upcoming sequel, "The Dark World."

You'll have to scroll way down to come across the Wikipedia page for Thor Heyerdahl. Not really on most people's radar anymore, but in 1947 the ethnographer and explorer became an international sensation after embarking on what was considered by the scientific and publishing communities to be a foolhardy 5,000-mile expedition from Peru to Polynesia by raft.

His book about the voyage sold more than 50 million copies and a 1951 documentary earned the Academy Award (you can check it out on YouTube). Joachim Rønning and Espen Sandberg's dramatization, "Kon-Tiki," Norway's nominee this year for the Oscar for Best Foreign Film, comes to our shores in a simultaneously-filmed English language edition, and while the wind goes out of its sails a few times along the way, this is a ravishingly photographed, old-fashioned man-against-the-elements adventure epic propelled by human-scaled heroics.

"Kon-Tiki" establishes Heyerdahl (Pål Sverre Hagen) as a born risk-taker in a childhood prologue, and then jumps to Polynesia in 1937, where he develops his theory that the islands were not populated 1,500 years earlier by Asians, as was conventional wisdom, but by South Americans. (Anthropologists largely doubt that theory today.) Next stop: New York, where he fails to convince the starchy naysayers at National Geographic and other publishers, although, one concedes, a story about Norwegians drowning in the Pacific probably would sell magazines.

While the film isn't clear on what drives Heyerdahl (a mix, it is suggested, of stubbornness, ego and ambition), he is not to be dissuaded, even by his wife (Agnes Kittelsen, in a thankless role), who pleads, "Don't do this. You can't even swim."

But when the president of Peru steps up to offer assistance, the stage is set for Heyerdahl and his small crew to make the more than 100-day journey across the Pacific Ocean using an authentically constructed balsa wood raft. It is christened Kon-Tiki after the Incan sun god said to have guided the ancient sailors.

Despite the inherent dangers ("There will be no one to save us out there," Heyerdahl cautions), the human drama of "Kon-Tiki" is underdeveloped. Only one crew member makes an impression: Herman Watzinger (Anders Baasmo Christiansen), a former engineer turned refrigerator salesman, who yearns for adventure, but gets more than he bargained for and threatens to go all Queeg on his shipmates.

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The downtime the men must have experienced would have provided screenwriter Petter Skavlan ample opportunity for scenes in which the crew talked about their lives and allowed the audience to become more invested in them. Instead, they become familiar to us only as the Guy with the Radio and the Parrot, the Guy Who Plays the Guitar, or the Guy with the Camera.

But once "Kon-Tiki" gets out to sea, it delivers several thrilling set pieces that keep the film on a steady course. There is a powerful storm; a tense, blood-soaked shark attack; a close encounter with a whale; and, in the last 240 yards, a deadly reef to navigate.

Through it all, the calm and charismatic Heyerdahl urges the men to "have faith." "I have faith," the navigator responds at one point when he discovers the craft is not on its desired course. "I also have a sextant."

"Kon-Tiki" is filmed in a more realistic style than the fanciful "Life of Pi," but it offers no less a sense of wonder, as evoked in scenes with flying fish, electric eels that light up the nocturnal waters, or simply the rapturously beautiful panoramic view of the tiny craft as a speck on the vast oceanscape.

As with "Argo," the fact that the outcome is known does not diminish the suspense or excitement of witnessing how Heyerdahl and company accomplished their own best bad idea.

Never mind the guy with the hammer. "Kon-Tiki" could put this Thor back on the map. - Donald Liebenson / Roger Ebert.com

Nominated - Best Foreign Language Film, Academy Awards, 2013

Life of Crime

Dir: Daniel Schechter **USA** **2013** **94 mins** **Cert:** Club
Starring: Jennifer Aniston, Isla Fisher, Tim Robbins, Will Forte, Jon Hawkes, Mos Def
Language: English
Available to programme: Late January
Trailer:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQvnhJuhM3g&list=PLeACCobo_9B9iFzQAeZq7IzbXEJ21wSaR

Jennifer Aniston, Tim Robbins and John Hawkes star in this wildly entertaining caper, adapted from a book by Elmore Leonard, about two ex-cons whose plan to kidnap a real estate developer's wife doesn't go quite as smoothly as expected.

Author Elmore Leonard's characters Ordell Robbie and Louis Gara were made famous on the screen by Samuel L. Jackson and Robert De Niro in Quentin Tarantino's *Jackie Brown*. Stepping into the skin of Robbie and Gara for a very different adventure set fifteen years prior to the events of *Jackie Brown*, yasiin bey (perhaps better known to audiences as Mos Def) and John Hawkes star in Daniel Schechter's new seventies caper comedy, *Life of Crime*.

Fresh out of prison, where they bonded over their similar convictions for grand theft auto,

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Ordell and Louis (Hawkes) have already decided to team up when they catch wind of Frank Dawson (Tim Robbins), a Detroit property developer and secret embezzler. Their plan is simple: they'll kidnap Frank's country-club wife, Mickey (Jennifer Aniston), and hold her for ransom. What the duo didn't count on is that Frank's affections have turned to his perky young mistress, Melanie (played by the always charming Isla Fisher), and he may not be in a rush to rescue his spouse. Eliciting Mickey's insider knowledge, the crooks shift gears, frantically devising a new plan.

Also featuring great performances from Will Forte and Seana Kofoed, *Life of Crime* utilizes its all-star cast and impeccable art direction to build an entertaining and hilarious period piece. Evoking the spirit of some of the greatest film adaptations of Leonard's novels, *Get Shorty*, *Out of Sight* and, of course, *Jackie Brown*, Schechter serves up a twisty comedic gem. - *Toronto International Film Festival 2014*

Love Eternal

Dir: Brendan Muldowney **2013** **Ireland** **93 mins** **Cert: 18**

Starring: Polyanna McIntosh, Amanda Ryan, Robert de Hoog

Language: English

Available to programme: January

Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hjr1qIIMkyE>

When Ian (Robert de Hoog) finds the body of a hanged teenage girl in the woods, he retreats into his bedroom and becomes obsessed with mortality. Deadened, distant, and decidedly festering, there's something autistic about Ian's interest in patterns – leaves, snowflakes, the heat death of the universe – and in his remove from society.

He crawls the web in search of ghoulish new material. But just as he stalks death, it, in turn, stalks him. A series of discombobulating fatalities casts Ian in the unlikely role of suicide assistant, a voluntary position that brings the intriguing Naomi (Polly McIntosh) into his life. Will she act as much-needed catalyst in this increasingly creepy tale?

At first glance, Irish writer-director Brendan Muldowney's second feature recalls other pointedly placeless Irish-European co-productions as *Milo or Kelly & Victor*: accents, landscapes and licence plates are more likely to confuse than clarify.

But *Love Eternal* grinds these slippery signifiers to work in service of the otherworldly material. Transposing Japanese author Kei Oishi's novel *Loving the Dead* to Europe is an audacious undertaking: many better-known talents and grander budgets have floundered on attempts to bring Japanese horror-style wraiths to a western setting. But from the opening sequence – with its geometric animations and Bart Westerlaken's angular electronic score – *Love Eternal* works on its own dark terms. - *Tara Brady / The Irish Times*

Winner - Best Irish Film Award of Dublin Film Critics Circle at JDIFF 2014

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Mea Culpa

Dir: Fred Cavayé **France** **2014** **90 mins** **Cert:** Club
Starring: Vincet Lindon, Gilles Lellouche, Nadine Labaki, Gilles Cohen, Max Baissette de Malglaive
Language: French
Available to programme: February
Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rQO6DKJ9nc>

There's action galore, bolstered by credible motivation in Mea Culpa, Fred Cavayé's third highly effective thrill-a-minute drama after Pour Elle (remade as The Next Three Days) and A Bout Portant (Point Blank). The story of two French cops whose friendship remains rock-solid after one is bounced from the force features plenty of well-staged hand-to-hand combat, copious gunplay (including a shoot-out with automatic weapons in a packed-to-the-gills nightclub) and a lively sampler of chase scenes leading to a lethal showdown on a high-speed train in motion.

The tension-sustaining setpieces are always filmed and edited with sufficient oomph to silence any reality-based objections.

Local returns should be robust for this February 5 release in and foreign sales are already brisk, including Fox Searchlight in the US and Metrodome in the UK.

Taciturn Vincent Lindon continues to hone lived-in suffering to a science as Simon who, six years prior, caused a fatal accident while driving drunk. After losing his badge and serving prison time, he's now an armoured car employee with shared custody of his 9-year-old son, Theo (Max Baissette de Malglaive).

Gilles Lellouche hits all the right notes as Simon's ex-partner Franck, an iconoclastic cop who knows that police brutality is sometimes called for, especially around certain quarters of Toulon and Marseilles. Simon is plagued by sepia-toned nightmares of the traffic crack-up that cost him his profession and led to a split from his beautiful wife, Alice (Nadine Labaki). Even if there were such a thing as a joie de vivre transplant, Simon's body would probably reject it.

Mystery Road

Dir: Ivan Sen **2013** **Australia** **112 mins** **Cert:** CLUB
Starring: Aaron Pedersen, Hugo Weaving, Ryan Kwanten, Jack Thompson, Tasma Walton
Language: English
Available to programme: January
Trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_PO9Cxb6F4&list=UUmSnT-7uw0gKj8PW2ZqaMVQ

A young Aboriginal girl is found dumped in a drain beneath an Outback highway, her throat slit, wild dogs circling, and so begins the ruminative creep along *Mystery Road*, the slow-burn whodunit from Australian auteur Ivan Sen that just kicked off the Sydney Film Festival. Blending genre conventions with subtle commentary on race relations in a colonized landscape, the writer-director-cinematographer-editor follows up the striking

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realist features *Beneath Clouds* and *Toomelah* by corraling a top Australian cast and crafting his most commercial film yet.

Mystery Road's racial undercurrents blur the lines of simple white-hat/black-hat Western conventions, but Sen has quite clearly stamped his central character as the lone-wolf hero of the piece with a spotless white Stetson. The charismatic Aaron Pedersen, stepping out of his television drama wheelhouse, is in practically every scene as Detective Jay Swan, an Aboriginal cop returning to his tiny hometown in remote and dusty Queensland after a stint in the big city. Assigned to the murder case, Jay chases down leads through the town and treeless surrounds, navigating the hurdles thrown up by the predominantly white police establishment and the mistrust of his own indigenous community. "We kill coppers bro," a young Aboriginal boy tells him.

Pedersen is superb as the square-jawed protagonist, stoic in the face of blatant disinterest from his sergeant (Tony Barry) and the thinly veiled animosity of Hugo Weaving's menacing fellow cop. His inquiries soon lead him to his estranged teenage daughter, who lives with his ex-wife Mary (Tasma Walton) and was friends with the dead girl, and he begins to tease apart a small-town web of drugs, prostitution and further murders.

The plot doesn't so much thicken as expand to fill the wide-open landscapes shot with the spare framing and stillness of style that Sen has trademarked. Aerial shots of Jay criss-crossing the town along stringy dirt roads rope in a wide assortment of peripheral characters, giving juicy cameos to Jack Thompson as a melancholic loner, Damian Walshe-Howling as a petty criminal, Bruce Spence as the town coroner, the snowy-haired Jack Charles as the sly, all-seeing Old Boy and David Field and *True Blood's* Ryan Kwanten as a casually racist father and son.

Strong characterization and Sen's distinctive visual style trump plot, which advances at a crawl and occasionally stumbles over a surfeit of fringe characters and too-obvious MacGuffins. The journey is overlong (the multi-talented Sen should have outsourced the editing) but entertaining, helped along by the slowly swinging pendulum of a reverb-heavy soundtrack and a dose of laconic humor. A cracking shootout finale on Slaughter Hill shows Sen as much in command of action scenes as atmospherics. - *Megan Lehmann / Hollywood Reporter*

Night Moves

Dir: Kelly Reichardt	2013	USA	112 mins	Cert: 15A
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Starring: Jesse Eisenberg, Dakota Fanning, Peter Sarsgaard, Alia Shawkat, Logan Miller, Kai Lennox, Katherine Waterston, James Le Gros.
Language: English
Available to programme: February
Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OQ7jjkY3tE>

Josh is an intense and intelligent young man who has learned his craft and cut his teeth and now feels ready to create a masterpiece. "It's gotta be something big," he says. "People are gonna start thinking." What Josh wants to do is pack a boat with explosives and run it into a hydroelectric dam in the forests of Oregon. Josh is an eco-activist and is portrayed with a clenched and cold-blooded urgency by Jesse Eisenberg. The Oscar-nominated star of *The Social Network* appears to have cornered the market in playing

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corn-fed American fanatics.

Josh has a girlfriend, Dena (Dakota Fanning), who he treats more as a junior partner than a love interest, and a mentor, Harmon (Peter Sarsgaard), who once served in the marines. It is Dena who convinces a skeptical feed-store owner to sell her the sacks of ammonium nitrate fertiliser which will be used to make the bomb. "You said that no one would get hurt," she reminds Josh and Harmon, but who can give such a guarantee when a dam is coming down and the woods are full of campers?

Are we meant to see these activists as heroes or villains? Tellingly, writer-director Kelly Reichardt elects to remove the usual moral signposts and let us figure that out for ourselves. The trio's concerns may be legitimate, but their plan proves misconceived and hazardous. By the same token, the film's token authority figures are depicted as decent, well-meaning professionals, even if they are the tools of corrupt and corroded industrial culture.

Reichardt (the talented director of *Old Joy* and Meek's *Cutoff*) takes this volatile story and handles it with care and precision, as if transporting unstable nitroglycerin. *Night Moves*, on balance, is the perfect name for a film that walks in shadow; a hushed and coiled thriller in which the characters struggle to find the line between civilisation and nature, conviction and crime. The final act arguably pushes the tale into more conventional, even lurid genre territory. But no matter. This director, in the past, has shown herself to be an ace with the teasing, hanging ending and *Night Moves* saves the best for last. Josh, Deena and Harmon long to light out for the wilderness, to shake the sick modern world from their shoulders and live free in the forest. When the dam falls down and the net closes in, flight – not fight – may be their final resort. - *Xan Brooks / The Guardian*

Stations of The Cross

Kreuzweg

Dir: Dietrich Dietrich Brüggemann Germany 2014 107 mins Cert: CLUB

Starring: Lea van Acken, Franziska Weisz, Florian Stetter, Lucie Aron, Moritz Knapp

Language: German

Available to programme: February

Trailer:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeHiT4e4LZ0&list=UUR2_AYQ_sNb3NTdXWjC93Cw

VIEWING:SESSIONS Rating: 82% from 26 responses

A 14-year-old girl's commitment to the extreme tenets of a conservative Roman Catholic sect is traced with a mix of compassion and irony in a film likely to rile the faithful and the faithless alike. Dedicated to self-denial, young Maria is tormented by the scrutiny of her fanatically observant mother and disconcerted by her feelings for a boy whose appetite for music has not stopped at Bach cantatas. Though his film is formally precise – enacted within a series of tableaux named for the Stations of the Cross – you may never know exactly where on the faith spectrum director Dietrich Brüggemann is coming from: a place of uncertainty, perhaps? What's utterly sure is the heartbreaking credibility of young Lea van Acken as Maria. The script, which attains a spellbinding clarity of thought and emotion in her most direct encounters with her priest, won Best Script in Berlin this

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year. - New Zealand International Film Festival 2014

“Made in a small number of shots, each framed and timed to perfection by a dazzlingly accurate ensemble cast and crew... Stations of the Cross nonetheless comes with a bigger surprise: its ‘wicked’ sense of humour, which only enhances its perfect poise between belief and scepticism.” — Nick James, Sight & Sound

Way He Looks, The

Hoje Eu Quero Voltar Sozinho

Dir: Daniel Ribeiro **Brazil** **2013** **95 mins** **Cert: CLUB**

Starring: Ghilherme Lobo, Fabio Audi, Tess Amorim, Lucia Romano, Eucir de Souza, Selma Egrei

Language: Portuguese

Available to programme: February

Trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NszYYfSz5_U

VIEWING:SESSIONS Rating: 71% from 20 responses

When a blind teenager meets the new boy in his class it's love at first sight in all ways -- except literally -- in *The Way He Looks* (*Hoje eu quero voltar sozinho*), the sweet and beautifully observed feature debut of Brazilian writer-director Daniel Ribeiro.

The film's a feature-length version of the director's award-winning, 17-minute short film from 2010, with the same actors back on board again here, though their characters are now slightly older teenagers. Ribeiro has impressively fleshed out the material into a full narrative, with not only added conflict and a convincing gallery of supporting characters but also an entirely new focus on the quest for independence of the blind lead (the shift is more obvious in the films' Portuguese titles, as the short is called *I Don't Want to Go Back Alone*, while the feature's title literally translates as *Today I Want to Go Back Alone*).

A shoo-in for some serious love from queer film festivals and distributors, this title should also prove popular at festivals more generally aimed at teenagers or uncomplicated, narrative-driven foreign films.

Leonardo (Ghilherme Lobo) has been blind since he was born, so he has never even seen the face of his devoted best friend, Giovana (Tess Amorim), who walks him home from their Sao Paulo school every day. They sit next to each other in class, where Leo uses a braille typewriter to take notes. Their familiar and safe routine is upset when a curly-haired cutie, Gabriel (Fabio Audi), joins their class and becomes friendly with Leo, while Giovana wonders whether he could be romantically interested in her.

Though they must be 16 or 17, both Leo and Giovana live in a sheltered suburban environment that's almost too innocent to be true, as neither has ever even kissed anyone. To make matters worse, Giovana's clearly smitten with her handsome childhood friend, but she's shy and there is no way Leonardo can pick up on any visual clues. Ribeiro's command of tone is key in making this setup believable, focusing on the innate goodness of his young characters before slowly allowing them the space to rebel as they try to assert themselves and leave their protective childhood cocoon behind.

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Indeed, Giovana is extremely protective of Leonardo, though there might also be some jealousy involved when she sees Gabriel absorb part of her duties and potentially be the object of her friend's budding amorous feelings. Leo's parents are possibly even more protective than Gio, as they don't even like their teenage son to walk home unaccompanied or stay home alone, much less go on a school trip or move abroad for a high-school exchange program.

Ribeiro makes the protectiveness of the characters around Leonardo, rather than Leo's potential coming out, the motor of the drama, with both Leo's mother (Lucia Romano) and father (Eucir de Souza), getting a couple of well-written exchanges in which they discuss their parental doubts and fears with their only child. It's clear from these well-observed scenes that the parents are of course worried about the safety and well-being of their special-needs son, but they are also at least a little bit guilty of using his blindness as an excuse to avoid what is truly scary for any parent: letting their son be his own man.

But it is independence that Leo's after, which also means making his own choices about whom he loves. His choice of partner, Gabriel, feels entirely natural and Ribeiro movingly shows the boy's growing affection for his classmate through the heightened other senses of Leonardo, such as touch and smell. Gabriel isn't sure initially how to react and a game of spin-the-bottle at a party at the house of the class bimbo (Isabela Guasco) ends in a cascade of embarrassing moments for Giovana, Leo and Gabriel. A class trip in the film's third act feels somewhat protracted and the resulting shower scene, after an afternoon at a countryside pool, feels too much like a convenient queer film cliché (the characters never seemed to shower when they went to the pool at Giovana's in the city earlier in the film, when the boys' rapport was just friendly). Generally, however, Ribeiro's screenplay, which is marbled with moments of humor as well as emotion, feels extremely well-tuned into the conflicted emotional lives of his adolescent characters, who often retreat into the safety of their childhood comfort zone after every exciting, but also scary, excursion into the adult unknown. Ribeiro also weaves in several lovely audio and visual leitmotifs, including the contrasting music tastes of the budding couple and Leo's seemingly impossible dream to simply bike down the lanes of Sao Paulo.

Lobo is mesmerizing as Leonardo and, compared to the short, he's offered a much larger range of emotions to play here, suggesting Leonardo will one day make a fine and well-adjusted young man once his occasional outbursts about wanting to be treated like any other kid will have finally worn those around him down. Though not blind himself, the actor's gait beautifully conveys that all of his character's other senses are constantly wide-awake to compensate for his lack of sight.

Audi and Amorim also turn their characters into full-bodied human beings, with Audi bringing a natural affability to Gabriel that makes it clear that even a blind boy would totally fall for him, while Amorim adds a fragility to Giovana that ensures that her third-wheel fate is quietly heartbreaking. *Boyd Van Hoeij / The Hollywood Reporter*

Winner - Teddy Award for Best First Feature, Berlin Film Festival 2014