



Sigourney Weaver is among the eight onlookers with a different *Vantage Point* on a presidential assassination attempt.

The tough ladies from Rose City Rollers will be on hand at evening screenings March 8. **B**

—SB

In Bruges

Cult playwright Martin McDonagh makes a disappointing feature film directing debut with this comedy thriller about three hit men hanging out and causing mayhem amid the picturesque charms of a Belgium tourist spot. McDonagh is one of my favorite contemporary writers, but he has explored the bloody slapstick genre many times before and with much more hilarity, horror and grotesque poetry. Here his writing seems flabby (never a problem with his razor-sharp theater pieces), clumsy and not unlike half-baked Pinter and Beckett leftovers. The talented cast works hard at keeping it afloat, but even a manic Colin Farrell, a reptilian Ralph Fiennes (has he played Lord Voldemort one too many times?) and the gracefully wry Brendan Gleeson can't save the meandering script and maladroitness direction. A depressing misfire. **C+**

—Jon Kretzu

Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day

This adaptation of Winifred Watson's forgotten 1938 novel is a delicious surprise. It's been a while since we've had a successfully frothy period romantic comedy, but *Miss Pettigrew* belies its cloddish title and combines stylish fizz, exquisite 1930s art-deco elegance and a cast of most engaging farceurs into a captivating soufflé. Amy Adams continues to astonish with another spot-on comic portrayal that takes multiple clichés and spins them into a lovely, touching and effortless performance; Frances McDormand (absent way too long from the screen) is pitch perfect in the tricky title role; and they are given support by a sterling cast, gorgeous designs and Bharat Nalluri's graceful direction, which somehow doesn't miss a trick while never stumbling or tripping up. They don't make movies like this much anymore—so catch it while you can before the next CGI monolith lurches into the megaplex and eats it alive. **A**

—JK

The Other Boleyn Girl

This is a silly retelling of a serious episode in British history when the already-married Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church in order to wed Anne Boleyn. Both Scarlett Johansson, as the virtuous Mary, and especially Natalie Portman, as the saucy Anne, are lightweights whose acting skills consist of pouts and

moues. Add in Eddie Redmayne, with his silly-looking freckled face and beesting lips, and the whole venture turns into the visual equivalent of Herman's Hermits: "I am Hen-e-ry the eighth, I am; Hen-e-ry the eighth, I am I am." **C**

—Floyd Sklaver

Penelope

After transforming from a precocious child actor into an irrepressible bad girl in indie movies, Christina Ricci lost her way with straight-to-video bombs like *Prozac Nation* and, now, this flat fairy tale about a girl cursed with a pig snout. Ricci gives it her all, and she's backed by a likable cast that includes Catherine O'Hara, James McAvoy and Reese Witherspoon; unfortunately, the spirited performances can't disguise the fact that director Mark Palansky has no idea how to squeeze 90 minutes of whimsy out of a plot that ought to be confined to a brief bedtime story. **C**

—SB

Vantage Point

Director Pete Travis (*The Jury*) uses a stellar cast to show a presidential assassination attempt from eight different angles. William Hurt plays President Ashton, Dennis Quaid and Matthew Fox are two of the Secret Service agents closely assigned to him, and Forest Whitaker (exceptional once again) is a civilian who believes he caught the assassin on tape. I like this kind of storytelling; it effectively shows how the same event can be perceived so differently by different people. This action-packed thriller will keep you guessing til the end. **B**

—YPB

The Willow Tree

This is a powerful existentialist fable with a modern-day twist on the proverbial warning, "Be careful what you wish for." Youssef, an accomplished middle-age college professor who has been blind since childhood, is suddenly confronted with the option of a corneal transplant that might restore his sight. The result is a protracted sequence reminiscent of Patty Duke's equally operatic breakthrough in *The Miracle Worker*. But disillusionment is on the horizon for poor Youssef, who discovers that the world built in his imagination had some advantages over the real one. Iranian director Majid Majidi's lugubrious parable is beautifully shot but awfully heavy. Opens March 7 at Hollywood Theatre. **B+**

—Tony LeTigre 10

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