

Kam’s Kapsules: For Movies Opening June 14

BIG BUDGET FILMS

Man of Steel (PG-13 for profanity, sci-fi violence and intense action sequences) Henry Cavill stars as Clark Kent in this reboot of the Superman series about an alien raised from infancy by adoptive parents (Kevin Costner and Diane Lane) in Kansas where, as a young man, he’s called upon to save Earth from extraterrestrial invaders from his home planet, Krypton. With Amy Adams as Lois Lane, Laurence Fishburne as Perry White, Rebecca Buller as Jenny Olsen, and Russell Crowe as Jor-El.

This Is the End (R for crude humor, coarse sexuality, graphic nudity, drug use, violence and pervasive pro-



This Is the End

fanity) Ensemble comedy about celebrities forced to face their mortality when the apocalypse arrives while



KAM’S CAPSULES

Movie Reviews by Kam Williams

they’re partying at James Franco’s house. With Jonah Hill, Seth Rogen, Paul Rudd, Michael Cera, Rihanna, Emma Watson, Kevin Hart, Craig Robinson, Mindy Kaling, Channing Tatum and Jason Segel.

INDEPENDENT & FOREIGN FILMS

20 Feet from Stardom (PG-13 for profanity and sexuality) Backup singers belatedly get their due in this overdue documentary



20 Feet from Stardom

Claudia Lennear, Tata Vega and Lynn Mabry. With appearances by Bette Midler, Mick Jagger and Sheryl Crow.

Aliyah (Unrated) Dramatic thriller, set in Paris, about a 27 year-old drug dealer (Pio Marmai) who’s considering making a fresh start working in a relative’s restaurant in Tel Aviv in order to escape his burdensome, deadbeat brother (Cedric Kahn) and a love life complicated by an ex (Sarah Lepicard) and a new girlfriend (Adele Haenel). With Guillaume Gouix, David Geselson and Olivier Desautel. (In French with subtitles)

The Bling Ring (R for profanity, sexual references, drug use and underage alcohol consumption) Sofia Coppola co-wrote and directed this true tale about a gang of computer-savvy teenagers who embark on a crime spree burglarizing the homes of Hollywood stars by using the internet to monitor the celebrities’ whereabouts. Featuring

Emma Watson, Katie Chang, Leslie Mann and Israel Broussard.

Call Me Kuchu (Unrated) Chilling, equal rights documentary chronicling the aborted efforts of murder victim David Kato (1964-2011), Uganda’s first openly gay citizen, to lobby against the proposed law making homosexuality a capital crime in his country.

Far Out Isn’t Far Enough (Unrated) Reverential biopic about the life and times of prolific children’s book author and illustrator Tomi Ungerer, a subversive artist committed to challenging the status quo. (In English and French

with subtitles)

The Guillotines (R for graphic violence) Qing Dynasty drama revolving around the daring exploits of a top secret squad of five, sword-wielding assassins assembled by the emperor (Andrew Lau) to eliminate his political opponents. With Ethan Juan, Shawn Yue and Xiaoming Huang. (In Mandarin with subtitles)

Hatchet III (Unrated) High body-count horror sequel finds the revenge-minded heroine (Danielle Harris) attempting to break the curse of the seemingly-

invincible sociopath (Kane Hodder) who has been terrorizing her haunted Louisiana swamp for decades. Cast includes Caroline Williams, Derek Mears and Zach Galligan.

In the Fog (Unrated) World War II saga set during the height of Nazi occupation on the Western Front where a man (Vladimir Svirskiy) wrongly accused of collaborating with the enemy must fight to save his name. With Sergei Kolesov, Vladislav Abashin and Nikita Peremotovs. (In Russian with subtitles)



Call Me Kuchu

Backup Singers Belatedly Get Their Props in Pop Music Documentary

“Twenty Feet from Stardom” Film Review by Kam Williams

Do the names Merry Clayton, Lisa Fischer, Darlene Love, Claudia Lennear, Tata Vega or Lynn Mabry ring a bell? Probably not, yet you are undoubtedly very familiar with their stellar work as backup singers for a variety of musical icons.

For example, it’s Merry’s powerful voice which adds a memorable touch of soul to the Rolling Stones’ classic “Gimme Shelter” in the brief interlude where she makes the most of the opportunity to belt out the bizarre lyrics “Rape! Murder! It’s just a shot away!” The same can be said of Darlene who not only handled backup duties on hundreds of hits by everyone from Elvis Presley to The Beach Boys to Tom Jones to Sonny & Cher, but even anonymously ghost recorded the lead vocals on such Sixties anthems as “Da Doo Ron Ron,” “He’s a Rebel” and “It’s in His Kiss,” without getting credit or decent compensation.

Sadly, despite their amazing talents, folks pursuing this profession generally have precious little to show financially for their con-

siderable contributions to the annals of rock, soul and other genres. For most of the backups are black and female with gospel backgrounds, and have stories to share about being underpaid, underappreciated and/or outright exploited. In fact, Darlene confesses to having to clean houses as a maid between gigs in order to survive at a low point in her career.

Most backup singers are frustrated artists who spend years helping others shine while waiting for that big break that might never come that could catapult them into the limelight. Finally, thanks to Twenty Feet from Stardom, these neglected sisters are finally getting their props, if not the fortune and mega fame that has eluded them for so long.

Directed by Morgan Neville, this very entertaining and illuminating documentary includes testimonials by the likes of Sting, Springsteen, Bette Midler, Sheryl Crow and other greats freely paying tribute. A reverential retrospective representing the first tip of the cap to backups I can remember since Lou Reed warbled “And the colored girls go!” on the gritty ditty “Walk on the Wild Side.”

Twenty Feet from Stardom
Excellent ☆☆☆☆
Rated PG-13 for profanity and sexuality
Running time: 91 minutes
Distributor: Radius-TW

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