BLADE RUNNER 2049

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TO BE CONSIDERED FOR LISTINGS, send screening information at least two weeks in advance to Screen, *WW*, 2220 NW Quimby St., Portland, OR 97210. Email: sgormley@wweek.com. Fax: 243-1115.

★: This movie sucks, don't watch it.

★★: This movie is entertaining but flawed.

★★★: This movie is good. We recommend you watch it.

★★★★: This movie is excellent, one of the best of the year.

NOW PLAYING

Blade Runner 2049

★★★ Thirty years from where the original *Blade Runner* left off, Los Angeles is still an opulently grimey sprawl cloaked in endless rain. In director Denis Villeneuve's sequel to Ridley Scott's sci-fi noir masterpiece, the Tyrell Corporation has been replaced by the Wallace Corporation, which has figured out how to manufacture subservient replicants that don't stage bloody mutanies. The older models of synthetic humans are illegal, and it's still the job of blade runners like K (Ryan Gosling) to hunt them down. But the flimsy social order of humans over replicants becomes threatened by something K discovers at a protein farm. What he finds there leads him on an odyssey through gorgeous wide shots of deserted metropolises coated in sunbaked dust, a shootout strobe lit by a malfunctioning Elvis hologram and eventually to Harrison Ford's gruff Rick Deckard. With an overwhelming dissonant, bassy score by Hans Zimmer, *2049* looks and sounds spectacular. But *2049* wants to be more than just visually stunning. It's full of dramatic one-liners and existential musings, and dotted with literary references. As a testament to the influence of the original, there isn't much *2049* has to add about how technology blurs our sense of self and soul. Still, it has its own moments of beautifully rendered longing. Gosling's lone-wolf stoicism is more kicked puppy than hardened self-reliance, and we meet Ana (Carla Juri), who manufactures memories for replicants in the small, sterile room she's been confined to since the age of eight. But *2049* seems less concerned with tiny moments of emotion than big reveals from a twisty plot that seems to define *2049*'s imaginative boundaries rather than expand them. Still, it's one hell of a spectacle. **R.** SHANNON GORMLEY. B*agdad, Cedar Hills, City Center, Clackamas, Division, Eastport, Living Room, Lloyd Center, Moreland, Milwaukie, Tigard,*

My Little Pony: The Movie

★★ Much has changed in Equestria since a string of pastel centauresses first cantered into theaters. The 1986 original incarnation of *My Little Pony: The Movie* was a hastily assembled, C-lister-voiced historic flop that's unrecognizable from the glossy new release. Zoe Saldana voices a pirate parrot, there's con cat Taye Diggs, seapony Kristin Chenoworth. Sia not only wrote an original song for the movie, but also voices the character Songbird Serenade. The ponies' signature visual style has evolved into something like Lisa Frank anime—a swirling pinkish, purply miasma of flattened expressiveness. The underlying mythology has expanded, too. A benevolent monarchy supports the twinkly adventures of Twilight Sparkle (Tara Strong) and other Mane Six principals. There's an obvious tot appeal for the inane, song-drenched quest of Twilight and pals to defend their homeland against the Storm King (Liev Schreiber) and his broken-horned hench-unicorn (Emily Blunt). But *MLPTM* creators are all too aware they now serve two masters. However kid-friendly the daft plot, its dialogue has been sharpened for a much older, far bitchier clientele. The taint of bronyism hangs heavy over each knowing aside and attempted clever reference. The constant stream of Reddit-baiting badinage can't help but curdle the surrounding ethos of friendship, sparkles and everything nice. **PG.** JAY HORTON. *Cedar Hills, Clackamas, Divison, Eastport, Pioneer Place.*

STILL SHOWING

American Made

★★★ *American Made* is like a black-market *Forrest Gump*—just slick and loose enough to outweigh its historical foolishness. It tells the hyperbolized story of pilot Barry Seal (Tom Cruise), who flew covert smuggling missions for the CIA and Medellín drug cartel in the early '80s. **R.** CHANCE SOLEM-PFEIFER. *Pioneer Place, Lloyd Center, Eastport.*

Atomic Blonde

★★★ An adaptation of the Oni Press graphic novel *Coldest City*, *Atomic Blonde* depicts Berlin at the Cold War's last gasp. Charlize Theron plays a British secret agent set to meet up with James McAvoy's rogue operative and rescue a vital informant from East Germany. Even with the playfully stylized flourishes teasing coherency from a pointlessly complicated narrative, the film has a giddy devotion to its own daft momentum. **R.** JAY HORTON. *Academy, Vancouver.*

Baby Driver

★★★★ It takes a scant five minutes for *Baby Driver* to feel like one of the best car-chase films of all time. At the wheel is Baby (Ansel Elgort, whose face really sells the "Baby" business), who combats his tinnitus by constantly pumping tunes through his earbuds. Every sequence plays out perfectly to the music in Baby's ears, whether it's the rat-a-tat of gunfire punctuating the snare on an old funk track or clashing metal with the cymbal smashes on classic-rock oddities. It's hysterically funny, but not a straight comedy. It's often touching, but seldom cloying. It's the hyper-stylish car chase opera the world deserves. **R.** AP KRYZA. *Academy, Laurelhurst, Fox Tower.*

Battle of the Sexes

★★★ *Battle of the Sexes* had every excuse to be a straightforward biopic. It retells the epic 1973 tennis match between rising women's tennis star Billie Jean King (Emma Stone) and aging legend Bobby Riggs (Steve Carell), who publicly proclaimed he could beat King because she is a woman and he is a man. It's already an epic premise that could have just piggybacked on the current marketability of #feminism and Emma Stone's post-*La La Land* high. But it goes further, creating multidimensional characters and taking a nuanced look at gender dynamics in the '70s. It's a moment in history worth retelling, and *Battle of the Sexes* offers a lot more than the satisfaction of poking fun at old, rich, white men of the sports elite. **PG-13.** LAUREN TERRY. *Bridgeport, Casacade, Cedar Hills, City Center, Clackamas, Eastport, Living Room, Lloyd Center.*

Dunkirk

★★★★ In Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*. we get to follow a few soldiers and pilots and civilians at sea, but they're more like stand-ins for the other 400,000 like them marooned on the beach or assisting in the rescue effort. That's fine, though. This movie doesn't really need characters, and wasting time on distracting details like what's waiting at home for these boys would only slow down the headlong pacing of the operation. I don't think this film will win Best Picture at next year's Oscars, but it's a shoo-in a handful of technical nominations. PG-13. R. MITCHELL MILLER. *Bridgeport, Cedar Hills, Clackamas, Fox Tower, Hollywood, Lloyd, Tigard.*

Logan Lucky

★★★ In his comeback heist film, Steven Soderbergh seems actively disinterested in challenging his legacy. This story of a supposedly cursed West Virginia family, The Logans, ripping off the Charlotte Motor Speedway, nickname themselves "Ocean's 7-11" on an in-movie newscast. As the Logan brothers, Channing Tatum and Adam Driver, are laconic and weatherbeaten, gentle roughnecks who need a win in this life. And as explosives expert Joe Bang, Daniel Craig's brilliance is in appearing like a maniac but never detonating. Soderbergh is perhaps Hollywood's finest technician, and it's a pleasure to watch him tour his Vegas act through Appalachia. **PG-13**. CHANCE SOLEM-PFEIFER. *Bridgeport, Cascade, Fox Tower.*

Mother!

★★ In his new psychological thriller, *Black Swan* director Darren Aronofsky continues to be extra. *Mother!* stars Jennifer Lawrence and Javier Bardem as a couple living in a secluded house. Bardem (listed as "Him" in the credits) is a writer struggling to complete a follow-up to a revered work. Aronofsky surrounds Mother with unnerving, blood-themed imagery. Soon mobs of people, for whom "personal space" is a foreign concept, are swarming the house. For a while, it works simply as exercise in anxiety. But the last third of the movie drops into heavy-handed metaphor. Rendering the Struggles of the Artist into an exhibitionist nightmare is an exercise only the Artist could love. But man, what a nightmare. **R.** *Clackamas, Living Room, Lloyd, Tigard.*

Stronger

★★★★ Most movies described as "inspirational" practically beg to be dimissed as manipulative feel-goodery. Yet this biopic of Boston Marathon bombing survivor Jeff Bauman (Jake Gyllenhaal) resists the allure of the triumph-over-adversity cliches that would have doomed it. **R.** BENNETT CAMPBELL FERGUSON. *Clackamas, Fox Tower.*

Victoria & Abdul

★★ Even the power of Judi Dench's fearsome gaze isn't enough to redeem *Victoria & Abdul*, a white-savior fantasy from director Stephen Frears (Philomena, The Queen). At the center of the plot is Abdul Karim (Ali Fazal), an Indian prison clerk who travels to England to present Queen Victoria (Dench, who also played Queen Victoria in 1997's Mrs Brown) with a ceremonial coin. Abdul beguiles Victoria, who promotes him from servant to teacher—much to the consternation of racists like her son Bertie (Eddie Izzard). We're meant to be deeply moved whenever Victoria defends Abdul by shaming Bertie and his xenophobia, yet we learn little of Abdul's life, family or personality. Instead, the film uses him as a means for Victoria to prove her nobility. It's meant to be a tender story of an unlikely friendship, but it's hardly about friendship at all. PG-13. BENNETT CAMPBELL FERGUSON. *Bridgeport, Cedar Hills, Clackamas, City Center, Fox Tower.*

Woodshock

★★ *Woodshock* is a dark and dreamy ode to the Redwoods and the weird shit that happens in rural California. Kirsten Dunst stars as Theresa, a spacey medical dispensary employee who laces a few grams of shwaggy cannabis before rolling up a deadly joint for her terminally ill mother. Theresa is no stranger to this spiked concoction—the film is interspersed with flashbacks of her stumbling through the woods in a silk nightgown. The pain of grieving her mother draws her toward a hallucinatory escape, and sober moments become fewer and further between. Aesthetics aside, time spent during lengthy shots of Dunst trailing her fingers around redwood trunks could've better served to flesh out the rest of the characters. It's more fever dream than thriller, but permafry has never looked prettier. **R.** LAUREN TERRY. *Fox Tower.*