

MOVIES

Edited by Meghan Kavanaugh



GO IT ALONE He has directed his own music videos for years, but after learning of the hate-crime killing of fan Daniel Zamudio in 2012, Chilean musician Álex Anwandter was inspired to write and direct his first feature film. Drawn from true events, *You'll Never Be Alone* features newcomer Andrew Bargsted as 18-year-old Pablo, who is viciously attacked for being gay. In the aftermath, his father, the manager of a mannequin factory, must wrestle with his own guilt, deal with daunting medical bills and seek justice in a culture that seems to celebrate a toxic masculinity. Kick off the Wicked Queer Film Festival early when the film screens at the Paramount Center on March 3. / *Katja Vujić*

Reviews by Brett Michel

A CURE FOR WELLNESS ★★¹/₂ Director Gore Verbinski will never be accused of going small. His three *Pirates of the Caribbean* films grew progressively larger, and his last picture, 2013's misbegotten flop *The Lone Ranger*, suffered from a bloated two-and-a-half-hour running time. With his latest, Verbinski has forgone a marquee name like Johnny Depp, star of each of the former, ostensibly to help make a more intimate picture. A psychological thriller set in the Swiss Alps, *A Cure for Wellness* nevertheless clocks in at 146 minutes, despite the efforts of not one, but two editors. The man can't help himself. Dane DeHaan plays Lockhart, and the character's lack of a first name only underlines this Wall Street stockbroker's dearth of depth. Sent to a remote Alpine medical spa by his failing firm to retrieve the company's CEO (Harry Groener), the young man is not only unable to convince his boss to return to New York, but he soon discovers what has been rumored since his arrival: No one ever leaves this palatial "wellness center." Laid up in a cast with a broken leg, the result of a freak accident, Lockhart is soon diagnosed with the same nebulous condition as the other, much older patients by the ominous Dr. Heinrich Volmer (Jason Isaacs)—and they only seem to be getting sicker. Verbinski has dabbled in horror before, with 2002's *The Ring*, and although he's certainly in command of his craft, the script he and co-writer Justin Haythe have hashed out

never quite equals the sum of its parts, making for a mixed prognosis. (At Assembly Row, Boston Common, Fenway and in the suburbs.)

GET OUT ★★★ A biting satirical horror film that upends white viewers' images of predatory black men, the directing debut from Jordan Peele (of TV's *Key and Peele*, who also scripted) can be summed up as *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* by way of *The Stepford Wives*. But that's barely scratching the surface of this uproarious thriller that deftly examines the modern state of race in America, made by a natural-born filmmaker who has a tremendous amount of fun toying with the audience's expectations, beginning with the prologue set in a suburban neighborhood that might remind you of John Carpenter's horror classic, *Halloween*. That's intentional, I'm sure, as are the uncomfortable laughs mined from the film's setup, which finds young black photographer Chris (*Sicario*'s Daniel Kaluuya) and his white girlfriend Rose (Allison Williams of HBO's *Girls*) reaching the stage of their relationship where she wants to introduce him to her well-heeled parents, neurosurgeon Dean (*The Cabin in the Woods*' Bradley Whitford) and therapist Missy (*The 40-Year-Old Virgin*'s Catherine Keener). So, off they go for a weekend visit at her parents' upstate abode, where Chris experiences racism, both subtle and overt...and even possibly sinister. What's with the oddly acting black staff in this rich white community? The conventional third act will supply some

mildly disappointing answers (as well as some broad comic relief from *The Carmichael Show*'s LilRel Howery), but you may be having too much subversive fun to care. (At Assembly Row, Boston Common, Fenway and in the suburbs.)

THE GREAT WALL ★★★ Boy was the Internet up in arms when the trailer for this one hit! Matt Damon, an Anglo actor from Boston, headlining a historical epic as a Great White Savior in a tale set in and around the original Great Wall (sorry, Donald!), a la Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai*? How dare this *gweilo* steal a role that should rightfully have gone to one of the many outstanding actors of Chinese descent? Well, it turns out the Internet should go back to being outraged over Trump, since the detractors couldn't have gotten the story any more wrong. FAKE NEWS! Instead, Damon's William is an Irish mercenary wandering through northwestern China with his Spanish pal Tovar (*Game of Thrones*' Pedro Pascal) as they search for a fabled "black powder" (i.e., gunpowder) that promises to "turn air into fire and night into day." Soon, they're attacked by an unseen creature, which William manages to kill before the duo is captured by the Nameless Order—a Song Dynasty army that William stands in awe of. Oh yeah, this is actually a monster movie, with hundreds of thousands of the hulking, reptilian/leonine beasts William encountered setting siege to the Great Wall, which was apparently constructed to keep the monsters out of the mainland. It's certainly silly, but gorgeous to behold, which isn't unexpected coming from director Zhang Yimou, a master who's usually aided by more literate scripts. Big, dumb fun. (At Assembly Row, Boston Common, Fenway and in the suburbs.)

HIDDEN FIGURES ★★★ Theodor Melfi's crowd-pleaser is a fact-based look at three of the brilliant African-American women who were instrumental figures in NASA's race to put a man into space, despite the institutionalized racism and sexism that has kept their stories hidden until now. These human "computers" quickly rose through the U.S. space program's ranks as they made calculations that launched astronaut John Glenn (Glen Powell) into orbit, with one of them—Katherine G. Johnson (Taraji P. Henson in her first big-screen role since hitting it big on TV with *Empire*)—personally guaranteeing his safe return. Johnson's introverted math prodigy is forced to waste time running from building to building because of the segregated bathrooms, at least until the eventual intervention of her boss, Al Harrison (Kevin Costner), whose eyes are gradually opened to the inequality that's keeping Johnson and her friends and co-workers Dorothy Vaughan (Oscar winner Octavia Spencer) and Mary Jackson (*Moonlight*'s Janelle Monáe) from reaching their potential. It's a by-the-numbers portrait that could have used a more subtle touch, but just as he did when he unleashed Bill Murray in his last picture (*St. Vincent*), co-writer and director Melfi hires big personalities and lets them do the heavy lifting. (At Assembly Row, Boston Common, Fenway and in the suburbs.)

ADVICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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