

Mary Dan's 2017 Movie List

B indicates Bob saw it, too

Documentaries

** Also Worth Seeing **

** Highly Recommended **

Obit., dir by Vanessa Gould © 2017 **B**
A documentary about the obituary writers at *The New York Times*. The writers are interviewed, but there are also some scenes with the fellow who works in the "morgue." He's quite funny, and has a lot to say about their extensive collection of clippings, how they are filed, and so on. The only female writer on the obituary desk was Margalit Fox, about whom more can be found, below.

Harold and Lillian: A Hollywood Love Story, written and dir by Daniel Raim © 2015 **B**
This is as much about Harold (b. 1920) and Lillian (b. 1928) Michelson's relationship, and their long marriage, as it is about her very interesting library work (at various studios) and his very interesting storyboard work, behind the scenes in Hollywood. They weathered hard times together. They worked on hundreds of iconic films during Hollywood's golden age, including "The Ten Commandments," "The Apartment," "The Birds," "Full Metal Jacket" and more.

Monsieur Mayonnaise, dir by Trevor Graham © 2016 **B**
This wonderful film (and the following one) was shown during Rochester's Jewish Film Festival. Painter Philippe Mora decided to follow the trail (before everyone was dead) of his father's work in the French Resistance and his mother's family's narrow escapes. (We learn that his mother is a rather famous Australian artist, Mirka Mora). Philippe paints the scenes, at each of his stops. Seek this out.

Keep Quiet, dir by Sam Martin and Joseph Blair © 2016 **B**
The journey of Csanad Szegei (b. 1982) from anti-semitic Orthodox Jew. He rose to the vice presidency of the nationalist Jobbik party before (whoops!) discovering that he himself was Jewish. His grandmother, when she got out of Auschwitz, thought the purging of the Jews might happen again, so decided the best thing to do was "keep quiet" about her identity. Many interesting themes for discussion. Definitely worth seeing.

It's Not Yet Dark, dir by Frankie Fenton © 2016
Narrated by Colin Farrell, using words from Simon Fitzmaurice's memoir of the same name. Premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2017, where Eva & Buffy saw it and thought it was a positive depiction of living with a disability. So, I went to see it when it came to Rochester. Simon is diagnosed with Motor Neuron Disease (known here as ALS) the same day that his wife Ruth finds out she is pregnant with their third child. He wants to live—and does—he outlived the dire prediction he was given. (I see in the news that he has since died—this year, Oct 26, at age 43.)

It's Criminal, dir by Signe Taylor © 2017
This documentary was screened at Rochester's High Falls Film Festival, which celebrates women in film. Pati Hernandez's professional focus is the exploration of political and social problems through the arts. She has started the nonprofit Telling My Story (see more, below). This documentary was not about her, but rather about the class she started at Dartmouth in 2005 that brings students into a nearby women's prison. They, and a group of inmates, work towards a performance. You get to know the inmates. There was a Q&A after the screening where we met the director and, best of all, two of the women, now out of prison and working as coordinators of the program. Wonderful!

Tower, dir by Keith Maitland © 2016
Combines archival footage with what's called rotoscopic animation to reenact the events of Aug 1, 1966 on the University of Texas campus. This was a worthy effort in that it preserves the story—told in the words of the affected individuals—in a creative and interesting way.

Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story, dir by Alexandra Dean © 2017
Not just a pretty face, Hedy (1914-2000) worked in her spare time on various hobbies and inventions (more about this, below). This will air on *PBS American Masters* during 2018.

** I Might Have Skipped These **

Blood Road, dir by Nicholas Schrank © 2017
High Falls Film Festival. The filmmaker followed Rebecca Rusch, among the greatest female ultra-endurance mountain bikers in the world, as she rode the 1200 mile length of the Ho Chi Minh Trail (known as Blood Road). Her goal was to find—for some emotional closure—the site in Laos where her father's Air Force plane had crash-landed in 1972. She enlisted champion Vietnamese cyclist, Huyen Nguyen, to be her translator/partner on the ride. One gets caught up in watching them overcome the hardships of the trek, but I was left with an unsettled feeling about it. The review that I captured (see below) does a nice job of putting into words my feelings about this film.

One Lucky Elephant, dir by Lisa Leeman © 2011
I am interested in the plight of elephants (and, thanks to Laurel for getting us started, we are supporters of the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Kenya, which cares for orphaned elephants). This film follows David Balding's love of Flora, an orphaned African elephant who had performed in David's one-ring St. Louis circus for many years, and his search for a permanent home for her retirement. While she ended up in a relatively good situation (sanctuary in the U.S.), the film is wildly mis-titled.

Into the Abyss, dir by Werner Herzog © 2011
Recommended for criminal justice students or someone whose family has been involved in a similar senseless crime. But not satisfying to the likes of me. The pace was too slow, for starters. Pointless shots of cars crossing an intersection. Michael Perry maintains his innocence (but he was able to point police to where the bodies were found). We don't find out what his explanation is for how he could know this without having been involved. Jason Burkett (who was given life for the triple murders) and his father were both interesting interview subjects.

Narrative Films

** Some of this actually happened **

Loving, dir by Jeff Nichols © 2016 **B**
Richard and Mildred Loving (residents of VA, he white, she black) were arrested for miscegenation in 1958. Virginia was one of 24 states that banned interracial marriage at that time. The Supreme Court eventually took up the case, and reversed the ruling in 1967. We saw this with Sheila in December 2016. It was memorable for Sheila because she used for the first time special glasses that provide subtitles! (The glasses were very heavy, and it was not a very satisfactory system. She's since discovered a better system.) The casting of Australian actor Joel Edgerton and Ethiopian-born Ruth Negga as the main characters was perfect.

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Jackie, dir by Pablo Larrain © 2016

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Natalie Portman did a good job portraying a Jackie who was “conscious of compiling the first draft of history,” and who was grief-stricken. But, before seeing it, I wondered “what is there to say about Jackie as she navigates the first two weeks after JFK’s assassination?” And seeing it confirmed for me that there really wasn’t that much to say.

Lion, dir by Garth Davis © 2016

Adapted from Saroo Brierley’s 2014 book *A Long Way Home*; screenplay by Luke Davies. Nicole Kidman plays Saroo’s adoptive Australian mother, and Dev Patel plays the adult Saroo. Heartbreaking story, with happy ending. Recommended.

Hidden Figures, dir by Theodore Melfi © 2016

B

Loved this! The film stars Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer, Janelle Monae, Kirsten Dunst, and Kevin Costner. The story ends in 1962, and the punched-card computing world was still much the same when I came into the mainframe computer world in 1968 (summer internship) and then 1969 (DuPont plant on the Ohio River). At DuPont, there were only two salaried women. And we didn’t work together—the other woman worked in the business area using COBOL, and I worked with the engineers using Fortran. So, although I didn’t have the additional barrier of race, I certainly experienced the “only woman in a sea of men” thing, and the film really resonated with me.

Anthropoid, dir by Sean Ellis © 2016

This film tells the story of Operation Anthropoid, in which the Czech resistance was tasked in December 1941 with the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, second in command under Hitler (at which effort they succeeded in May, 1942). Brace yourself for torture, tension, and searing sadness. The bonus features on the DVD were quite interesting, especially the VFX producer showing how he recreated (using visual special effects) the feeling of the silver gelatin black & white 1942 photographs of Prague that the director had found.

20th Century Women, written and dir by Mike Mills © 2016

Mills was nominated for an Academy Award for this original screenplay. Dorothea (Jamie’s mom), Abbie (young woman who rents a room from Dorothea), and Julie (good friend of Jamie’s) portray certain female types that Mills is exploring. Set in 1979, “a transition period” (and worth noting that that was an important year for Mills, who was about 13 that year). I am charmed by Annette Bening and Greta Gerwig, and Elle Fanning, and look forward to anything else they will be doing. I really liked this—especially after watching the extras and learning how much it was about Mike Mills’ mother! A few years ago, we saw *Beginners*, based loosely on the story of his father.

The Bridge at Remagen, dir by John Guillermin © 1969

B

With George Segal, Robert Vaughn and Ben Gazzara. My interest in this arose from an interest in Ken Hechler, who wrote the 1957 book of the same name, based on his wartime experience. The honorable Ken Hechler died at age 102 in Dec 2016. His *NYT* obituary calls him “a leading voice for national coal-mining reforms during his nine terms [1959-1977] in the House of Representatives and a colorful presence in West Virginia politics for decades.” He was our guy in Congress during our Council of the Southern Mountains years.

Maudie, dir by Aisling Walsh © 2017

B

Maud Dowley Lewis, untrained artist, was born, raised, and lived her whole life (1903-1970) in Nova Scotia. From childhood, she suffered with crippling rheumatoid arthritis. She married Everett Lewis, a fish peddler. In this movie version, she left him after he said “Ever since you stepped into my life—nothin’ but pain”—and many even more hurtful things. After experiencing life without her, he realized that the exact opposite of those words was actually the case. She accepted his apology and came back to their one-room-with-loft house (they were

‘tiny house’ adopters before it was a “thing”!). Every inch of that house was decorated by Maud’s paintings. After their deaths, the province of Nova Scotia bought the home (in 1984). It was restored and now sits in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Lewis worked in relative obscurity until 1965, when she became the subject of a nationally broadcast CBC documentary. Even after that, her paintings never went for more than \$10 during her lifetime. Highly recommended. The protagonists are wonderfully played by Sally Hawkins and Ethan Hawke.

Genius, dir by Michael Grandage © 2016

All about the creative process and the dynamic between editor Maxwell Perkins (Colin Firth) and writer Thomas Wolfe (Jude Law). Also tells the story of the love affair between Wolfe and costume designer Aline Bernstein (Nicole Kidman), who was almost 20 years his senior. This was Michael Grandage’s first film, after having been a stage director for many years. Based on A. Scott Berg’s biography, *Max Perkins: Editor of Genius*. This was well worth my time.

A Generation (© 1955), **Kanal** (© 1957), and **Ashes and Diamonds** (© 1958), dir by Andrzej Wajda

This trio of early films by Polish director Wajda (pronounced Vida) showed at The Dryden on three successive Thursdays. All are about life in Poland during WWII. These are not feel-good movies. Wajda himself was part of the Polish resistance (and in 1981, he joined the Solidarity labor movement of Lech Walesa). Wajda made films for 60 years, and just died last year at age 90.

D-love, dir by Elena Beuca © 2017

High Falls Film Festival. There are three main characters: Stephania, played by director Elena Beuca, her husband Dan, played by Elena’s real-life husband Dave, and a gentle wanderer/traveler from Denmark (D-love) who came into their lives for a brief time. In the Q&A afterwards, we learned that D-love played himself in the film. They contacted him via Facebook years after they had met him. He brought enlightenment to a strained marriage.

A Royal Affair, dir by Nikolaj Arcel © 2012

B

Set in Denmark between 1767 and 1772. George VII had become king at age 17. His behavior was erratic and inappropriate. Alicia Vikander plays Caroline Mathilde, who was sent from England to become his wife. (She looked familiar, so I looked her up and found that she had been the star in **The Light Between Oceans**, which Eva and I had seen at Rancho La Puerta.) She bore him two children, but the second one (Louise) was (it is widely believed) actually fathered by Johann Struensee, the king’s personal physician and Caroline’s lover. It was interesting to learn about this episode in Danish history.

Battle of the Sexes, dir by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris ©2017

Loosely based on the 1973 tennis match between Billie Jean King (Emma Stone) and Bobby Riggs (Steve Carell). Sheila and I saw this together when she visited in October. Most enjoyable.

Menashe, dir by Joshua Z. Weinstein ©2017

Menashe Lustig, who has never acted professionally, plays himself in this film. Menashe is an ultra-Orthodox Jewish widower and he wants to raise his son himself—not so simple in a community that makes and enforces its own laws. Filmed in Borough Park, NY.

** Original Screenplays and screenplays based on books **
(not, as far as I know, based on actual events)

** Highly Recommended **

Fences, dir by Denzel Washington © 2016

B

Play and screenplay by August Wilson. (Wilson wrote the screenplay in 2005, just before he died, but the film didn’t come to fruition until

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2016.) This film received Oscar nominations for Best Picture, Best Actor (Washington), Best Supporting Actress (Davis), and Best Adapted Screenplay. Davis won for her performance. The setting is Pittsburgh, 1956/57.

Atonement, dir by Joe Wright © 2007

I saw this in 2008 and remembered virtually nothing. I had not yet read the book. Now I watched it again within weeks of finishing the book. What a difference. I thought the screenplay and the visuals were perfect. Very well cast. Saoirse Ronan was 13 when she played 13-yr-old Briony. Keira Knightly lit up the screen. The Dunkirk scene was stunning. And, it was fun seeing, in the St. Thomas Hospital scenes, Gina McKee (whom I had just seen and found to be stunning in *The Forsyte Saga*) as Sister Drummond.

Hunt for the Wilderpeople, dir by Taika Waititi © 2016 B

New Zealand director Taika Waititi also wrote the screenplay (based on the book *Wild Pork and Watercress* by Barry Crump), produced the film, and played the funeral preacher. The lead role, 13-yr-old foster child Ricky Baker, was wonderfully played by Julian Dennison. After being introduced to him in this movie, I watched the Special Features, and also some interviews. Julian has aspirations of becoming a director (and it's well worth watching some of his interviews). This is an adventure comedy-drama, and the fun the cast had in making it is evident, and infectious.

Butterfly, dir by José Luis Cuerda © 1999 B

In Spanish, with subtitles. "La Lengua de las Mariposas" literally The Tongue of the Butterfly. Set in an idyllic village in Galicia, in northern Spain, in 1936. 7-yr-old Moncho starts to figure out some mysteries about life. In the end, everyone has to choose a side. Thanks to Bob Placier for this recommendation.

Lady Bird, written and dir by Greta Gerwig © 2017 B

Tagline: "Time to fly." With Laurie Metcalf as the mom and the fine Saoirse Ronan (*Brooklyn*, *Atonement*) as the high school senior daughter who wants to be called Lady Bird. She calls it her given name (she gave it to herself). Some of the scenes between mother and daughter (shopping together for a dance dress, for instance) really resonated (it's hard for them not to annoy each other).

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri, written and dir by Martin McDonagh © 2017 B

Starring Frances McDormand (Mildred) and Woody Harrelson (Chief Whiloughby). You have to go with the flow, ignoring some plot points that weren't particularly credible. But, you forgive that, because there are moments of humor and you're interested in the story and the characters. Well worth seeing.

**** Also Worth Seeing ****

A Man Called Ove, dir by Hannes Holm © 2015 B

General theme was similar to Clint Eastwood's *Gran Torino* (2008). I'm guessing, from all the raves I've heard about the book (by Fredrik Backman), that the movie doesn't do the book justice.

Frantz, dir by François Ozon © 2016 B

This was pleasurable, but not stunning, so I wouldn't recommend going out of your way to see. It's set in 1919, in Germany, in the aftermath of WWI. Frenchmen aren't welcome in this small town in Germany where the film is set. Centers around a young woman who is mourning her fiancé, who was killed in the war. Then, a stranger comes to town. The lovely lead actress, Paula Beer, won the 'best young actress' prize at the Venice Film Festival.

Get Out, written and directed by Jordan Peele B

Tagline: "Just because you're invited, doesn't mean you're welcome." This was a low-budget horror film, not usually my cup of tea, but the racial theme kept me interested, and there was wonderful comic relief by the main character's best friend, played by Lil Rel Howery.

Southside With You, written and directed by Richard Tanne © 2016

I enjoyed watching this, especially since Michelle Robinson Obama grew up in an apartment at 7436 S. Euclid, on the south side of Chicago, just over one mile from where I grew up, and only about a half a mile from my high school. The story took place on the day and evening of her and Barack's first date, summer 1989. (Oct 2017 was their 25th wedding anniversary.)

Their Finest, dir by Lone Scherfig © 2016

Enjoyable, but certainly not a must-see. I liked the war-time London setting and look forward to seeing the actress Gemma Arterton in other films. We have seen *An Education* by this director, but not *Italian for Beginners* or any of her other films.

Hell or High Water, dir by David Mackenzie © 2016 B

Stars Jeff Bridges and Chris Pine. Two brothers resort to robbing small banks to save their family's farm from foreclosure.

Felix and Meira, dir by Maxime Giroux © 2014

Selected as Canada's Oscar submission for Best Foreign Film. Set mostly in Montreal. This is a film about leaving community. Two people form a bond; they were both loved but pressured into doing the "right" thing and fitting in (not that they talked about that). Meira's Hassidic husband does not/cannot understand her lack of connection. "When will you finally understand that this is our life? Pull yourself together!"

The Florida Project, written and dir by Sean Baker © 2017 B

Co-written by Chris Bergoch. The single mothers in this film find themselves in a depressing situation (living in motel rooms with their children, with no prospects of a better life), but the wonderful children in the film make it watchable. Having just read John Dominic Crossan's memoir (from 2000), this sentence of his comes to mind when I think of the children in this film: "What I remember from those [early childhood] years is not education but adventure, that is, the regular endangerment of limb, if not life, in what we described to our parents as "playing outside."

**** I Might Have Skipped These ****

The Handmaiden, dir by Park Chan-wook © 2016

I went to this alone on a night when Bob stayed home sick with a cold. I knew nothing about it except that it was on some Ten Best lists and was set in 1930s Korea (during the Japanese occupation). Too gothic, too sadistic, too soft-porn, too confusing for me.

Bad Day at Black Rock, dir by John Sturges © 1954 B

The Dryden, as part of an Ernest Borgnine series. Also starring Spencer Tracy (winner, Best Actor, Cannes Film Festival), Walter Brennan and Lee Marvin. Bob has often quoted our friend Chauncey Hare as saying, "There are only two stories: A man goes on a journey, and a stranger comes to town." Well, this movie told both of those stories. I enjoyed it (in an historical sort of way), but there is certainly no reason for anyone but a true movie buff to seek it out.

Captain Fantastic, written and dir by Matt Ross (c) 2016 B

Surfwise (a 2007 documentary dir by Doug Pray) was a much better film on this same general topic (father who has unorthodox ideas about raising his kids). Viggo Mortensen was nominated for Best Actor.

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Splendor in the Grass, dir by Elia Kazan © 1961
Screenplay by William Inge. With Natalie Wood and Warren Beatty
(Beatty's film debut). Interesting historically, but not moving.

** TV Series highlights **

American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson **B**
Ten episodes, originally broadcast as a television mini-series in 2016.
Based on Jeffrey Toobin's book *The Run of His Life: The People v. O.J. Simpson* (1997). Timeline: Murders occurred June 12, 1994; White Bronco televised chase, June 17, 1994; Jury selection completed Oct, 1994; Jury sequestered Jan, 1995; Verdict announced Oct 3, 1995. The only things from this saga that I remember from the time are the slow-motion chase, and then gathering with everyone else at work in the cafeteria to watch the verdict. Of course, I remember the names—Marcia Clark, Johnnie Cochran, and so on. The trial was shown on Court TV, which we didn't have. I surely read some news reports of the glove, and so on, but basically I missed all the details and personalities. So, I loved this series. Also in 2017 we watched Ezra Edelman's 8-hour documentary **O.J.: Made in America**. I didn't like it as much, but it did cover some things not in the other production, such as the civil trial brought by the Goldman family, and the lengths to which O.J. went to avoid paying the \$33.5 million judgment against him.

Fargo, season 1 **B**
This had me really hooked. Bob loved the acting (Billy Bob Thornton, as Lorne Malvo, Martin Freeman as Lester Nygaard, Allison Tolman as Molly Solverson, and Colin Hanks as Gus Grimly) but tended to get stressed out by the grisly content of the episodes.

The Forsyte Saga (2002, PBS mini-series)
Based on the Nobel-prize-winning 1922 novels by John Galsworthy. Spans three generations at the turn of the 20th century. I got interested in Corin Redgrave (brother of Vanessa) who plays Old Jolyon Forsyte. And I got interested in Gina McKee, who plays Irene. I loved that the final 'e' in 'Irene' was pronounced, much as you would pronounce those other classic Greek names, Penelope, Phoebe, Hermione.

We are absorbed in Season 3 of **Madam Secretary** and of **Borgen**, and Season 2 of **Better Call Saul** and **The Americans**.

We've watched two detective series this year, **The Fall** and **Broadchurch**. the former is a British-Irish co-production with Gillian Anderson as investigator Stella Gibson. The latter was set in Dorset, on the south coast of England. It was an eight-part murder mystery, which kept our attention. Detective Alec Hardy comes in from elsewhere to head up the investigation, and Detective Ellie Miller works with him. Along the way, we consider who of the many appear-to-be-guilty townspeople might have done the deed.

My guilty pleasures are **Call the Midwife** (sixth and final season) and **A Place to Call Home**. I thought the fourth season of APTCH was the finale (Sarah had her baby; Regina got her just reward), but I hear there is to be a Season 5, set 4 years later.

Bob watched Ken Burns' **The Vietnam War**, but I haven't watched it yet. I will be interested to hear how people have been liking **The Handmaid's Tale**. Though I love Elizabeth Moss, I haven't thought about trying this (despite its good reviews) because I truly hated the book.

Movie-related Quotes

Acting is just pretending to be someone else and really meaning it.
- Julian Dennison, the 14-yr-old Kiwi star of *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* says that this definition was given to him by his co-star Sam Neill, and it stuck with him, and informed his performance

You know why this is my favorite tree? Cause it's tipped over but still growing.
- 6-yr-old Moonee to her friend Jancey, as they sit on a fallen willow, in the film *The Florida Project*

Movie critic A.O. Scott: "There was a lot to feel bad about in 2017: plenty of reasons to take offense, get angry, go numb or feel sick to your stomach. If that sentence bummed you out, I'm sorry. (It was an epic year for dubious apologies, too.) But I'm not sorry about this list that made me feel other, better ways. Not always cheerful, but enlightened, moved, surprised and gratified. In bad times, we tend to either ask too much or expect too little of art, pretending it might heal or save us, and dismissing it when it doesn't. Its actual function is much simpler: it keeps us human. That's what these movies [his Top Ten and second 11 lists] did for me this year."

I just don't feel like I've seen very many movies about 17-year-old girls where the question is not, 'Will she find the right guy' or 'Will he find her?' The question should be: 'Is she going to occupy her personhood?' Because I think we're very unused to seeing female characters, particularly young female characters, as people.
- Greta Gerwig, talking about *Lady Bird*, her directorial debut

At no point in *Menashe* does the protagonist push back against the nature of his faith. I take these characters at face value. They don't question the rules. That was way more interesting to explore than people who think these rules are wrong.
- Joshua Weinstein, talking about his film *Menashe*, his narrative debut

Reviews or Descriptions I Liked

Not relevant to this year's movies, but here is a review I liked
Rarely has so much feeling been mined from so little content. Something's lost in the process, of course: brevity.
- Jesse Green, in his review for *New York* of Annie Baker's play, *The Flick*

Jackie
[Jackie] is intrusive, presumptuous, and often absurd, but, for anyone who thinks that all formality is a front, and that the only point of a façade is that it should crack, "Jackie" delivers a gratifying thrill.
- Anthony Lane, *The New Yorker*, Dec 5, 2016

Loving
Nichols returns to images of Loving bricklaying at work: appropriate for the brick by brick quality of how justice is sought, built upon and finally delivered. - Richard von Busack, *MetroActive*

Anthropoid
That's another yardstick by which I measure movies. They shouldn't be disposable. They should leave a residue on your skin and on your psyche for a few days or a few weeks. That's to me what cinema should be about. - Cillian Murphy, actor

Fences
Confinement, however, is a theme implied in the play's title, and opening it up too much would risk diluting the power of watching large personalities colliding in a narrow place. ... *Fences* is part of a

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cycle of 10 plays about the African-American experience that amounts to a critique of the American dream from the standpoint of people intent on defying their exclusion from it. ... "What about my life?" she [Rose/Viola] asks him in the midst of an especially wrenching confrontation. What is most remarkable about this film is how thoroughly — how painfully, how honestly, how beautifully — it answers that question. - A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*

Get Out

At a time when horror films are often dismissed for their over-reliance on gimmicky premises and cheap jump-scares, *Get Out* has been cheered for giving audiences something meatier to chew on. While films including *The Babadook*, *It Follows* and *The Witch* have helped elevate the genre, none has had the zeitgeist-tapping timeliness of *Get Out*, and none has crossed over to mainstream success with anything close to the same degree. - Josh Rottenberg, *The Los Angeles Times*

The People v. O.J. Simpson

Cuba Gooding Jr's Simpson is a man unhinged by his sudden fall from grace and privilege—a well-played perspective that works regardless of the final verdict. Paulson makes Clark a sympathetic hero without sanding off her edges. Vance's Cochran rivets with charisma and complexity. We hate him for fogging the jury—and us—with specious skepticism and counternarrative, but we always understand his righteous rationalizations. - *Entertainment Weekly*

O.J.: Made in America

A significant blind spot for the film was its predominance of male voices among the interview subjects, and the narrowness of the film's discussion of domestic violence... [T]he film, which so persuasively treats law enforcement racism as a systemic problem, can't figure out how to treat violence against women with the same kind of rigor or nuance. ... O. J. Simpson is viewed as a symbol while Nicole Brown Simpson's fate, in contrast, is treated as an individual tragedy, and there seems to be no political vocabulary available to the filmmakers to understand what happened to her. The deep links between misogyny and American sports culture remain unexamined.

- A. O. Scott, *The New York Times*

Southside With You

The last part of *Southside With You* is a botched opportunity. Barack and Michelle are blown away by *Do The Right Thing*. But then there's a terrible scene where they bump into a senior partner at the firm and Barack eases the clueless white man's discomfort over the climactic riot with a bit of flimflam. What we don't see is Barack and Michelle engage with the debate Spike Lee establishes between the nonviolent resistance of Martin Luther King, a side we've seen Barack take in that community meeting, and the angry militancy of Malcolm X, which Lee endorses. I'd like to have heard some of that discussion before they kiss. Is that a spoiler—that they kiss? For all its clunks and wobbles, something comes through vividly in *Southside With You*. These two kids have terrific chemistry. - David Edelstein, Aug 2016

20th Century Women

One of the things Mike is tapping into is the mystery of our children and our parents. And that we all seek to know our parents in a way that we can never fully realize. - Annette Bening

Poignant narration, spoken by Jamie at the end of the movie: "Years after she is gone, I will have a son. I will try to explain to him what his grandmother was like. But it will be impossible."

I'm a guy admiring these women. They're the most important thing that happened in my young life. Ultimately, it's a portrait of all these women that I loved, that raised me, that still confuse me, that are still like a mystery to me. - Mike Mills

Blood Road

Some viewers may see a moral disconnect here: The film doesn't know what to do with the fact that its object of reverence, Captain Rusch, is [indirectly] responsible for the scars on this land, the maimed people Rebecca Rusch passes on her bike, the unexploded ordinance that still threatens the lives of children at play. ... One might wonder if a better way of connecting with her absent father might be to put the bike away and help crews clean up the still-lethal mess he left behind. A title card just before the closing credits suggests she [the athlete, Rebecca Rusch] has begun to do something of the sort, starting a cycling-tourist program that helps fund bomb removal. That's praiseworthy. But for most of its running time, *Blood Road* seems to think one American's emotional closure matters more than the lasting damage done in the countries she has gone to visit.

- John DeFore, 6/23/2017, *hollywoodreporter.com*

The Florida Project

All sorts of lives, you feel, have washed up on the shores of the Magic Castle and come to rest, for want of another tide to bear them away.

- Anthony Lane, *The New Yorker*, Oct 9, 2017

Into the Abyss

Mr. Herzog is not interested in vindicating any particular point of view or version of events. Nor, despite his clearly stated moral opposition to capital punishment, is he advocating a political position. He is instead — as he so often has, in fictional features and documentaries alike — probing the contradictions of the human heart, in which nobility and savagery are so entwined as to be almost indistinguishable.

- A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*

Obit.

Margalit Fox is one of those writers ... whose every paragraph carries an undercurrent of humor ... you're never more than a few sentences away from an ironic aside or wry observation or the sudden appearance of some cockeyed fact. ... Stranger still, Fox maintains her writerly bounce despite her regular subject, which is death. ...

Margalit Fox is ... the best writer all around, at the *New York Times*.

- high praise from Andrew Ferguson, calling her "The Artist of the Obituary," in *Commentary* magazine

Battle of the Sexes

Turns real-life events into a crowd-pleasing, well-acted dramedy that ably entertains while smartly serving up a volley of present-day parallels.

- Rotten Tomatoes' critical consensus

Splendor in the Grass

Natalie Wood ... whining like a cat in heat and moaning in a steaming hot bathtub while her unbroken hymen vibrates like a tuning fork.

- slantmagazine.com, Mar 2, 2009

Movie Miscellany

Loving

Judge Leon M. Bazile, in language Chief Justice Warren would recall, said that if God had meant for whites and blacks to mix, he would have not placed them on different continents. ... Mrs. Loving stopped giving interviews, but last year issued a statement on the 40th anniversary of the announcement of the Supreme Court ruling, urging that gay men and lesbians be allowed to marry.

- from Mildred Loving's *New York Times* obituary, May 6, 2008

Hidden Figures

The film was based on the book *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race*, by Margot Lee Shetterly. The author is the

Mary Dan's 2017 Movie List

B indicates Bob saw it, too

founder of the Human Computer Project, a digital archive of the stories of NASA's African-American "Human Computers" whose work tipped the balance in favor of the United States in WWII, the Cold War, and the Space Race. Her father was among the early generation of black NASA engineers and scientists, and she had direct access to NASA executives and the women featured in the book. She grew up around the historically black Hampton College, where the women in *Hidden Figures* studied.

Anthropoid

You can find a good overview here, a comparison of the facts against movie depiction re: the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in May, 1942: <http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/anthropoid/>

Fences

Previous attempts to adapt August Wilson's *Fences* for the screen had been fruitless, partly due to Wilson's insistence on utilizing an African-American director. ... Playwright and screenwriter Tony Kushner came aboard to build on a draft written by Wilson before his death in 2005. However, Wilson is the only credited screenwriter for the film, while Kushner received a co-producer credit. [Todd] Black explained that [Denzel] Washington insisted that they remain faithful to Wilson's work. - Wikipedia

Frantz

François Ozon is nothing if not a restless film-maker. ... [H]e's the Woody Allen of France, churning out one to two films a year.
- *The Guardian*, 10 Sep 2016

This is a loose adaptation of the 1932 Ernst Lubitsch drama *Broken Lullaby*, which was in turn based on a play by French playwright Maurice Rostand. ... [Ozon] radically shifts from the source material by imagining the entire second half of the story (which fittingly is the best part of the film). - *The Guardian*, 10 Sep 2016

One of the key questions he's asking here is about the moral necessity of telling a falsehood, particularly when the need to shield those already in mourning from further pain becomes its own moral imperative. - *onlineathens.com*, 8 April 2017

O.J.: Made in America

This was directed by Ezra Edelman, who is mixed race and is the son of Marian Wright Edelman [president and founder of Children's Defense Fund] and Peter Edelman [law professor at Georgetown, specializing in poverty, welfare, juvenile justice, and constitutional law].

Get Out

... has grossed more than \$150 million domestically [two months into its release] — a "staggering return" for Universal Pictures and Blumhouse Productions on a movie that cost just \$4.5 million to produce.

Director Jordan Peele, 38, was previously best known as one of the stars of the Comedy Central sketch series *Key & Peele*.

20th Century Women

From an interview at *gq.com*: "Mills pauses in front of August Sander's *Citizens of the 20th Century*, a collection of the photographer's attempts, from 1892 to 1952, to shoot portraits of as many [types of] people as he could. It's part of where Mills got the title for his new film, he says."

Their Finest

When asked what his reactions were to being cast as Ambrose Hilliard, Bill Nighy said: "They were looking for someone to play a chronically self-absorbed actor in his declining years, and they thought of me,

which is something that's easier to process on some mornings rather than others."

The film is based on the book *Their Finest Hour and a Half* by Lissa Evans. The novel, and the movie, "illuminate not just the deprivations, but also the liberations of the war years."

The Bridge at Remagen

Filming in Czechoslovakia was interrupted by the Soviet invasion of August 1968. Cast and crew were taken to safety in a convoy of 28 taxis, except for Robert Logan, who stayed behind with film gear in order to capture the invasion on film and photo. The movie was completed in Italy and Austria.

It is ironic that Remagen Bridge (more properly the Ludendorff Bridge), whose capture facilitated the Allied advance into Germany in WWII, was originally built during WWI to help speed the advance of German troops into France.

Genius

Max Perkins had a genius for friendship.

- John Logan, screenwriter

He had a real understanding not just of his job but of their work. He was able to bring things out of people that made them better, and they all knew that. And that is a great gift.

- Michael Grandage, director

He seemed only to live for other people.

- Colin Firth, who played Max Perkins in the film

It's Criminal

Telling My Story is "a non-profit organization that breaks down walls between socially isolated individuals and their communities through collaborative creative engagement. We use theater as a medium for social reflection and relationship building. Our programs develop self-awareness and communication skills with populations behind visible and invisible social walls such as those created by incarceration, addiction and poverty. Through writing and performing, people behind walls are empowered to reclaim their own voices and strengths."

The Florida Project

I've been very influenced by Hal Roach and *The Little Rascals* throughout my entire career. And this film became a tribute, a present-day *Little Rascals*. [I am also] intrigued by this world because there was this juxtaposition of kids growing up in cheap hotels and the 'happiest place on earth' for children next door.

- Sean Baker, as quoted in *The Daily Beast*, Oct 8, 2017

Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story

During World War II, Lamarr learned that radio-controlled torpedoes, which could be important in the naval war, could easily be jammed, thereby causing the torpedo to go off course. With the knowledge she had gained about torpedoes from her first husband, she thought of creating a frequency-hopping signal that could not be tracked or jammed. She contacted her friend, composer and pianist George Antheil, to help her develop a device for doing that, and he succeeded by synchronizing a miniaturized player-piano mechanism with radio signals. They drafted designs for the frequency-hopping system, which they patented.

- This (explained here by Wikipedia) was a story told in the film

Battle of the Sexes

Thrown out of his house when he can't conceal a Rolls Royce he won in a tennis bet, Bobby Riggs hits upon the idea of a challenge match against the top woman player, boasting that even at age 55 he can beat any woman. Billie Jean King was 29 and one of the top female tennis players in the world. He was 55 and had been a world champion before she was born.