

# MOVIES

Edited by Meghan Kavanaugh



## SPRING FEVER

If you were one of the many Bostonians afflicted with the flu this winter, take solace in knowing it could have been worse. Consider Steven Soderbergh's 2011 thriller *Contagion*, in which a businesswoman returns from a trip to Hong Kong with a virus that kills her in two days and rapidly spreads, sending the world into panic mode. Thankfully, there's a doctor in the house: Harvard Medical School genetics professor George Church will explain the science behind the sickness before a screening of the thriller at the Coolidge Corner Theatre on March 22. / *Marlo Jappen*

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### Reviews by Brett Michel

**THE BIG SHORT** ★★★ During the end credits of Adam McKay's 2010 Will Ferrell/Mark Wahlberg comedy, *The Other Guys*, the writer/director presented a PowerPoint-style series of infographics breaking down how a Ponzi scheme works, while displaying statistics on corporate greed and how you and I get screwed by the 1 percent. McKay must have felt he was on to something, because his latest pitch-black comedy shows how we were played for fools when the housing bubble burst in 2008. Adapted from Michael Lewis' bestselling *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine* by McKay and co-writer Charles Randolph, the movie focuses on a handful of Wall Street misfits (played by Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling and producer Brad Pitt) who took on the big banks, betting big on the financial collapse and making millions off others' misery. The movie is a long way from McKay's improv-heavy efforts starring Ferrell, whose fans will likely glaze over when faced with this film's massive information dumps relating the inner workings of the finance industry. To make talk of collateralized debt obligation go down a little easier, McKay employs people like Selena Gomez and Margot Robbie to sex up the delivery. For the most part it works. But it's still depressing as hell. (At Boston Common, Kendall Square, West Newton and in the suburbs.)

**DEADPOOL** ★1/2 Twentieth Century Fox infamously botched the on-screen introduction of fanboy favorite

Deadpool in 2009's *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. Ryan Reynolds was cast as the right kind of sardonic personality, but Fox literally muzzled Marvel's antihero by stitching his lips shut, a big no-no for a character known as "The Merc with a Mouth." Well, Fox has given Reynolds a second, very R-rated shot at playing the tight-wearing assassin who murders with guns and swords, allowing him to constantly break the fourth wall (a staple of his comic book incarnation) as he comments on the action. The directorial debut of former visual effects artist Tim Miller, the movie is basically two extended fight scenes, padded out with origin-oriented flashbacks narrated by former special forces operative Wade Wilson (Reynolds), a self-described "bad guy who gets paid to fuck up worse guys" on his way to becoming Deadpool. Unfortunately, as we also discover, he's probably better suited to the printed page. "I know what you're thinking," Wilson muses in voiceover, "whose balls did he have to fondle to get his own movie?" Funny, no? Since I didn't laugh once at the puerile "humor," no. (At Assembly Row, Boston Common, Fenway, Somerville and in the suburbs.)

**EYE IN THE SKY** ★★★ Director Gavin Hood has previously examined the vagaries of modern anti-terror efforts with 2007's *Rendition* and drone warfare with 2013's *Ender's Game*. His latest picture isn't science fiction, though. Its moral dilemma involves an unlucky Kenyan girl (Aisha Takow) who's selling bread

on the street, next to a house containing militants who are under surveillance by British Col. Katherine Powell (Helen Mirren), commander of a U.K.-based operation to track and capture a home-grown terrorist on African soil. However, when her drones uncover an imminent suicide bombing being carried out by her target, she upgrades her objective from "capture" to "kill," coordinating with U.S. allies to drop a Hellfire missile on the building. But as American drone pilot Steve Watts (Aaron Paul) is about to pull the trigger, he notices the 9-year-old innocent who's entered the "kill zone." Thus begins a darkly comic procedure of "referring up," as the decision to proceed begins a chain of bureaucratic buck-passing. The late Alan Rickman appears in his penultimate role, as does Oscar nominee Barkhad Abdi (*Captain Phillips*), who adds tension on the ground. (At Boston Common, Coolidge Corner and Kendall Square.)

**GODS OF EGYPT** ★★★1/2 What a peculiar film. The visually resplendent latest from director Alex Proyas (*The Crow*, *Dark City*) caused an uproar when its first trailer was released, with many complaining that the movie's ancient Egypt had been whitewashed with hunky beefcakes such as Gerard Butler and *Game of Thrones*' Nikolaj Coster-Waldau. In reality, Proyas' spectacularly realized digital playground is Egypt in name only. Sure, there are pyramids, but they're wondrous creations, made of swirling sands, and the titular gods—Set (Butler), Horus (Coster-Waldau), Hathor (Elodie Yung) and Thoth (Chadwick Boseman)—are portrayed by Scottish, Danish, French-Cambodian and African American actors, who may as well be playing Marvel superheroes, given their stature (they're twice the size of mortals) and their propensity to, say, transform into winged robots or clone their bodies to appear in multiple locations at once. Speaking of those mortals, the film's hero, Bek (Brenton Thwaites), is as bland as they come, but the adventure he undertakes—teaming up with Horus to simultaneously take down the evil Set and save his enslaved love, Zaya (Courtney Eaton)—is a deeply silly romp that evokes old Saturday afternoon serials, with Butler doing his hammy best to recall bygone idols like Victor Mature. Divertingly cheesy. (At Assembly Row, Boston Common, Fenway and in the suburbs.)

**HAIL, CAESAR!** ★★★1/2 The Coen Brothers' latest opens in a confessional, where they introduce us to Eddie Mannix (Josh Brolin), a fictionalized version of the infamous MGM general manager and vice president who gained a frightening reputation as a "fixer," covering up scandals for the studio. He's also a Christ figure, bearing the burdens of other people's sins. Driven by a comical sense of Catholic guilt, Mannix spends much of the film's 24-hour period dealing with the not-entirely-unusual disappearance of bender-prone womanizer Baird Whitlock (George Clooney), Capitol Pictures' biggest star. That's right, Capitol Pictures—the same fictional studio that the Coens used as the backdrop of 1991's *Barton Fink*, their 1941-set, pitch-black comedy. That picture centered on a celebrated Broadway writer who is chewed up by the Hollywood system, but this much lighter movie is set at

#### ADVICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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