

CINEPLEX

MAGAZINE



ONE.
LAST.
BATTLE.

MARTIN FREEMAN

TALKS THE
HOBBIT FINALE

Inside

**JAMIE
FOXX**

**CHANNING
TATUM**

**ANGELINA
JOLIE**

**SETH
ROGEN**

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As the *Hobbit* trilogy comes to a contentious end in this month's finale, *The Battle of the Five Armies*, we speak with the charming **Martin Freeman** about how landing the starring role of little Bilbo Baggins changed his life
BY ASHLEY JUDE COLLIE

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BY COLIN COVERT





THE END, OR JUST THE MIDDLE?

Who here believes this is really the end of Peter Jackson's Middle-earth? Six movies, and 13 years, after we wandered into the land of dwarves and wizards it is time to wander back out as the final *Hobbit* movie is released. But considering the popularity and profitability of the Middle-earth movies — a cross-pollination of novelist J.R.R. Tolkien's stories with director Jackson's vision — it's hard to accept this is actually the end.

Jackson has all-but shot down the possibility of the most likely extension to the franchise, adapting *The Silmarillion* — a sort of Middle-earth background book. Simply put, where Tolkien had sold the movie rights to *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* before his death, the rights to *The Silmarillion* lie with Tolkien's family, and they're not interested.

So where does that leave us? I'll tell you where — with *The Amazing Race: Middle-earth*, an adrenaline-fuelled reality show in which 11 teams of two hunt for treasure and overcome obstacles on the decaying New Zealand sets of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. In the first episode, contestants must find an old piece of gaffer tape.

Or how about a good old-fashioned monster movie like *Gollum Meets Frankenstein's Monster*? Gollum invites Frank Jr. for drinks in his cave, everything's going swell until the big guy mistakes a glowing piece of jewellery for fire...

Jackson could borrow a page from the *Star Wars* universe and mount the *Middle-earth Holiday Special*. Like the *Star Wars Holiday Special* it would be terrible, broadcast only once, and never released on DVD or Blu-ray, making it an instant classic.

No? Well then let me propose an episode of the BBC's *Sherlock* where Sherlock Holmes and his sidekick Watson try to solve the case of a small, hairy man with big feet who has stolen a large amount of gold from a fire-breathing dragon. See what I've done there? It will save on salaries.

Truthfully, the most likely heir to the Middle-earth movies is *Temeraire*, a series of nine fantasy novels by American author Naomi Novik that involve an alternate version of Earth's history and an air force of, wait for it, dragons. Peter Jackson already owns the movie rights — purchased way back in 2006. Maybe he'll get going on the project once his hobbit's journey is finally done.

For your last hit of Middle-earth in this magazine (until the DVD comes out), turn to "This is the End," page 52, an interview with **Martin Freeman** about what the *Hobbit* trilogy has meant to him.

Elsewhere in this issue, **Angelina Jolie** talks about directing the inspirational bio-pic *Unbroken* (page 40), **Channing Tatum**, **Steve Carell** and **Mark Ruffalo** explain why making *Foxcatcher* was no fun (page 36), **Jamie Foxx** sings the praises of *Annie* (page 48) and we interview **Seth Rogen** about *The Interview* (page 44).

Plus, starting on page 25, we present 25 great gift ideas for the holidays. If you can't find what you're looking for there, you'd better make it yourself.

PUBLISHER SALAH BACHIR

EDITOR MARNI WEISZ
DEPUTY EDITOR INGRID RANDOJA
ART DIRECTOR TREVOR THOMAS STEWART
ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR STEVIE SHIPMAN
VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCTION SHEILA GREGORY

CONTRIBUTORS LEO ALEFOUNDER, ASHLEY JUDE COLLIE, COLIN COVERT, BOB STRAUSS

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■ MARNI WEISZ, EDITOR

MERYL STREEP EMILY BLUNT JAMES CORDEN ANNA KENDRICK CHRIS PINE AND JOHNNY DEPP AS THE WOLF



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INTO THE WOODS

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SNAPS



BEACH BRAWL

Naomi Watts and **Jake Gyllenhaal** film a scene for *Demolition* on Coney Island, New York. The film is directed by Montreal's Jean-Marc Vallée.

PHOTO BY SPLASH NEWS



THE ELGORT HOP

Ansel Elgort gets diagonal during a photo shoot for *Town & Country* magazine.

PHOTO BY SPLASH NEWS

RENNER GETS BOOKED

Jeremy Renner seems bemused by his page in *The Art of Discovery*. He was at the L.A. launch of the art book that features images by celebrity photographer Jeff Vespa.

PHOTO BY DONATO SARDELLA/GETTY





RAIN CHECK

Movie-rain showers **Jude Law** in a wet, cold mess as he shoots a scene for *Genius* in Manchester.

PHOTO BY SPLASH NEWS



SURFING U.S.A.

Seth Rogen shoots *Zeroville* on the beach in Malibu. The film co-stars, and is directed by, his good friend James Franco.

PHOTO BY KEYSTONE PRESS



DOGGONE CUTE!

Sarah Hyland cuddles her dog **Barkley Bixby** at a New York event in support of pet adoption.

PHOTO BY DENNIS VAN TINE/
KEYSTONE PRESS

IN BRIEF



RETURN TO DOG RIVER

From left: Fred Ewanuick, Brent Butt and Nancy Robertson hanging out in *Corner Gas: The Movie*

With this month's release of *Corner Gas: The Movie*, fans of the Saskatchewan-set TV show finally find out what Brent Leroy and the rest of the Dog River gang have been up to in the five years since the show went off the air.

"Not a lot, really," says the show's creator Brent Butt, who also plays Leroy. "Brent Leroy likes things the way they are. He's not big into change, as are most people in Dog River, so they've kind of been as you remember them when you last saw them."

Fear not, there is a plot here. It seems the town has been

mismanaged to the point that its very existence is in jeopardy. "It's facing the same situation that a lot of small, rural communities are facing and that is, 'Okay, do we just roll up the sidewalks, wrap everything up and leave and let this town die, or is there something here worth saving?'"

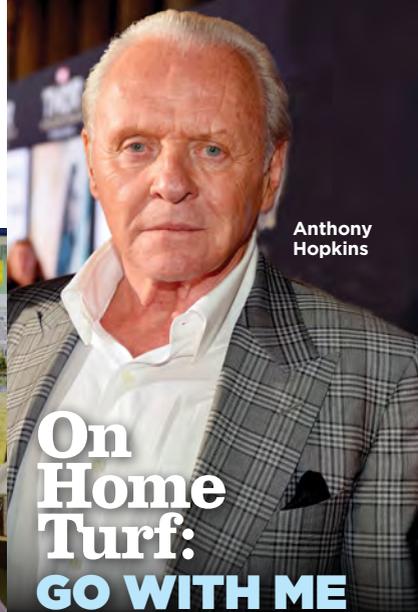
Spoiler alert. They try to save it. "Yeah, it would be a pretty lame movie if they didn't. 'No, let's just go.' And then it's five minutes of people packing suitcases," jokes Butt.

He says making *Corner Gas's* characters into movie stars was part of his plan from the

time they wrapped the show. Fortunately, the gas station where the series was shot was still standing, having served as a tourist destination for the past five years.

It did, however, need a lot of work. "We basically built it to last 13 episodes," says Butt. "It was built like a set, not like a building."

Corner Gas: The Movie plays at Cineplex theatres from December 3rd to 7th. The theatrical release will be followed by a TV run and then the film will be packaged up for a DVD release just in time for Christmas. —MW



Anthony Hopkins

On Home Turf: GO WITH ME

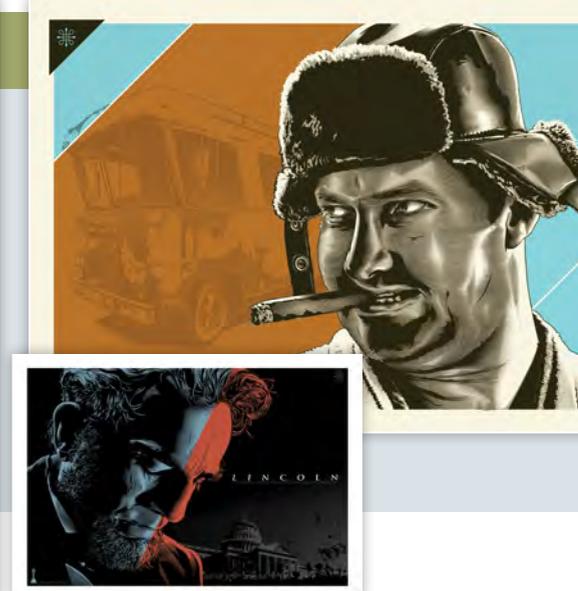
Anthony Hopkins, Julia Stiles and Ray Liotta are in British Columbia's North Okanagan to shoot *Go With Me* this month.

The film — which went into production last month — is based on the 2008 novel of the same name and tells the story of a woman (played by Stiles) in the Pacific Northwest who runs afoul of a bad cop-turned-crime boss in a small logging community and enlists the help of a veteran logger (Hopkins) to save her skin.

The production is expected to shoot mostly in Enderby and Lumby, with Swedish director **Daniel Alfredson** (*The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest*) at the helm. —MW ▶

THE ART OF FILM

It's no surprise that Pitt Meadows, B.C., artist and self-proclaimed "pop-culture fiend" Jeff Boyes studied screen-printing at art school. His process has changed, but his movie-inspired illustrations like these — clockwise from left of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off's* Cameron, *Christmas Vacation's* Eddie and *Lincoln's*, well, Lincoln — still draw on that foundation. "I usually concept something quickly on a notepad, scan that into the computer...sketch a more defined concept on a tablet and then I throw it into Adobe Illustrator and create the whole thing with a mouse," explains Boyes. See more at www.visualtechnicians.com. —MW



Go from blooper to blockbuster.

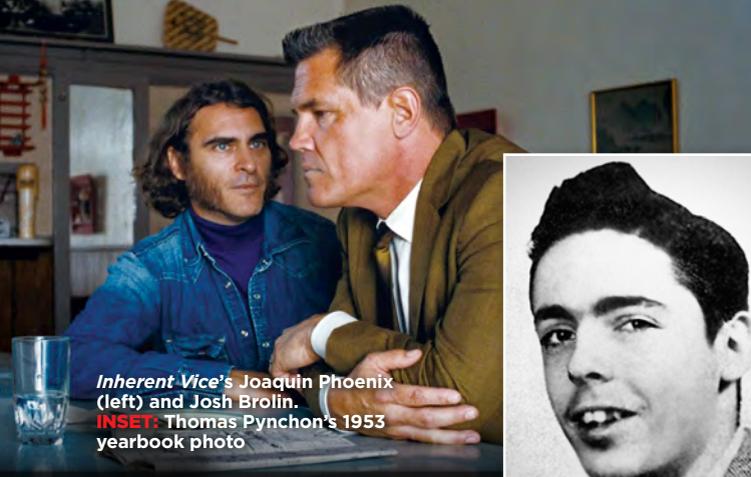
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Inherent Vice's Joaquin Phoenix (left) and Josh Brolin.
INSET: Thomas Pynchon's 1953 yearbook photo



▶ HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT?

Fill in the rest of this phrase with a name:

"Reclusive author, _____."

The correct answer is Thomas Pynchon (partial credit if you said J.D. Salinger, but let's stick with the living).

Pynchon — author of such celebrated novels as *V.*, *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Inherent Vice* — has become synonymous with the phrase. He even had a bit of fun with the reputation when he lent his voice to a *Simpsons* episode in which a cartoon Pynchon appears with a bag over his head shouting, "Get your picture taken with a reclusive author!"

So what are we to make of the rumours (all-but confirmed by star Josh Brolin) that Pynchon has a cameo in this month's big-screen adaptation of *Inherent Vice*, a 1970s-set crime drama directed by Paul Thomas Anderson and starring Joaquin Phoenix?

The bizarre thing is, the rumour is still unconfirmed, even though the film screened for packed crowds at the New York Film Festival in October.

The problem with confirming the rumour, we suppose, is being able to recognize the person doing the cameo. And Pynchon hasn't been captured on film since colour photography became popular. —*MW*



STARRY WOODS

If you think this month's big-screen adaptation of Stephen Sondheim's musical *Into the Woods* has an all-star cast — Meryl Streep as The Witch (pictured above), Johnny Depp as The Wolf, Emily Blunt as The Baker's Wife, Tracey Ullman as Jack's Mother — look at the talent that assembled for a 1990s table-read of an earlier version of the script.

In a 2010 interview with *Broadway World* (just as production on this new movie was gearing up), Sondheim confirmed that read-through included Cher as The Witch, Steve Martin as The Wolf, Robin Williams as The Baker, Goldie Hawn as The Baker's Wife, Danny DeVito as The Giant and Roseanne Barr as Jack's Mother. "It was really, really good," said Sondheim. "I remember thinking, 'If a bomb drops on this house, half of Hollywood would be wiped out.'" —*MW*



Quote Unquote

Genius is not always in the most romantic of packages. Most geniuses, they are strange, they do have conflict, **they do have these conflicts in themselves, they are often odd-looking sociopaths.**

—TIMOTHY SPALL ON PLAYING MR. TURNER'S TITULAR ARTIST



STANDIN' WITH HIS STAND-IN

We're usually amazed how much actors and their body doubles look alike. In this case, not so much. Mark Wahlberg and his stand-in get some work done on the New York set of *Ted 2*.

PHOTO BY ZELIG SHAUL/KEYSTONE PRESS



KNOW MOSES?

In this month's *Exodus: Gods and Kings* Christian Bale (seen above) becomes the latest in an eclectic collection of actors to play Moses. Can you match the actor who played Moses with the title in which he appears?

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1) Val Kilmer | A) <i>The Ten Commandments</i> (1956) |
| 2) Mel Brooks | B) <i>The Ten Commandments</i> (animated, 2007) |
| 3) Christian Slater | C) <i>History of the World: Part 1</i> (1981) |
| 4) Charlton Heston | D) <i>The Prince of Egypt</i> (animated, 1998) |
| 5) William Houston | E) <i>Son of God</i> (2014) |

ANSWERS: 1) D 2) C 3) B 4) A 5) E



MONKEY BUSINESS

Do you think other Hollywood monkeys lament the fact that Crystal's going to get all the good roles? Like, how many capuchins have said to their trainers, "Why bother, we both know Crystal will get it." And they're probably right.

Seen here reprising her role as Dexter in this month's *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb*, the 20-year-old simian has had more than 20 movie and TV roles since making her debut as a baby monkey in 1997's *George of the Jungle*. You've also seen her as the chain-smoking monkey in *The Hangover Part II*, Donald in *Zookeeper*, a drunk monkey in *Dr. Doolittle*, Oliver the helper monkey on TV's *Malcolm in the Middle* and Ricky the smoking monkey on *The Big Bang Theory*. —MW

VALLÉE'S WILD RIDE

When I told my French-Canadian mother I was going to see a screening of *Wild*, a movie directed by Jean-Marc Vallée and starring Reese Witherspoon, she asked, "Who's Reese Witherspoon?"

The anecdote makes Vallée laugh.

"This can only be true in some parts of Québec," he says. "It's true that I'm a bit of a household name in my native province. But I'm keeping my feet on the ground. I know how blessed I am to work with the finest actors in Hollywood."

Since his drama *Dallas Buyers Club* won three Oscars this past March, including Matthew McConaughey's Best Actor and Jared Leto's Best Supporting Actor, the Montreal native has been in high demand. When Jim Toth, Reese Witherspoon's husband (and McConaughey's agent), saw the movie he told his wife that she should meet Vallée.

"Reese was looking to adapt Cheryl Strayed's memoir. The book is based on her real-life journey, in which she decides to hike over a thousand miles alone as a way to find herself again following her divorce, the death of her mother, and years of destructive lifestyle."

The book left Vallée in tears. He'd lost his own mother three years prior and could relate to the author's grief. He wanted to make the movie as a tribute to his mom.

The only person who wanted to make this movie more than he did, he says, was Witherspoon.

"Reese was the toughest person on the set. We were shooting in remote locations, in the middle of nowhere. She literally did not want to stop shooting the entire time. She did not want to take lunch breaks, she just had snacks. She even helped the crew carry their equipment up and down the mountains. She immersed herself in the character without making a fuss about not wearing makeup, and often being totally naked on set. Her performance is breathtaking."

Vallée's already working on his next movie, *Demolition* with Jake Gyllenhaal and Naomi Watts. "I've got the next four years lined up," he says. "I'm doing the films that I want. I'm not doing the Hollywood big thing. By choosing my films, I'm choosing my own lifestyle. I've chosen to be happy."

—MATHIEU CHANTELOIS



PHOTO BY RAINA + WILSON (GWPHTOGRAPHIC.COM)

WILD
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EXODUS

GODS AND KINGS

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ALL DRESSED UP

EMILY BLUNT

In London for the British Film Institute Gala.

PHOTO BY DOUG PETERS/KEYSTONE PRESS

ROBERT DOWNEY JR.

At the Rome Film Festival's premiere of *The Judge*.

PHOTO BY RICCARDO CESARI/SPLASH NEWS

EMMA ROBERTS

In L.A. for the premiere of *American Horror Story: Freak Show*.

PHOTO BY MATT BARON/KEYSTONE PRESS



**LILY
COLLINS**

At the Rome Film Festival's premiere of *Love, Rosie*.

PHOTO BY SPLASH NEWS



**DANIEL
RADCLIFFE**

In London for the U.K. premiere of *Horns*.

PHOTO BY MATT CROSSICK/KEYSTONE PRESS



**REESE
WITHERSPOON**

In Beverly Hills for the American Cinematheque Award Gala.

PHOTO BY PAUL SMITH/KEYSTONE PRESS

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▶ KEIRA KNIGHTLEY

At the BFI London Film Festival's screening of *The Imitation Game*.

PHOTO BY LEXIE APPLEBY/KEYSTONE PRESS



JESSICA ALBA

In South Korea for Seoul Fashion Week.

PHOTO BY KEYSTONE PRESS



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IN THEATRES

DECEMBER 5



Wild's Reese Witherspoon

WILD

Reese Witherspoon is earning rave reviews for her turn as Cheryl Strayed, who sets out to hike 1,100 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail. A former heroin addict who's reeling after the end of a relationship and the death of her mother (**Laura Dern**), Strayed is unprepared for the enormous toll the trip takes. Directed by Quebec's own **Jean-Marc Vallée** (*Dallas Buyers Club*). See **Jean-Marc Vallée** interview, [page 12](#).

BACKCOUNTRY

In this Canadian-made survivor thriller, couple Jenn (**Missy Peregrym**) and Alex (**Jeff Roop**) take a detour while camping in the woods and run into a very aggressive black bear. Based on a true story.



Gemma Boveri's Gemma Arterton

GEMMA BOVERY

British couple Gemma (**Gemma Arterton**) and Charlie Boveri (**Jason Flemyng**) relocate to a French village where Gemma's sexual misadventures attract the attention of a snooty baker (**Fabrice Luchini**).

FALL

Set in Niagara Falls, this drama finds Father Sam (**Michael Murphy**) forced to examine his past behaviour when he receives a letter from a man accusing him of sexual misconduct 40 years earlier.

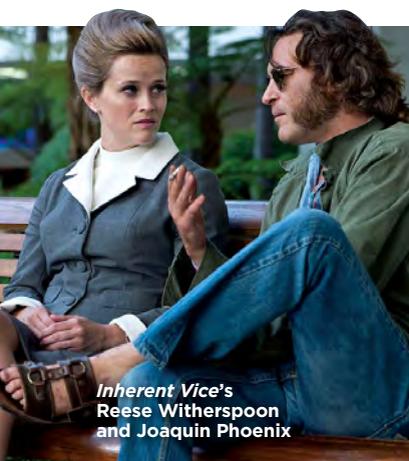


SERENA

Jennifer Lawrence and **Bradley Cooper**'s third film together — after *Silver Linings Playbook* and *American Hustle* — casts them as a Depression-era couple who will do anything to expand their Appalachian timber empire.

EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS

Master filmmaker **Ridley Scott** assembled 700 cast and crew — along with 4,000 extras — in the deserts of Spain and Mexico to recreate the well-known Biblical tale of Moses (**Christian Bale**), who's chosen by God to free enslaved Israelites from the control of hard-hearted Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses (**Joel Edgerton**).



Inherent Vice's
Reese Witherspoon
and Joaquin Phoenix

INHERENT VICE

Joaquin Phoenix looks as if he was born to play often-stoned, 1970s private detective Doc Sportello in director **Paul Thomas Anderson's** adaptation of the Thomas Pynchon novel. Doc gets mixed up with hippies, hardnosed L.A. cops and various oddball characters when he's asked to help solve a kidnapping. Co-starring **Reese Witherspoon**, **Josh Brodin**, **Benicio Del Toro**, **Jena Malone**, **Owen Wilson** and **Martin Short**.



TOP FIVE

Chris Rock writes, directs and stars in this comedy about Hollywood comedian **Andre Allen (Rock)**, who drops his funny act to make a documentary about the Haitian revolution. This doesn't sit well with his reality-show fiancée (**Gabrielle Union**), agent (**Kevin Hart**), or entourage, but it is intriguing to the *New York Times* reporter (**Rosario Dawson**) who's writing a feature on him.

CONTINUED ▶

DECEMBER 17



► **THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES**

Soak in every last orc, elf, dwarf and warg, our trip to Middle-earth is finally coming to the end. This third, and final, *Hobbit* film finds Thorin (**Richard Armitage**) and his dwarves unwilling to share their gold with the elves and the men of Lake-town. But they, along with hobbit Bilbo (**Martin Freeman**), will have to band together when armies of goblins and wargs attack. See **Martin Freeman interview, page 52.**

DECEMBER 19



Dan Stevens (left) and Ben Stiller in *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb*

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: SECRET OF THE TOMB

Larry the night watchman (**Ben Stiller**) travels to the British Museum to restore the fading powers of the magical tablet of Ahkmenrah. Favourite series characters are joined by newbies Sir Lancelot (**Dan Stevens**) and Mindy the security guard (**Rebel Wilson**).

THE IMITATION GAME

Benedict Cumberbatch immerses himself in the role of Alan Turing, the real-life mathematical genius (and gay man) who broke the German enigma code during World War II by building the world's first computer. Co-starring **Keira Knightley** and *Downton Abbey's* **Allen Leech**.

ANNIE

Annie (**Quvenzhané Wallis**) is living the hard-knock life in a foster home under the watchful eye of meanie Miss Hannigan (**Cameron Diaz**). That all changes when she meets a wealthy mayoral candidate (**Jamie Foxx**). See **Jamie Foxx interview, page 48.**

THE GAMBLER

Mark Wahlberg lost a reported 60 pounds to play the lead role of a college English professor whose gambling addiction gets him in trouble with the mob. This is a remake of the highly touted 1974 pic starring James Caan. CONTINUED ►

Annie's Rose Byrne (left) and Quvenzhané Wallis



SURVIVAL

RESILIENCE

REDEMPTION

UNBROKEN

THE UNBELIEVABLE TRUE STORY

CHRISTMAS





BIG EYES

Tim Burton directs this true story of artist Margaret Keane (**Amy Adams**), who found she could express herself by painting portraits of women and children distinguished by their immense black eyes. She signed the popular works with the single name "Keane," allowing her husband, Walter (**Christoph Waltz**), to take credit for them.

THE INTERVIEW

Clueless TV interviewer Dave Skylark (**James Franco**) and his producer Aaron Rapoport (**Seth Rogen**) land a huge scoop when they're allowed into North Korea to interview the country's leader, Kim Jong-un. Then the CIA recruits them to assassinate the big guy. **See Seth Rogen interview, page 44.**

INTO THE WOODS

The beloved Broadway musical comes to the big screen with Hollywood heavyweights showing off their singing skills. Characters from well-known fairy tales get mixed up in each other's stories when a witch (**Meryl Streep**) puts a curse on a baker (**James Corden**) and his wife (**Emily Blunt**).

AMERICAN SNIPER

American Navy SEAL Chris Kyle (**Bradley Cooper**) ranks as the military's most lethal sniper with 160 confirmed kills. This bio-pic directed by **Clint Eastwood** recounts Kyle's exploits while serving overseas and then back home with his wife (**Sienna Miller**) and kids.



Into the Woods stars Meryl Streep (left) and Mackenzie Mauzy

SELMA

It's 1965 and African-American civil rights leaders Dr. Martin Luther King (**David Oyelowo**), James Bevel (**Common**), Hosea Williams (**Wendell Pierce**) and John Lewis (Toronto's own **Stephan James**) lead a walk from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, to ensure equal rights for black voters.

UNBROKEN

In **Angelina Jolie's** second film as director she brings the remarkable true-life story of Louis Zamperini (**Jack O'Connell**) to the big screen. An American Olympic athlete who enlisted as an airman during World War II, Zamperini was shot down over the Pacific. He survived months lost at sea and then years inside a brutal Japanese POW camp. **See Angelina Jolie interview, page 40.**

MR. TURNER

British director **Mike Leigh** teams with actor **Timothy Spall** to present a compelling portrait of 19th-century artist J.M.W. Turner, whose unconventional life — he visited brothels, kept a secret mistress — informed his chaotic, masterful landscapes that were both lauded and reviled by the art world.

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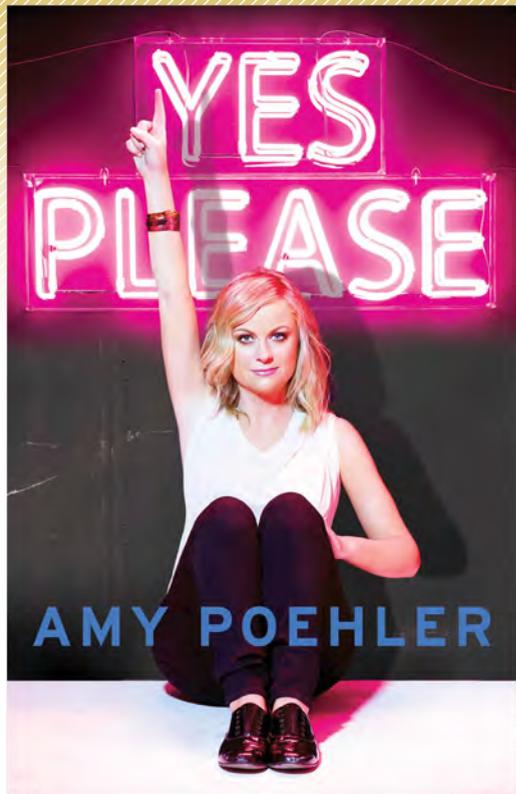
FREE THE CHILDREN

25

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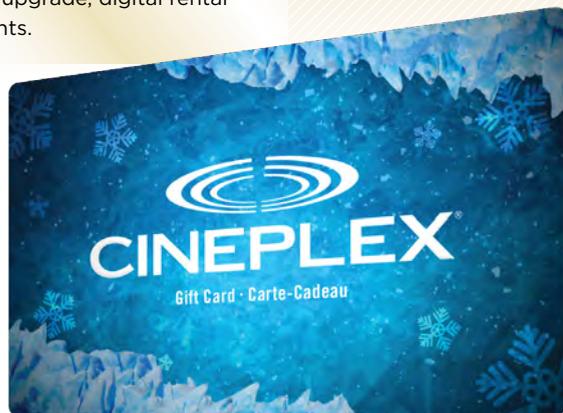
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The celeb read of the season? That would be **Amy Poehler's Yes Please** (\$33, book stores). The funny lady's autobiography takes us from her Boston childhood, to her time at *SNL* and her current gig on *Parks and Recreation*.

Buy a **\$40 Cineplex Gift Card** (in theatres or at Cineplex.com/Holiday) and get \$40 worth of bonus stuff, including free popcorn, ticket upgrade, digital rental and SCENE points.



POP-CULTURE prezzies

It's so meta. Wonder Woman, wearer of wrist cuffs, is herself featured on these gold-plated **Wonder Woman Cuffs** (\$88 each, mizdragonfly.com) from Toronto designer Karine Eyamie. Each one's made from an original, vintage cartoon strip.



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A Merry Christmas, you will have with this adorable **Lightsaber Yoda Tree Topper** (\$80, retrofestive.ca).



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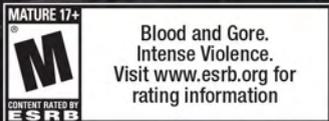


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There are 12 luscious hand creams in the **Big Top Twelve Hand Therapy Musical Tin** (\$60, Crabtree & Evelyn). Plus, they're packaged in a music box that plays the seasonal fave "Sleigh Ride."



BEAUTIFUL gifts

Philosophy's Christmas Cookie Shampoo, Shower Gel & Bubble Bath (\$21, Hudson's Bay Stores) does it all (and comes with a recipe).



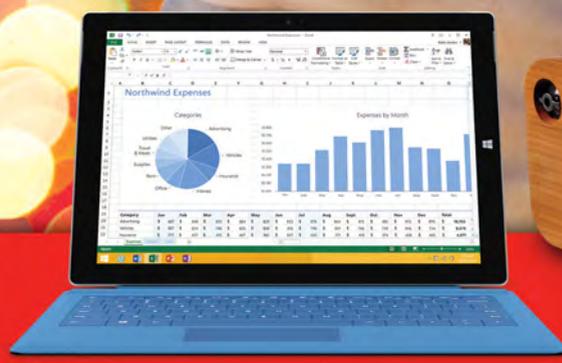
Guess what? There's a mini lip-gloss and mini eye-shadow inside each of these **Quo Cosmetic Crackers** (\$15 for a package of three, Shoppers Drug Mart).

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What's the latest in TV technology? The curve. **Samsung's 55" HU9000 Curved UHD TV** (\$4,200, select electronics retailers) blends a curved screen with UHD (ultra high-def) technology for the ultimate in realism and immersion.



The super-handy **LG Pocket Photo** (\$170, major retailers) is a sleek, portable, mobile printer that works with your cellphone so you can print, edit and share photos anywhere.



TECH THE halls



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TomTom's Golfer (\$250, Future Shop) is a GPS sports watch containing data for 34,000 golf courses around the world. It uses that data to give golfers valuable tips about distances and hazards.

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Point Zero's **Hooded Shiny Jacket** (\$170, pointzero.ca) is wind and water resistant and looks supercool in Cadet Blue.



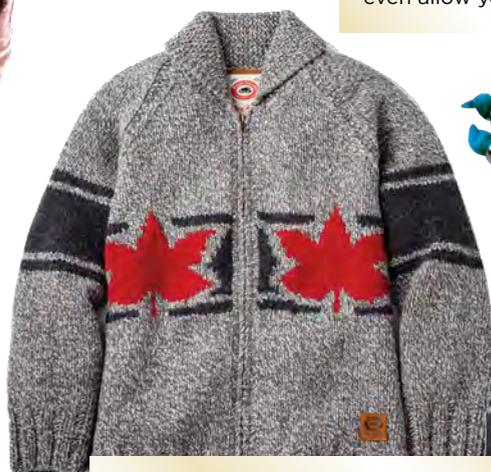
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LOOKING great

We love the whimsy and warmth of **Pajar's Anika Boot** (\$230, pajar.com).



Be My Charm's **Tree of Life Triple Wrap Charm Bracelet** (\$18, etsy.com/shop/bemycharm) is handmade in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Custom orders even allow you pick your band colour.



Iconic Canadian knitting-pattern designers Mary Maxim worked with Roots to come up with a line of curling sweaters, including our fave, the **Mary Maxim Rink Sweater** (\$198, Roots).



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WRESTLING HISTORICAL



Channing Tatum as wrestler
Mark Schultz in *Foxcatcher*

FOXCATCHER
HITS THEATRES NOVEMBER 28TH

WITH RY

Foxcatcher stars **Channing Tatum, Steve Carell** and **Mark Ruffalo** talk about bringing the true story of wrestling, murder and insanity to the big screen ■ BY INGRID RANDOJA

You often hear actors gush about how much fun it was to make a movie, but for *Foxcatcher* stars Steve Carell, Channing Tatum and Mark Ruffalo the experience was profoundly painful. “I think we can comfortably say we were all just very happy when the movie was over,” says Tatum during an interview at the Toronto International Film Festival. “Or not happy, just relieved, just that, ‘God, that’s over.’ For however [the movie] turns out, we survived the film.”

Already lauded as one of the year’s most interesting dramas, director Bennett Miller’s *Foxcatcher* recounts the true story of mentally unstable multimillionaire John du Pont (Carell), who became obsessed with wrestling in the 1980s.

In particular, du Pont believes he can help 1984 Olympic gold medal wrestler Mark Schultz (Tatum) regain his form, so he sets up an elaborate training facility at his 800-acre Foxcatcher estate just outside of Philadelphia. He also brings Dave Schultz (Ruffalo), Mark’s older brother — and one of the top coaches in the country — to the estate to oversee his wrestling program.

However, in 1996, after the death of his mother (Vanessa Redgrave), increased drug consumption and deteriorating mental health, du Pont shoots and kills Dave Schultz.

“We all researched the roles, we found out as much as we could about the people,” says Carell, who is seated next to co-stars Ruffalo and Tatum. “There’s an added responsibility because they’re real people. You don’t want to be glib about a portrayal, you want to take it seriously and do your best to honour them.”

All three give amazing performances. Carell — wearing a prosthetic nose and false teeth — is unnervingly subdued and emotionally stagnant, yet behind his dead eyes lurks menace. Tatum is superb as a hulking man-child who wants to please, and Ruffalo brings an almost maternal love to his role as the big brother determined to protect and guide his younger sibling.

But getting into the minds of these characters took its toll.

“We didn’t go home,” says Ruffalo. “We were going” **CONTINUED ▶**



Brotherly love: *Foxcatcher*'s on-screen brothers Mark (Channing Tatum, left) and Dave (Mark Ruffalo) Schultz

“I just kind of fell in love with the idea of attempting this,” says Tatum. “It was going to be a mountain of a role”

later a lot can happen. He just seemed so clear, and he helped me more clearly understand what the goal was with the film. That was it, and I just kinda fell in love with the idea of attempting this. It was going to be a mountain of a role.”

For Carell, who's added a smattering of purely dramatic parts to his comedic dance card — last year's *The Way Way Back* and the upcoming lesbian civil rights drama *Freeheld* — the opportunity to

▶ from the set to the gym. That was every single day, and the weekend we were at the gym and washing clothes.” Ruffalo turns to Tatum and asks, “Did you get to go home very much?”

“I didn't go home,” he answers. “My wife was pregnant during this and she came to Pittsburgh, was suppose to stay a week, and left after the second day. She was like, ‘Nope, this is not healthy for me to be here, you're in a weird place, I'm just going to go. Call me at least once a night and let me know you're okay.’”

Carell, perhaps playing the film's most demanding role, had the same experience.

“When I talked to my wife on the phone, she'd ask how it went that day and I'd say, ‘It went well,’ and I wouldn't talk about it. I didn't recount the day or talk about anything we did because there was just no energy to do so, and I don't know if she wanted to hear about it either.

“There weren't stories from the set,” he continues, “like we did this great practical joke on Chan, it wasn't like that. It was very still and very sombre and Bennett set that tone.”

Bennett Miller, the acclaimed director of *Capote* and *Moneyball*, actually wanted to make *Foxcatcher* seven or eight years ago and approached Tatum about starring in the film then, but the actor declined. At that point in his career Tatum was known as the guy from *Step Up* and *She's the Man*, but obviously Miller saw something in the young, good-looking actor. It was Tatum who didn't see the fit.

“The first time I read the script, I just didn't understand why you'd want to make the film,” remembers the 34-year-old.

“There's no resolve to any of this...it's way more complicated than that. I just don't think I was anywhere near to understanding the story or character. I think I did a lot of growing in the seven years in between meeting Bennett. Plus, Bennett was really weird.”

“I guarantee you that won't be in any article,” Carell says with a laugh.

“And [Bennett] is still weird,” says Tatum with a smile, “but he was such a different person when I met him. I don't know, seven years

work with Miller was enticing.

“I think the fact that Bennett chose to do [*Foxcatcher*] — he's so selective, he's so comprehensive in how he designs his films — that you have to take that into regard and I did. I thought there's obviously a lot going on here because he's chosen to do it.”

Ingrid Randoja is the deputy editor of Cineplex Magazine.



The real John du Pont



Steve Carell as John du Pont in Foxcatcher

JOHN DU PONT

The real John du Pont, seen top left wearing his Team Foxcatcher warm-up in a 1996 picture, was part of the family that founded the DuPont company as a gunpowder manufacturer in 1802. DuPont is now one of the world's 10 largest chemical companies.



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A REAL HOLLYWOOD HERO



Unbroken director
Angelina Jolie with
her real-life hero, the
late Louis Zamperini



Jack O'Connell (centre)
in *Unbroken*

No, that “Real Hollywood Hero” isn’t **Angelina Jolie**, though she is certainly idolized by millions. It’s that guy to the right, the late Louis Zamperini — an unshakeable spirit, and war hero, who lived just up the street from Jolie in the Hollywood Hills. Here Jolie talks about directing *Unbroken*, Zamperini’s incredible life story ■ BY BOB STRAUSS

The tale of Olympic runner and World War II survivor Louis Zamperini has inspired millions who’ve read his memoirs and Laura Hillenbrand’s 2010 bestselling biography *Unbroken*.

Now Angelina Jolie has directed the highly anticipated movie based on *Unbroken*, which is expected to spread the late hero’s story to millions more.

“He’s somebody who many people know his life, or know her book, but when you sit with him, it really is...” Jolie says during an interview in Los Angeles, searching for the right words to explain the personal impact that Zamperini had on her. The man who died last July at the age of 97 was, coincidentally, her neighbour in Hollywood. “I didn’t know my grandparents and I didn’t grow up with my father [actor Jon Voight], so that was amazing for me as well, really getting to know an older man and getting the wisdom.

“There was so much pride in a hard day’s work, and [a sense of] responsibility, certainly, coming out of the Depression and going into the war,” the actor-turned-filmmaker says of Zamperini’s generation. “So I think it’s not just that he was heroic and he was exceptional, he was of the generation that we must learn as much as we can from in

order to make this next generation strong enough.”

Lovely sentiment, but let’s face it: Louis was quite a guy. Raised in an L.A. suburb by Italian immigrant parents, Zamperini was a track star at Torrance High School, and set distance-running records that earned him a scholarship to the University of Southern California and a spot on the 1936 U.S. Olympic team. He came in eighth in the 5,000-metre race at the Berlin games, but his final lap was so fast that the event’s host, Adolf Hitler, insisted on a personal meeting to congratulate the lad.

Seven years later, Zamperini was on a defective B-24 bomber that fell into the Pacific. He and two other members of the 11-man crew survived the crash, but only Louis and pilot Russell “Phil” Phillips survived the subsequent 47 days at sea on a raft with little food or drinking water (but lots of visiting sharks). Eventually landing in the Marshall Islands, they were sent to various Japanese prison camps, where Zamperini endured horrendous conditions and brutality until the end of the war.

English actor Jack O’Connell (*Starred Up*, *300: Rise of an Empire*) plays Zamperini in Jolie’s film. Irishman Domhnall Gleeson (*Frank*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*) is Phillips and New Englander Finn Wittrock is the third man on the raft, Francis McNamara.

While working on location in Australia, Jolie, whose only previous feature-directing job was the Bosnian War rape drama *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, wondered if she’d signed up for more than she could handle.

“It was daunting in a whole different way,” she explains. “*Blood and Honey* I wrote, it was in a few rooms. There were certain things to tackle, and certainly the politics of it to balance and many, many things like that.

“But getting into *Unbroken*, and suddenly two plane crashes and shark attacks and 47 days at sea and three prison camps

CONTINUED ▶



Jack O'Connell crosses the finish line in *Unbroken*

► and the 1936 Olympics and races.... You wake up in the morning and you think, 'God, there's a way to do that, isn't there?' There's a way to direct races; it isn't just show up at work and cover it this way or that way. This is actually something I have to really understand. I have to put the bombardiers in the plane. I have to understand how they went in formation, who was where, what happened.

"It was just so much more, there were days when I didn't know if we would be able to track it all and accomplish it all," Jolie admits. "We didn't have that much money and we didn't have that much time. So, it was a new scare."

The all but unknown *Unbroken* actors bore great personal burdens too: extreme physical demands and periods of near, if medically supervised, undernourishment. It was no fun — though, as the lads are quick to acknowledge, hardly equal to the suffering the soldiers they portray underwent. Nevertheless, they were pleased to discover that their boss, who also happens to be one of the biggest female movie stars on the planet, was sensitive to what they were going through.

"Thankfully, Angelina had total empathy throughout the whole situation," O'Connell reports in a recent phone interview. "She never claimed that what we were doing was easy or [anything] that she'd ever reckoned with before, so I certainly benefitted by feeling like I was doing it for somebody that I respected."

"Angelina was very certain and brilliant at getting what she wanted," Gleeson adds, also over the phone. "I think she's an amazing woman and a fantastic, fantastic director of actors. And Finn and me and Jack, I have to say, were a pretty strong trio. We helped each other through all the hard times and, I think, got on very well together. It was an amazing work environment; very difficult, but it was amazing."

O'Connell had it especially tough in that the World War II scenes were filmed before those set in the 1930s. He had to train to look like a sportsman before production, waste away, then rapidly get back up to racing speed.

"From scratch, I was working with professionals," O'Connell says. "Because I was going to spend the first part of the job emaciated, I had to get whatever training that was necessary for the Olympics scenes done, then starve. Thankfully, I was prepared by the time we were finished with the emaciation stage, which felt like a mammoth mission in itself but was only half the shoot. It meant that by the time I was on the field again, I hit the ground running, literally. Whatever work I'd put in in terms of my stride — I had to widen my stride on a treadmill before I started — was there."

Keeping everyone going was Zamperini himself, with whom O'Connell bonded on several occasions, and whom Jolie, as she indicated earlier, grew to greatly love.

"Louis was at the foreground of everybody's thinking," notes O'Connell, who says he's still devastated by the man's death. "Now, in hindsight, the experience was very special because it hurt. If it had been a painless production, I think we would all have good reason to be very nervous. But that's not the case." ■

Bob Strauss lives in L.A. where he writes about movies and filmmakers.



Before she started working on *Unbroken*, Angelina Jolie had no idea the film's real-life hero was her neighbour.

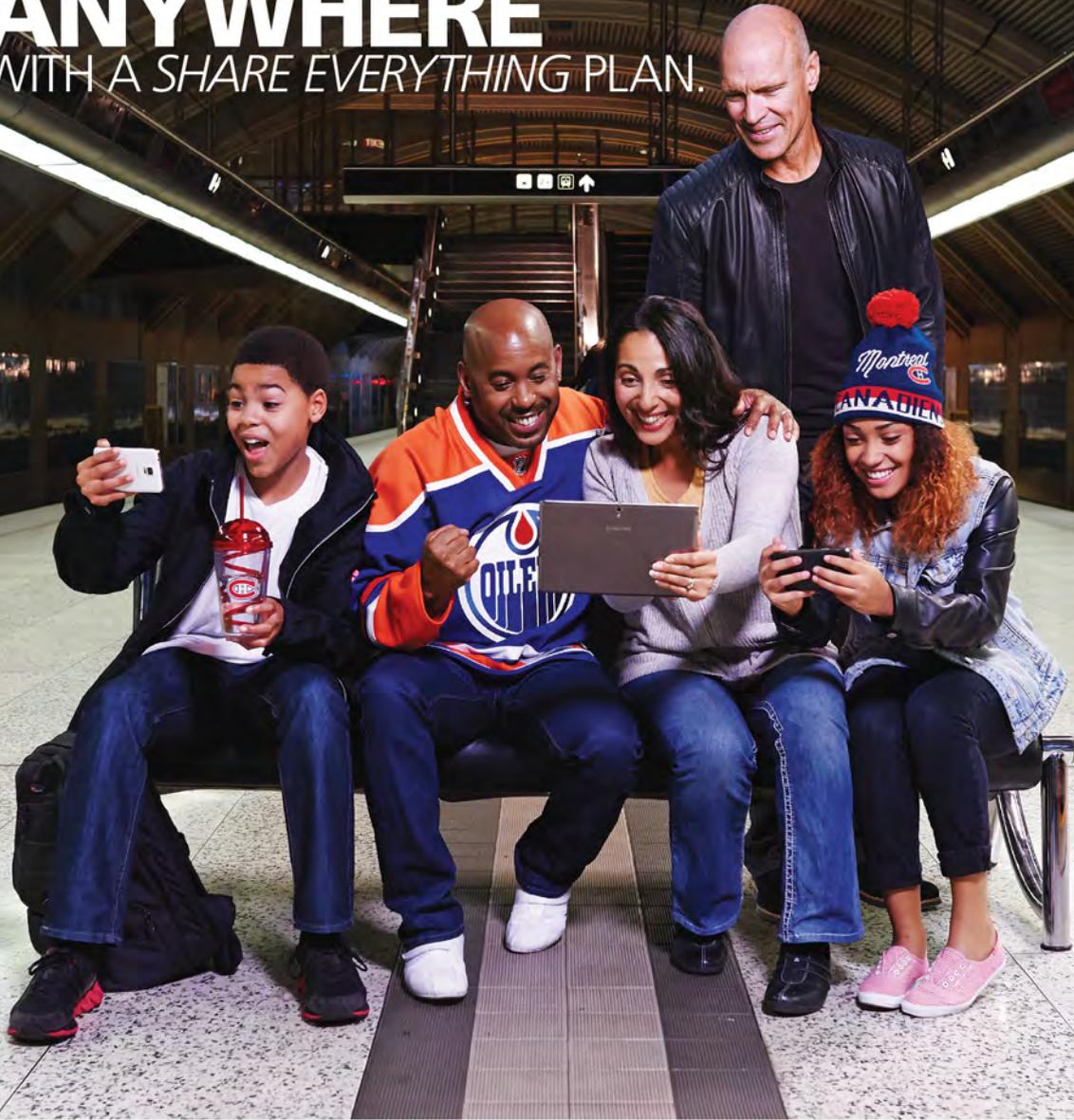
The late Louis Zamperini (he passed away in July at age 97) bought his home in the Hollywood Hills in 1957 with the \$8,000 he earned selling the rights to his life story to Universal. For more than 50 years the studio toyed with the idea of making a Zamperini bio-pic, but interest really picked up with the 2010 release of *Unbroken*, Laura Hillenbrand's biography of the hero.

From his back patio you can see the roof of the sprawling compound owned by Jolie and husband Brad Pitt. During an interview with the *Today* show this past February, Jolie said, "I imagine that for the last 10-something years he's been sitting there, having a coffee in the morning wondering, 'Who's going to make this movie?'"

"And I've been sitting in my room, laying there, thinking, 'What am I suppose to be doing with my life? I want to do something important. I want to connect, I need some help, I need some guidance. Where is it?' And it was right outside my window." —IR

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**Whose Idea
Was This,**

ANYWAY



From left: Diana Bang,
Seth Rogen and James Franco
in *The Interview*

THE INTERVIEW
HITS THEATRES
DECEMBER 25TH

WAY?



Seth Rogen will probably not be responsible for starting World War III. We're pretty sure of that. Honestly. But his political satire ***The Interview*** has already prompted threats from North Korea, and we're guessing the controversy's not over yet ■ BY BOB STRAUSS

You're reading this article because a movie called *The Interview* might come out this month.

If things keep going the way they have been since June, however, it might not.

Don't blame us if that happens. It would be due to international incidents beyond our control.

Seriously. (Sort of.)

The Interview is a goofy comedy co-written, -produced and -directed by Seth Rogen and his Vancouver boyhood pal Evan Goldberg, and shot in their hometown late last year. Rogen plays Aaron Rapoport, producer of a dopey celebrity talk show, *Skylark Tonight*, that is inexplicably a favourite of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un's. When the leader invites host Dave Skylark (James Franco) to interview him in Pyongyang, a CIA agent (Lizzy Caplan) asks Aaron and Dave to do her a little favour while they're there: assassinate the troublesome strongman.

"It's really good, if I say so myself," Rogen said while the film's final touches were being completed last spring. "It's very relevant, it's about North Korea, but our version that's a take on something that's so much in the ether right now. And it's another action comedy, which is really fun. I think people have been waiting a long time to see me do that again. It's really exciting and I'm very, very proud of it."

However, when the real Pyongyang regime got wind of the project soon after that conversation, it responded a little less enthusiastically. Through North Korea's government news agency KCNA, a foreign ministry spokesperson threatened the U.S. with a "resolute and merciless" reaction to what it dubbed an "act of war" — i.e., allowing the silly thing in to be released in theatres.

CONTINUED ►



Dave Skylark (James Franco, left) and Aaron Rapoport (Seth Rogen)

“We’ve kind of made a lot of mistakes over the last five years and, from that, we’ve really learned **what we’re good at and what we’re not good at,**” says Rogen



► “People don’t usually wanna kill me for one of my movies until after they’ve paid 12 bucks for it. Hiyooooo!!!” Rogen tweeted in retaliation.

Americans were as shaken up as they always are when North Korea makes ridiculous, invariably hollow threats. However, the movie’s distributor, Columbia Pictures, may have actually entertained some second thoughts. Perhaps something to do with the fact that Columbia’s owner, Sony Corporation, has its Tokyo headquarters within range of Kim’s missiles?

Whatever the reason, the studio switched *The Interview*’s release date from October to Christmas Day. After what might be interpreted as a cooling-off period, the company did appear to get behind the movie, releasing fake *Skylark Tonight* segments online, having “Dave” host an MTV Video Music Awards special and flooding theatres with posters and trailers.

But then the unthinkable happened. In September, Kim disappeared from public view, and as weeks went by there was increasing speculation that the secretive and paranoid regime was covering up his death or deposing or something.

Ever intrepid, Rogen posted a photo on Twitter of the movie’s Kim (played by L.A. actor Randall Park) and Skylark smoking joints in a strip club to explain what the missing leader was really up to. But it was hardly enough to assuage genuine concern in Hollywood that by the time *The Interview* came out, the film would be irrelevant — exactly the opposite of what its creator wanted.

That crisis was averted when Kim was seen visiting a housing development in mid-October. Of course, Rogen put the best spin on the situation in an interview with Britain’s Press Association claiming it was all part of the film’s marketing plan.

“It is amazing,” Rogen told them. “It’s almost as if we gave [Kim] a list of, ‘Here’s what you can do that would help promote our film.’ And



From left: Franco, director Evan Goldberg and Rogen on set

he’s doing pretty much all of it.”

You can put the best comedic face on it, but with the unpredictability that comes with anything concerning North Korea, who knows what else might happen between now and December 25th, when the film is set to come out?

In that conversation back before all the geopolitical hoo-hah erupted, Rogen admitted that few of his films — which recently include the well-received *This is the End* and *Neighbors* — have gone off without a hitch.

“We’ve kind of made a lot of mistakes over the last five years and, from that, we’ve really learned what we’re good at and what we’re not good at and what we do and don’t enjoy doing,” the funnyman said. “I hope all of that lends itself to making better movies.”

That don’t start a war, he might have added. ☐

Bob Strauss lives in L.A. where he writes about movies and filmmakers.

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Jamie Foxx and Quvenzhané Wallis (centre) lead *Annie*'s cast in a musical parade



Not the same old SONG AN

With a little help from **Jamie Foxx**, Jay Z and 11-year-old wunderkind Quvenzhané Wallis this month's *Annie* re-do promises to be a toe-tapping good time. Here Foxx talks about bringing the old fave out of mothballs and making it relevant for a new generation ■ BY COLIN COVERT

The way Jamie Foxx sees it; it doesn't matter whether he's starring in a blood-soaked thriller or a kid-friendly flick. A promising movie, whatever the genre, is appealing both to audiences and to Foxx himself.

No surprise then that he just repeated his role as a murder consultant in the raunchy comedy *Horrible Bosses 2*, plays a kind-spirited tycoon in this month's family friendly reimagining of *Annie*, and is slated to star in an upcoming bio-pic about complicated boxing legend Mike Tyson.

"The world now opens it up for you to play in all these different areas, these different arenas," he says over the phone from San Francisco. In other words, having success in one category of film isn't the sort of barrier to variety that it used to be. "Look at Robert Downey Jr., Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale. These guys are all super-powered actors. They can do what they do in dramas, and then have fun with it."

This month's re-do of the musical *Annie* promises to be one of the fun ones.



Quvenzhané Wallis (history's youngest Oscar candidate for her debut in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*) has the titular role of the plucky foster child with a bright, sun-will-come-out-tomorrow outlook. Cameron Diaz hams it up as the film's horrid foster-home matron Miss Hannigan. Foxx is Annie's new acquaintance Will Stacks, a financier and New York mayoral candidate whose go-getter aims conceal a softy's heart. When Will discovers that his chance encounter with Annie gives him a campaign edge, he builds a father-daughter dynamic with the girl that triggers street-wide song-and-dance celebrations.

But this *Annie* update needed some help from an unlikely source — hip-hop mogul Jay Z.

While the 1924 comic strip had already been turned into a 1977 Broadway smash, a 1982 film and 1999 TV movie, Foxx explains,

"Nobody had gotten the rights to *Annie* for years."

Then Jay Z's hit remake of the musical's signature song, "It's the Hard Knock Life," "sort of put a taste in your mouth of what *Annie* could be. Without thinking of the movie you look at Jay Z, a hip-hop star from the 'hood, and he takes a song that he's performing, and there's a hundred thousand people that are jumping and listening. And they're going, 'Wow, what's going on here?'"

With film legend Will Smith as his producing partner, Jay Z revived the dead property and pulled in an all-star cast, including one of Foxx's favourite young actors as the juvenile lead.

"They said, 'Who's got that passion for this part as a young actress?' And you see Quvenzhané Wallis and what she did in *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and *12 Years a Slave*. When they told me CONTINUED ▶

ANNIE
HITS THEATRES
DECEMBER 19TH



Foxx has a ball with young star Wallis

Terrell, Texas, with an irresistible urge to capture everyone's attention. He began playing piano at age five when grandma saw it was a sure way for him to earn his money. In school he was a celebrated jokester, getting time at the end of class to repeat the material he learned watching TV the night before.

"When you're a kid and you're growing up, doing your acting in front of a mirror, trying out your character, whoever it is, it's basically the same muscle," Foxx says.

He was determined to build on his eclectic skill set. A major music scholarship drew him to college in San Diego, but he soon left to hit the comedy-club circuit in Los Angeles, where he worked seven nights a week. It was there he learned he could move in whichever direction the audience wanted. "With me being a stand-up comedian, I've always been on stage by myself, creating the character or breaking the fourth wall."

In the early 1990s Foxx stepped into prime time as part of Keenen Ivory Wayans' multicultural sketch-com show *In Living Color*. He spent years stepping away from comedy in dramatic supporting roles, like the football star in the 1999 gridiron drama *Any Given Sunday*, a role he won partly because he'd

▶ she is going to be Annie I said, 'Wow. That is very brilliant.' She's a weighty actor."

Jay Z also contributed original songs alongside his adaptations of the show's musical classics. "If this is any indication of what *Annie* could be, this movie is really going to make its own mark, you know what I mean?" says Foxx.

He does, however, admit that adding a new chapter to a property that's so familiar to so many takes a gentle hand. It's something he had to keep in mind while making both *Annie* and his other big 2014 family pic, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, in which he played supervillain Electro.

"It's always a challenge when you come into a franchise. You want to respect it and bring as much appreciation and flavour of its character as you can," he says. Not that he'd ever let fear of messing up hold him back. "It's like what I tell all the kids, 'Just remember: What's on the other side of fear? Nothing!' You do anything you want to do. God put you here for a reason."

Foxx was on his way to becoming a Renaissance man long before he was done being a kid.

Adopted from his distant mother by his loving, discipline-minded grandmother before his first birthday, Foxx grew up in

been a high school quarterback.

Subsequent films, like the 2004 thriller *Collateral*, and the Ray Charles musical biography *Ray* — for which he parlayed his acting and piano-playing skills into a Best Actor Oscar — proved Foxx had earned the right to be taken seriously as a major talent. It was worth the years of struggle.

"It's important to have things to overcome," he says. "You need to climb that mountain." His career, he says, is a combination of "luck and blessings and all of that put together. What you have to do is have your talent sharpened and then hope there's a little luck hidden there." □

Colin Covert is film journalist based in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



Willow Smith

ALMOST ANNIE

When this *Annie* update was first announced back in 2011, singer Willow Smith was attached as the titular orphan. Earlier this year, Willow, now 13, told *The Guardian* that she pulled out because, "To be honest, something inside me was just, like, 'Don't,'" adding, "I'm very connected with my intuition." Her mom and dad, Jada Pinkett Smith and Will Smith, remained on as producers. —MW

PHOTO BY ROGER KISBY/GETTY

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**THE HOBBIT:
THE BATTLE OF
THE FIVE ARMIES**
HITS THEATRES
DECEMBER 17TH

Martin Freeman as
Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit:
The Battle of the Five Armies*

This is THE END

Spending time in Middle-earth has become a holiday tradition. But you're about to make your last trip into Peter Jackson's fantasy world as *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies* brings the current trilogy to a rousing end. Here we talk to **Martin Freeman** about playing Bilbo Baggins and how it has — and hasn't — changed his life

■ BY ASHLEY JUDE COLLIE

The first thing you notice about English actor Martin Freeman is how much he's unlike Bilbo Baggins, his character in the *Hobbit* movies. When we first encountered Bilbo in 2012's *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, he was an idle, upper-middle class bachelor,

comfortably disengaged from the chaos coming to Middle-earth and utterly disinterested in joining Gandalf and the thirteen dwarves on their quest to reclaim the Lonely Mountain from the dragon Smaug.

Freeman, on the other hand, would probably have jumped at Gandalf's request. The 43-year-old actor is always working. This year alone, the charming, ever-composed Englishman has had principal roles on two television shows — *Sherlock* and *Fargo* — and on stage playing villainous King Richard in a London production of *Richard III*, which he describes as his "first professional Shakespeare."

He managed to juggle his overlapping work commitments in 2011 to get onboard director Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* bandwagon, and again plays Bilbo in this month's *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*, the final part of the franchise that has already earned more than \$2-billion worldwide.

CONTINUED ►

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STEP INTO ANOTHER WORLD



“There hasn’t been as much craziness as you may think,” says Freeman. “People, **most often young boys, will shout out ‘Bilbo!’**”

► Ever quick with the self-deprecating humour, in a phone interview from London, Freeman describes his biggest challenge in playing Bilbo as “overcoming my lack of any talent.” Right.

Jackson’s adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien’s 1937 novel is, of course, told from the older Bilbo’s point of view, looking back on his remarkable adventures. Consequently, the role required Freeman to evolve from idler Bilbo to the active hero who saves the day in several terrifying situations. Quite a challenge, but Jackson knew Freeman could do it, in fact he delayed filming on the first movie because he saw the actor as “perfect” for the role.

Freeman is quick to point out that Jackson delivers the goods too. “He carries all this stuff, and he does have the shoulders of a Titan. And then we all just do our best,” he says deferentially.

Those who’ve read Tolkien’s novel know this final film will involve, as Jackson said at this year’s Comic-Con, a lot of “sadness and tragedy.” That includes the deaths of some main characters as the film progresses to the darker tone of *The Lord of the Rings*. But since this trilogy is recalled from Bilbo’s perspective, we sense Freeman’s character will return to his comfortable life after his grand adventures.

While the role has made Freeman an international star, he admits he is rarely swarmed by *Hobbit* fans, quipping, “I still have conversations with people who don’t have a clue who I am, which is fine for me, if you just want to eat quietly. *Hobbit* people have been very restrained, and there hasn’t been as much craziness as you may think. People, most often young boys, will shout out ‘Bilbo!’ Actually, there’s been more *Sherlock* craziness.”



Luke Evans (left) and Orlando Bloom in *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*

DID YOU KNOW?

While Elf prince Legolas (Orlando Bloom) plays a crucial role fighting orcs in the *Hobbit* films, the character does not appear in author J.R.R. Tolkien’s novel. Legolas joins Galadriel (Cate Blanchett), Saruman (Christopher Lee) and Frodo (Elijah Wood) among the *LotR* characters Peter Jackson inserted into the *Hobbit* pics. —JR

Smaug attacks Lake-town



Freeman, the person, is actually very Sherlockian in his keen sense of awareness, even though he plays Holmes' second-fiddle sidekick, Watson, on the BBC show that has garnered a rabid following around the globe. *Sherlock's* co-creator Steve Moffat says the actor's strength is that he is "very responsive to the performances around him," adding that his alchemy with Benedict Cumberbatch is the cornerstone of the show.

That "responsiveness" also serves Freeman well playing opposite the plethora of live-action characters peopling Middle-earth. But with the state-of-the-art technology that Jackson employs in the *Hobbit* films, it's also key to working with CGI characters like the dragon Smaug, who's voiced by Freeman's *Sherlock* co-star Cumberbatch, and with Gollum who was brought to such terrifying life by Andy Serkis in a motion-capture suit for the first *Hobbit* movie.

Freeman recalls acting opposite Serkis. "It really was like a totally unencumbered stage play," he says. "I didn't have to look past the fact that Andy was going to be computer generated. He was totally present, even though he was in a motion-capture suit. It was like a very pure form of acting, and there was no point at any time that I wasn't able to look 'Gollum' in the eye." Not only did Serkis play the evil, but poetic, Gollum in the first *Hobbit* film, he also acted as second-unit director for Jackson on all three movies.

The Hobbit trilogy was shot in New Zealand in two main blocks — first from mid-2011 to 2012 when the bulk of the scenes were committed to film, and then for another 10 weeks in the spring of 2013 when additional scenes for the final two films were shot. And Freeman admits it took some time to "empathize with the role of a hobbit again" when he first returned.

But any challenges were well worth the effort. Freeman says playing Bilbo has "changed the game" for him. "It was my one chance to do something that, at one time or another, nearly everybody was going to see."

And, still, the chameleon-like actor may be sitting right next to you, unobtrusively having a quiet meal. ☐

Ashley Jude Collie is a Canadian writer living and working in Los Angeles.



Ian McKellen as Gandalf

WHERE WE LEFT OFF

Before the battles begin in this month's *Hobbit* finale, let's take a moment to set the stage.

The last *Hobbit* film, *The Desolation of Smaug*, came to a rousing — and very unnerving — end as giant dragon Smaug escaped from the attacking dwarves inside Erebor and flapped off to wreak havoc on the humans of Lake-town while Bilbo looked on, proclaiming, "What have we done?"

Meanwhile, Gandalf (Ian McKellen) was imprisoned in the ruins of Dol Guldur, where he could only watch as one-armed Orc chieftan Azog marched to Erebor with his army. Gandalf's perilous predicament was not actually included in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Hobbit* book, but rather referred to in the massive appendices Tolkien attached to the end of *The Lord of the Rings*. —IR

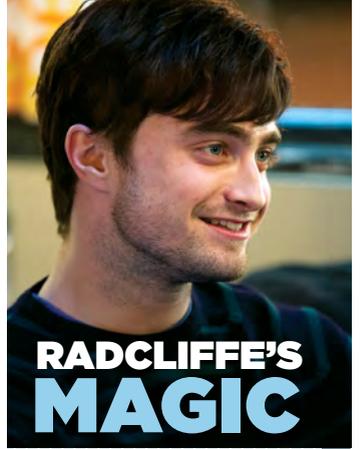
CASTING CALL

BY INGRID RANDOJA



TARANTINO LIKES LEIGH

Michelle Williams, Robin Wright and Demi Moore were reportedly vying for the part, but it's **Jennifer Jason Leigh** who landed the coveted female role of Daisy Domergue in director **Quentin Tarantino's** *Hateful Eight*. The Western sees eight people, including convicted murderer Daisy, a bounty hunter (**Samuel L. Jackson**) and a confederate general (**Bruce Dern**), turn on one another while snowbound in a remote saloon. Production gets underway early next year.



RADCLIFFE'S MAGIC

Harry Potter star **Daniel Radcliffe** will dabble in magic again; he's been cast in the sequel to *Now You See Me*. Radcliffe plays the son of insurance magnate Arthur Tressler (**Michael Caine**), who sponsored the four thieving magicians in the first film. **Jesse Eisenberg, Mark Ruffalo, Isla Fisher** and **Woody Harrelson** all return for the follow-up that's going with the wordy title *Now You See Me: Now You Don't*.



BARDEM EYES PIRATE ROLE

Javier Bardem is circling the villainous role of ghost pirate Captain Brand in the fifth *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie, *Dead Man Tell No Tales*. The actor perfected his bad side in *No Country for Old Men* and *Skyfall*, so if anyone can help revive the tired franchise it's Bardem. **Johnny Depp** and **Geoffrey Rush** are back as leads, with the Norwegian directing team of **Espen Sandberg** and **Joachim Rønning** (*Kon-Tiki*) behind the camera.



ARNETT BACK AS BATMAN

Will Arnett's hugely entertaining turn as a sarcastic Batman was a highlight of this past summer's *The LEGO Movie*. Therefore it's no surprise that the blocky Batman is getting his own spin-off movie, *Batman LEGO*. **Chris McKay**, who served as animation supervisor on *The LEGO Movie*, is directing the project. It should hit screens sometime in 2017.



WHAT'S GOING ON WITH...

INFERNO

Director **Ron Howard** and star **Tom Hanks** are reuniting for *Inferno*, their third big-screen adaptation of a **Dan Brown** bestseller after *The Da Vinci Code* (2006) and *Angels & Demons* (2009). Shooting begins this coming April in Italy as fictional Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon (Hanks) deals with a case of amnesia while trying to stop a madman from enacting the terrors found in Dante's *Inferno*.



FRESH FACE

MORGAN GRIFFIN

You won't find many women in director **Angelina Jolie**'s World War II drama *Unbroken*, but for the crucial role of Cynthia Applewhite, the wife of Louis Zamperini (**Jack O'Connell**), Jolie cast up-and-coming Aussie actor **Morgan Griffin**. The 22-year-old has worked almost exclusively in Australia, but is garnering attention in Hollywood and will be seen in the disaster pic *San Andreas* opposite **Dwayne Johnson** next summer.



STREEP HITS WRONG NOTES

Meryl Streep is eyeing the role of Florence Foster Jenkins in a film to be directed by **Stephen Frears**. Jenkins was an amateur American opera singer who funded her own career between 1912-1944. She was a horrible singer who believed she was terrific, and her undying belief in her talent led to sell-out concerts in front of amused audiences. **Hugh Grant** is in the running for the role of Jenkins' manager.

ALSO IN THE WORKS

► **Dave Bautista** is set to batter and bruise **Daniel Craig** as *James Bond 24*'s big baddie. ► Listen for **Alec Baldwin** as a fast-talking infant with a nose for business in the animated comedy *Baby Boss*. ► **Lena Dunham** plans to direct the medieval coming-of-age book *Catherine, Called Birdy*. ► **Dwayne Johnson** is circling the big-screen version of the cheesy TV series *Baywatch*.



**THE
ORIGIN
OF
Life**

We can thank an unconventional Christmas card for giving us the beloved Christmas film *It's a Wonderful Life*.

In December 1943, author Philip Van Doren Stern sent 200 copies of a short story, bundled to look like a Christmas card, to friends and family. His 4,000-word story, titled *The Greatest Gift*, featured a despondent man named George who wishes he had never been born. But when granted that wish he sees that his life has made a huge impact on those around him.

A producer at RKO Pictures got hold of the card and told director Frank Capra he simply had to make a film version of the tale, which he did in 1946 starring a perfectly cast Jimmy Stewart as George.

In his autobiography, *The Name Above the Title*, Capra says his purpose was to make "a film that said to the downtrodden, the pushed-around, the pauper, 'Heads up, fella. No man is poor who has one friend.'"

—INGRID RANDOJA

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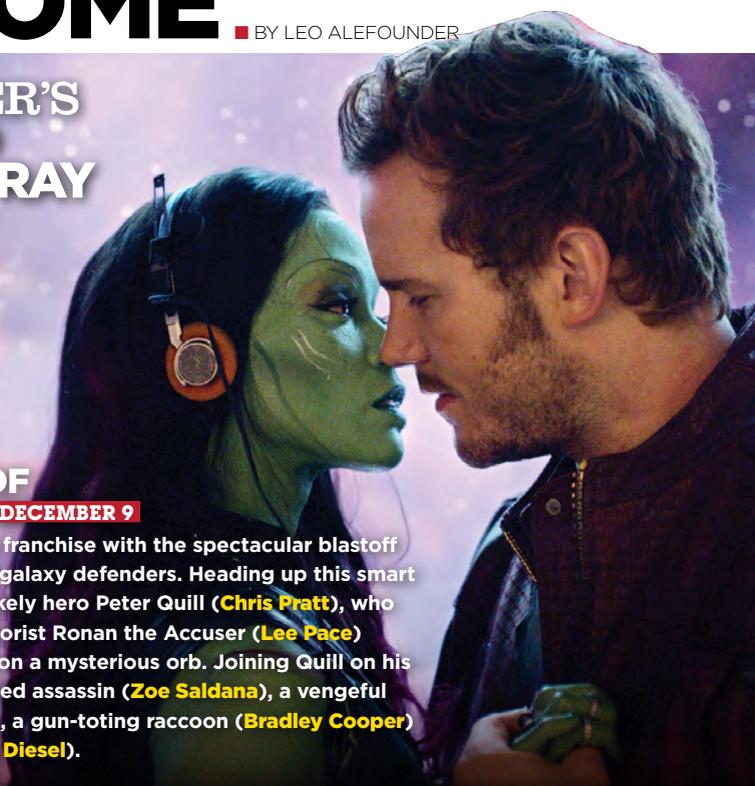
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Marvel secures another franchise with the spectacular blastoff of their ragtag team of galaxy defenders. Heading up this smart space adventure is unlikely hero Peter Quill (**Chris Pratt**), who must stop evil Kree terrorist Ronan the Accuser (**Lee Pace**) from getting his hands on a mysterious orb. Joining Quill on his quest are a green-skinned assassin (**Zoe Saldana**), a vengeful convict (**Dave Bautista**), a gun-toting raccoon (**Bradley Cooper**) and a walking tree (**Vin Diesel**).



DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

DECEMBER 2

As Caesar (**Andy Serkis**) and the apes evolve, and thrive, in the secluded forest, humankind is being wiped out by a pandemic. Now a band of survivors looking to restore civilization is about to shatter the simians' peaceful existence.



THE HUNDRED-FOOT JOURNEY

DECEMBER 2

A hoity-toity French chef (**Helen Mirren**) learns some valuable lessons in cuisine and culture from a Mumbai family when they relocate to the south of France and open an Indian eatery across the street from her Michelin-starred restaurant.



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

DECEMBER 16

The 1980s comic book crime-busters get a **Michael Bay**-produced reboot in which the mutated foursome teams up with TV reporter April O'Neil (**Megan Fox**) to prevent the villainous Foot Clan from wreaking havoc on New York.

Something Special

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS: 50TH ANNIVERSARY DELUXE EDITION

DECEMBER 2



The beloved holiday favourite is remastered with improved picture and audio. As Christmas approaches, Charlie Brown struggles to get into the festive spirit. But with the help of his friends and a tiny tree, he starts to remember what Christmas is all about. Also includes the 1992 animated TV special *It's Christmastime Again, Charlie Brown*.

Games

Why We Love...



THE CREW

DECEMBER 2

PS4, XBOX ONE, XBOX 360, PC

This Ubisoft racing game emphasizes the social aspect of driving. While single players can still experience the thrill of riding across a stunning, open-world U.S. on their own, the real fun is in the multiplayer route, which allows a maximum of eight drivers to compete.

MORE MOVIES ▶ AS ABOVE, SO BELOW (DECEMBER 2) ▶ FRANK (DECEMBER 9)

▶ DOLPHIN TALE 2 (DECEMBER 9) ▶ MAGIC IN THE MOONLIGHT (DECEMBER 16)

▶ THE MAZE RUNNER (DECEMBER 16) ▶ THIS IS WHERE I LEAVE YOU (DECEMBER 16)

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FINALLY...



HAPPY 50th RUDOLPH, FROM YOUR FELLOW CANUCKS!

It's been 50 years since a plucky little reindeer with an inferiority complex hoofed his way into turkey-scented homes and became an American classic. But did you know NBC's *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* was voiced almost entirely by Canadians? After the stop-motion animation was created in Japan, the voice track was recorded in Toronto with local actors Billie Mae Richards (yep, a woman) as Rudolph, Paul Soles as Hermei, Larry D. Mann as Yukon Cornelius, Stan Francis as Santa and Janis Orenstein as Clarice. Actor/singer Burl Ives, who lent his melodious pipes to Sam the Snowman, was the only American to snag a prominent role in the special, which first aired on December 6th, 1964. —MW

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