

Movie Titles that begin with "K"

The Karate Kid (2010) * Kate and Leopold * Keeping The Faith * Kicking & Screaming * Kid Poker * The Kid Stays in the Picture * The Kids Are All Right (2010&2020) * Kill Bill Vol 1 * Kill Bill Vol 2 * Kill The Irishman * Kill The Messenger * Kill Your Darlings * Killer Joe * Killing Me Softly * Killing Them Softly * Kimi * The Kindergarten Teacher * The Kindness of Strangers * King Arthur * King Kong * King Richard * The Kingdom * The King's Speech (2010 & 2020) * Kingsman: The Secret Service * The Kings of Summer * Kinky Boots * Kinsey * Kiss, Kiss, Bang Bang * Kissing Jessica Stein * The Kite Runner * Kit Kitteredge: An American Girl * Knight and Day * Knives Out * Knocked Up * K-Pax * Kung Fu Panda

THE KARATE KID: As was the original 1984 *Karate Kid*, the 2010 version is both predictable and satisfying. We must be genetically programmed to root for the underdog against the bullies. And the camera seems to love twelve-year-old Jaden Smith, who plays the lead, as much as it does his famous father, Will Smith (one of the producers), or his beautiful and talented mother, Jada Pinkett Smith. Screen presence seems to run in the family. Adding significantly to the charm of this film is Jackie Chan who brings humor, martial arts skill, and star power to his role. This is a teenage *Rocky*, set in China. It has a running time of 141 minutes compared to 126 minutes in the original and I think a little judicious cutting could have actually improved this updated version. Purists may argue that the 2010 version of *The Karate Kid* would be more accurately named *The Kung Fu Kid*, but I'm willing to forgive that technicality. If you remember the original, you will recognize all the highs and lows and be properly incensed in the right places. Many reviewers will not be charmed by this remake, but Barbara and I both enjoyed the film enough to give it a favorable grade. **GRADE B**

KATE AND LEOPOLD: This movie is a romantic fairy tale about true love and time travel. It has most of the typical fairy tale cliches, including a Duke on a white horse coming to the aid of a fair damsel. The damsel is Meg Ryan as Kate McKay who spends her days as a market researcher for an advertising agency and her nights wondering why she is "not good with men." The hero is Hugh Jackman as Leopold, a man who plunges off the Brooklyn Bridge in 1876 and wakes up in today's New York City. Some of the best parts of the film are Leopold's amazement at modern life and technology. Naturally, the damsel and the hero fall in love, helped along the way by Kate's brother, Charlie (Breckin Meyer), and her ex-boyfriend, Stuart (Lieve Schreiber). Meyer, who is the star of a lame sitcom, is quite funny here. Of course, Meg is her usual adorable self, complete with her signature "I'm-too-cool-to-comb-my-hair" hairstyle and Jackman is the hunkiest hero to grace the screen in a long time. The New York Times critic called him a "perfect a specimen of romance-novel dreaminess." I heartily concur. Many critics, like Michael Wilmington of the Chicago Tribune, find the movie "oppressively cute," and "suffocatingly whimsical," but I think they just don't "get" fairy tales. Of course they are cute and whimsical. They're supposed to be. And this one also has a better than average script going for it. We enjoyed it enough to give it a **GRADE B.**

KEEPING THE FAITH: There are no stock characters in this movie: Everyone is unique, real, and interesting. The writer, Stuart Blumberg did an excellent job of weaving comedy, romance and religion together into a satisfying whole. Edward Norton, who was so scary in American History X, shows a real flare for lighthearted comedy. What's more, he is also a capable director. Of course, Ben Stiller is always funny, and Jenna Elfman proves she is not merely a comedienne, but also a fine actress. She is perfect in the role of Anna, the childhood friend of Jake (Stiller) and Brian (Norton), who steps back into their lives and turns everything upside down. Jake, the rabbi, and Brian, the priest, are both passionate about their calling-they are defined by what they do. When both of the men fall in love with Anna their feelings and their faith collide. The result is both funny and moving. Anne Bancroft is fun as Jake's mother, Eli Wallach is delightful as the senior Rabbi in Jake's synagogue, and Milos Forman is wonderful as Father Havel, the senior priest in Brian's parish. The film as shot in New York and the city never looked better. **GRADE: B+/A-**

KICKING & SCREAMING: Before reading this review you must first understand that both Barbara and I like the acting of Will Ferrell. That and the appearance of Mike Ditka, one of our favorite coaches, was our motivation for seeing a film we might otherwise have skipped. The film does not achieve the excellence of *Elf*, but is an entertaining couple of hours with a family film that will give you laughs, albeit no surprises. As you might guess, Mike Ditka plays himself very well. Anyone who has observed parents coaching their kids in competitive sports, knows they can lose any semblance of rationality. I have to agree with Roger Ebert who hopes the film will inspire kids to overthrow their coaches and take over their own sports. **GRADE B-**

KIDPOKER: (2015 TV Movie) This made for TV feature-length documentary is about Daniel Negreanu, a legend in the world of poker. It was recently purchased by Netflix and released for viewers in the UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Daniel Negreanu (/ni'grɑ:nou/) is a Canadian professional poker player who has won six World Series of Poker (WSOP) bracelets and two World Poker Tour (WPT) championship titles. The independent poker ranking service Global Poker Index (GPI) has recognized Negreanu as the best poker player of the past decade. Clearly and understandably anyone uninterested in poker will not be motivated to seek this film out. Through interviews with friends, family, and Kid Poker himself, the movie does a fantastic job of taking viewers on a revealing personal journey, beginning with Negreanu's childhood in Canada, through his teen years, and then his emergence in the high stakes poker scene in Las Vegas when he became, at 23, the youngest player to win a World Series of Poker bracelet. The story is inspirational, emotionally charged, and entertaining. It gives viewers insight into where poker's greatest ambassador gets his passion for the game, and for life. Daniel truly deserves his recent induction into the Poker Hall of Fame. **GRADE: A must see for anyone who loves poker.**

THE KID STAYS IN THE PICTURE: We want to thank my sister, Mary, for recommending this brilliant documentary on the life of dynamo producer, Robert Evans. Evans was only 32 when he became head of production at Paramount. The boy wonder took the studio from last to first in annual ticket sales in the late 1960s and '70s with box office hits that include *Love Story*, *The Godfather*, *Chinatown*, *Rosemary's Baby*, and *Urban Cowboy*. Along the way, he married Ali McGraw, the star of *Love Story*. Then, in the 1980s, his career and reputation plummeted because of a drug conviction and a murder case. He was only tangentially involved in the case, which came to be known as "The Cotton Club Murder," but the press so linked his name with the killing that he was forever identified with it. When this documentary was shown at the Sundance Film Festival, someone in the audience asked Evans, "If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?" "The second half," he said. Brett Morgen and Nanette Burstein based the

documentary on Evan's best-selling book of the same name. The filmmakers said that the film "needs to be a roller-coaster ride for the audience, because that's what his life was, and still is to this day." Through creative use of still pictures and old film footage, Morgen and Burstein have, indeed, taken us on a riveting ride. Evans himself narrates the film and Roger Ebert said that he "sounds like a man describing an accident he barely survived." Be sure to stay for the credits, because you will see a very funny 1976 film clip of Dustin Hoffman, impersonating Evans. (Hoffman used the producer's trademark self-absorbed rambling mumble for his character in *Wag the Dog*.) Here's what Evans has to say about the film: "It's a lot more fun looking at it than living it." Anyone who has any interest in how films get made will have great fun watching *The Kid Stays In The Picture*. **GRADE A** (Note: Evans initially said he wouldn't do the voice-over for the film--that the directors could use the audio tape he made of his book. However, one week before the film was due to be shown at Sundance, Evans relented, and did all the voice-over work in that week before it was premiered at the film festival.)

THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT: This is a movie about marriage and family; not a traditional family perhaps, but one that is very real and funny and touching. The parenting struggles and the domestic tensions of middle-aged life are no different for Nic (Annette Bening) and Jules (Julianne Moore) than they are for any other couple. Nic is a physician and Jules has never quite found a career. She has been the stay-at-home mom for most of the marriage. Their two kids, Joni (Mia Wasikowska), 18 and on her way to college, and 15-year-old Laser (Josh Hutcherson) are well adjusted, although Laser's moms don't care much for his best friend. Into this mix comes Paul (Mark Ruffalo) who was the sperm donor for both of the kids and seems anxious to form a relationship with the whole family. The film is a marvelous antidote to an overdose of mindless summer action films and the critics have greeted it with open arms. As did we. We cannot say enough about the wonderful ensemble acting. What a joy to see Benning on screen: so believable and likeable as Nic, and Moore and Ruffalo are equally terrific. We were blown away by Wasikowska a couple of years ago in TV's *In Treatment* and she hasn't disappointed us since. Hutcherson is an actor to watch. He has appeared in 2007's *Bridge to Terabithia* and 2008's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and has two movies coming out soon. Director Lisa Cholodenko has hit every note perfectly. Watching this family maneuver their way through a summer is a lovely way to spend a couple of hours. **GRADE A-**

THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT: 2010/2020 (Recorded from HBO) We saw this movie first in 2010, and we recorded it from HBO in 2020. We thoroughly enjoyed it the second time around. It was perfectly cast with actors we have appreciated in all their movies. I don't think I can improve on my original review except to say that, at the second look, we would give it an unqualified A. (I think we were into qualifying our As back then, but now when we really like a movie, we give it an A without the minus.) Here's my review: (See Review above) **GRADE A**

KILL BILL: We decided that we wanted to see *Kill Bill, Volume 2*, so we rented a DVD of *Volume 1*. We were surprised how much we liked the film. Yes, it's almost non-stop violence, but because the violence is done in a cartoon fashion it's actually amusing and not all that horrific. Tarantino creatively uses animation to tell us how O-Ren Ishi (Luch Liu) became the most notorious assassin in Japan. Uma Thurman is terrific and her confrontation with O-Ren Ishi is quite something. Roger Ebert said, *The movie is not about anything at all except the skill and humor of its making*. And then he added, . . . *it's kind of brilliant*. We agree. **THUMBS UP**

KILL BILL VOL. 2: Quentin Tarantino has created the quintessential revenge movie in *Kill Bill Vol.1* and *Vol. 2*. While it's not necessary to see *Vol 1* first in order to enjoy *Vol 2*, we're glad we did. The credits at the end of *Vol 2* cover scenes from both films, so they may be confusing to someone who never saw *Vol 1*. In this volume, The Bride (Uma Thurman) continues to get her revenge on the people who killed everyone at her wedding rehearsal. These are all people who needed killing, so the revenge scenes are quite satisfying. The final scene, when The Bride confronts Bill is stunning for both the surprise it contains and the way in which it is executed. Michael Madsen and Daryl Hannah die splendidly, and David Carradine is terrific as Bill. **GRADE B+**

KILL THE IRISHMAN: The legendary Cleveland gangster Danny Green, a sort of mobster-of-the-people, died in a parking lot when a bomb exploded in a car parked next to his. Green went against the Cleveland mafia and they were determined to kill the Irishman. He had narrowly escaped death at their hands on four previous occasions. The movie, based on Green's life, opens with the first failed attempt. Picking himself up after jumping out of his car at the last minute, Green shouts, "Is that all you got?" It's a good opening scene and sets the tone for the movie. The Irish actor Ray Stevenson (so good in TV's *Rome*) is believable as the man who, according to legend, had the biggest balls in all of Cleveland. The movie is based on the true story of the gang war that erupted in the early seventies—a war that Green's death was instrumental in eventually ending. Organized crime never regained their grip on the city. Vincent D'Onofrio appears as John Nardi, a teamster official who sided with Green. Paul Sorvino appears as New York mob boss Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno, and Christopher Walken plays racketeer Shondor Birns. A surprisingly hefty Val Kilmer plays a Cleveland detective who had been Green's childhood friend. There is a lot of killing in this one, lots of cars and buildings are blown up, and Green was, it is clear, not a laudable character. But Stevenson imbues his character with some charm and, director Jonathan Hensleigh does his best to "mythologize the meatheads who populate his script," as Jeannette Catsoulis of the *New York Times* wrote. This movie may make you nostalgic for *The Sopranos*. We thought all the performances were good and we enjoyed the period flavor, but it's hard to give high marks to a movie that seems to glorify mobsters and murder. **GRADE B**

KILL THE MESSENGER: (2014) "There are some stories too true to be told." This is a depressing thought that will mean little if you chose not to see this riveting political thriller. It is a film that focuses on the fate of a truth-seeking whistleblower, Gary Webb. Webb was an American investigative reporter best known for a series of newspaper articles published in 1996 and based on a year-long investigation alleging the CIA funneled profits from illegal drugs to support the Contras in the Nicaraguan Revolution. He also alleged that the CIA was directly or indirectly behind the 1980's crack cocaine epidemic that swept our nation. Webb's story generated fierce controversy. We may never know how accurate his story was, but we do know that the CIA worked with the Contra and people who supported the Contra despite drug-dealing allegations against them. The CIA admitted this much in 1998, but the admission was buried in the 623rd of a long report that the press paid little attention to because they were so occupied with the Monica Lewinsky affair. Playing the lead in *Kill The Messenger* is Jeremy Renner. Renner is best known for his role in *The Hurt Locker*, which won multiple Academy Awards in 2008. He is brilliant playing Webb in an investigation that takes him from the prisons of California to the villages of Nicaragua and to Washington D.C., drawing the attention of powerful forces that set out to destroy the story by destroying Webb's credibility. Webb died in 2004 from two gun shots to the head. The death was ruled a suicide. This is a powerful film and I think one that

is important historically. Renner is joined by an all-star cast that includes familiar names and faces like Rosemarie DeWitt, Oliver Platt, Michael Sheen, and Ray Liotta. We would love to hear your comments if you see this film. **GRADE A-**

KILL YOUR DARLINGS: (2013) This is a narrowly focused independent film that has literary value but very narrow appeal. It is loosely based on reality and deals with the formative college age years of the major authors who became identified with the Beat Generation: Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac. The title *Kill Your Darlings* refers to editing advice attributed to William Faulkner: “always edit out the parts of your writing you most love because they are probably the most self-indulgent.” Daniel Radcliffe, who made a ton of money playing Harry Potter, now feeds his artistic side playing a young Allen Ginsberg who is best known for his epic poem *Howl*. Ben Foster plays writer William Burroughs (*Naked Lunch*) and Jack Huston plays Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*). They and the rest of an ensemble cast are all excellent. The first half of the film concentrates on how the iconic authors met and were shaped by experiences at Columbia University. They were profoundly influenced by a handsome and charismatic classmate, Lucien Carr brilliantly played by Dane DeHaan. The second half focuses more on their involvement in a 1944 fatal stabbing of David Kramer played by Michael C Hall who is well known for playing Dexter on T.V. Bill Goodykoontz awards this film 3.5 out of 5 stars. I give it a B- and Barbara agrees. **GRADE B-**

KILLER JOE: (2011 release date) Director William Friedkin has been making “hard to forget” movies for decades. In the 1970’s he gave us *The Boys In The Band*, *The French Connection*, and *The Exorcist*. In 1980 he gave us the “hard to watch” *Cruising*. More recently he brought us *Rules of Engagement* and *To Live and Die in L.A.* *Killer Joe* is ugly and mesmerizing at the same time. There are intense scenes that make you wish you could turn away, but you can’t. This is a blood-spattered dark comedy peopled by unbelievably stupid people you might expect to see on *The Jerry Springer Show*. The plot involves stolen drugs, a plan to murder for insurance money, and a hired hit man who has the manners of a Southern gentleman but who is a sadistic psychopath. The performances are powerful. Matthew McConaughey plays the psychopath who is also a detective with the Dallas Police Department. Thomas Hayden Church (*Sideways*), and Gina Gershon (*Showgirls*) are the most familiar names in the supporting cast, but all are effective in making this a film a memorable experience. If blood, nudity, dysfunctional trailer trash, violence, and sexuality make you at all uncomfortable, this one may be too dark for your theater enjoyment. But if you decide to take a chance, don’t say you weren’t warned. Barbara finds it hard to put a grade on this one. She says the film is so unusual and well done that it may deserve a higher grade, but we finally agreed. **GRADE B+**

KILLING ME SOFTLY: (2002 release seen on DVD) This film stars Joseph Fiennes (*Shakespeare In Love*) and Heather Graham (*Boogie Nights*, *Bowfinger*) and Natasha McElhone (*Mrs. Dalloway*, *Solaris*). Graham is Alice, an American living and working in London, who falls instantly and passionately in love with a man she sees on a London street. The man is Adam (Fiennes) and the feeling is mutual. He is a famous mountain climber and a mysterious and possibly sinister man. McElhone plays his sister with whom he has a strange relationship. Alice rushes into marriage and then begins to suspect her husband of nefarious deeds. The sex scenes are quite explicit and the background music adds to the mystery and menace. The performances are quite good. It held our interest and we liked it better than the critics, who didn’t like it at all. Gary says **MARGINAL THUMBS UP**

KILLING THEM SOFTLY: This movie has all the Tarantinoesque conventions: violence, lots of blood and prosaic conversations between killers. Unfortunately, it doesn’t have Tarantino’s humor. There are a couple of amusing exchanges, but most of the conversations are banal. Set in 2008, the movie draws a comparison between the business of crime and the business of the country. Both have economic concerns and are trying to cut corners. This “business” element of crime is embodied in the character played by Richard Jenkins, as he discusses the efficacy and economy of killing the people who ripped off an underworld poker game. Brad Pitt is the hired killer who has been tasked with eliminating those involved. James Gandolfini is an assassin Pitt brings in to take care of one of the perpetrators—someone with whom Pitt is acquainted. Pitt’s assassin prefers to kill people he doesn’t know, and to kill them “softly,” which apparently means at a distance. However, that’s not exactly how it goes down. Director Andrew Dominik was the writer/director of the 2007 movie, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, which also starred Brad Pitt. In our review of that film, we said, “The story is told in a highly stylized but painfully slow way...” Dominik is consistent: this movie is also stylized and slow. It’s also not particularly interesting. All the performances are good, and Pitt is terrific. I was particularly impressed with Scoot McNairy who plays one of the young men who robbed the poker game. I must not be the only one impressed with this actor, who also appeared in *Argo*. He has 2 movies in the can, 4 in post-production, two in pre-production and is currently filming one. A busy actor. The critics are divided on *Killing Them Softly*, and we side with those who were underwhelmed. **GRADE C**

KIMI: 2022 (Streaming is available on HBO Max) First you should know that *Kimi* is not a character in the film, but is a voice based computer assistant similar to “Alexa” or “Siri.” The film seems to be based on an outlandish story, but it is far more fact than fiction as it is based on a real-life legal case in Arkansas. During the COVID-19 pandemic in Seattle, an agoraphobic tech worker, Angela Childs, discovers evidence of a violent crime while reviewing a data stream, but she is met with resistance and bureaucracy when she tries reporting it to her company. Angela suffers from anxiety and agoraphobia due to a previous assault, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. To get involved, she realizes she must face her greatest fear--venturing out of her apartment. Getting out of her apartment leads to an exciting second half of *Kimi* and a hair-raising finish that I won’t reveal. Barbara and I were impressed by the directing of Steven Soderbergh who also directed another film reviewed in this month’s Movie Views, *No Sudden Move*. We also liked this mystery & thriller. **GRADE B+**

THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER: 2018 (Available for streaming on Netflix) Starring American actress and filmmaker Maggie Gyllenhaal, *The Kindergarten Teacher* is an English-language remake of a dark Israeli comedy. It is advertised as a psychological character study with a lot to say but no easy answers. Professional Critics seemed to love it earning 90% on the Tomatometer, but only a 68% Audience Score. I must warn you that Barbara and I did not find it an easy film to embrace. Gyllenhaal plays Lisa Spinelli a Staten Island teacher who is devoted to her students. When she discovers one of her five-year-olds is a prodigy she becomes fascinated with the boy, ultimately risking her family and freedom to nurture his talent. What plays out as a drama for the first hour, turns into an uncomfortable thriller as lines start getting crossed. Despite an excellent performance from Maggie Gyllenhaal we found the film slow moving and not as watchable as we expected. **GRADE B-**

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS: 2019 (Available for streaming on Netflix) This film is a internationally co-produced drama, written and directed by Lone Scherfig. It had its world premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival on February 7, 2019 and was released in the United States on February 14, 2020. It is a story about the transformative impact of kindness and forgiveness. *The Kindness of Strangers* serves as a strong argument for the importance of really seeing those around us and opening our hearts to them. Help often comes from unexpected places when needed the most. Critics often refuse to allow their heartstrings to be tugged and punish filmmakers who try with negative reviews. Even with a talented onscreen ensemble, *The Kindness of Strangers* only received 31% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes. Barbara and I would probably never have chosen to see the film had it not been for the glowing report we received from long time Movie Views readers and good friends Holly V and Rich S. The story centers on the plight of a woman, Clara, who flees an abusive marriage with her two young sons. Clara is played by actor Zoe Kazan, who in real life is the granddaughter of film legend: Elia Kazan. Clara knows she has to get her boys away from their abusive father, Richard, so she sneaks them out early one morning and takes them to Manhattan on "vacation." It quickly becomes apparent to them (as well as to viewers) that Clara has no plan — or any resources to fall back on. Homelessness looks nearly inevitable. A heartfelt drama unfolds about a handful of people whose lives intersect amid the bustling anonymity of New York City. It sounds like it could be depressing, but the delightful characters made it a fascinating journey for Barb and me. **GRADE B+**

KING ARTHUR: I wanted to see this film because of Clive Owen and Ioan Gruffudd. Gruffudd is that handsome Welshman with the unpronounceable name who plays Capt. Horatio Hornblower in the TV movies. I was impressed with Owen in both *The Croupier* (1998) and *Gosford Park* (2001). Neither actor disappointed me. Supposedly giving us the "real" story of the Arthur legend, the movie tells of Arthur's disenchantment with Rome and his decision to fight with the people of Great Britain for their freedom. He must go against the Saxon army--Germanic invaders who hope to conquer the Brits. He is aided in the battle by the Woads--a group of native peoples--led by Merlin. It's a different look at the famous magician. Nothing here about living life backwards. In fact, the film plays only slight attention to previous versions of the Camelot legend. Guinevere (Keira Knightley) appears, but she seems more interested in fighting than in making love to either Arthur or Lancelot. There is enough hacking, slashing and killing to satisfy even the most battle hungry viewer, but at least the battle scenes are all with real people and not computer-generated combatants. However is it the appeal of the actors who make this movie work. Stellan Skarsgard (*Good Will Hunting*) is Cerdic, the Saxon leader. I loved this comment by A.O. Scott (NYTimes) who said that Skarsgard's "*halting, throaty delivery and gleefully hammy villainy confirm his stature as the Swedish Christopher Walken*. Gary and I give this one a B, but our grandson, Nathan, says A-. **GRADE B**

KING KONG: This film is an exercise in excess. I don't think Peter Jackson knows how to make a movie shorter than three hours. The special effects scenes are amazing, but most of them run on too long, especially the dinosaurs! As remarkable as they are, we don't need to see them for as long as we do. The buildup takes forever—it's over an hour before we first see Kong. Even Nathan, who gave the film a B+, said he would have given it an A if it had been a bit shorter. Naomi Watts is lovely in the Fay Wray role, and Kong's human qualities make him exceedingly sympathetic. Watts has said that she did most of her acting in front of a green screen, but you wouldn't know it from her performance. Jack Black is the erstwhile moviemaker and Adrien Brody is the writer who falls in love with the actress. Kyle Chandler is funny as the movie hero who is not much of a hero off camera. Gary said he enjoyed it more than he expected to and gives it a B. For me, it was a B-. **GRADES B+/B/B-**

KING RICHARD: (2021 Available in theaters and streaming on HBO Max thru Dec19, 2021) Based on a true story, this film focuses on tennis superstars Venus and Serena Williams, two of the most extraordinarily gifted athletes of all time, and how they became tennis champions after growing up with the unusual and controversial coaching methods of their father. Actor, rapper, and film producer Will Smith plays Richard, the demanding and ambitious father. Smith has, in his long career, been nominated for five Golden Globe Awards, two Academy Awards, and has won four Grammy Awards. It is my opinion that Smith will add to his awards collection with this film." *King Richard* is a good sports about a family whose unwavering resolve and unconditional belief ultimately delivered two of the world's greatest sports legends. Training on old and neglected tennis courts with a coach navigating a world totally foreign to him, the girls seem to face insurmountable odds of even becoming professional players. But they ultimately become two of the world's greatest sports legends. The film doesn't attempt to put Richard on a pedestal. It highlights his flaws just as much as his strengths. At times Richard comes off as a bully who doesn't listen to anyone, but when Smith cracks that smile or makes that joke, he's hard to dislike. The two young girls playing Venus and Serena were just exceptional and must themselves be excellent tennis players. It doesn't affect my grade, but I was a little disappointed that there was no mention of Althea Gibson. She broke the color barrier back in the 1950's. She ultimately won 11 Grand Slam titles at a time when racism and prejudice were widespread in sports and in society. Barbara and I liked the movie a lot even though it is nearly two and a half hours long. We were glad we streamed it at home where we could take a couple of breaks. I might mention that you don't need to know much about tennis to appreciate this moving film that scored 98% Audience Score on Rotten Tomatoes. **Grade A**

THE KINGDOM: When terrorist bombs explode in a Western housing compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, an elite FBI team gets permission to help the Saudi police find those responsible. Jamie Foxx assembles a group that consists of Chris Cooper, Jennifer Garner and Jason Bateman. I had trouble believing that the FBI would send a woman to Saudi Arabia, but her presence does illustrate one of the cultural differences that hamper the effectiveness of the team. The American team is not welcome at first, but eventually Foxx is able to establish a relationship with the lead Saudi policeman, Colonel Al-Shazi. The first two-thirds of the film plays like C.S.I., Saudi version, but the last third is brimming with action and gunfire. With this film, Peter Berg joins the ranks of directors enamored of hand-held cameras. Almost all the action is shot with such jerky camera work that it is frequently difficult to decipher exactly what is happening. As with *The Bourne Ultimatum*, we longed for a steady cam. Still, the film is well-made and the acting is first rate so we can recommend the film, providing you aren't susceptible to vertigo. Gary thought one of the best parts of the film was the opening description of how the Saudi's discovered oil by accident and how that discovery led to a complicated relationship with our country. It was a very brief but interesting look at Saudi history. **GRADE B-**

THE KING'S SPEECH: This is an excellent historical drama and a powerful personal story of a man struggling to overcome a speech impediment. It will surely get an Oscar nomination for Best Picture and Colin Firth will probably win Best Actor for his portrayal of King

George VI. He is a consummate actor. In an interview, Firth said that he had to learn how to stammer, and then learn how to try not to stammer. The agony on his face as he desperately tries to get the words out is painful to watch but, from an acting standpoint, marvelous to behold. We are all familiar with the story of the Duke of Windsor who, in 1939, abdicated his throne for the love of Wallace Simpson. However, we don't know much about Edward's younger brother, Albert, who became King George VI. This movie is about Albert. The title has a double meaning: It refers to a critical speech King George made shortly after succeeding to the throne—a speech that is the climax of the movie. It also refers to Albert's speech problem—he stammered badly. The story begins with Albert attempting to open the British Empire Exhibition in 1925. Faced with a crowded arena and a potentially huge radio audience, he is barely able to get the words out. Over the next 14 years he works with many therapists to no avail. He gets no help, but he does get a lot of bad advice. One even suggests that he smoke as much as he can because, according to this so-called expert, inhaling relaxes the vocal chords. Finally, through the efforts of his loving wife, he finds an enthusiastic Australian named Lionel Logue who claims much success working with shell-shocked World War I veterans. Logue's methods are unconventional and he has a rather disrespectful attitude toward royalty. He calls the Prince by a name only the family uses—Bertie. The King's Speech is at its heart the story of a friendship: A friendship between two very different men that lasted the rest of their lives. Geoffrey Rush is perfect as Logue and Helena Bonham Carter is lovely as the woman who became Britain's beloved Queen Mother. Timothy Spall makes an interesting Winston Churchill and Guy Pearce is the Duke of Windsor. This is a very special film and deserves an A. **GRADE A**

THE KING'S SPEECH: (2010) Barbara and I saw this delightful British film on a big screen when it was first released ten years ago and we awarded it a well-deserved "A". In the opening sentence of Barb's review she writes "*This is an excellent historical drama and a powerful personal story of a man struggling to overcome a speech impediment.*" We wisely decided that there are worse ways to spend a couple of hours waiting out the Covid-19 pandemic than with this film. **The King's Speech** was a major box office and critical success. For a proper review, I refer you to the ten year old words of Barbara in the Movie Views Archives under the **K**.

King George VI died on 6 February 1952.

On 26 February 1952, Lionel Logue wrote to the late king's wife, The Queen Mother:

No man ever worked as hard as he did, and achieved such a grand result.

During all those years you were a tower of strength to him and he has often told me how much he has owed to you, and the excellent result could never have been achieved if it had not been for your help.

I have never forgotten your gracious help to me after my own beloved girl passed on.

The Queen Mother replied:

"I think that I know perhaps better than anyone just how much you helped the King, not only with his speech, but throughout his whole life and outlook on life.

I shall always be deeply grateful to you for all you did for him."

THE KINGS OF SUMMER: (2013) This is an independent film with no big names in the cast, but the trailer made it look interesting. Also I read that it garnered positive buzz at this year's Sundance Film Festival and our local critic loved it. So Barbara and I went with high expectations. They were not met. It is not a terrible movie, just an unremarkable one. There are occasional moments of wit, but more misses than hits. And if there was a profound message, it went right over our heads. Two teenage boys become so fed up with their home life that they decide to run away and slap together a house of their own in the deep woods. A third boy who takes quirkiness to a new level seems to be there because he has nothing better to do. The boys get dirty, grow scraggly beards, revel in their escape from their parents' rules and find ways to express their new found freedom. In fairness, their idyllic summer is broken by a few problems and evolves into a test of friendship. Some lessons are learned, but it didn't save the film for us. We wanted a movie that makes us laugh, or cry, or think, or feel, but sadly when we left the theater, our conversation revolved around why wasn't it better? That isn't a conversation the produces a high grade. **GRADE C**

KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE: (2015) We couldn't resist seeing Colin Firth as a lethal secret agent kicking butt and blowing people up with impunity. Firth is the epitome of a gentleman agent in the tradition of the early James Bond movies. He is part of a super-secret spy organization that uses a tailor shop as a front for its underground facility. We enjoyed the first half of the movie because it didn't take itself too seriously, and the mayhem was choreographed with some wry humor. Needing to fill an opening in the organization, Firth contacts a young street kid whose father, many years ago, was a heroic agent. Firth wants to recruit the boy, and it was enjoyable watching the spy organization put the group of would-be recruits through a series of exercises to prove their worthiness. Of course, a movie like this has to have a villain threatening to destroy the world, and in **Kingsman**, a lispng Samuel Jackson fills the bill. He is a high tech billionaire who wants to solve the global warming crisis. The goal is enviable, but, unfortunately, his cure for the planet involves drastically and violently reducing the world's population. Not that he will do any of the reducing himself, for the sight of blood makes him queasy. All this was fairly light hearted, but after an over-the-top scene of mayhem in a church, the movie began to look like just any other spy thriller--too much killing and not enough humor. There is one scene of spectacular mayhem toward the end of the movie that did make me laugh, but otherwise it seemed like a long two hours. We stayed through some of the credits while most of the audience hurried out of the theatre. They missed a closing scene that echoed one of the best scenes in the movie. The moviemakers perhaps misjudged the willingness of the average audience to sit through closing credits. For what it is trying to accomplish, **Kingsman** deserves a B, and Colin Firth is always worth a trip to the movies. Gary was less enthused than I, and he says it's in the C+/B- range. **GRADE B/C+**

KINKY BOOTS: (2005) In 2002 we saw **Dirty Pretty Things** starring Chiwetel Ejiofor and were so impressed with him that we managed to remember his rather difficult name. Three years later he starred in **Kinky Boots** as a drag queen who helps save a shoe factory. We didn't see that movie in 2005, but watched it recently on HBO. Ejiofor is terrific as Lola who helps Charlie save the factory

he inherited from his father by making sexy shoes for female impersonators. In his review, Roger Ebert praised the actor for playing Lola without resorting to simpering, mincing or preening. He is definitely not your typical drag queen. Ejiofor was nominated for a Golden Globe and he is the main reason to watch the movie. Last year, the movie was made into a musical with a score by Cyndi Lauper for which she won a Tony Award. *Kinky Boots* also won the Tony for best musical. The original movie seems made for Broadway. The conventional story is simple and there are several heart-tugging moments and more than one conflict. We thought the conflicts seemed rather manufactured and one toward the end didn't work for us, but we agreed that the story would work well on the stage. We were glad to get a look at Ejiofor in an unusual role—so very different from his roles in *Love, Actually* and *Inside Man*, and as a vicious mobster in *Four Brothers*. **GRADE B-**

KINSEY: I am old enough to have personal knowledge of the profound changes that resulted from the work of Alfred Kinsey. So I had hope and high expectations when I went to see this film about a sex researcher who had the audacity to ask questions that had never been seriously or systematically asked before. In the film, writer-director Bill Condon (who won an Oscar for "Gods and Monsters,") tellingly devotes nearly as much time to Kinsey's damaging childhood and his 35-year marriage as he does to his ground breaking work. With the brilliant acting of Liam Neeson playing Kinsey, Laura Linney playing his wife, and John Lithgow playing his father, and an able supporting cast, the film won me over from the opening. And it held me for two hours through the film's end and even through the humorous animal takes at the end of the closing credits. Kinsey's attempt to shed light on an area of ignorance was not without controversy in 1948 when *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was published or even in 1953 when *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* was released. And today the film is being greeted with both praise and protests. There are many people who believe this film is in poor taste and should be avoided. I will close with a wonderful quote from *Rolling Stone*, "Kinsey wanted to snap the public out of sexual ignorance. And Condon's knockout of a movie tries to do the same. You'll be shocked at how far we haven't come." (**Barb's Note: I concur.**) **GRADE A**

KISS, KISS, BANG BANG: I have to like any movie where one character corrects the grammar of another character when he says "I feel badly." Fortunately, that's not the only thing to like in this quirky send-up of Hollywood and of private-eye films. Robert Downey, Jr. is Harry Lockhart, a petty thief who blunders into an audition while fleeing the police and winds up making a movie in Hollywood. Val Kilmer is terrific as Gay Perry, a gay private-eye who is a consultant on Harry's movie. Michelle Monaghan is Harmony, a girl that Harry lusted after in high school and meets on his first day in Los Angeles. When the three of them get involved in a real-life crime, gunshots and dead bodies abound. Harry narrates the film and, unlike some critics, we thought it was cleverly done. Each chapter of the action is introduced by captions that are all taken from Raymond Chandler novels. One critic thought the cleverness of the dialogue was tiresome after a while, but we do not agree. It made us laugh. Both Gary and I, along with grandson Nathan, very much enjoyed the movie. **GRADE B+** (*Has anyone else noticed how much Monaghan & Liv Tyler resemble each other?*)

KISSING JESSICA STEIN: What a delightful movie this is. The two stars, Jennifer Westfeldt (Jessica Stein) and Heather Juergensen (Helen Cooper) wrote the screenplay after meeting in an acting workshop. They have a remarkable ear for the way people talk. (Occasionally, Jessica's nervous chatter reminded me of *Annie Hall*.) They wrote a witty, intelligent and funny script. Plus, the casting is perfect! Jessica Stein is a 28 year old woman who has had no luck finding the right guy, even with her Jewish mother's help. In desperation, Jessica decides to try connecting with another woman. Helen Cooper, the woman Jessica meets, has had an active heterosexual sex life, but she is also interested in a lesbian relationship, so she puts an ad in the Personals to attract a woman partner. The two actresses are terrific and work exceptionally well together. Tovah Feldshuh plays Jessica's mother with sincerity and affection. Roger Ebert also thought Feldshuh was special. He mentioned a scene between mother and daughter and said, "Feldshuh takes an ordinary scene and makes it extraordinary by the way she delivers the simple, heartfelt dialogue." Scott Cohen appears as Josh Meyers, a man Jessica dated in college and who is now her boss. **GRADE: A-** (Running time: 94 minutes. Rated R for sexual content and language.)

THE KITE RUNNER: A few years ago Barbara and I read a beautiful and inspired book titled *The Kite Runner*. It was the first novel ever published in English by an author from Afghanistan. Today we saw a beautiful and inspired film based on that book. The story begins with young boys flying kites in the city of Kabul in 1978. That was before the Russians, the Taliban, the Americans, and the ravages of war that have followed. It is a story about a boy haunted by guilt. It is a story of betrayal, cowardice, and an opportunity for redemption that touched my heart and I think will touch the hearts of those fortunate enough to see it. The two young male leads worked in front of a camera for their first time and they give powerful and convincing performances. They now face tribal reprisals and have been relocated for their protection. You may have to search for a theater showing this wonderful film since it will probably not see the wide release other films get. Whether you were one of the millions of readers of the novel or not, I think you will find the film well worth seeking out. Barbara and I were both so moved by this film that we have to award it a high grade. **GRADE A**

KIT KITTREDGE: AN AMERICAN GIRL — This warm family film is set during the Great Depression, and its heroine, Kit Kittredge, is based on one of the dolls in the American Girl doll line. Abigail Breslin is perfect as Kit, and, with her blond wig, she looks a lot like her doll namesake. Kit is a very spunky girl. She is determined to be a reporter and bangs away on a 30s-style typewriter whenever she has the chance. Kit's mom and dad are nicely played by Julia Ormond and Chris O'Donnell. When Kit's dad loses his car dealership and has to leave Cincinnati to find work, her mom takes in boarders. This provides an opportunity for some quirky characters, delightfully played by Stanley Tucci, Joan Cusack, Glenn Headly, and Jane Krakowski. The film is a mystery and Kit and her friends' amateur sleuthing provide some exciting moments. It is also an interesting history lesson. The young girls and their moms who made up most of our audience are too young to remember the Depression, but the film brings it to life. It introduces today's audiences to hobos, hobo camps, soup kitchens, and the dangers of judging a person by their station in life. It's ironic that in the film banks are foreclosing on peoples homes—exactly what is happening today. The very popular American Girl dolls are a wholesome alternative to precocious Barbies and sexy Bratz. Each doll/character has a carefully researched back story, and this film was based on the story for the doll of the same name. It was a bit too much of a young girl's movie for Gary, and he couldn't grade it higher and C+, although he admits it was well done. I enjoyed it more than he did, and give it a solid B. **GRADE B/C+**

KNIGHT AND DAY: This is the perfect vehicle for Tom Cruise. His character is sort of crazy, sort of charming, and totally manic. He is in his element, performing one incredible stunt after another. Cameron Diaz provides a good foil and partner for his antics. Cruise is either a spy who has gone rogue or a crazy assassin. He certainly kills a lot of people, but the mayhem is almost like a video game. You can't really take it very seriously. Our local critic said that the film doesn't make much sense, but that director James Mangold doesn't slow the action down enough to give you time to think about it. He also said that Cruise's "weirdly complex performance" is the best thing about the film." I agree. I like Cruise in this kind of role: no one does it better, but toward the end, I began to get restless. Gary said it was a good afternoon movie for him because he could nod off briefly and not miss anything important. The action moves around the world with scenes several countries. In Spain, we even have a running of the bulls scene. But the scenery is incidental to the close-ups of the two good-looking stars, so if you are a Cruise and/or Diaz fan, you'll enjoy it. **GRADE B**

KNIVES OUT: (2019) This is a modern whodunit murder mystery paying tribute to the well-known mystery mastermind Agatha Christie. Sporting a cast of big screen veterans, the purposely convoluted script relies on its fine cast to walk the line between parody and sincerity. Everyone in the cast is given a chance to be in the spotlight and they all rise to the occasion. On the night of his 85th birthday, renowned crime novelist Harlan Thrombey (Christopher Plummer) is found with his throat slit in the attic where he pumped out his bestselling books. The inquisitive and debonair Detective Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig) is enlisted to investigate. There's no shortage of suspects as it seems everyone in the Thrombey clan had a reason to want the old man dead. The all-star ensemble cast includes Jamie Lee Curtis, Toni Collette, Don Johnson, Michael Shannon, Chris Evans, and a few others you may recognize. From Harlan's dysfunctional family to his devoted staff, Blanc sifts through a web of red herrings and self-serving lies to uncover the truth behind Harlan's untimely death. A little less than half way through the film something interesting and unexpected happens. The audience is told what happened and whether it was murder or suicide. It seems like there is nowhere else for the story to go. Then a second, more subtle mystery begins. Professional critics loved the film with 266 reviews yielding a score of 96% on *Rotten Tomatoes Tomatometer*. Audience scores were only slightly lower with 94%. Barbara and I liked the movie though perhaps with slightly less enthusiasm. In fairness this may be because it is not a genre high on our list of favorites. **GRADE B**

KNOCKED UP: Judd Apatow has made another funny comedy. Previously he gave us *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, a film that we rated "B." This one deserves a B+ and maybe even an A-. Ben Stone (Seth Rogan) lives with four of his slacker friends in a frat house atmosphere. They are in their early twenties and have no visible means of support. They spend their time making ridiculous bets and watching movies to catalogue nude scenes. We weren't crazy about their juvenile gross humor, but when Ben meets Alison, the film quickly gets better. Ben has never had much success with women and can't believe his good fortune when he has a one-night stand with a gorgeous blond (Katherine Heigl from TV's *Gray's Anatomy*). When Alison calls him two months later to tell him she is pregnant, Ben's life changes drastically. The growing relationship between Ben and Alison is balanced by the marriage of Pete and Debbie, Alison's sister. The always amusing Paul Rudd is Pete and we were impressed with Leslie Mann who plays Debbie.* What's more, all the incidental characters are funny and interesting, and that makes for an enjoyable film. In addition to the comedy there are some serious moments and even a few touching ones. Apatow's writing also deserves praise. His characters' actions seem believable and are well-motivated. Even the cliché birthing scene elicited laughter. If you can get past the frat-house humor, you will enjoy this one. **GRADE B+** (*Note: Mann is Apatow's wife and their two daughters, Iris and Maude, play Pete & Debbie daughters in the film. It's a real family affair.)

K-PAX: You'll want to see this film just to enjoy the performance of Kevin Spacey as the mysterious Prot. Prot is either an alien from the planet K-PAX--1,000 light years away from our planet--or he is a mentally ill delusional. Jeff Bridges is Dr. Mark Powell, the psychiatrist who becomes fascinated with Prot and tries to discover who he is and what event caused the delusion. Prot is very convincing as an alien. He has an astounding knowledge of astronomy and he seems to be able to communicate with family pets. There is a segment in the middle of the film that bothered Gary. Prot has failed to respond to anti-psychotic drugs, yet Dr. Powell seems convinced that hypnotism will get at the truth. Gary doesn't buy that attitude. However, we both thought the ending was very well done and feel the movie deserves a solid B. Roger Ebert said that Spacey made a career decision years ago: To always play the smartest person in the movie. It certainly has worked well for the actor. He was, at first, asked to play the psychiatrist, but campaigned vigorously for the part of Prot. It is interesting to see Bridges as the psychiatrist because we remember his outstanding performance as an alien in *STARMAN*, a 1984 film that is worth seeing again. K-PAX is based on the novel by Gene Brewer and was directed by Iain Softley. It has a running time of 120 minutes. **GRADE B**

KUNG FU PANDA: Liked the Panda; Didn't much care for the Kung Fu. I can, however, appreciate the brilliant animations—the most memorable for me was the swirl of cherry blossoms that carried Master Oogway away. We were delighted that Oogway was voiced by Randall Duk Kim, who we remember from our visits to the American Players Shakespeare Theatre in Spring Green, Wisconsin. All the voices were very well done, especially Dustin Hoffman as Kung Fu Master Shifu and Ian McShane as the evil Tia Lung. Jack Black voices the loveable Panda, and he was very appealing. However, there was just too much kung fu fighting to keep us engaged. (They just don't make 'em like Bambi anymore!) If you are a fan of Jackie Chan movies, and you liked 2000's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, then you will probably enjoy this animated feature. And if you go, you might want to take a child along. The kids in the theatre with us certainly did enjoy the movie. For us, however, it only deserves a C. **GRADE C**