

## Movie Titles that begin with "O"

127 Hours \* O Brother Where Art Thou? \* Oblivion \* Obvious Child \* Oceans \* Ocean's 8 \* Oceans's Eleven \* Ocean's Twelve \* Ocean's Thirteen \* OC87 \* Off The Map \* Official Competition \* Official Secrets \* Offside \* O.G. \* The Old Man & the Gun \* Old School \* Oliver Twist \* Omar \* On Chesil Beach \* On The Basis of Sex \* On The Ice \* Once \* Once Upon a Deadpool \* Once Upon A Time In Hollywood \* One Child Nation \* One Hour Photo \* The One I Love \* One Night at McCool's \* One Night in Miami \* Open Range \* Open Water \* Operation Finale \* Operation Mincemeat \* Orange County \* Ordinary People \* Osama \* The Other Boleyn Girl \* The Other Guys \* Our Brand is Crisis \* Our Friend \* Our Idiot Brother \* Our Kind of Traitor \* Our Souls At Night \* Out of the Furnace \* The Outfit \* Over The Hedge \* Overboard \* The Overnight \* Owing Mahoney

**127 HOURS:** The consensus in Hollywood was that this true story about an American climber who's arm was pinned by a boulder for 127 hours was un-makeable. Danny Boyle, who won a Best Director Oscar for *Slumdog Millionaire*, thought differently. He set out to make an inspiring story of courage and determination in which a young man is forced to cut off his own arm to save his life. One of our regular readers refused to see the film based on his conviction that movies should not celebrate stupidity. His argument is not without logic in that the young man should not have been climbing alone in a remote canyon in Utah with no one's knowledge. Barbara and I decided to see the film based on our respect for the lead, James Franco, the director, and the high praise of many critics. Our decision was rewarded with a tense hour and a half of brilliant acting and filmmaking. It is a tour-de-force for Franco who must carry the entire film. It is intense and sometimes gruesome, and it may not be for everyone, but Boyle makes what could be a depressing downer into an uplifting experience. Barbara agrees that the acting and filmmaking deserve a high grade, but, because of the "celebrate stupidity" factor, we have to put a minus after the A. **GRADE A-**

**O BROTHER WHERE ART THOU:** The Coen brothers' say at the beginning of this film that they based it on *The Odyssey*. They have since confessed to never having read Homer's work, but there are elements in O Brother that comes directly from it: a Cyclops, three sirens, a hero named Ulysses with a wife named Penelope (short for Penelope perhaps?), and a blind soothsayer. They also borrow from a couple of Hollywood films. One scene, involving a KKK meeting, is taken directly from *The Wizard of Oz*. The title of the film comes from *Sullivan's Travels*. In this Depression-era odyssey, Ulysses Everett McGill (George Clooney) escapes from a chain gang with two friends, John Turturro and Tim Blake Nelson, who are about as smart as a "bag of hammers." The three men have one adventure after another to the accompaniment of some wonderful blue grass music. All three men are delightful, and John Goodman, Charles Durning, Michael Badalucco, and Holly Hunter bring great style to the film. O Brother is beautifully photographed and thoroughly entertaining. The whimsical Coen Brothers never fail to surprise me and I was quite delighted with the film. For pure enjoyment, I think it is worth a B+. Gary thinks a B is high enough. **GRADE: B+/B**

**OBLIVION:** (2013) The story line of science fiction movies is almost always incomprehensible, so I won't even try to talk about the plot. Most fans of sci-fi films go for the spectacle, and *Oblivion* provides a lot of that. The killer drones were creative and extremely difficult to destroy. The landscape of the earth after a nuclear attack by aliens 60 years earlier is desolate with only an occasional landmark visible. Tom Cruise is assigned by someone or something to protect the devices that extract Earth's remaining resources for the benefit of some planet, or someone, or something. He flies an exotic machine from a futuristic space platform. As Cruise began to have doubts about his mission, we began to have doubts about going to the movie. Gary had trouble staying awake through the long setup, and even the multitude of explosions and fights between futuristic machines couldn't keep his attention. I have to admit, a lot of it was boring. We did like the woman who was Cruise's wife, the very lovely Olga Kurylenko (*Quantum of Solace*). We wish we'd seen more of Morgan Freeman. We probably won't see another sci-fi movie for a very long time. (Unless another *Avatar* comes along. Now that one we liked.) **GRADE C-/D+**

**OBVIOUS CHILD:** (2014) Jenny Slate has been doing stand-up comedy since graduating from college in 2004. In 2009, she was a regular on *Saturday Night Live*. In 2012, Slate became a best-selling author for a children's book she co-wrote with her husband. In *Obvious Child* she has her first starring role in a feature film. She is Donna Stern, a young woman who works in a bookstore by day and does stand-up at night. *Obvious Child* is a most unusual romantic comedy. Although it is reminiscent of *Knocked Up*, the similarity soon evaporates in this R-rated comedy. After a devastating breakup, Donna meets Max (Jake Lacy, Pete in TV's *The Office*, 2013). Their obvious connection leads to an unwanted pregnancy. That she decides, without any soul-searching, to get an abortion will anger right-to-lifers and may hurt the box office for the movie. Reviewers have given the movie high marks, especially for Slate, who is, as the *Time* magazine critic opined, "a stupendous pleasure to watch." Although we thought Slate was wonderfully vulnerable, we were not taken with Donna's stand-up segments. In an interview in *EW*, the author compared Donna, the character, with Slate, the actor this way: "Donna is a raw nerve with a love of fart jokes, whereas Slate is poised and eloquent with a deep love of fart jokes." We are not enamored of fart jokes and we do not collapse with laughter when someone steps in a pile of dog poo. Perhaps it's our age, but if Slate's stand-up routines are anything like Donna's, we will abstain. Gary thought *Obvious Child* was a drastically uneven, but the sweet and charming ending helped elevate our grade. **GRADE C+**

**OCEANS:** Pierce Brosnan narrates the English version of this 2009 French film. Disney released the film here in the U.S. on Earth Day, which is appropriate since the film warns that our lives depend upon the health of the oceans. The film is not heavy on the ecological message, though. It concentrates more on the visual. You can expect some marvelous pictures of the strange and amazing creatures that live in our oceans. I have to agree with the Slate critic (Dana Stevens) who said that the film, though long on visuals, is short on content. However, she goes on to say that its "visual splendor more than makes up for its intellectual poverty." If you love the Disney nature films, you will want to see this one. We have been watching and enjoying the series "Life" on TV, and I have to say that I prefer Oprah's narration to Brosnan's. We decided not to grade this one, but to give it a **THUMBS UP**

**OCEANS 8:** (2018) I found it refreshing to see a movie where all the major leads are women, and Gary agrees. What's more, *Oceans 8* is an entertaining heist movie featuring Sandra Bullock as Debbie Ocean, sister to George Clooney's Danny Ocean (see *Ocean's*

**Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen).** Debbie is incarcerated and gives a convincing performance before the parole board. Once free, she connects with her old partner, Lou (Cate Blanchett), and together they assemble a group of women who have the necessary skills to plan and carry out a daring jewelry heist. Three of the more familiar names are Rihanna, a dread-locked hacker known as nine-ball, Sarah Paulson, a suburban mom who still operates as a fence, and Helena Bonham Carter, a fashion designer. The complicated job involves hacking into the Metropolitan Museum's security system, 3d printing, and getting a movie star to wear a famous diamond necklace on loan from Cartier. The movie star is played convincingly by Anne Hathaway, who is not a dumb as she looks. Debbie also has revenge as a secondary agenda. It's fun to see Marlo Thomas and Elizabeth Ashley in a small bit at the end of the movie. I won't tell you how they fit into the heist because, well, it's complicated. **GRADE B**

**OCEAN'S ELEVEN:** Before seeing this film I couldn't have imagined that a movie with George Clooney could be boring. Granted, I wasn't bored when the incredibly cool Clooney was on screen, but when he wasn't--Ho Hum. The original *Ocean's Eleven*, made in 1960, was an excuse for Frank and Dean and the rest of the Rat Pack to have some fun in Vegas while shooting a movie. I'm sure that the actors in this version had a lot of fun making it. I just wish we had had more fun watching it. Even Julia Roberts was boring. When she can't use that remarkable smile often enough, she really isn't that interesting to watch. Clooney and Brad Pitt kept us reasonably engaged and the actual heist of the Bellagio casino vault was worth watching. We also enjoyed Casey Affleck and Scott Caan as two quarrelsome brothers. The planning of the heist, however, made little if any sense. Those scenes are just excuses to introduce each character. But, there are so many people involved in the heist that you never really get to know any one of them--except, of course, for Clooney's Danny Ocean. Consequently, we didn't really get caught up in the story. Because of Clooney and the heist itself, I can go as high as C+. Gary enjoyed it a bit more than I did and gives it a B-. **GRADE B-C+**

**OCEAN'S TWELVE:** For celebrity watching, this is a good movie: For plot, not so much! All heist movies have convoluted plots, but this one raises the bar. Most of the time, it's impossible to know what is going on. Some individual scenes play quite well, but as a whole it's a bit of a mess. The actors are having great fun, though, and that is fun to watch. Brad Pitt has indicated that he is not terribly proud of the film, but he comes off well in it. He and Clooney are way cool. And, looking at the two of them for a couple of hours is quite pleasant. We especially liked the bit with Julia Roberts and Bruce Willis. (Unlike reader Paul K—See Readers' Views) We also thought Catherine Zeta-Jones was a good addition to the cast. We decided it was about a C movie, but the merciful absence of car chases and gun battles elevated it to a C+. **GRADE C+**

**OCEAN'S THIRTEEN:** *Ocean's Eleven* was good. *Ocean's Twelve* not so much. *Ocean's Thirteen* is pretty good. Clooney and Pitt are as cool as ever, and the plot is pleasingly complicated. It revolves around Reuben Tishkoff (Elliott Gould), one of the original 11. Reuben suffers a heart attack after he is double-crossed by casino owner Willie Banks (Al Pacino), and Danny Ocean (Clooney) and company decide to get even. That involves digging a tunnel under Banks's casino using a giant tunnel boring machine—the kind that was used to dig the chunnel between England and France. How did they manage to maneuver two of these 600-ton machines under the streets of Las Vegas without anyone noticing? I guess we're not supposed to ask. Al Pacino and Ellen Barkin were nice additions to the mix. The fun of these movies is just to watch movie stars enjoying being movie stars, and that was entertaining. But don't expect anything close to reality. I suppose there will be an *Ocean's Fourteen*, although by now these boys must be known all over Vegas and barred from every Casino in town. Not sure how the writers will handle that. Gary says that they'll ignore it. I think he's right. **GRADE B**

**OC87: The Obsessive Compulsive, Major Depression, Bipolar, Asperger's Movie:** This film offers us a rare and insightful journey into the head of a man desperately trying to be "normal." As a teenager, Bud Clayman longed to be a filmmaker. After graduating from Temple University with a major in radio, television and film, he headed to Los Angeles to realize his dreams. A severe mental breakdown in which he suffered from a long laundry list of debilitating symptoms took over his life for the next 30 years. Now he has finally recovered enough to be his own subject in an original and very personal film that is therapeutic for the filmmaker and educational for anyone willing to seek it out and sit through 1hr and 40 minutes of creative documentary. The film is an honest and authentic glimpse into the depths of neuroses and I can almost promise you will leave the theater with a more profound understanding of all the diagnostic labels listed in the film's long subtitle than you had when you entered. **GRADE B**

**OFF THE MAP:** (2003 Release) Joan Allen and Sam Elliott are unconventional parents in this charming low-key movie directed by Campbell Scott. Their daughter, Bo, who is a remarkable young lady, narrates the story. The family lives in a cabin in the high desert of New Mexico. They have no indoor plumbing or electricity and they grow most of their food. They also do some hunting, but never kill except for food. They also frequent the local dump taking only the "good stuff." Charley (Sam Elliot) is suffering from severe depression and his wife and daughter are wonderfully sympathetic to his pain. A stranger appears one day--an IRS agent. He is investigating the fact that they have not filed a tax return for many years. Since they live on less than \$5,000 a year, they didn't feel it was necessary to file returns. (We did find it difficult to believe that the IRS would send someone to their house.) Jim True-Frost, a former Chicago actor, is the agent. He is completely seduced by the family and by the New Mexico desert. "New Mexico is a powerful place," says Arlene (Joan Allen). It certainly changes the agent's life! Allen and Elliott are marvelous and Valentina de Angelis makes Bo a charming and compelling young heroine (Amy Brenneman plays the grown-up Bo.) J.K. Simmons is Charley's best friend and he is equally fine. The film premiered at Sundance in 2003 and is opening only now probably because, as *Variety* noted, its "unmelodramatic nature and unmomentous subject matter will make this a tough sell even on the review-driven specialized circuit." This film has a very measured pace and it may take you a while to get involved, but, sooner or later you will find yourself captivated. We liked this one very much. I say it's an A-. Gary says B+. **GRADE A-/B+**

**OFFICIAL COMPETITION:** 2021 (Available for \$4.99 rental on Prime Video.) This is a subtitled Spanish farce about filmmaking. It stars Penélope Cruz, Antonio Banderas, and Oscar Martínez who is an Argentine actor. In the film's opening, a grossly rich billionaire who wants to enhance his prestige with the creation of something truly worthwhile decides to make a great movie. He hires a stellar team consisting of a famous director, Lola Cuevas, played by Cruz, and two legendary actors played by Banderas and Martínez. The two actors are not exactly best friends which is good because they play two brothers who are locked in mutual hatred. The screenplay is adapted from an award-winning novel about a man who is unable to forgive his brother for killing their parents in a drunk-driving accident. Capitalizing on the fact they play brothers who detest one another, she devises an ingenious series of acting exercises that

heighten the tensions. Award winning actress Penélope Cruz who has been making movies and TV shows for over thirty years is especially dazzling. She is the first and only Spanish actress to be nominated for and to win an Academy Award, as well as the first to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The critics loved **Official Competition**. It received a score of 97% from 122 critics on Rotten Tomatoes. Barbara and I were less enthusiastic. Perhaps it lost something in the translation. **GRADE C+**

**OFFICIAL SECRETS:** (2019) This is a bold new film that exposes a story that few people in either Great Britain or America have heard. Based on a true story, this is an American-British docudrama about a whistleblower who leaked information to the British press about an illegal NSA spy operation designed to push the UN Security Council into sanctioning the 2003 invasion of Iraq. NSA is the acronym for National Security Agency, an intelligence agency for the United States Department of Defense. The whistleblower, Katharine Gun, a British intelligence specialist brilliantly played by Keira Knightley risked everything to stop an unjust war. One day in 2003, in the lead up to the Iraq War, Gun received a memo from the NSA with a shocking directive: the United States was enlisting Britain's help in collecting compromising information on United Nations Security Council members in order to blackmail them into voting in favor of an invasion of Iraq. Unable to stand by and watch the world be rushed into an illegal war, Gun made the gut-wrenching decision to defy her government and leak the memo to the press. Her government called her a traitor. Writer/director Gavin Hood, is a South African filmmaker who is most well known as the Oscar winning director of the award-winning drama, **Tsotsi**. He masterfully dramatizes the events leading up to the Iraq War and brings Gun to life as an ordinary woman in an extraordinary situation. A great deal of news footage is effectively used in this eye-opening film. Knightley is outstanding and is surrounded by a fantastic British cast! Barbara and I think it is worth seeking out and hope all our readers have an opportunity to see. **GRADE A**

Little did we realize when we saw this movie how relevant it would be to today's news. (10-1-2019)

**OFFSIDE:** We went to see this Iranian film because it has gotten such praise from the critics. On Yahoo Movies, the average critics' grade was A-. Either they saw a different film, or they used vastly different criteria for judging **Offside** than they would have used if it had been made in the U.S. Here are some of the critic's comments: *brilliant, warm-hearted comedy-drama, wonderfully funny, powerful*, etc. We found it amateurish, frequently boring and only mildly amusing. It is interesting because it shows life in Iran and the exuberance and national pride of Iranian soccer fans. We see what happens when a group of young women disguise themselves as men in order to enter Tehran's Azadi Stadium to watch a 2006 World Cup qualifying game between Iran and Bahrain. Under Iranian law, no woman can attend a male sporting event. (One of the young woman is a soccer player herself, and she admits that men are not allowed to attend women's games either.) The soldiers who arrest and guard the women are somewhat sympathetic to their desire to see the game. In fact, one of the soldiers does a play-by-play commentary for the arrested women. One amusing sequence involves a guard trying to explain why women aren't permitted in the stadium. His response is that the sports fans might curse and swear and women shouldn't be exposed to that. When asked why Japanese women were allowed in to see the Japan/Iran game, he replies that they didn't speak Farsi and so wouldn't understand the swearing. The film is shot in documentary style with hand-held cameras. It has never been shown in Iran, and the director was not given official permission to make the film. He pretended to be shooting a much less controversial film in order to use the Azadi Stadium for his set. His two previous films were forbidden by the Islamic government of Iran. Perhaps our critics wanted to reward his courage by praising his film. We, however, can't really recommend it. For Gary it was a D movie. I don't know what grade to give it. **GRADE ?/D**

**O.G.** (2018 Streamed from TV on *HBO*) Louis (Jeffrey Wright) has been in prison for 24 years, but he is serving his last few weeks before release. When he was a gang-connected young man he killed the man he was robbing. As a young inmate, he virtually "ran" the prison, but now he refrains from getting involved in any gang activity. When he encounters Beech, a newly incarcerated young man, he takes him under his wing and things get complicated. William Fichtner plays a guard who wants Lewis to inform him of any nefarious plans afoot in the prison. Lewis declines to be a rat. Wright is excellent, as he always has been ever since we first saw him in the TV version of **Angels in America**. This is a slow-moving look at daily life in prison for someone who has been there for a long time. *Rotten Tomatoes* critics gave it 89%, but audiences were less enthusiastic. Gary thought Wright was terrific, but didn't care much for the slowness of the story line. I liked it better than Gary did. **GRADE B/C+**

**OG means "original gangster."**

**An original gangster is an old school gangster who has been in the game for a while.**

**THE OLD MAN & THE GUN: (2018)** This may be the last we'll see of Robert Redford on screen. That would be sad, but every Hollywood legend must have a final film and this would be an appropriate story to end his memorable career. If you need a reason to see the movie, it's Redford. His effortless charismatic screen presence has not diminished with age and co-star Sissy Spacek, another Hollywood legend, has no trouble keeping up with him at every turn. **Old Man & The Gun** is based on the *mostly* true story of Forrest Tucker, a senior citizen bank robber who was so likable and gentlemanly that tellers and bank managers practically handed him their money as he went about one of the most infamous robbery sprees in American history. He was also known for his many prison escapes, the most audacious from San Quentin at the age of 70. In real life Forest Tucker died in prison, but writer/director David Lowery embellished the truth with something closer to a Hollywood ending. Some critics have been hard on him for that, but Barbara and I thought the ending was delightful. If this turns out to be Redford's last film, it may not be among his most memorable films, but it's a fitting send-off for a Hollywood legend. **GRADE B**

**OLD SCHOOL:** This **Animal House** wannabe doesn't come close. But, it does have some laughs and three good performances by Luke Wilson, Will Ferrell and Vince Vaughn. Wilson is so likeable and believable that he can bring off some incredibly hokey lines. And both Vaughn and Ferrell are quite funny. When Mitch (Wilson) ends a relationship, his friends--Frank (Ferrell) and Beanie (Vaughn) try to cheer him up by starting a fraternity--a very unusual fraternity. Some of the members are actually students at a local university, but others are way above the typical fraternity age limit. The purpose of the house is to throw outrageous parties, and they are good at it. There is a nice love story thrown in between Wilson and Ellen Pompeo, and Jeremy Piven plays Pritchard, the Dean of students. Pritchard has never gotten over the indignities he suffered at the hands of Mitch, Frank and Beanie during their college years, so he is determined to close down the fraternity. Sounds a bit like **Animal House**, doesn't it? Although Ferrell is quite amusing, he can't match the comic genius of John Belushi, and this movie doesn't deserve a grade higher than C. **GRADE C**

**OLIVER TWIST:** "Beware the historical costume drama whose most impressive feature is the production design." So said Mike Clark in his *USA Today* review, and we have to agree with him. Polanski's 19th Century London looks authentic and wonderful. However, I wonder why this master director chose to make such a familiar story—a story that has had 18 film treatments including two big-screen movies. In 1922, Jackie Coogan played Oliver Twist and Lon Chaney was Fagin. In the 1948 version, director David Lean put Alec Guinness in the role of Fagin and Robert Newton was Bill Sykes. In this 2005 version, Ben Kingsley plays the complicated and always interesting Fagin. He is very good, and the young boy who plays Oliver (John Howard) is winsome and winning. But, it does go on for quite a long time, and because we know the story so well, it gets just a wee bit tedious. Especially since the British dialects are not always easy to understand. I do like Dickens, but the oh, so dark *Oliver Twist* is not my favorite. I'm almost ashamed to say that I think I like the musical version better. We both give this film a B-. **GRADE B-**

**OMAR:** (2013) This was Palestine's submission to the Academy for Best Foreign Language Film. And it was one of five films nominated. It is a well-made movie that tells the grim story of what it is like to be a young Palestinian in the occupied West Bank. It is a blending of love story and political thriller set in an ugly world that feeds on distrust and vengeance. It is not an easy film to watch and I would not recommend it to readers who have not become comfortable with subtitled foreign films that deal with human pain and the no-win situations in which people sometimes find themselves. The lead in the title role is brilliantly played by a talented and handsome young man, Adam Bakri, who Barbara and I predict will find a home in the film industry. A cast of mostly first-time actors add realism to a story of what it must be like to live in fear of death or humiliation every time they step into the street. *Omar* is visually striking and gives an inside look at a culture that is so foreign to us. **GRADE A-**

**ON CHESIL BEACH:** (2018) Lovemaking scenes have become ubiquitous in movies and TV, so it was interesting to see a movie about sex with no lovemaking scenes. There is a sex scene, but it can hardly be called lovemaking. Based on Ian McEwan's novel, and set in 1962 England, this is the story of two young people who fall in love, get married and honeymoon at a beachside hotel. Florence (Saoirse Ronan) comes from a wealthy family. Edward (Billy Howle) comes from a middle-class family, but that is the least of their problems. They have little in common and both are naïve and inexperienced when it comes to sex. The film begins with the two walking hand in hand on the beach, but through flashbacks we see how they met and fell in love. Florence is a talented violinist who started a string quartet that she is passionate about. Edward is a bright student who has a promising future. It was heartwarming to see Florence interact with Edward's family. She was particularly good with Edward's brain-damaged mother. Edward is passionate about Florence, but, although she enjoys kissing him, she doesn't permit anything more sexual to occur. Although Edward has intimated prior sexual encounters, he finally admits that Florence is his "first." Their combined sexual inexperience results in a disastrous wedding night—a night that leads to an annulment. The movie ends with touching scenes in 1975 and 2007. As I left the theatre, I couldn't help but think where is a good sex therapist when you need one? Roman and Howle were excellent, as was the supporting cast. Gary, who thought the first half of the film was very slow, can't go higher than a grade of B and I agree. **GRADE B**

**ON THE BASIS OF SEX:** (2018) This is the inspiring true story of Ruth Bader Ginsburg (RBG) and what she had to overcome in order to become a U.S. Supreme Court Justice. I am sure there are many antecedents that contributed to the strong and spirited woman she became, but this movie starts with her entry into Harvard Law School, her early struggles for acceptance as a woman attorney, her years as a crusader for gender equality, and a dramatic final scene showing the real-life RBG entering the Supreme Court Building in Washington D.C. Barbara and I loved the movie and especially the outstanding work of Felicity Jones and Armie Hammer playing RBG and her husband in this well-acted biopic. Biopics are almost never well attended and in a country sharply divided on anything political, it is not surprising the story of a woman who stands with the minority liberal side of the Supreme Court would receive mixed reviews from critics. *On the Basis of Sex* received 75% from 87 reviews counted. We stand with those who were enthusiastic. **GRADE A-**

**ON THE ICE:** (2011 release) As the opening credits rolled, Barbara whispered a reminder that we never want to live in or even visit a frozen, barren land where the snow never melts. This offbeat independent film was shot entirely on location in Barrow, Alaska. It is the feature film debut by writer/director Andrew Okpeaha MacLean, who is a native of northern Alaska. He, like most of the cast, is Inupiaq. *On The Ice* is a suspenseful morality tale. Two teenagers face a moral dilemma when a seal-hunting trip goes wrong. A tussle turns violent and a local teen is killed in a tragic accident. The two boys are panic stricken and make some bad decisions which result in a cover-up that proves worse than the crime. The acting seemed stilted, but I was never sure if that was the result of inexperienced actors or a reflection of a culture that is very low on affect. There are some solid scenes in this film but overuse of hand held cameras made many scenes seem very amateurish. Still, the cinematography is sometimes stunning and the film is an interesting emersion into a culture that most will find unfamiliar. **GRADE C+**

**ONCE:** This is another example of a film whose critical raves created expectations that were impossible to meet. The New York Times critic said it was the best movie musical he had seen in the last 20 years. I'm afraid we cannot agree. The movie is charming, with a very natural and believable young couple. But, we had a problem with the film. The songs in the movie are about feelings and experiences, so it's important to understand the words. However, that was difficult for us, perhaps because of the Irish accents. I missed some of the lyrics and Gary missed most of them. We liked the music, but the songs were best when we could catch all the lyrics. The guy (Glen Hansard) works in his father's vacuum repair shop and spends his free time writing songs and performing as a street musician. The girl (Markéta Irglová) has come to Ireland from The Czech Republic and sells flowers on the street. She, too, is a musician. They meet and become friends and collaborators. The best scene in the film takes place in a recording studio, where the guy makes a CD of some of his songs, so that he can take it to London and makes his fortune in the music business. The energy of the scene reminded me of the recording session in last year's *Hustle & Flow*. The Irish writer/director, John Carney, wanted to make his low-budget musical as naturalistic as possible, so he cast non-actors in the leading roles. Hansard is the front man for the Irish alt-rock group the Frames, and Irglova is a pianist. The film won an audience award at the Sundance Film Festival. It is definitely a film-festival type movie, and enjoyable as such. Gary finds it impossible to grade, but for me, it was a solid B movie. **GRADE B**

**ONCE UPON A DEADPOOL 2:** (2018) Ryan Reynolds returns as Wade Wilson, otherwise known as Deadpool, in a re-release of *Deadpool 2* under the new name. For the re-release, there is frame story that spoofs *The Princess Bride*. Since I am partial to the *Princess Bride*, and since our local critic gave it four stars and called it "hilarious," I persuaded Gary to go. The movie begins with an

adult Fred Savage in bed with Deadpool reading a bedtime story. He says the story is now rated PG and can bleep out any word that doesn't pass the PG test. That sets up what I thought was the funniest bit later in the movie. Here's the basic movie story: When Wilson loses Vanessa (Morena Baccarin), the love of his life, he tries to kill himself. That fails because one of his special powers is that he cannot die. To get his heart in the right place and join Vanessa in the afterworld, he must protect a 14-year-old mutant teenager who is being threatened by Cable (Josh Brolin) a dangerous cyborg from the future. The movie stresses the importance of the "F" word, although in this case the "F" stands for family. All manner of Marvel mayhem ensues, and all the strange characters from the 2016 **Deadpool** movie are present in this one. Gary's reaction was about par for the course: After a short nap, he asked "Is Z a grade?" Although I did miss some of the Marvel comic references, I nevertheless got some big laughs and enjoyed Deadpool's repartee. **GRADE B-/Z**

**ONCE UPON A TIME...IN HOLLYWOOD:** (2019) This is writer/director/actor Quentin Tarantino's ninth feature film. He has often said his 10<sup>th</sup> would be his last. He burst onto the Hollywood scene in 1993 with **Reservoir Dogs**, a movie regarded by many as the greatest independent film of all time. He boosted his popularity with his second film in 1994, **Pulp Fiction**. Other films he both wrote and directed are **Kill Bill**, **Inglourious Bastards**, and **Django Unchained**. His latest film is the least plot-driven and it might be more enjoyable to think of **Once Upon A Time...In Hollywood** as a series of vignettes in tribute to the final moments of Hollywood's golden age. It is a star filled movie: Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, Margot Robbie, Dakota Fanning, Al Pacino, Damian Lewis, Kurt Russell, Bruce Dern, Luke Perry, Timothy Olyphant, and a few of others you may recognize. The story, such as it is, is set in Los Angeles in 1969. The two lead characters are Rick Dalton (DiCaprio) an aging television actor and Cliff Booth (Pitt) his stunt double and longtime friend. Oh, and Rick has a next-door neighbor you may remember reading about, Sharon Tate. It is an irreverent and often humorous film that received fairly positive reviews from critics. Barbara and I thought there were a number of scenes, especially those with DiCaprio and Pitt that were fun and memorable, but we can't rate this film as high as most of his earlier efforts. At times it dragged and 2 ½ hours seemed too long. **GRADE B**

(Barb's Note: If you see this movie, you'll notice Tarantino's obsession with feet, along with cars being driven on uncharacteristically empty LA streets and freeways.)

**ONE CHILD NATION:** (2019) I can't pretend this documentary is easy to watch, but if you are a history buff and especially if you are interested in the history of China, it is a brutal must-see film. For more than three and a half decades Mainland China implemented a policy in which most married couples were limited to a single child. Watching how China enforced this policy becomes an eye-opening view into big government at its worst. Award-winning documentarian Nanfu Wang explores the ripple effect of this devastating social engineering experiment, uncovering one shocking human rights violation after another -- from abandoned newborns, to forced sterilizations and abortions. It is not a pretty picture. Wang, who left China and lives in United States, must be struck by the irony that she left a country where the government forced women to abort, and moved to another country where the government restricts abortions. The one child per family social experiment ended in 2015, and now China is doing everything it can to purge any record of that shameful period. Of course most countries have histories that are shameful. United States had 200 years of slavery, the decimation of the aboriginal population, and internment camps for loyal Japanese Americans. The movie took home the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival and earned 99% from critics on the Tomatometer. Barbara and I made up half the audience when we saw this educational documentary. We were glad we did. **GRADE B**

**ONE HOUR PHOTO:** The best thing about this movie is the compelling performance of Robin Williams as a lonely disturbed man who becomes obsessed with a family who brings their photos to him for developing. He has worked in the photo lab of a discount superstore for thirteen years, and has collected copies of all the Sorkin family photos. His apartment is barren except for one wall that is papered with these photos. This is a very strange man! In his imagination, he has become part of the family, and when he discovers that the Sorkins are not quite the ideal family he thinks they are, he goes off the deep end. The problem with this movie is that it moves so slowly we had too much time to notice plot details that didn't ring true. Williams' performance deserves an A, and we liked the way the director built the suspense, but we can't give the film more than a B-. Connie Nielsen and Michael Vartan play Nina and Will Sorkin, Gary Cole is the manager of the superstore, and Eric LaSalle plays a detective. The film was written and directed by Mark Romanek. **GRADE B-**

**THE ONE I LOVE:** (2014) It's kind of a romantic dramedy with an odd twist. Mark Duplass and Elizabeth Moss play Ethan and Sophie, a married couple seeking to put a spark back into their relationship in an attempt to save their marriage. Their marriage counselor, played by Ted Danson, sends them to a beautiful vacation house for a weekend getaway. After the set-up, the story drifts toward a Twilight Zone type of science fiction. That is a direction I usually try to avoid, but the creativity drew me in and I found myself enjoying the acting, the story, and even the sci-fi elements. Duplass and Moss are enjoyable to watch and their character's forced self-examination is unpredictable and imaginative. You might be interested in knowing that this is the first feature-length film for director Charlie McDowell. He is the son of veteran actors Malcolm McDowell and Mary Steenburgen, and his stepdad is Ted Danson. For Barbara and me *The One I Love* comes off as a low budget independent film well worth the 90 minute running time. **GRADE B**

**ONE NIGHT AT McCOOL'S:** "How not perfect can one woman be!" Randy (Matt Dillon) is talking about Jewel (Liv Tyler), the extraordinary woman who walked into his life one night and turned it upside down. Randy is explaining to Burmeister (Michael Douglas) why he has hired the hit man to remove Jewel from his life. We also hear about Jewel from two other men who have fallen under her spell. Carl (Paul Reiser) is working out his obsession with a therapist (Reba McEntire) and Detective Dehling (John Goodman) is confessing to a titillated priest. These interlocking recollections are told Rashomon style in this black comedy. We thought Liv Tyler was properly sensual and appealing as a femme fatale that drives men wild and makes their life crazy. **McCool's** is the first movie from producer/actor Michael Douglas's new smaller-scale company, Furthur. The casting is unusual and inspired. Andrew Dice Clay even appears in a double role. The acting is uniformly good and the script is quirky and clever. Our local critic thought it had too many bodies to be a comedy. Has the man ever seen **Fargo**? Gary thought it was very funny and might go as high as a B+. I settled on a B. It is rated R for sex and violence. **GRADE B+/B**

**ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI** (2020 on Amazon Prime): A description of this movie sounds a little like the beginning of a joke: “A boxer, a singer-songwriter, an NFL football star, and a civil rights activist walk into a bar.... Believe me, this film is no joke. It is a powerful drama inspired by true events that took place more than 55 years ago. The movie is a fictional account of a real meeting on February 25, 1964. Four black American icons met one night in Miami. Muhammad Ali, Sam Cook, Jim Brown, and Malcolm X were the four men in that historical meeting. No one knows for sure exactly what was said in the privacy of the meeting, but the writer Kemp Powers certainly has a feel for it. He wrote the 2013 award-winning play on which this movie is based as well as the screenplay. The film premiered at the Venice Film Festival in September, 2020. It was the first film ever shown at the Festival directed by an African-American woman director. It was Regina King’s feature film directorial debut. She made her name as an actor, winning an Academy Award in 2019 for *If Beale Street Could Talk*. For anyone unfamiliar with the four empowering men, the movie opens with a series of insightful vignettes for each of them. But most of the movie unfolds within a small motel room as Malcolm X pushes the men to make a stand for cultural change they all want to come but are unsure of what their role should be. It is an amazing film for a first time feature film director and she has assembled an incredible ensemble cast of relatively unknown names. I will be surprised if this riveting indie doesn’t get some attention at the Academy Awards. It earned 98% from critics on *Rotten Tomatoes*. Barbara and I liked the film especially as the tension built in the second half. It is not only an interesting and insightful film, but also a great conversation starter. **GRADE A**

**OPEN RANGE:** Kevin Costner has created a classic western in *Open Range*. Classic in the sense that it contains all the classic western elements: a lot of gorgeous scenery, a lot of men shooting each other, a generous amount of men bonding over camp fires and on horseback, and a little bit of romance. It also borrows a bit from *High Noon* and *Gunfight at the OK Corral*. Costner and Robert Duvall are partners in a free-range cattle operation and they run afoul of a tyrannical rancher who wants to rid of the world of free-range cattlemen. Duvall is absolutely wonderful! That man totally inhabits every role he plays, and here he acts circles around Costner, who isn’t all that bad himself. The climactic gun battle is quite good--more realistic than many I’ve seen. Annette Benning plays the classic girl-behind-the-picket-fence, but with a twist: she’s a grown woman with a mind of her own. Michael Gambon, the Irish actor, makes a credible villain. I thought the movie was too long and had too many endings, so I gave it a B-. Gary liked it better than I. He says B+.  
**GRADE B+/B-**

**OPEN WATER:** Scuba diving was never high on my things-to-do list, but after seeing this independent film, it fell right off the bottom of the page. Based on a true story, *Open Water* taps into our latent fears of sharks, drowning, the unknown, and the feeling of being terribly alone in an unresponsive universe. It is a relatively short film at 1 hr. 19 minutes and the story is simple. A couple goes on a scuba diving expedition while on vacation, but they accidentally get left behind to fend for themselves in shark-infested waters. The actors are convincing and the dialogue is realistic. Barbara and I agree on a B for *Open Water*. (Barb’s Note: The tension builds slowly in this movie, but by the end you’ll feel like you’re in the water with this unfortunate couple. You won’t catch me scuba diving in open water! )  
**GRADE B**

**OPERATION FINALE:** (2018) Gary and I remember Ben Kingsley for bringing Ghani to life on screen. In *Operation Finale*, however, he is playing a much different sort of role: he portrays the architect of Germany’s Final Solution--Adolph Eichmann. Eichmann was living in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the name of Ricardo Klement and working as a foreman in a Mercedes-Benz factory. He was captured there in 1960 by the Mossad, Israel’s intelligence service, and taken back to Israel to stand trial for war crimes. It was sobering to learn how many in Argentina in the 1960s were sympathetic to the Nazis. As it is equally sobering to learn of those in our country in 2018 who idolize Hitler and the Nazis. The movie is based on the true story of Peter Malkin, who is played onscreen by Oscar Isaac. Isaac first came to our attention in 2014 in the movie *A Most Violent Year*, and we have been impressed with him ever since. He doesn’t disappoint in *Operation Finale*. Of course, Ben Kingsley is marvelous as the efficiently brutal Eichmann. The movie is factually accurate to a surprising degree. Pete Malkin did have conversations with the captive Eichmann and those conversations helped him to realize that the former Nazi was not a monster but a human being, which made Eichmann’s actions during the war even harder to comprehend. Malkin later commented that “a monster can be excused for his behaviour . . . The problem is not how a monster could do it, but how a human being did it.” The operation to extract the Nazi went, in real life, mostly according to plan, but that wouldn’t make for a very exciting movie, so the filmmaker heightened the tension for dramatic effect. At the end of the film, there is a race to get the plane off the ground, with Eichmann’s son leading the charge to rescue him. In real life, Eichmann’s son Nicolas later revealed that he and about 300 fellow fascists found out about the flight taking Eichmann out of Argentina, but they were half an hour too late to prevent the plane from departing. **GRADE B**

**OPERATION MINCEMEAT:** 2021 (Netflix) Two Mr. Darcys are in this movie: Colin Firth, who played Darcy in 1995 in the movie *Pride and Prejudice* as Ewen Montagu of British Naval Intelligence and Matthew Macfadyen (*Pride and Prejudice*, 2005) as Charles Cholmondeley of the RAF. If that isn’t enough to make you want to see the movie, the presence of Kelly Macdonald (*The Girl in the Café*), Penelope Wilton (*Downton Abbey*), and an actor playing a clever intelligence officer named Ian Fleming – yes, that Ian Fleming, years before Bond, should do it. But be warned—it is a true tale of wartime deception and back-room espionage that sticks close enough to the facts to court tedium in the first half of the movie. But the story is just too good to be denied: In 1943, British Intelligence needed to draw Hitler’s attention away from the Allies’ planned invasion of Sicily, so a corpse was outfitted in a Naval uniform, planted with papers indicating the assault would take place in Greece, and thrown in the ocean off the coast of Spain, whose supposedly neutral government was passing information to the Nazis. The dead marine, called Major William Martin, and the documents he held were entirely fabricated. The corpse was in fact Glyndwr Michael, a 34-year-old man whom Montagu chose because he had no known relatives looking for him. His identity wasn’t revealed publicly until the 1990s, when a postscript was added to his tombstone recognizing his part in the successful deception. Cholmondeley never spoke of his part in *Operation Mincemeat*. Churchill, who had approved the operation initially, reportedly received a telegram informing him of the operation’s success, saying: “Mincemeat swallowed rod, line and sinker.” As a result of the false information, the Nazis were caught off guard when, in July 1943, 160,000 Allied troops invaded Sicily and took control of the island in just over a month. That was considered a “turning point” in the war, accelerating Mussolini’s downfall later that month and supporting the Allies in their eventual victory in Europe in September 1945. Mark Twain said it best: “Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn’t.” **GRADE B**

**ORANGE COUNTY:** This is an amusing comedy about a young man who lives in Orange County, CA and dreams of going to Stanford University and becoming a writer. Getting to Stanford turns out to be difficult, especially when the high school's misguided guidance counselor, played by Lily Tomlin, sends the wrong transcript. Colin Hanks (the son of Tom Hanks) is Shaun Brumder, the only sane member of his outrageously dysfunctional family. With Catherine O'Hara as his permanently wigged out mother, John Lithgow as his workaholic father, and Jack Black as his completely burned out brother, it's amazing that Shaun turned out to be a model son. Schuyler Fisk, Sissy Spacek's daughter, is sweet and supportive as Ashley, Shaun's girlfriend. Jake Kasdan, the son of director Lawrence Kasden, directed this film and he did a creditable job. It was written by Mike White who also wrote *Chuck and Buck*. Kasden was apparently able to talk many of his father's famous friends into appearing in his first film. Kevin Kline, Gary Marshall, Chevy Chase, Harold Ramis and Ben Stiller all appear in minor, but funny, roles. I especially want to mention the very funny Jack Black, who first got our attention in *High Fidelity*. He reminds me of John Belushi: Black can raise one eyebrow and it makes me laugh. **Orange County** is our first 2002 movie, and we enjoyed it. **GRADE B**

**ORDINARY PEOPLE:** 1980 (Available for streaming on Prime Video with Paramount+ add on) **Ordinary People** is a 1980 American psychological drama film, directed by Robert Redford in his directorial debut. Barbara and I were looking for a critically acclaimed classic movie that deserves to be remembered. We loved our trip down memory lane. The film follows the disintegration of an upper-middle class family in Lake Forest, Illinois, following the accidental death of one of their two sons and the attempted suicide of the other. It stars Donald Sutherland, Mary Tyler Moore, Judd Hirsch, Timothy Hutton, and Elizabeth McGovern. Robert Redford brings stirring emotion and impressive skill to this story of an affluent family crumbling under the facade of normalcy. Redford's classic was deserving of praise. From the score to the acting, this remains a powerful film and likely inspired hundreds of inside looks into how family members interact with one another. The film marked Mary Tyler Moore's career breakout from the personality of her other two famous roles as Laura Petrie on *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and Mary Richards on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Moore's complex performance as the mother to Hutton's character was well-received and obtained an Oscar nomination for Best Actress. The film grossed \$90 million world wide on a \$6.2 million budget. At the 53<sup>rd</sup> Academy Awards it won Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Supporting Actor for Hutton (the youngest recipient at age 20). It also won five awards at the 38<sup>th</sup> Golden Globe Awards. There is no question **Ordinary People** is historically significant. Better have a box of tissue close at hand. **GRADE A**

**OSAMA:** Barbara asked me to write the review of this film. As I reflect, I realize it will be nearly impossible to evaluate fairly. Even though it was the winner a Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film, it is clearly not a polished product that can be compared with most other films we are exposed to. It was the director's first feature film and the first feature film produced in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban. Actors and actresses in the film are all non-professionals from the city of Kabul. To find the lead, a young girl, the director looked in schools, orphanages, street children centers, and refugee camps. He eventually found his lead when he encountered her on the streets. The story focuses on the impossible plight of women under the Taliban Regime. Women were not permitted to work or even leave their homes without a male relative. This meant that widows without brothers or male cousins could not venture out of their homes even for food or water. In desperation, a mother and grandmother disguise their young granddaughter (Osama) as a male. The story is a simple one about this unlucky girl. I recommend it, not because it is enjoyable, but because it should be experienced. Roger Ebert gives it 3 ½ stars. I simply can't put a grade on it.

**THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL:** This film is set in an historically interesting period in 16<sup>th</sup> Century England. The characters are historical, King Henry VIII, his first wife Katharine, Anne Boleyn and her sister Mary. Hollywood has always been big on "historical," but not so big on "accuracy." This film is based on Philippa Gregory's novel, which Barbara rated much higher than the film. For a story about ambition, sex, and betrayal, the film comes off bland and at times dull. Some critics say "stunningly dull." I wouldn't go quite that far and have to admit that the costumes and set were outstanding. The leads, Natalie Portman (Anne Boleyn), Scarlett Johansson (Mary Boleyn), and Eric Bana (King Henry VIII), who have all shown talent in other roles were, in my opinion, hampered by a weak script. Plus, I think Portman and Johansson were miscast. For me, the most believable scenes were those played by Ana Torrent who portrayed Katharine of Aragon, Henry's first wife. I went to this film based on Barbara's regard for Gregory's novel (same title as the film). My recommendation is to read the novel. My grade is only slightly lower than Barbara's. **GRADE C/C+**

**THE OTHER GUYS:** It is a daunting task to spoof a genre that is already over the top. Barbara and I went to this film knowing that, but hoping for the best. What we got was often amusing, sometimes laugh-out-loud funny, but well short of "the best." The genre being spoofed is "action/adventure/buddy-cop." In recent years with accelerating use of computer graphics and with every filmmaker striving to outdo the last action/adventure film, each new release is in danger of looking like a parody. With Will Ferrell and Mark Wahlberg playing leads and Michael Keaton and Eva Mendes playing supporting roles, the acting is superb. I like Will Ferrell and here he nails the role of Allen Gamble, a nerdy forensic accountant who is better equipped to stay at his desk pushing paper than hitting the streets with his partner Terry Hoitz (played by Wahlberg) who desperately wants action. Hoitz gets his wish when Gamble's paper trail research leads them to a white-collar crime of Bernie Madoff magnitude. Professional critics range from C- to A on this film, so you might find it more compelling than we did. But if you do decide to go, be sure to stay through the credits at the end of the film. You will be rewarded with interesting if not jaw-dropping information. **GRADE C+/B-**

**OUR BRAND IS CRISIS** (2015) Sandra Bullock almost makes this a good movie. Her performance as a campaign strategist who comes back from a self-imposed exile to work for a presidential candidate in Bolivia is excellent. The movie definitely proves the point that politics is a dirty business, but most of us already knew that. In politics perception is everything. and It is the job of campaign strategists, or "fixers," to manipulate that perception in favor of their candidate. No trick is too dirty, no rumor is too scurrilous because, to these fixers, the end justifies the means. The movie highlights the competition between Jane Bodine, Bullock's character, and Pat Candy, played by Billy Bob Thornton channeling James Carville. Neither one cares who signs their pay checks, they just want to win. The movie beautifully illustrates Emma Goldman's famous saying, "If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal." There are some humorous moments that we enjoyed and a few that missed the mark for us. Joaquim de Almeida, a Portuguese actor, does a good job portraying Jane's candidate. He is 28 points behind when she goes to work for him, but that changes when Jane does her thing. The supporting cast is uniformly good and the ending is hopeful, but that only raised our grade from a C to a C-. **Our Brand is Crisis** is based on a 10-year old documentary of the same name. It was probably a better movie. **GRADE C+**

**OUR FRIEND** 2019/2021 (purchase only for \$15 on Prime): Most people have a best friend that they hoped their significant other would also like. The movie is fact-based, and begins with Nicole (Dakota Johnson) introducing her husband Matt (Casey Affleck) to her best friend Dane (Jason Segel). Over time, he becomes their best friend. When Nicole is diagnosed with cancer, her friends gather around, but as the years go by, the friends drift away. But not Dane. He puts his own life on hold to help Matt take care of Nicole and their two daughters. The story jumps back and forth in time, but each scene is identified with how many years before or after her diagnosis. That bothered Gary for a bit, but he quickly got used to it. We witness Nicole and Matt's marriage through the betrayal and Matt's long absences as a foreign correspondent. We get to know their two young daughters. The scene where they tell the girls that their mom is going to die, is heartbreaking. Some critics thought it wallowed too much in sadness. One critic was tempted to dismiss the movie as just another weeper. But, then she watched it. She wrote, "Yes, it's a tearjerker, but it's derived from a first-person article and has three exceptional performances." We couldn't agree more wholeheartedly, and we thank MV reader Holly V. for recommending it. **GRADE B+**

**OUR IDIOT BROTHER:** Both Barbara and I are avid Paul Rudd fans, so rushing to the theater to see this offbeat comedy on opening day was an easy decision. Without the easy disarming likeability of Rudd, this appealing film could have been a disaster. With him it is charming and, of course, funny. Rudd plays Ned, a long haired hippie who may be about the nicest, most pleasant guy in the world. His complete honesty and his trusting belief in the honesty and good intentions of others don't always serve him well. The script demands a strong supporting cast and this film certainly provides that. Ned's three sisters are brilliantly played by Emily Mortimer, Elizabeth Banks, and Zooey Deschanel. In addition there is a full cast of very talented comedic performers who you might recognize, but have difficulty hanging a name on them. This film will not have any Oscar nominations, but if you are looking for a pleasant ninety-five minutes away from the explosions, aliens, and heavy drama, we think you might enjoy *Our Idiot Brother*. We did. **GRADE B**

**OUR KIND OF TRAITOR:** This is our kind of spy movie—no car chases and only one explosion. The emphasis is on character development, and the themes are family, betrayal and honor. Perry (Ewan McGregor) is a Poetics professor at the London University vacationing in Marrakech with his wife when he is befriended by a flamboyant Russian named Dima (Stellan Skarsgard). Unbeknownst to Perry, Dima is a money launderer for the Russian mafia. When Perry and his wife are leaving for home, Dima asks him to deliver a flash drive to MI6. Perry agrees because he is an honorable, nice guy. However, the act of friendship involves both Perry and his wife in the world of international espionage and dirty politics. The tension is maintained throughout and, along with Perry, we don't know who to trust. There is a lot of talk about money laundering and international banking but that doesn't detract from the absorbing story. Damien Lewis plays a British MI6 agent who is determined to bring down a British politician no matter what the cost. Skarsgard is wonderful as a Dima, a man with an extravagant personality who clearly loves his family. McGregor is perfect as a nice guy caught up in a world that he is ill prepared to survive. Naomi Harris is Perry's barrister wife who gradually becomes caught up in the intrigue. Gary and I both liked this movie, which was recommended by several friends. **GRADE B+**

**OUR SOULS AT NIGHT:** (2017) I loved Kent Haruf's novels and have read them all. Haruf died in 2014, so he never lived to see the film of what became his last book, *Our Souls At Night*. That is sad, because Robert Redford has produced a movie that is remarkably true to the novel. The characters in all of Haruf's novels are ordinary people living, what appears to be, ordinary lives. His writing has been described as honest storytelling that is compelling and rings true. I have certainly found it to be so. The movie, *Our Souls At Night*, begins with a proposition: A 70-year-old widow named Addie (Jane Fonda) knocks on the door of a longtime neighbor named Louis (Robert Redford) and asks if he would like to come to her house at night to lie in bed—not for sex, but to talk and fall asleep together. Addie's husband died years ago and Louis has been a widower for a long time. The nights are lonely, and they both miss the closeness of a warm body in the bed and talking with a friend in the dark. As Addie says "the nights are the worst." We meet Holly (Judy Greer), Louis's daughter, and Gene (Matthias Schoenaerts) Addie's son. We also meet Addie's grandson, Jamie, played by Iain Armitage, so good as Sheldon Cooper in TV's *Young Sheldon*. The lives in Haruf's book may seem ordinary, but everyone has secrets, and the joy of his books and this movie is exploring the lives of people you will not soon forget. Gary, who hasn't read the novels, gives the movie a B+, but I, as a fan of the novels, grade the movie higher. **GRADE A/B+**

**OUT OF THE FURNACE:** (2013) To call this film "gritty" is an understatement. It is unrelenting in its bleakness. The setting is a dying steel mill town, and the main characters are weary and defeated. The acting is excellent and the photography outstanding, but the revenge story is as dark and gloomy as its setting. Russell (Christian Bale) is the loving older brother of Rodney (Casey Affleck.) Russell works in front a blast furnace at the steel mill, and is trying his best to lead a good life. Rodney, who is in the military and has served several tours in Iraq, is unemployed and no doubt suffering from PTSD. He refuses to take a job in the mill that killed their father. Desperate for money, Rodney starts fighting in bare-knuckle matches fought in out-of-the-way places. They are violent bouts. This activity brings Rodney into contact with Harlan DeGroat, a nasty backwoods fight promoter/drug dealer played with impressive malevolence by Woody Harrelson. Things don't get any less gritty as the movie moves toward the final showdown between Russell and DeGroat. Critic Richard Roeper calls it "one of the best movies I've seen this year," and that's probably why we decided to see it. Many other critics were less enthusiastic. Mike LaSalle (*San Francisco Chronicle*) calls it "A long, grim exercise in garden-variety pointlessness, disguised as nihilism." The grim and violent story is, we think, minimally offset by the quality of the performances. **GRADE B-** (Note: The final scene has generated much discussion, but director, Scott Cooper (*Crazy Heart*) calls it "an homage to *The Godfather Part II*.")

**THE OUTFIT:** 2022 (Prime Video rental 5.99) Shot during the pandemic, this film is a gripping thriller in which an expert tailor played by Academy Award winner Mark Rylance must outwit a dangerous group of mobsters in order to survive a fateful night. Set in 1956, it's a great story that will keep you guessing until the very end. Leonard Burling aka "English" (Mark Rylance) makes suits for the discerning men of the city, most of them criminals. They keep his business afloat and use his tiny shop as a safe drop-off point for money and mysterious packages. Mark Rylance gives a captivating performance, but there are several compelling supporting players as well. The 62-year-old British legend thinks of himself more as a theatre actor than a movie actor, but his growing list of movie roles may ultimately change his mind. His film career began with the 2015 film *Bridge of Spies*. Barb and I gave that film an **A**. You can read the review in the Movie View Archives. Now he's the leading man in this film as well as the leading man in *The Phantom of the Open* a movie reviewed in this issue of Movie Views. I may be misreading it, but he seems to be having the time of his life in his movie roles. Although

**The Outfit** is entirely fictional, the idea originated when co-writers Graham Moore and Johnathan McClain learned that the first electronic bug ever planted by the FBI was inside a tailor shop in Chicago in 1956. There was this real moment in the '50s, when bugging technology was very new. We were fascinated by this unusual movie. **GRADE A**

**OVER THE HEDGE:** Let me start by saying we don't care much for animated features. Two exceptions have been *The Lion King* and *Shrek* which we loved. This one is no *Shrek*. This movie doesn't have a story that catches your imagination. The animals are cute enough, and the celebrity voices are entertaining, but it's all rather ho-hum. I chuckled a couple of times and the "suburbia" jokes but, for the most part it was just mildly entertaining. The kids in our audience seems to enjoy it quite a bit so, if you decide to see it, I suggest you take a couple of kids with you. For us, this film gets a generous C. For children, it's probably in the B to B+ range. **GRADE C**

**OVERBOARD:** (2018) This movie is a remake and a re-imagining of a 1987 film starring Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn. Both movies have the same name, but in this year's **Overboard** the genders are switched. In the 1987 movie, Goldie Hawn played a cruel but beautiful heiress who mocked and cheated a hired carpenter (Russell). When she falls overboard and gets amnesia, he decides to introduce her to regular life by convincing her they're husband and wife. In 2018 it is Eugenio Derbez who is the heartless rich man who is cruel to Anna Feris (TV's **Mom**), causing her to lose her job. When he falls overboard and washes up on the shore with total amnesia, it is she who collects him from the hospital claiming he is her husband of 15 years and the father of her three children. Nobody recognizes Derbez because he is from Mexico so his face is not familiar to Americans even though his father is fabulously wealthy. In both movies, the inevitable happens and the couples eventually fall in love. (After all, they are romantic comedies.) Eva Longoria is Feris's friend and her husband (Mel Rodriguez) goes along with the deception and hires Derbez to work construction. Much hilarity follows as we watch the wealthy playboy get a lesson in being poor and working for a living. At least, the characters in the movie seem to think it's hilarious. Gary and I not so much. It was nice to see the three daughters bond with Derbez, who is a talented comedian and a fine actor. We love Anna Feris in **Mom** and think that she is perhaps underappreciated as an actor with outstanding comic timing. It's the writing and not the actors that make the 2018 remake seem so flat—and unfunny. Perhaps one of the big differences is that Gary Marshall directed the 1987 film. Rob Greenberg, who also co-wrote the screenplay, directed the remake. His filmography lists some good TV comedies, including **How I Met Your Mother**, but this is his first feature film. We were disappointed in this mediocre movie and give it a grade of C. **GRADE C**

We have to agree with the critic who wrote: ...*you'd be safer to leave this one floating without a life jacket and just renting the '87 one again.*

**THE OVERNIGHT:** (2015) This was a complete waste of our time. Because the Duplass brothers produced it, Taylor Schilling and Adam Scott starred in it, and it got almost 80% on the *Tomatometer*, we took a chance. We regret it. A young couple (Schilling and Scott), who are newcomers to Los Angeles, agree to spend a night with some new friends. And what a night it is: alcohol, pot, nudity, and an emphasis on penises combine to make a movie that could be classified as soft-core pornography. Soft-core porn can be appealing--think **Emmanuelle**—but this was not. Most importantly, it was boring. We expected a comedy, but there were only a few laughs—a very few. The *Seattle Times* critic said it was "*alas, a very odd combination of squirm-inducing and dull.*" She got that right. **GRADE D**

**OWNING MAHOWNY:** This film is a tours de force for Philip Seymour Hoffman who plays the title role in this story taken from real life. Brian Mahowny executed the largest single-handed bank fraud in Canadian history, grossing over \$10 million in eighteen months to feed his gambling obsession. **THUMBS UP**