

film listings



Tell No One

D: Guillaume Canet; with François Cluzet, Marie-Josée Croze, André Dussollier, Kristin Scott Thomas, François Berléand, Nathalie Baye, Jean Rochefort. (NR, 125 min., subtitled)

Tell No One, French director Canet's excellent adaptation of Harlan Coben's bestselling novel, has everything a great personal-paranoia/persecution movie needs: a citizen-hero

who refuses to capitulate to unseen and malevolent powers that are, for reasons unknown, out to destroy him; love, desperation, and erotic obsession as motivating forces; crooked cops; back-alley gangsters; random violence; not-so-random torture; at least one top-notch foot chase; and a soundtrack that features ballads by both Otis Redding and Jeff Buckley. The film's hero is pediatrician Alexandre Beck (Cluzet), whose wife and childhood sweetheart, Margot (Croze), vanishes one night after wandering into the woods by the couple's cherished lake and is presumed murdered. Flash forward eight years, and Alex is still in mourning, balancing the demands of his workaday life with those of the past he constantly revisits in his head, visits punctuated by drunken reveries and flashes from his wife's funeral. Then, on the eighth anniversary of Margot's disappearance, Alex receives an anonymous video e-mail message that suggests everything he knows about that horrible night may be wrong. From the moment that video appears, *Tell No One* is a great ball of unrelenting energy barreling through the streets of Paris, following the once-resigned

but now-energized Alex on his rabid quest to unravel the truth about his wife, a quest that, like so many of the best conspiracy-fueled films (particularly Howard Hawks' brilliant *The Big Sleep*), is more fascinating the more convoluted, and eventually impenetrable, it becomes. By the time Alex starts stumbling into answers in the film's last act, chances are you won't even really care to know what they are, because the thrill of *Tell No One* isn't in the knowing (as proven by the over-long expository conversation that brings the film to a tidy, if uninspiring, conclusion); it's in the *not* knowing. The thrill is in the wondering: wondering where those inner-city gangsters appeared from all of a sudden; wondering who that sinister woman in the sleeveless shirt is; wondering if Alex is really all he claims to be; wondering if his wife is – or was. The thrill is in watching a defeated man pull himself out of his half-dead haze of confusion, desperation, self-loathing, and murky memory and into the rejuvenating life of action, no matter how confusing, desperate, loathsome, and murky that life, and that action, may be.

★★★★ Arbor

– Josh Rosenblatt

new reviews

BRIDESHEAD REVISITED

D: Julian Jarrold; with Matthew Goode, Ben Whishaw, Hayley Atwell, Emma Thompson, Michael Gambon, Greta Scacchi. (PG-13, 135 min.)

I'm not sure that Evelyn Waugh, a Roman Catholic convert, would have endorsed this accomplished adaptation of his 1945 novel about the pre-World War II chasmic divides of class and religion and one man's efforts to scale one while rejecting the other. Goode plays the lowborn, aspiring painter Charles Ryder, a role originated by Jeremy Irons in the 1981 miniseries. New to Oxford, Charles is unformed and attention-starved, but very quickly he becomes the pet of Lord Sebastian Flyte (Whishaw, Rimbaud from *I'm Not There*). One might be inclined to call the ever-tipping Sebastian a playboy, but he's too guileless for that, and too puppyishly besotted with Charles. (As with the novel, the parameters of their friendship are never explicitly laid out, although the film does introduce a drunken kiss.) The film's first passage, with its bucolic setting and collegial passes by way of naked fountain dips, is fine enough, but *Brideshead Revisited* becomes a far more interesting picture when it puts the frolicking aside to explore the insidious sway of Sebastian's home-stead of Brideshead, which is as much an idea as it is a house (and more like a mausoleum than a place to call home). There, Charles meets Sebastian's comely sister, Lady Julia Flyte (Atwell), and his severe – and severely Catholic – mother, the Lady Marchmain (Thompson), and it is then that the film begins its inevitable uptick toward tragedy. *Brideshead Revisited* spans several decades, and it's worth noting that everyone plausibly ages – which sounds like an easy enough trick of etched lines and a daubing of gray at temples but is more intriguingly telegraphed, via the two male leads, in the hardening of one and the softening of the other. As his character calcifies with age and heartbreak, Goode loses his boyish mien and turns out to be a more compelling actor than his earlier scenes (or his earlier résumé) would suggest, and Whishaw, who goes from a lanky, loose-limbed adolescent to a broken and emaciated barely-there man, delivers an open-faced, lacerating performance. She gets less screen time, but Thompson's Lady Marchmain is chillingly effective, and by the time she delivers her tour-de-force monologue, at once banishing Charles while further snaring him in Brideshead's airless clutch, one realizes how layered the script by BBC stalwart Andrew Davies and Jeremy Brock really is. Yes, there are the practically codified stringed swoons of a period picture – and they're pleasurable swoons, too. But the film, a distinctly secular take on Waugh's religiosity, is far more interested in the battle of blind faith vs. rigid disbelief and its devastating effects. Herein, everyone is complicated – by their station, their philosophy, their God – and everyone is complicit.

★★★★ Arbor

– Kimberley Jones

ELSA & FRED D: Marcos Carnevale; with Manuel Alexandre, China Zorrilla, Blanca Portillo, José Ángel Egido, Omar Muñoz. (PG, 108 min., subtitled)

Old folks in love, ain't it grand? That pretty much sums up *Elsa & Fred*, a septuagenarian love story from Spain that will likely warm the cockles of your heart, even though it's hardly the stuff of great romance. Keeping with the cinematic tradition in which opposites attract, the introverted Fred (Alexandre) and the extroverted Elsa (Zorrilla) meet when she delivers a check for the damage caused by a fender bender outside the Madrid apartment building in which they both live. He is politely reserved, careful in his words and gestures; she is coyly manipulative, bending her words and gestures to fit her immediate needs. In due time, they fall for each other, though Fred has some initial difficulty with daring Elsa's willingness to break the rules, all in the name of living. (In some ways, she's a scaled-down version of Auntie Mame.) Zorrilla is delightfully engaging as the gregarious woman for whom truth is a relative term – jabbering incessantly, she's concocted so many stories about her life that even she has trouble keeping up with what's fiction and what's not. Though her temperament can be maddening, it's easy to see why the staid Fred finds Elsa attractive, though the film does a poor job in addressing the various familial conflicts that arise as a result of their odd coupling. But in the film's third act, in which the two lovers go to Rome to fulfill Elsa's lifelong dream to re-create the Trevi Fountain scene in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, *Elsa & Fred* goes flat on charm. The dream fulfillment seems more silly than romantic, and it brings the movie to an abrupt end that is wholly unsatisfying. It's as if director and screenwriter Carnevale ran out of ideas for this elderly couple, other than the inevitable. How refreshing it would have been to watch these two fade into the sunset. Now that would have been a love story.

★★ Arbor

KUSELAN D: P. Vasu; with Rajnikanth, Nayantara, Meena. (NR, 159 min., subtitled)

Not reviewed at press time. In this Indian remake of the Malayalam hit *Kadha Parayumbol*, a film star gives an assist to an old acquaintance. The film is being simultaneously released in Tamil- and Telugu-language versions.

– Marjorie Baumgarten

Tinseltown South

THE MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN

D: Ryuhei Kitamura; with Bradley Cooper, Vinnie Jones, Brooke Shields, Leslie Bibb, Roger Bart. (R, 85 min.)

Not reviewed at press time. A photographer in search of compelling subject matter latches on to the work of a notorious serial killer who slices and dices late-night commuters on the subway. The plot is based on a Clive Barker short story.

– Marjorie Baumgarten

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THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR

D: Rob Cohen; with Brendan Fraser, Maria Bello, Jet Li, John Hannah, Michelle Yeoh, Luke Ford, Isabella Leong. (PG-13, 114 min.)

It's been seven years since husband-and-wife adventurers Rick and Evelyn O'Connell (Fraser, playing Indy, and Bello, playing Rachel Weisz, poorly) last kicked off the