

# Movie Reviews

BY STEVE WARREN

## KINGSMAN: THE GOLDEN CIRCLE (R)

★★

When the people on screen are having more fun than you are, you know you're watching a bad movie. Actually, Julianne Moore is the only one who seems to be enjoying herself in this Kingsman sequel – but she must have looked at her paycheck before every scene to look so happy. She plays Poppy, who runs “a global monopoly on the drug trade” from her theme park/hideout in Cambodia. She has all members of Kingsman, the independent intelligence agency operating out of a Saville Row haberdashery, killed; but two escape: Eggsy (Taron Egerton), the young man who was recruited and Eliza Doolittle in the first film, and his boss, Merlin (Mark Strong). Later they discover a third musketeer, Harry (Colin Firth), who we thought was dead but only lost one eye and his memory. The remains of Kingsman team up with their American counterpart, Statesman, which operates out of a Kentucky distillery. That allows much of the film's humor to come from trading in Southern stereotypes, circa Beverly Hillbillies. Poppy's master plan is to infect all her customers worldwide with a slow-acting virus, and announce she'll release the antidote if the U.S. will legalize all drugs and grant her amnesty. (This would force her to lower her prices and pay taxes, so what's her point?) The President (Bruce Greenwood) sees it as a chance to win the War on Drugs by killing off all addicts. The trailer suggests nonstop action, but there are plenty of stops and the action itself is often disappointing. Oh, and Elton John plays himself. When Monty Python was silly it was still more intelligent than most serious drama, but this movie makes Michael Bay's worst look like a Harvard graduate thesis film.

## MARK FELT: THE MAN WHO BROUGHT DOWN THE WHITE HOUSE (PG-13)

★★ 1/2

Remember the last time the Washington swamp was drained? That story was told better in *All the President's Men*, but here it is for a new generation from a new perspective. Mark Felt (Liam Neeson) is a 30-year man with the FBI in 1972 when the Watergate break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters occurs. As Deputy Associate Director Felt thinks he'll move to the top spot when J. Edgar Hoover dies; but one of the President's Men, an outsider, gets the job instead. It quickly becomes obvious that the people caught at Watergate had close ties to Nixon,

his inner circle and the Committee to RE-Elect the President (CREEP); so the White House tries to stop the investigation, despite the FBI's supposed independence. Felt, a Democrat, is so bitter about everything and so hostile toward everyone, he should be the prime suspect when someone starts leaking classified information to Time magazine and the Washington Post, which dubs him “Deep Throat.” While all this is going on, Felt and Audrey (Diane Lane), “the perfect little FBI wife,” are searching for their hippie daughter who's been missing for a year. Although Felt is portrayed as a hero, he's so unpleasant most of the time that it's hard to root for him. It's like current politics, where you root against the other side instead; but that's not the best way to make a movie. Lane has only a few scenes and tries too hard to make the most of them. If this amazing story is new to you you'll be lost amid the plethora of characters, many of whom seem interchangeable; but if you keep your eye on Felt and Nixon (playing himself in archival footage), you'll get the gist.

## MANOLO: THE BOY WHO MADE SHOES FOR LIZARDS (NR)

★★★

“Manolo: The Man without whom the Women of Sex and the City Would Have Gone Barefoot” would have been a more commercial title for this odd portrait of shoe designer Manolo Blahnik. Being fashion-challenged myself, I hoped this would be that rare documentary that would arouse my interest in a topic I cared nothing about. It didn't achieve that goal but it often kept me interested in the film itself. Director Michael Roberts shamelessly travels to more countries than a Bond movie, employs clever animation behind opening and closing credits, and features reenactments not only of moments from Manolo's life but also a scene from one of his favorite movies, *Blonde Venus*, with the drums beaten with shoes instead of sticks. A number of celebrities – friends, customers or both – sing Manolo's praises, from Rihanna to Anna Wintour (“The Devil Wears Manolo” – there's another title!). I'm not a fan but I can't afford his shoes anyway so it doesn't matter what I think. While he comes across as a flamboyant gay stereotype, no one seems to know of his ever having had sex with anyone. He's apolitical, hates crowds and says he wants to be alone when he's at home. Roberts, a fashion journalist making his first film, seems to know Manolo as well as anyone; and by the end of his film you will too.

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KINGSMAN: THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

# Station Control PLOTS ASK TO JUST GO WITH IT

BY BENJAMIN CARR

## THE GOOD PLACE (NBC)

On the surface, this returning program seems just as bright and delightful as it was last year. But looks can be deceiving. As we learned in the first season finale, the show is and has always been set in Hell. Ted Danson's character Michael, once thought to be an angel, was revealed as a demon from Hell intent to torture our heroes in new and inventive ways. Kristen Bell's character Eleanor – a bad, bad seed who still has the audience's rooting interest – has become savvy to the afterlife where she is trapped, but she is still powerless against the Devil and his machinations. In spite of the new season's crazy premise the show is entertaining feels fresh.

## GHOSTED (Fox)

A show about a secret government organization investigating paranormal phenomena has returned to the airwaves on Fox. But *Ghosted* doesn't bring us a new Mulder and Scully. It brings us Leroy and Max, played by gifted comedians Craig Robinson (*The Office*) and Adam Scott (*Parks and Recreation*). The show is silly but solid. Max is a bookstore clerk and former scientist, his life destroyed after the possible UFO abduction of his wife. Leroy is a mall security officer, formerly a missing persons detective with the LAPD. A secret agent with an organization called The Underground names them in a video before he is abducted by aliens, so they are recruited to find him. Suddenly both are on the run from headless monsters, zapped by lasers from spaceships and pulled into the mystery surrounding Max's wife. It is all very zany.

## The Good Place



## STAR TREK: Discovery (CBS)

Now that the CBS All Access show has premiered, the veil of secrecy surrounding its premise has been revealed. It is the story of First Officer Michael Burnham, in the years before Kirk and Spock, nearly instigated an intergalactic war with the original *Star Trek* monsters, the Klingons. Sonequa Martin-Green stars as the impulsive, Vulcan-raised human Michael. And the character and actress are fascinating. The deep dive into a darker, more violent and less hopeful *Star Trek* may turn off some fans. But, for others, it may just be a relief to see these worlds again.

## HOME THEATER

# NEW RELEASES

THE LATEST DVD, BLU RAY & VOD RELEASES

By John Moore

## ALICE COOPER – WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE SPECIAL EDITION

(Eagle Vision/Alive)

This Alice Cooper DVD set – including the 1976 “Welcome To My Nightmare” concert film as well as a TV special (“Alice Cooper: The Nightmare”) from the year before – manages to do the seemingly impossible, being both nostalgically dated and simultaneously timeless. The onstage effects, the costumes, the use of freakishly large puppets in both Alice Cooper's live show and the ABC TV special reek of the 1970s, but the music, even four decades later, is still as emotionally and impactfully relevant. Even if you're not a longtime Alice Cooper fan, the sheer fascination of this live set and the TV special should be enough to pull anyone in.

## JANE'S ADDICTION – ALIVE AT TWENTY-FIVE (Cleopatra/MVD Visual)

A lot has happened in the 25 years since Jane's Addiction last released their fantastic, one-time swan song *Ritual De Lo Habitual*: The band split up and got back together

several times; Front man Perry Farrell invented the modern-day touring rock festival with and guitarist Dave Navarro managed to join and quit a slew of different bands. To celebrate the album's silver anniversary, the group toured the globe in 2015 and 2016 to play the album in its entirety. Their show at Irvine Meadows Amphitheater in Irvine, CA is captured brilliantly here in the concert film (on Blu Ray, DVD and CD). The set features all the groundbreaking album tracks in their original order, plus a handful of other fan favorites. Twenty-five years later, Jane's Addiction shows they are still relevant.

## HYPE! [COLLECTOR'S EDITION]

(Shout! Factory)

In 1996, as grunge was finally starting to fade from popular culture, filmmaker Doug Pray put out the seminal documentary about the genre and the Seattle music scene that created it. In the two decades that have passed since its initial release, *Hype!*, has gone on to become the chief reference point for just about any book or article about the scene. Shout! Factory is finally giving the documentary its first ever Blu-Ray release with this collector's edition that includes all new commentary from the director, several interviews and performances that never made the original. It also includes the Peter Bagge animated short “Hate.” Fly the flannel and lace up the docs for another viewing.

