

the debut feature from mono-named film critic Kogonada. Like Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson*, this is a film that inextricably links place with ideas, and ideas with characters that are in a holding pattern. The question is whether such a story can find a way to marry the brain and heart, but *Columbus* pulls it off movingly. Cho plays Jin, a translator who has arrived in Columbus, IN, because his estranged father, an internationally renowned architect, has suffered a stroke while visiting the city—a mecca of remarkable modernist buildings—to give a lecture. Jin meets Casey (Richardson), a high school graduate who works in a library and has eschewed college ambitions to stay in town and care for her mother, a recovering drug addict. Each has a deep well of sadness, and while their age difference all but prohibits romantic attachment, they bond as friends over visits to and conversations about Columbus's architecture, especially buildings that can't help but evoke powerful thoughts and feelings. This coming together of two outwardly different people, who each need understanding as well as a jolt to move forward in life, ultimately proves to be irresistible. Also featuring Parker Posey in a small but important part, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Dark River ★★★

FilmRise, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95



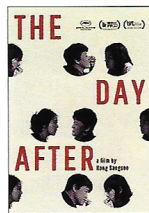
Acting leads Ruth Wilson and Mark Stanley raise this British drama above its ceaseless tone of misery, although the film is also truly compelling for its evocation of strangely menacing farm country. Wilson is Alice, a thirtysomething woman returning to her recently-deceased father's (played by Sean Bean in flashbacks) farm following 15 years of absence. Confronting her upon arrival is Alice's older brother Joe (Stanley), who is resentful that she has not been seen at all while he cared for their father through the latter's protracted illness. The backstory on Joe and Alice's painful family history is alluded to in disturbing bursts of memory as tensions escalate between the siblings when they end up competing for tenancy of the farm. The images of Yorkshire country carry a deceptive beauty, as the rich green belt of Alice's and Joe's farm teems with unfathomable, even unsettling, numbers of creepy-crawly life. Although the ending is a bit clunky, overall writer-director Clio Barnard's *Dark River* offers a fascinating exploration of what happens when a family is not ready to confront, forgive, and heal. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### The Day After ★★

Cinema Guild, 101 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

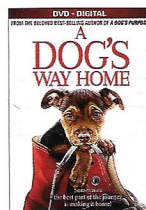
South Korean director Hong Sang-soo's film presents an uncomfortable comic story of

infidelity. Bongwan (Kwon Hae-hyo) is a Seoul book publisher whose wife Haejoo (Cho Yun-hee) is aware that her husband is having an affair. She tries to interrogate him over breakfast, but he is evasive. Bongwan was having an affair with his assistant Changsook (Kim Sae-byuk), but that soured and she quit her job. Replacing Changsook is Areum (Kim Min-hee), a sensitive aspiring writer. Unfortunately for Areum, her first day on the job is thrown into tumult when Haejoo arrives at her husband's office and violently mistakes Areum for Changsook. Haejoo's physical assault on the unsuspecting young woman enables Bongwan to lie to his wife that Areum was a one-time mistress and he will not retain her as an assistant—which results in Areum being fired and Changsook being brought back into the office. Hong's filmmaking style involves lengthy conversations between the characters, non-linear sequences, and dreary black-and-white cinematography. Optional. (P. Hall)



### A Dog's Way Home

★★★1/2  
Sony, 96 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

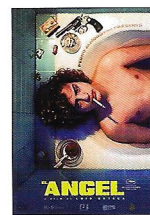


Adapted from the titular 2018 book by W. Bruce Cameron (*A Dog's Purpose*), the plot of filmmaker Charles Martin Smith's live-action canine soap opera centers on the old incredible journey chestnut of an animal making its way back to its owners over a long distance. Bella (voiced by Bryce Dallas Howard—yes, she talks) is a puppy brought up by a cat after her pitbull mother is seized by a nasty animal control officer. Bella eventually finds a home with med student Lucas (Jonah Hauer-King) and his mother Terri (Ashley Judd), the latter an army veteran coping with post-service depression. Lucas falls afoul of a developer who not only is planning to tear down some deserted houses where stray cats and dogs live but also enlists a dogcatcher to target Bella. In desperation, Lucas and his girlfriend Olivia (Alexandra Shipp) arrange for Bella to stay temporarily with Olivia's folks in New Mexico, but she escapes and begins a perilous quest through the wilds of New Mexico and Colorado towards home. So long as the movie focuses on Bella and the animals she encounters along the way—particularly an orphaned cougar cub she befriends—the story is engaging enough, especially since the locations are gorgeous. Unfortunately, the human characters are unbearably bland—not only Lucas, Terri, and Olivia, but also the people that Bella interacts with on her journey. And it is this mediocrity of the human element that undermines one's enjoyment of Bella's quest.

Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### El Angel ★★1/2

Passion River, 115 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Carlos Robledo Puch was a baby-faced 19-year-old in 1971-72, when he went on a crime spree in Buenos Aires that included 11 murders, as well as numerous robberies, rapes, and kidnappings. After his arrest, Puch was called the "Death Angel" or "Black Angel" because of the inexplicable divergence between his good looks and solid upbringing and his unspeakable actions. Luis Ortega's docu-drama can be criticized for failing to provide much psychological insight into Puch and for romanticizing his story, but it does boast a charismatic turn from Lorenzo Ferro—who bears a strong physical resemblance to the actual killer as a young man—and striking visuals, with the period settings captured in colorful widescreen images. Still, the narrative is thoroughly unpleasant, charting Puch's evolution from a high school kid who enjoys breaking into houses and stealing motorcycles, to a hardened thief who pulls off heists of guns and money, and finally to a killer who apparently enjoys shooting people just for the thrill of it. Anyone looking for answers about why Puch embarked on a career of mindless violence will undoubtedly be disappointed, but *El Angel* does present an effective account of this disturbing case. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Ferahfeza (Ships)

★★★1/2  
IndiePix, 97 min., in Turkish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Turkish filmmaker Elif Relig's feature film directing debut, which won the FIPRESCI Award and the Special Jury Prize at the 2013 European Film Festival, centers on Ali (Ugur Uzunel), a shipyard worker stuck in a tiresome job due to his father, who works in the same shipyard. Bored by the monotony, Ali spends time watching ships sail off to distant horizons that he fears he will never visit. One day, Ali discovers a half-completed graffiti mural of a ship and takes it upon himself to find the artist. That creative force is Eda (M. Sitare Akbas), who is also in a suffocating relationship with her father. Ali believes the pair are foreordained to travel to faraway destinations together, although his dreams and reality never quite manage to overlap. The two leads have a dynamic chemistry and their poignant union helps fuel this emotional drama. And under Relig's expert direction, the relationship between Ali and Eda never grows soggy, while the story also swerves in