

# movie reviews

## The Big Year 20th Century Fox In Theaters: 10.14

It's mind-blowing how countless unproduced yet brilliant screenplays sit on a shelf for years, and others, with the most mundane storylines imaginable, are set free upon an unsuspecting public. Speaking of the latter, how does a 100-minute feature about bird watching sound? Terrible, you say? Well, here it is anyway! In an attempt to break the record of spotting over 732 bird species in North America in one calendar year, three men, including a recently retired business executive (**Steve Martin**), a working man who still lives with his parents (**Jack Black**) and the current record holder (**Owen Wilson**), trek across various landscapes while continuously trying to outwit each other all in the name of triumph. As friendships form and alliances are shattered, the trio not only discover an unbelievable variety of flying fowl, but also the deeper meaning behind the importance of life. While Martin appears to be the only reasonable candidate for being casted into this comedy clearly produced for those who were alive during **President Franklin D. Roosevelt's** terms in office, Black and Wilson are terribly miscast and add nothing for younger generations to enjoy. The film is as entertaining as listening to your grandfather discuss the joys of bird watching. You'll want to walk out, but must refrain in fear of upsetting the senior citizens in close proximity. For viewers with an AARP membership, this conservative comedy is as tasty as a warm Werther's Original from your pocket. —*Jimmy Martin*

## Iggy & the Stooges Raw Power Live: In the Hands of the Fans MVD Entertainment Group Street: 09.27

A group of Iggy & the Stooges fans win the opportunity to film the band playing live at the *All Tomorrow's Parties Festival* in 2010. This is supposed to be the premise of the film, but I don't really think that a DVD of a concert really needs a premise. I think it's kind of like trying to work a plot into a skin flick. No one really wants premise in their live rock show, they just want to rock. I'll hand it to the lucky winners—all of the footage from the show is what they filmed and it looks great, but I don't think the Stooges need to resort to such methods to sell a concert film. They're the Stooges, and when they do their thing, it is just what I need it

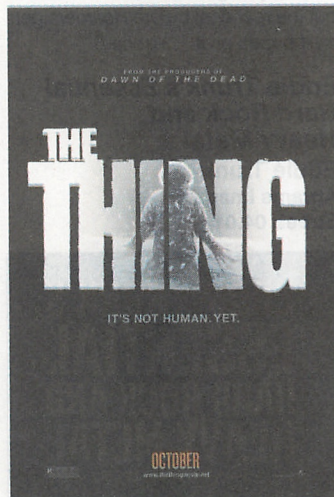
to be. They play the entire *Raw Power* album with ferocious energy, and despite the fact that the guys are all showing their age, they don't sound like it. Iggy didn't go as far as to roll in broken glass, but he still brought a huge presence to the show. The extras on the disc feature the filmmakers having a short Q&A with the band where you really get to see Iggy go on some random, crazy tangents and it's well worth a look. —*Ben Trentelman*

## The Red Chapel Lorber Films Street Date: 10.04

It's no secret that the country of North Korea has been shrouded under a cultural blanket for over 50 years. Under the leadership of **General Kim Jong-il** (aka the Dear Leader), the socialist state's citizens have endured an unprecedented storm of fear and oppression, and that's exactly what director **Mads Brügger** wants to expose in his documentary, *The Red Chapel*. The title comes from the name of Mads' comedy troupe (as well as a code name used by a Communist spy cell), which embodies two adopted Danish-Korean comedians, **Simon and Jacob**, the latter being a self-proclaimed "spastic." In order to gain access into the restricted country, the ensemble pose as a pro-Marxist group and offer to perform a Danish-inspired vaudevillian showcase before an auditorium of students for cultural exchange. What results is a voyeuristic glimpse into a country occupied by individuals appearing to be controlled by an invisible force. The most poignant and pertinent element comes from the relationship between Jacob and **Ms. Pak**, the group's patriotic tour guide, as she becomes eerily attached to the guest in what appears to be an elaborate scheme to disguise the nation's true feelings and treatment toward the handicapped. It's astonishing that all of the footage presented was confiscated by the North Korean secret police and analyzed to assure the film expressed love and respect for the dictator, but nothing could be further from the truth as Mads has produced his own form of propaganda to bring the realization of a broken country to light. *The Red Chapel* takes the notion of espionage filmmaking one step further in the right and entertaining direction. —*Jimmy Martin*

## The Thing Universal In Theaters: 10.14

Rather than creating yet another remake in Hollywood, writer **Eric Heisserer** and director **Matthijs van Heijningen**



**Jr.** refrained from mimicking **John Carpenter's** *The Thing* (which they are quoted as saying would be like "painting a mustache on the Mona Lisa") and expanded the snowy horror story by exploring the origins of the extraterrestrial. Set in Antarctica in the winter of 1982 (three days before the original's timeline), a team of Norwegian scientists unearth an alien artifact along with an unknown creature. After hiring an American paleontologist (**Mary Elizabeth Winstead**) to recover the discovery without harm, the organism escapes and slaughters team members one by one only to replicate their identities, leaving the mystery of who is still human for those still breathing. It's abundantly clear Heisserer and Heijningen Jr. are super fans of Carpenter's film and have developed an in-depth homage to the source material for their fellow Carpenter fanatics. However, for those attached to the graphic, sometimes disturbing, make-up artistry delivered by **Rob Bottin** in the '80s, you'll only feel semi-complacent with the CGI renderings offered in this update. While many important plot points are themselves replicas, the subtle twists and alterations make this prequel much more appealing than sitting through a "been there, done that" shot-for-shot remake, especially with the hidden Easter eggs strategically inserted throughout the film. —*Jimmy Martin*

## Tyrannosaur Strand Releasing In Theaters: 11.04

Within the first five minutes of **Paddy Considine's** dramatic thriller, it's blatantly clear the male lead is one of the most soulless characters to reach the screen in ages. Joseph (**Peter Mullan**)

is an alcoholic with a gambling problem whose temper instigates unbelievably callous acts of violence. After kicking his dog to death, shattering a store window and attacking three individuals in a bar, Joseph finds himself hiding from responsibility in the clothing racks of a thrift store owned by Hannah (**Olivia Colman**). Transforming the awkward situation into an opportunity to offer comfort through religion, Hannah attempts to offer sanctuary for the self-destructive loner. As their relationship expands, the truth behind Hannah's abusive marriage surfaces and Joseph attempts to redeem a life fueled by anger and hate by returning the favor. Mullan truly embodies the essence of pure hatred with his soulless eyes that alone express a life smothered with neglect, which translates beautifully on camera. The hopelessness and sorrow Colman brings to the film is mesmerizing, but it's the well balanced transition to power that leaves a permanent mark. First-time director Considine has constructed an absolutely brilliant film that refuses to soften its content or its characters and their actions. It's stunning how Considine is able to successfully convey such a cold-blooded character that once appeared to be on an unstoppable path of self-destruction. (This film is playing exclusively at *The Art House Cinema* in Ogden, Utah.) —*Jimmy Martin*

## We Were Here Red Flag Releasing In Theaters: 11.18

In the early '80s, an epidemic with no name was sweeping through the gay community of San Francisco. Often called the gay cancer, eventually the disease was identified as AIDS and claimed 15,548 San Franciscans—many of them young, sexually active gay males. *We Were Here* weaves together archival footage and present-day interviews with five individuals who lived through the epidemic to create a very heavy film. *We Were Here* looks at the community through a microscope, illuminating not only how the AIDS tragedy affected lives but also how community members were able to mobilize to force new research and advancements in treating the disease. Although the focus is narrow, the story is ultimately a universal one—dealing with loss, recovery and the strength that people find in one another when faced with incredible odds. —*Jeanette D. Moses* ■

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