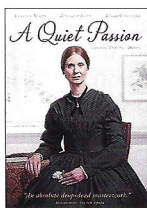


to visit her uncle, a British ambassador, and meets scholarly, soft-spoken Henry Cadogan (James Franco) with whom she has a tragic romance. Unfazed, the fiercely intelligent and independent Bell treks with a guide (Jay Abdo) and camel caravan through the Syrian Desert, learning about the Bedouin culture, and noting: "My heart belongs to no one now but the desert." Bell encounters hostile nomadic warriors, fends off admiring sheiks, and at Petra's fabled ruins in Jordan banters beguilingly with T.E. Lawrence (a miscast Robert Pattinson). Meanwhile in Damascus, the unhappily married British Consul General, Charles Doughty-Wylie (Damian Lewis), falls in love with her. While the vast landscapes are magnificently photographed by Peter Zeitlinger, writer-director Werner Herzog's screenplay is lethargic and full of archaic dialogue. Optional. (S. Granger)

A Quiet Passion

★★★1/2

Music Box, 126 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Writer-director Terence Davies brings his idiosyncratic poetic sensibility to the life of Emily Dickinson in a film that is mannered and extremely deliberate, albeit presented in the form of a conventional biography. *A Quiet Passion* begins with the young Dickinson's expulsion from Mount Holyoke for her unorthodox religious views and the story continues through the decades that she spent in her father's Amherst home, including the years in which she declined to leave the grounds at all. Cynthia Nixon as Dickinson and Jennifer Ehle as her supportive sister are excellent, coping with the deaths of their father (Keith Carradine) and mother (Joanna Bacon) and marital infidelity on the part of their brother (Duncan Duff). Emily's hostility to the prim morality and male-centric bias of her age is a major motif, expressed primarily through a speculative portrayal of a friendship with an aphorism-spouting teacher (Catherine Bailey) who sounds as if she could have stepped out of a play by Oscar Wilde. The core of the film, however, is Dickinson's verse, for which she gained recognition only after death, as well as Dickinson's hopeless relationship with a married minister who was one of the few to appreciate her poems. A richly textured character study of a premier American poet, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Resident Evil: Vendetta

★★★

Sony, 97 min., R, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$26.99



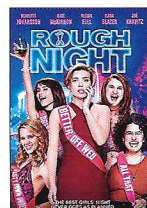
Although the live-action movie series based on the popular video game franchise set in a world engulfed in a zombie apocalypse supposedly ended

with *The Final Chapter*, the CGI-animated features are apparently continuing. This third installment has Chris Redfield (voiced by Kevin Dorman), agent of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance, enlisting cynical colleague Leon S. Kennedy (Matthew Mercer) to help track down arms dealer Glenn Arias (John DeMita). Arias—seeking revenge against the government—plans to unleash a virus that will create a wave of super-savage zombies that are subject to his control. The heroic duo also aim to rescue Professor Rebecca Chambers (Erin Cahill), a scientist studying the virus, who Arias has taken prisoner and intends to marry. The plot is rudimentary and the characterizations are typically sketchy, but the action sequences are energetically mounted—especially a final face-off involving the heroes and a monstrous mutation. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Rough Night

Sony, 101 min., R, DVD:

\$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99, Sept. 5



Feminism takes a couple of steps backward in this estrogen-forced comedy when a Miami bachelorette weekend goes awry. Aiming for a gender-flipping reversal of *The Hangover* and similar fare, the raucous story revolves around Jess Thayer (Scarlett Johansson), who is running for the Florida state senate. Although she projects a straitlaced image, Jess wasn't always a goody-two-shoes. Indeed, as Alice (Jillian Bell)—her needy, still-single former college roommate friend—reminds her, Jess once encouraged Alice in a frat-house beer-pong tournament, whispering "Do it for womankind." Now Jess is getting married, and Alice organizes a party weekend at a posh beach house borrowed from one of Jess's campaign donors. Attending are strident political activist Frankie (Ilana Glazer) and almost-divorced New York socialite Blair (Zoë Kravitz), who were once a hot 'n' heavy duo—plus Pippa (Kate McKinnon), Kate's free-spirited Australian chum, dubbed "Kiwi" by jealous Alice. After drinking, snorting cocaine, and carousing as a posse, complications arise over the accidental death of a brawny male stripper, coupled with the inconvenient attention of the smarmy swingers-next-door (Demi Moore, Ty Burrell)—not to mention the arrival of menacing jewel thieves. Working from a cliché-laden script, co-writer/director Lucia Aniello's *Rough Night* features a predictably formulaic and flimsy plot peopled with stereotypical (and unlikable) characters. Only fitfully funny, this is an optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Song to Song

Broad Green, 129 min., R, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

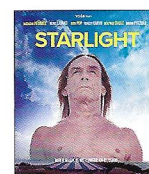
After making two much-praised films

in the 1970s—*Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*—writer-director Terrence Malick retreated into seclusion for two decades. Lately, he has grown increasingly productive with less critically acclaimed films such as *To the Wonder* and *Knight of Cups*. In a meandering, semi-improvisational fashion, *Song to Song* serves up a romantic roundelay set against the Austin, TX, music scene. Cook (Michael Fassbender) is a bigwig in the business, attracting Faye (Rooney Mara), an aspiring singer-songwriter, who has hopes of advancing her career. Cook also sees promise in handsome BV (Ryan Gosling), another songwriter, but BV shows an interest in Faye, leading to a pallid romantic triangle. To add to the complexity, Cook seduces pretty waitress Rhonda (Natalie Portman), while BV, in response to Faye's dalliance with Cook, connects with love-lorn Amanda (Cate Blanchett), and Faye moves on to experimentation with sultry Zoey (Bérénice Marlohe). All of these story threads are tossed together, and any discernible chronology takes a backseat to long, rambling scenes of characters traipsing around the Texas capital while reciting pretentious interior monologues in voiceover. Yet another movie suitable only for absolute diehard Malick fanatics, this is not recommended. (F. Swietek)



Starlight

Cleopatra, 100 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray: \$19.99



In this star-studded art house circus drama, director Sophie Blondy mixes color and black-and-white footage along with static images and fantasy sequences. Elliot (Denis Lavant), a clown, and Angèle (Natacha Régnier), a dancer, belong to a volatile troupe stationed in the desolate North Sea. Their colleagues bicker on and off the stage, driven by jealousy and bitterness, with ringmaster Heroy (Tchéky Karyo), who lusts after Angèle, hoarding all of the profits. Their shows, which incorporate magic and comedy, are so anarchic that they seem better suited to urban audiences, although the provincial punters find them entertaining enough (Béatrice Dalle plays a Romani singer with a voice that can shatter glass). While Elliot loves Angèle, he's also haunted by his Conscience (played by Iggy Pop, who sings the closing number). When lust and desperation collide, one performer ends up in prison, endangering the future of the entire enterprise. Instead of a clear-cut conclusion, however, Blondy opts for fantasy. An attractive film that still doesn't leave much of an impression, this is a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)