

Do You Take This Man

★★★
Breaking Glass, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

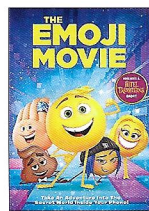
The promising subject of writer-director Joseph Tunick's earnest dramedy—an evening of crises and doubts before a gay wedding—proves too large for his low-key, low-budget approach, which leaves viewers feeling claustrophobic within the four walls of Tunick's single setting (a well-appointed house). Daniel (Anthony Rapp) is a starched shirt who prefers to stay home rather than socialize with younger partner Christopher (Jonathan Bennett) and his hip friends. While Christopher confesses to some anxiety over his age and energy difference with Daniel, the latter is doing the same while prepping all of the food (no caterer for control freak Daniel) for the rehearsal dinner. A big chunk of the film is built around that dinner, where Daniel's wonderful parents (Sam Anderson, Lee Garlington) welcome a teary Christopher (who is estranged from his mother and father), and sundry other relatives and chums (Alyson Hannigan and Thomas Dekker among them) reveal hidden histories and long-running anxieties. The talk produces enough red flags to create doubts in the engaged couple. Viewers are expected to take some things on faith (e.g., the puppyish Christopher is supposedly a gallery-approved painter of stirring depth) and are advised to bring fairly low expectations to the celebration, which does feature some appealing performances by the supporting cast. Optional. (T. Keogh)



The Emoji Movie ★

Sony, 86 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

For technology luddites and anyone left without a smart phone, “emoji” are pictographs and ideograms often used in electronic text messages. Originating on Japanese mobile phones in the late 1990s, emojis were popularized by Apple's iPhone and quickly adopted by Android and other mobile operating systems (their addictive popularity even led to inclusion in the Oxford English Dictionary). While their meanings can be culture specific, their use is now almost universal. This animated feature co-written and directed by Tony Leondis is set in Textopolis, a fanciful workplace within an adolescent boy's smartphone. The story revolves around Gene (voiced by T.J. Miller), an emoji created without a filter, meaning that he's a nonconformist who is able to express multiple emotions. Gene's task is to be the “meh” (or disinterest) symbol, but he aspires to be more, which leads to his being terminated by his sinister supervisor Smiler (Maya Rudolph). Unwilling to accept his fate, Gene and his once-popular



buddy Hi-5 (James Corden) search for help. Eventually, an error involving a punk hacker dubbed Jailbreak (Anna Faris) catapults Gene on a life-changing trip. Product placements abound, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Candy Crush, Just Dance, Spotify, Dropbox, and the Cloud, while esteemed British actor Sir Patrick Stewart disgraces himself as the poop emoji. Mind-numbing cinematic malware, this total time-waster is not recommended. (S. Granger)

England Is Mine ★★★

Cleopatra, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95, Dec. 12

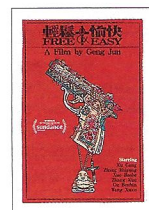
Singer-songwriter Morrissey was unquestionably an important force in English music during the 1980s, but in Mark Gill's film about the artist's formative years in Manchester, he comes across as rather obnoxious—and, at least here, boring. Jack Lowden plays young Steven, initially (in the late '70s) with a mop of long hair and then (in the early '80s) with a much shorter cut. But while the hairstyle changes, he remains the same morose, taciturn figure throughout. A shy 17-year-old trapped in a stifling middle-class family, Steven spends his days scribbling lyrics in his notebook and writing savage critiques of local rock bands. Eventually he meets Billy Duffy (Adam Lawrence), with whom he founds The Nosebleeds, but Duffy soon leaves for greener pastures, forcing Steven to endure first a dreary desk job under an odious boss and then a stint as an orderly in a hospital (where he encounters an old high school sweetheart dying of cancer), until Johnny Marr (Laurie Kynaston) shows up at his doorstep one day, asking whether he'd like to join a new band. The Smiths are born! One can sympathize with Gill's difficulty making a film about Morrissey without the subject's permission or access to The Smiths music catalogue, but *England Is Mine* feels like a long, turgid prologue, a film that might more accurately be titled *A Portrait of the Artist as an Insufferable Young Twit*. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



Free and Easy ★★★

FilmRise, 99 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95

An absurdist comedy built on little more than a sketch premise that quickly loses its novelty, the Chinese film *Free and Easy* is set in a deserted, decaying town that once supported factory work, where a scattered group of crooks, imbeciles, worriers, and corrupt cops mill about and have odd encounters. Co-writer and director Geng Jun, working with nonprofessional actors, sets up a series of vignettes in which his slow-moving, laconic characters end up

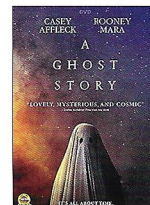


in awkward confrontations. A soap salesman asks people to smell his fragrant product, which renders them unconscious and allows him to rob them. An alleged Buddhist monk offers talismans at ridiculous prices. A man who works for road and bridge authorities frets over a missing tree. And so on. Geng adopts a somewhat formalist take in terms of studied composition, but the effort only underscores the artificiality of the ghost town backdrop. In the end, the film is a bit of a slog with a few funny moments, but never really comes together. Optional. (T. Keogh)

A Ghost Story ★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 92 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99

Writer-director David Lowery imbues the horror genre with a rare degree of poetic elegance while also ruminating on the nature of time, memory, and grief in this small but affecting film. An unnamed young couple (Casey Affleck and Rooney Mara) move into a house, where they are woken by strange sounds. After the husband dies in a car crash, and the wife goes to identify the body in the morgue—covering him with a sheet before she leaves—the camera lingers on the gurney until his “ghost” (literally the sheet with black eyeholes) rises and glides through the hospital corridors, over the fields, and back to the house, where he watches his wife mourn. *A Ghost Story* is a haunted house story told from the ghost's perspective: unable to communicate (except with the ghost who haunts the house next door), the spirit continues to watch as events move forward and then backward in time. Although it may sound somewhat plot-driven, *A Ghost Story* is primarily a mood piece, a reverie about the human need for connection, the inevitability of change, the pain of loss, and eventual resignation. While it is unlikely to scare viewers, Lowery's mournful, moving film will probably haunt them. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Glass Castle ★★★

Lionsgate, 127 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Nov. 7

In filmmaker Destin Daniel Cretton's adaptation of Jeannette Walls's 2005 bestselling memoir about a dysfunctional childhood, Walls's abusive, alcoholic father Rex is all-too-often seen through rose-colored glasses, or perhaps it just seems that way due to Woody Harrelson's colorful, manipulatively roguish interpretation. Working as a 1980s Manhattan gossip columnist, riding in a taxi after dinner with her financier fiancé (Max Greenfield), Walls (Brie Larson) spots her grubby, itinerant parents dumpster-diving on the Lower East Side—a sight that ignites a series of flash-

