

**PROXY (2013)** ♂♂

D: Zack Parker. Joe Swanberg, Alexa Havins, Alexia Rasmussen, Kristina Klebe. 122 mins. (IFC Midnight) 10/14

Young Ester Woodhouse (Rasmussen) is savagely attacked moments after leaving her OB. She loses the baby in the attack and is referred to a grief management group to try and help her cope with her loss. There she meets Melanie Michaels (Havins), a young wife and mother who lost her husband and son to a drunk driver. The two women bond through their mutual bereavement, but when Ester makes romantic advances toward Melanie, the woman becomes enraged and storms off. Things get complicated when Ester steals her girlfriend's truck to follow Melanie, then learns some startling secrets about Melanie's "deceased" family. To say more may spoil some of the twists and turns this gritty, distasteful but honestly shocking thriller has to offer. Director Parker ladles on the depravity: while this grim little sucker will keep you guessing, there are absolutely no characters you can even half-heartedly cheer along; everyone is in some manner a psychopath and no one has any redeeming qualities. Ester generates some initial sympathy, but once we learn more about her we can't wait until something really horrible befalls her. Also, the two-hour-plus running time makes this flick seem even more unpleasant and unending. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews and a trailer.

—Rob Freese

**SEXINA (2008)** ♂♂1/2

D: Earl Sharkey. Lauren D'Avella, Adam West, Annie Golden, Luis Jose Lopez, Allyn Rachel, Kellie Fernald. 79 mins. (Wild Eye Releasing) 10/14

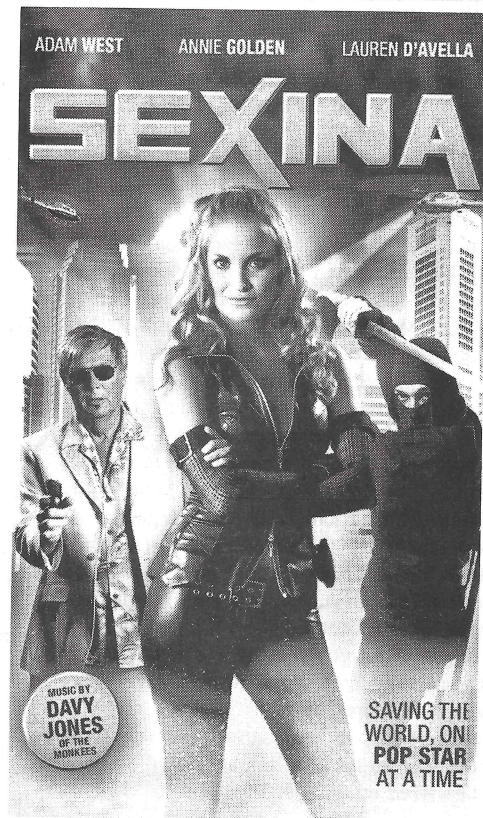
A bit more budget, scope and wit might have lifted this cost-conscious indie music-biz spoof to a vintage ZAZ team meets later John Waters level. As it stands, there are enough comic rewards in *Sexina* (onscreen title: *Sexina: Popstar P.I.*) to make it worth a look for camp comedy fans. D'Avella brings considerable appeal to her eponymous pop star/private eye, whose mission is to thwart the evil plans of twisted music magnate West (the former TV Batman is more heard than seen here), one of which involves unleashing a secretly cyborg boy band, Top That (a very funny sequence sees the group grotesquely malfunction during a high-school gig). Paralleling *Sexina's* adventures are the travails of bullied fat girl Vera (Fernald), who dreams of hanging with her super-hot role model and thereby impressing her hostile classmates. Also in the mix is Ricky Martinesque idol Lance Canyon (Lopez), who ultimately joins forces with our heroine in a bid to end West's malevolent reign. Erstwhile New Wave chanteuse Golden contributes a brief cameo as Vera's chunky mom, while former Monkee Davy Jones croons the bouncy title tune.

Extras include clips from Jones' recording session, outtakes, blooper reel, deleted scene, behind-the-scenes footage and more. Withal, while hit and miss, *Sexina* is rarely mean-spirited and, at a slender 79 minutes, knows to leave the building before the chuckles run out.

**SNOWPIERCER (2014)** ♂♂♂♂

D: Bong Joon Ho. Chris Evans, Song Kang Ho, Tilda Swinton, Jamie Bell, Octavia Spencer, John Hurt, Ed Harris, Allison Pill. 126 mins. (Anchor Bay Entertainment) 10/14

Korean auteur Bong Joon Ho tops his brilliant *Mother* (VS #76) and *The Host* (VS #64) with this stunning sci-fi/action adventure that takes on climate change, human power games, class systems and much, much more. Adapted by Ho and co-writer Kelly Masterson, scripter of Sidney Lumet's blistering farewell feature *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead* (VS #67), from Jacques Lob, Benjamin Legrand and Jean-Marc Rochette's graphic novel, *Snowpiercer* envisions a frozen future where the world's few survivors endlessly circle an unforgiving snowscape while cloistered within the elaborate Ark train. The tail end of said train warehouses the powerless poor and huddled masses who feed on rectangular black bars composed of crushed cockroaches (barely an upgrade over Soylent Green), tattered, filthy folk who yearn to rebel against their pampered oppressors who luxuriate in the forward cars, not unlike their coddled, cosseted counterparts in such recent dystopian cinematic brethren as *Elysium* (VS #90) and *The Hunger Games* franchise. The downtrodden find a willing and able leader in Curtis (Evans, ideal in a role tailor-made for a younger Clive Owen or Christian



Bale), who marshals his forces, including Hurt as now-elderly upstart Gilliam (an homage to Terry, whose surreal sensibility and production designs are echoed in abundance here?), second-in-command Edgar (Bell), angry mom Tanya (Spencer), "kronole" junkie Nam (Song) and his equally addicted teenage daughter Yona (Ah Sung Ko) for an ultra-violent slog through the heavily guarded cars, sort of a speeding, horizontal variation on *The Raid: Redemption* (VS #84). (The film also conjures Walter Hill's *The Warriors* and John Carpenter's *Escape from New York*.) The rebels meet resistance of biblical proportions (including an ax-centric homage to *Snowpiercer* producer Chan-wook Park's *Oldboy*) as they fight their way to their objective, an engine room run by unseen legendary Ark architect and despot Wilford, even as the bloody body count mounts on both sides. Visually, *Snowpiercer* is virtually without peer, while the bizarre characters are sold by a terrific cast that's fully up to the challenge, with Swinton an especial standout as Wilford's wacky, lethal, patronizing mouthpiece Miss Mason, and Pill equally unforgettable as a chillingly chirpy brain-washer of hypnotized tots. *Snowpiercer* gets our vote as the best genre film of the year. Why it was all but buried by theatrical distributor Harvey Weinstein is a mystery that's at least partially explicated by *Boston Globe* critic Ty Burr in an excellent, in-depth article (scope it out online). Anchor Bay's double-disc Blu-ray edition arrives packed with bonus material, including a critics' commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, cast and crew interviews and much more. *Snowpiercer* demands to be boarded posthaste.

—The Phantom