

This section features reviews of current and classic studio, independent, and foreign feature films. Each review includes pricing information, as well as running time, rating, subtitling information, and street dates for yet-to-be-released titles. Most titles reviewed here are widely available through most distributors.

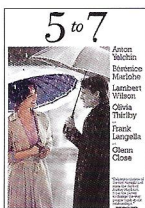
★★★★ = Excellent
 ★★★ = Good
 ★★ = Fair
 ★ = Poor

Current Films

5 to 7 ★★

MPI, 97 min., R, DVD: \$24.98

It's always frustrating to see an indie rom-com aspiring to be little more than a hipper, more sophisticated version of *You've Got Mail*. This improbable upper-middle-class fantasy-romance features what may be one of the most well-heeled struggling writers in cinematic history: Brian Bloom, who is played with a combination of youthful vulnerability and privileged smugness by Anton Yelchin. We never learn how Bloom manages to live in a luxury midtown studio flat despite being a serial-rejection fiction writer, but while strolling the high-end streets of NYC for inspiration he spots a dark-haired Gallic goddess on a smoke break outside her place of work and decides to strike up a dull conversation. Amazingly, the sophisticated 33-year-old ex-model (played by former Bond girl Bérénice Marlohe) inexplicably enjoys Brian's emotionally needy social patter. After a few dates, she tells him she's married, but asks if he's interested in a lovers' tryst from 5 to 7 in the evening, the time when cheating on her impotent diplomat husband would be most convenient. What should have been a hot and steamy affair ends up onscreen like some sort of prudish Eisenhower-era document of a back-door relationship. Writer-director Victor Levin's attempts at humor (and, by turns, pathos) overreach for rarified Woody Allen/Whit Stillman heights, but the tin-eared dialogue and unimaginative direction here unfortunately smack of bottom-of-the-barrel amateurism. Not a necessary purchase. (M. Sandlin)

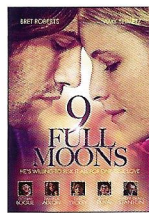


9 Full Moons ★★★

Indie Rights, 103 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

A modern-day bohemian romance, set in the grungy beer-soaked East Los Angeles indie music scene, *9 Full Moons* centers on Jim

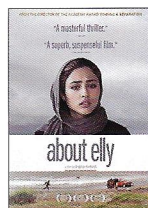
Morrison lookalike Lev (Bret Roberts), a strong-silent-type freelance music producer looking for his breakout gig. Lev has his hands full with his slothful, loose cannon of a live-in girlfriend, Frankie (Amy Seimet), who parties like there's no tomorrow and collects lots of useless junk. Lev's future looks bright for a split second, however, when he lands a producing slot with once-relevant outlaw country legend Charley King Nash (Donal Logue), who is on the comeback trail and looking for a new commercial sound. When Lev's not dealing with his other half's unnecessary dramatics, he's trying to navigate the precarious rollercoaster ride of the music biz. But just when his indie version of the main chance begins to unravel, he learns that Frankie is pregnant, forcing him to redirect his gaze beyond his own narcissistic present needs towards a more realistic adult future. What it lacks in originality, director Tomer Almagor's film makes up for in capturing the rhythms of real life. Recommended. (M. Sandlin)



About Elly ★★★

Cinema Guild, 119 min., in Farsi w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Before he won the Academy Award for *A Separation*—the first Iranian film to take home an Oscar—Asghar Farhadi made 2009's *About Elly*, which serves up a fascinating mix of mystery and social drama. Set during a family seaside vacation with three close-knit couples and their young children, the film offers a portrait of modern Iranian culture that has been little seen on American screens. The couples are middle class urban professionals who bring along Elly (Taraneh Alidoosti), a young single schoolteacher—ostensibly to watch their kids but in reality to meet a recently divorced friend visiting from Germany. All is easygoing fun and well-meaning romantic machinations until a child is pulled into the surf and almost drowned. The boy survives, but Elly, who was supposed to be watching the children, is gone. Did she drown or simply run away? This set-up recalls Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'avventura*, but the mystery here becomes a vehicle for social drama and sharp observations of friendships and marriages under pressure. As seemingly innocent secrets and lies are revealed, everything begins to appear suspect, especially when Elly's fiancé arrives looking for an explanation. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

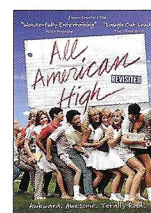


All American High Revisited ★★★

Virgil, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

In 1984, aspiring filmmaker Keva Rosen-

feld turned his camera on the graduating class of Southern California's Torrance High School to make *All American High*, which was briefly released theatrically in 1987 and subsequently aired on PBS before disappearing from view. Thirty years later, Rosenfeld tracks down several of the students for an update on their lives, which is here tacked on the original as a coda. *All American High* offered an intriguing view of the school that inspired the cult comedy *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (the curriculum included a class on surfing!), and today's viewers will certainly enjoy seeing the atrocious hairstyles and clothing favored by fashionable youth from that bygone era. From a historical standpoint, Rosenfeld's film also reminds us of the less amusing aspects of the decade, most notably in ways that schools educated teenagers about the escalating political tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Rosenfeld's original film framed the Torrance High School environment through the eyes of Finnish exchange student Rikki Rauhala, and she returns here with several of her classmates for the new ruefully funny where-are-they-now epilogue. Recommended. (P. Hall)



Aloft ★1/2

Sony, 97 min., R, DVD: \$20.95, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Director Claudia Llosa's *Aloft*, set in the frigid north of Canada, jumps back and forth between the past—with Nana (Jennifer Connelly) bringing her two children, Ivan and Gully, to a faith healer known as The Architect in hopes of curing Gully's brain tumor—and the present, with the adult Ivan (Cillian Murphy), who was later abandoned by Nana, being approached by Jannia (Mélanie Laurent), a documentary filmmaker looking for Nana, now herself a faith healer operating in the remote Arctic. Ivan agrees to accompany Jannia, and the pair grow close over the course of the journey, although it is revealed that the two have very different agendas. It's hard to say what Llosa is aiming for with this strange fable, which continually shifts from past to present; the characters' motivations are unclear and their actions are bizarre. With its odd dramatics, mysticism, and quasi-poetic metaphors (including a motif centered on hawks), *Aloft* remains a largely incomprehensible story that is told in a painfully lugubrious, fractured fashion. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



Alto ★★1/2

Cinema Libre, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

Mikki del Monico's *Alto* uses Italian-Ameri-