



Observer Showbiz

Movies, DVDs

with James Sherlock



Melbourne Observer

Reviews by Aaron Rourke

Weekly DVD Recommendations

FILM: THE TIGER'S TAIL:
Genre: Comedy/Mystery/Thriller/2006/MA15+.
Cast: Brendan Gleeson, Kim Cattrall.
Summary: Fascinating comedy-mystery-thriller from legendary director John Boorman about a successful Irish property developer who finds out he has a twin brother he never knew he had, and the brother begins to take over his life, including his wife, well worth a look.
STARS: ***

FILM: JOHNNY GUITAR:
Genre: Western/Classic/1954/TBC.
Cast: Joan Crawford, Sterling Hayden, Ward Bond, Ernest Borgnine.
Summary: Classic western drama of a saloon owner planning to build her own town once the railroad is put through, but faces tough opposition, great performances and direction by Nicholas Ray, a major inspiration for the Sergio Leone classic Once Upon a Time in the West.
STARS: ****1/2

FILM: HELL IS FOR HEROES & STALAG 17 [Two Disc] Double Feature:
Genre: War/Action/Drama/Classic/1953-1962/M.
Cast: Steve McQueen, James Coburn, Bobby Darin, William Holden, Otto Preminger.
Summary: Two great WWII classics in one DVD. Steve McQueen and company battle it out on the front line, while William Holden in his Oscar winning role goes up against Otto Preminger and the odds in Billy Wilder's POW classic, a real treat!
STARS: *****

FILM: THE MUMMY - Two Disc Special Edition:
Genre: Horror/Classic/1932/PG.
Cast: Boris Karloff, Zita Johann.
Summary: One of the great horror classics of all time, in 1921 an expedition in Egypt discovers the mummy of an ancient Egyptian prince, who was condemned and buried alive, and comes back to life and reeks havoc, plenty of chills! The legendary Karloff in one of his best roles!
STARS: ****1/2

FILM: HOGAN'S HEROES - The Complete Season One [Five Disc Set]:
Genre: Comedy/War/Classic TV/1965/G.
Cast: Bob Crane, John Banner, Werner Klemperer, Larry Hovis.
Summary: The classic comedy of a bunch crazy inmates of a German World War II prisoner of war camp who conduct an espionage and sabotage campaign right under the noses of the Germans in one of the great TV comedy series of all time, great fun and laughs all the way!
STARS: ****1/2

FILM: THE TIN STAR:
Genre: Western/Classic/1957/TBC.
Cast: Henry Fonda, Anthony Perkins, Neville Brand.
Summary: Solid, tense and hugely entertaining western drama of cynical ex-sheriff turned bounty hunter who helps a young, recently appointed acting sheriff with advice and his gun, to combat outlaws in the town, both Fonda and Perkins are a standout, a classic!
STARS: ****

STAR RATING SYSTEM:
NO STARS:
 A bomb, a turkey, a dud, it doesn't get any lower than this, this is the bottom of the barrel, so call the dentist and get that long overdue root canal work done.

ONE STAR:
 A good time to wash the dishes, vacuum the floors, put the rubbish out, and take the dog for a long walk instead.

TWO STARS:
 Not a bad choice, it could be better or a lot worse, it won't exactly set your world on fire, but will fill-in a mildly pleasant couple of hours.

THREE STARS:
 Above average, it comes well recommended and should not disappoint.

FOUR STARS:
 Highly recommended! An excellent decision, you've made a very good choice indeed, and is well worth the rental or purchase.

FIVE STARS:
 Outstanding! A Classic! They don't come any better than this, so book the couch, take the phone off the hook, bolt the doors, turn out the lights and put the volume up, because you're in for a real treat!

Wanted

■ **WANTED (MA)**, 110 minutes.
 After impressing audiences worldwide with the terrific "Night Watch" and "Day Watch", Russian director Timur Bekmambetov makes his Hollywood debut with "Wanted", an energetic, imaginative, and above all, entertaining action film that will please fans of the genre.

Based on a comic by Mark Millar and J G Jones, the big screen adaptation certainly maintains a comic book feel, and embraces the larger-than-life story rather than trying to twist it into something that seems logical and routine.

James McAvoy plays Wesley Gibson, a meek office worker who cannot handle any kind of confrontation, and regularly suffers panic attacks. He is always being ridiculed by his boss, his work colleagues, and his girlfriend, and as such feels nothing towards the world around him.

Then one night, while at a convenience store, Wesley bumps into Fox (Angelina Jolie), a mysterious woman who claims to know his father, who left Wesley when he was only one week old. As she tries to explain who his father is, another stranger, Cross (Thomas Kretschmann), enters the store, seemingly hellbent on killing Wesley.

Wesley discovers that his father is part of a group known as The Fraternity, who have been around for a thousand years, maintaining peace by assassinating those who try to bring chaos to the world. It is now his turn to join the group.

From here the story takes a number of twists and turns, the kind that could only exist in a comic book. If one were to treat it as a realistic action/thriller, the film would simply fall apart. But director Bekmambetov and writers Michael Brandt, Derek Haas (who scripted the "3.10 To Yuma" remake), and Chris Morgan dive into this world, making it a deliberately sensory experience.

Suspension of disbelief is required, but like a great comic, if the makers believe in the world they are creating, then so will we.

Performances are all fine, with McAvoy ("The Last King Of Scotland") handling what is essentially an unlikeable character with skill and a wonderful amount of energy. Morgan Freeman, as the head of The Fraternity, projects a suitable air of authority, and Kretschmann is certainly intimidating as the relentless Cross. Terence Stamp ("The Limey") and Marc Warren ("Hustle" tv series) nicely round out the cast.

There is even an appearance from Konstantin Khabensky, who starred in the director's "Watch" films.

Angelina Jolie is perfectly cast, but her off-screen personality again intrudes on her on-screen performance. One can't help but see the actress, rather than the character she's playing.

Technically the film is first-rate, with impressive effects, colourful photography, and razor-sharp editing. There doesn't seem to be a wasted moment, a trick that a lot

of modern action movies fail to master (the over-inflated, 144 minute "Transformers" is a perfect example).

"Wanted" is a cut-above the usual action film currently hitting our screens. It delivers the action, but in a stylish, assured manner that makes it more than a mere guilty pleasure. Timur Bekmambetov has made a successful transition to Hollywood.

RATING : ***1/2
 - Aaron Rourke

The Bank Job

■ **THE BANK JOB (MA)**, 111 minutes.
 Based on an incredible true story, and cleverly mixing fact and fiction, "The Bank Job" is the kind of film that can be enjoyed by adults, who want something more than mere surface-level thrills and action.

Set in 1971, the film centres around Terry Leather (Jason Statham), a London car dealer who is in serious debt to local gangsters and corrupt police.

The business is failing, and Terry can't see himself getting out of the grave he has dug for himself.

Then in walks Martine Love (Saffron Burrows), a former lover who has a job that seems too good to be true. One that will guarantee Terry and his family financial security for the rest of their lives.

With several sub-plots and a large gallery of characters to deal with, "The Bank Job" could have easily become overly convoluted, but veteran writers Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais (whose work ranges from the films "Flushed Away" and "The Commitments, to the classic tv shows "Porridge" and "The Two Ronnies") never lose control of the material, keeping their focus on story and characterisation, allowing the audience to connect with what's happening on screen.

Roger Donaldson ("No Way Out"/"Thirteen Days"/"White Sands") directs proceedings with a measured, experienced hand, showing that you don't have to rely on flashy histrionics or an annoyingly shaky camera to tell a good story. It is amazing how much more involving a film can be when the camera isn't being thrown around.

Despite giving a better-than-expected performance, the film's weakest link is Statham who gives the film an unfair air of familiarity, due to the fact that he has been in a number of British heist movies. The stand-out in the cast is David Suchet (Agatha Christie's "Poirot"), who is suitably seedy and menacing as a gangster/pornographer who proves to be a major thorn in Leather's side.

While not in the same class as heist films such as "The Taking Of Pelham One Two Three" and "Topkapi", "The Bank Job" is an intelligent, very well-made film that is able to stand on its own in what is a very over-worked genre.

RATING : ****
 - Aaron Rourke

Top 10 Lists

THE AUSTRALIAN BOX OFFICE TOP TEN:

1. THE DARK KNIGHT.
2. MAMMA MIA!
3. THE X-FILES: I WANT TO BELIEVE.
4. HANCOCK.
5. FORBIDDEN KINGDOM.
6. GET SMART.
7. KUNG FU PANDA.
8. THE SAVAGES.
9. SEX AND THE CITY.
10. MEET DAVE FOX.

NEW IN CINEMAS AROUND AUSTRALIA:

JULY 31: WANTED, AND WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE YOUR FATHER? THE BANK JOB, THE SQUARE.

AUGUST 7: STOP-LOSS, COLLEGE ROAD TRIP, PINEAPPLE EXPRESS, YOU THE LIVING, REDBELT, SINGH IS KINNG.

THE DVD TOP SELLERS:

1. RAMBO.
2. GET SMART: The Complete Seasons 1, 2 & 3.
3. THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL.
4. THE BUCKET LIST.
5. SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET.
6. WATERHORSE: LEGEND OF THE DEEP.
7. IN THE VALLEY OF ELAH.
8. THE MIST [Thomas Jane/William Sadler/Toby Jones/Dir: Frank Darabont].
9. THE DARJEELING LIMITED [Owen Wilson/Adrien Brody].
10. THE KITE RUNNER.

ALSO: LIVE FROM BAGHDAD, THE HUNTING PARTY, CLOSING THE RING, NATIONAL TREASURE 2: BOOK OF SECRETS, SLEUTH, ARCTIC TALE, 3:10 TO YUMA, ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS, ROGUE, DAN IN REAL LIFE, DEFINITELY, MAYBE [2008/Ryan Reynolds/Rachel Weisz/Kevin Kline], CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR.

NEW RELEASES ON DVD:

- THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES [Nick Nolte/David Strathairn].
- JUBAL [1956/Glenn Ford/Ernest Borgnine/Rod Steiger].
- THE MAN FROM COLORADO [1948/Glenn Ford/William Holden].
- SANTEÉ [1973/Glenn Ford/Dana Wynter].
- JOHNNY GUITAR
- THE TIN STAR
- DOWNHILL RACER [Robert Redford/Gene Hackman].
- THE BEGUILED [1971/Clint Eastwood/Geraldine Page/Dir: Don Siegel].
- WAGON'S EAST [1994/John Candy/Richard Lewis].
- HELL IS FOR HEROES [Steve McQueen] & STALAG 17 [William Holden] Double Bill.
- THE MUMMY: Two Disc Special Edition [1932/Boris Karloff].
- HOGAN'S HEROES: The Complete Season One.
- BECKER: The Complete Season One.
- THE UNTOUCHABLES: Season One - Volume Two [Robert Stack].
- ASHANTI [1979/Michael Caine/Peter Onofri/Omar Sharif].