

FILM SNIPPETS BY ROZANNE WEISSMAN

THE GREAT GATSBY. Captures the excesses of the '20s with its own over-the-top excesses in 3D. Fabulous costumes and cinematography. Needs cutting. Stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Tobey Maguire, whose personal friendship is apparent in the film. I'm not a great fan of Leo and often wonder: Why does he get every juicy role when he doesn't always seem to fit the part? But this film is also not his best work. See it because it's Gatsby, but frankly it's no Titanic.

QUARTET. Remember Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*? Well now he's all grown up and at age 75 is a first-time director of this lovely film that is worth seeing. The film's setting: Beecham House, a retirement home for opera singers and classical musicians in the English countryside. The superb cast, including Maggie Smith who plays a celebrated British soprano, works together on a fund-raising gala to celebrate Verdi's birthday.

"Quartet" deals with what happens when a performing artist's physical gifts fail with the years. I loved the classical music and the relationship of the characters to each other as the aging process changes them. See this little jewel.

MUD. Demonstrating that even hunk Mathew McConaughey can look totally unappealing covered in mud and tattoos with a snaggletooth smile, the film reeks of the heat and humidity of a Delta summer. McConaughey is quite good as Mud, the mysterious, temporary, lone inhabitant in hiding on a tiny island on the Mississippi River. His young co-stars, Tye Sheridan and Jacob Lofland, who have interesting back stories, discover Mud and also walk off with the film. See it.

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP. Highly recommend this excellent film directed and acted by Robert Redford. Perhaps it's just that I well remember the intense times and bitter battles of the '60s and 70s. Redford plays a wanted but actually innocent Weatherman/Weather Underground fugitive living under an assumed identity, a lawyer with a daughter. Susan Sarandon and Julie Christie play other fugitives in this thriller. Shia LeBeouf plays an enterprising reporter.

THE KINGS OF SUMMER. This coming-of-age comedy premiered to rave reviews at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival. Three teenage friends--Joe, Patrick and the eccentric and unpredictable Biaggio--disappear from their homes to spend their summer building a house in the woods and living off the land. Free from their parents' rules, their idyllic summer quickly becomes a test of friendship as two like the same girl who is brought into and disturbs their male paradise.

PEEPLER. Can you imagine the gorgeous Kerry Washington (ABC-TV's hit show *Scandal* and gripping slave role in Quentin Tarantino's film *Django Unchained*) in love with Craig Robinson? Neither could I. Enough said about this executive produced Tyler Perry poorly written unbelievable film.

Also highly recommend: **THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST** and **DISCONNECT.**

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Multiple Film Reviews By Rozanne Weissman

So many good movies. So little time for a part-time film critic to write detailed reviews of each. Consequently, many mini-reviews follow a few longer reviews.

ARGO. A must-see, substantive political thriller directed by and starring **Ben Affleck** as Tony Mendez, a CIA expert in disguises and extricating captives from tough situations. It's based on a little-known true story in 1979 during the Carter administration at the height of the Iran hostage situation — a main factor in Carter's downfall. Mendez comes up with a harebrained scheme to get six American diplomats—who had escaped to the Canadian ambassador's residence—out of Tehran. The scheme: Mendez impersonates a film producer who arrives in Iran with his crew to scout locations for his alleged upcoming, off-the-wall science-fiction film. Amusing scenes when he deals with the revolutionary government's cultural ministers and "rehearses" the Americans to play members of the film crew as a strategy to get them safely out of the country. Well-written script by Chris Terrio. Superb cast.

It was fascinating to learn this story through the film. Politically, the Carter administration could not take credit for this rescue of six of the Americans—although it was a highly successful American mission. **President Carter's** albatross was the relentless Iranian hostage crisis which spawned the ABC-TV "Nightline" program with Ted Koppel counting off the days that American hostages were held captive. Daily, it reminded Americans that the administration was ineffective in getting hostages released. As Iran thumbed its nose at poor Jimmy Carter who couldn't catch a break, I stood in front of the White House as released hostages were received by the new President Ronald Reagan.

ZERO DARK THIRTY. Another must-see docudrama about the decade-long hunt for Osama bin Laden who was responsible for the devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, since termed 9/11. "Zero Dark Thirty" refers to the darkness and secrecy of the lengthy hunt for bin Laden and the half past midnight raid.

Director **Kathryn Bigelow**, the first woman to win a directing Oscar for her masterful film *The Hurt Locker*, weaves together an emotional tale from a unique opening sequence with 911 calls of trapped people in the World Trade Center—audio only against a blank screen. Cut to a riveting and troubling scene in a putrid prison two years later where a CIA official interrogates and tortures—including water boarding—a detainee. Politicos and others are up in arms over the graphic torture scene—excuse me, ahem, "enhanced interrogation"—claiming it distorts the role torture played in ultimately capturing bin Laden. Bigelow and script writer Mark Boal are in the crosshairs. But, frankly, the scenes are no more graphic than water boarding of an innocent man in the film *Rendition*—but not as many people saw that film.

Ten years of bureaucracy, wading through documents, following leads, and listening to and analyzing voices and "chatter" to detect patterns could make for a tedious film. So the film centers around a main character named Maya (**Jessica Chastain**), a young single-minded CIA operative who spent all her time tracking bin Laden. And, the "boys" over at Langley aren't happy over a woman getting the credit in the film. The pace steps up in latter scenes leading to the U.S. Navy SEAL Team 6 striking bin Laden's

Pakistan compound and killing him. No spoiler alert here: we all know how it ended. I found it hard to relate the SEALs depicted in the Navy-sanctioned film *Act of Valor* to the SEALs depicted in this film.

LINCOLN. Another must see film. Former NEA staffers will particularly find of interest the political machinations behind enactment of the 13th amendment to the Constitution against slavery—not so different from today’s lobbying and political fights minus digital and social media. Lincoln was much more involved than I was aware. **Daniel Day-Lewis** inhabits the spirit of Lincoln. His performance is superb.

QUARTET. I loved this film! It’s a delight directed by **Dustin Hoffman** and starring **Maggie Smith**. In a home for retired British musicians, the geriatric set is getting ready for the annual concert to celebrate Verdi’s birthday. The acting, opera, and classical music are wonderful. It’s almost as much fun as *The Most Exotic Marigold Hotel*. Ronald Harwood adapted his play to the big screen. And, it’s Hoffman’s directorial debut at age 75. Hard to forget the young Hoffman in *The Graduate*.

LES MISERABLES. Not as good as the stage musical, which I saw a number of times, but still worth seeing. **Anne Hathaway** as Fantine is terrific singing the iconic song "I Dreamed a Dream" while having to cry and sing simultaneously. Other stars didn’t have the “singing chops” for a musical.

Personal note: The film brought to mind my first time seeing *Les Mis*. As a birthday present, I gave my then 10-year-old niece from Cleveland a trip to Washington DC to visit auntie Rozanne and see *Les Miserables* at the Kennedy Center. Afterwards, she turned to me and said, “This is the best play I have EVER seen in my WHOLE life!” This year, I gave her a Regal gift card to see the film; she revealed the DC trip was one of her best memories of childhood.

ANNA KARENINA. The cinematography is fabulous. **Keira Knightley** is gorgeous and sensual in this tale of love, adultery, manners, and aristocracy. Most of the critics loved it and found the staging highly creative. I disliked the theater/stage and light opera concept for the film. Leo Tolstoy would turn over in his grave.

DJANGO UNCHAINED. As a black free slave turned bounty hunter, **Jamie Foxx** is terrific in director **Quentin Tarantino**’s southern revenge spaghetti Western. Of course, with Quentin Tarantino, there will be blood—and lots of it. And, in this film, also guts, gore, and whips. If you can’t stand violent films, don’t go.

SAFE HAVEN. Based on the Nicholas Sparks novel, it stars *Dancing with the Stars* Champion ballroom dancer and choreographer **Julianne Hough** (brother and fellow dancer Derek Hough) who flees from an abusive marriage to a policeman and encounters widower **Josh Duhamel**, with two winsome kids, who plays the male lead and her romance interest. I took lots of Kleenex expecting a tear jerker. Actually, less Kleenex, more tense thriller which moves it out of “chick flick” realm and makes it more acceptable for men.

SIDE EFFECTS. It’s a psychological thriller directed by **Steven Soderberg** and starring **Rooney Mara** as a young depressed New Yorker, **Jude Law** as her psychiatrist, and **Channing Tatum** – with his clothes on – as her husband who was released from prison for insider trading. And then there’s the beautiful **Catherine Zeta-Jones** as her former psychiatrist. Sex, drugs, greed, murder, pharmacological sales pitches for psychiatric drugs including antidepressants such as the fictitious Rx Ablixa—all wrapped up

into one film. And it contains more unexpected twists and turns than a cocktail of those drugs. Interesting but implausible; perhaps it needs a quick fix Rx.

GANGSTER SQUAD. Off-the-book cops fight dirty to keep mob outa old LA. Video game shoot-'em-up feel. Great cinematography and luscious wardrobe of that timeframe. Mob: 0, cops 2, film 2 1/2.

ON THE ROAD. Based on Jack Kerouac's 1957 beatnik novel. Pot, sex, experimentation. Strong cinematography, music. Miscast. Brought back memories of writing on my old manual typewriter!

THE GUILT TRIP. Barbra Streisand plays Seth Rogen's overbearing Jewish mom. She 'kvetches' about her son on cross-country road trip. Oy vey!

A GOOD DAY TO DIE HARD. Car chases. Car crashes. Repeat. Excessive shooting. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Constant survival of **Bruce Willis** and "son" tests credibility. Lame story. Forget character development or caring about any of these people. Don't waste your money!

I have heard very good things about both **RUST AND BONE** and **AMOUR** which I haven't seen as of this writing. Film colleagues have complained enough about the inaccuracy of **HYDE PARK ON HUDSON** that I never bothered to see it.

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'Fusion or Confusion?' Chefs Luigi Diotaiuti of DC's Al Tiramisu and Mike Isabella of Graffiato, Food Writers Discuss New Century for Italian Cooking in America at Fancy Food Show

By Rozanne Weissman

Washington, DC, July 12, 2011— There were no fisticuffs but there certainly was a difference of opinion at the Fancy Food Show panel, "Fusion or... Confusion? A new Century for Italian Cooking in America," featuring two leading DC chefs and two prominent food writers.

The big question: Does getting creative and innovative with nonna's traditional Italian recipes mean giving up the authenticity of ingredients in the kitchen?

Moderator Corby Kummer, one of the nation's top food writers, senior editor of *The Atlantic*, and recipient of three James Beard Journalism Awards, noted there are some like respected restaurateur Tony May who say, "If you were not born and raised in Italy, how dare you."

"That's not necessarily true anymore, but you do need a good education in Italy to be an Italian chef," countered John Mariani, also one of America's top food writers and author of "How Italian Food Conquered the World. "A chef who has never set foot in Italy is at a disadvantage," he added.

Introduced as a "traditionalist who embraces the new," Italian-born [Chef/owner Luigi Diotaiuti](#) of Al Tiramisu, the most authentic Italian restaurant in the nation's capital, emphasized, "Italian food is not

just food or a commodity, it's part of a culture. One day I will die," he added, "and I will still not know all of the Italian dishes and recipes I discover by going town by town."

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of Italy and the 15th anniversary of Al Tiramisu, Diotaiuti has been teaching regional Italian cooking classes flavored with culture and history. Thus far, starting from the south to the north, he has covered [Sicily \(photos of food and blog\)](#), Sardinia, and Puglia. The restaurant imports most of its food from Italy, and Chef Luigi said he can generally get anything he needs within 18-20 hours, including on Sundays.

On the other hand, acclaimed third-generation Italian-American Chef Mike Isabella of Bravo TV's "Top Chef" fame and runner-up on "Top Chef All-Stars" described his just recently opened restaurant Graffiato as "Italian inspired." He illustrated, "I grew up in New Jersey. I keep the products local and add my own touches. There are American influences on the menu like small plates so that two people can dine and try six or seven dishes together. "

Isabella noted he was most inspired by his Italian grandmother and San Francisco Executive Chef Chris Cosentino of Incanto Restaurant and Wine Bar who makes frequent appearances on the Food Network.

Corby asked Isabella whether he got all his tattoos after meeting Cosentino and what his grandmother would say if she saw the tattoos. Isabella replied that he had the tattoos before and that "my grandmother would cry if she saw them."

The panel, sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and the Italian Trade Commission, was part of the Fancy Food Show at Washington, DC's Convention Center where Italy had the largest pavilion. Italy was among 80 countries at North America's largest specialty food and beverage marketplace which included 2400 exhibitors and 24,000 attendees.

Following the panel, Stacy Jolna spoke about the childhood obesity epidemic. He is the founder of Club EATalian 4Kids, which teaches kids healthy eating and cooking based on the authentic Mediterranean diet from Italy. The new program, with support from the Italian government, began in spring 2011 in Los Angeles.

Similarly, Diotaiuti, in his engaging, entertaining style, has provided a [hands-on cooking](#) experience for third to fifth graders from nearby Hyde-Addison Elementary School's Cooking Club. They cooked [gnocchi \(recipe and video\)](#) alongside Chef Luigi who closed Al Tiramisu for lunch to practice what he preaches: teaching the importance of preparing good food using healthy, fresh ingredients—plus adding movement for health. And then, at the table, they toasted the many chefs with lemonade.

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