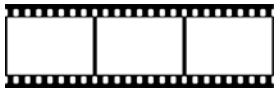
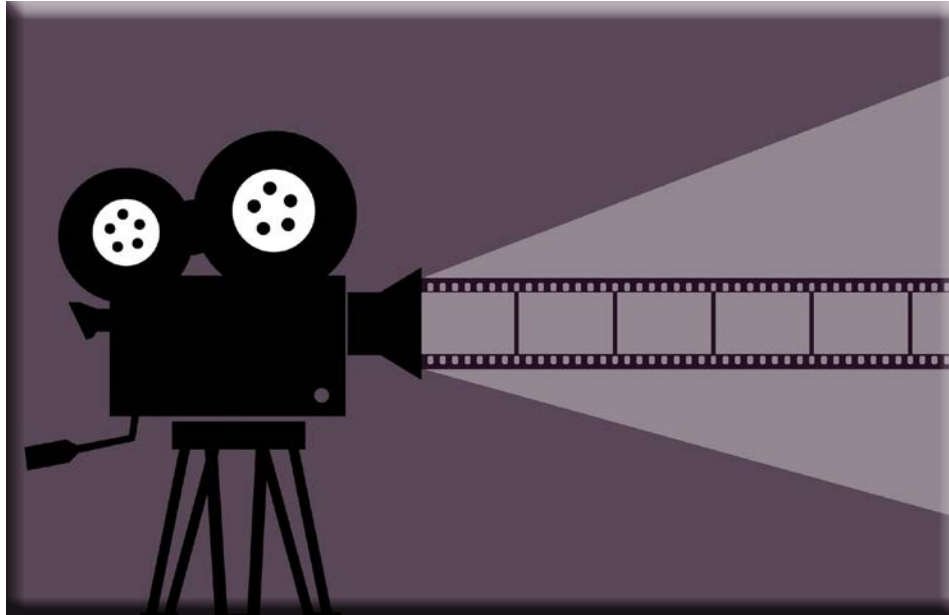


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## Movie Reviews

by Tony Medley, MSPE



### *The Phantom*

(8/10)

82 minutes. NR

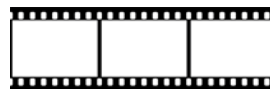
Prime

On the night of February 4, 1983, 26-year-old Wanda Lopez—a young woman working at a gas station in Corpus Christi, Texas—called police to inform them that there was a Hispanic man who worried her outside her store. While she was still on the phone, he attacked and killed her as the police listened. He ran away; but shortly thereafter, police found 20-year-old Carlos DeLuna hiding under a car. Eyewitnesses ID'd him as a man who had run away from the scene. During the trial, DeLuna identified Carlos Hernandez as the killer.

In 2012, a Columbia University innocence project investigated and reported that DeLuna had told the truth, that Hernandez not only performed the murder but also bragged about it. If what is shown in this film is true, this poor guy, DeLuna, had a lawyer who was lazy

if not incompetent, the prosecutors were more interested in an easy conviction than in finding out who really did it, and DeLuna ended up dead. It took 20 years to find out that there is an almost 100% probability that DeLuna was telling the truth, and it was truth that could have been discovered—especially by the prosecutors—with just a little diligence.

The film makes a pretty persuasive case for DeLuna's innocence, but it is basically one-sided. The fact, though, that DeLuna turned down a life sentence without possibility of parole is strong evidence that he was innocent. Had he been guilty, wouldn't he almost certainly have chosen life over death?



### *No Sudden Move*

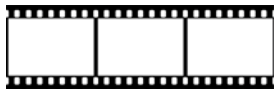
(8/10)

91 minutes. R

Theaters and HBO Max

An outstanding cast highlights this mystery/thriller about a home invasion that seems

incongruous and quickly goes wrong. Don Cheadle and Benicio del Toro give sparkling performances as two of the heist men who are involved in something far deeper than they could possibly imagine. But the relationships go much further than originally meets the eye, and one is kept guessing what is really going on throughout the film.



***Jolt***

(4/10)

91 minutes. NR

Prime

If this isn't the dumbest movie to come along, it must be close. Linda (Kate Beckinsale) is a psycho with what is defined as a "neurological disorder" that causes her to periodically become extremely violent. She's treated by Dr. Munchin (Stanley Tucci) who is supposed to be a psychiatrist; but in every scene in which he appears, he is located in what looks to be a rundown office, and he is dressed like a bum in need of a shave. What follows is utter nonsense. There are plot holes galore, characters who don't make sense, and situations that could only exist on a Hollywood sound stage. Apparently, the film's only purpose is to show that a woman can fight man after man, many at the same time, and put them down while barely working up a sweat. Directed by Tanya Wexler and based on a script by Scott Wascha, this film—advertised as a comedy—is not funny. Also advertised as a thriller, it is so absurd and ridiculous that it's thrill-challenged.



***Enemies of the State***

(7/10)

104 minutes. NR

VUDU, Prime Video, Apple TV

This is a semi-pseudo-documentary. It seems as if we are seeing the real people, but the main character, Matt DeHart, is an actor—actually two actors—as are the detectives and FBI agents. The film is about a son who purloins incriminating CIA documents, is attacked by the Deep State, and deeply involves his parents. It is believable, but the feigned scenes—such as the one in which the parents are apparently speaking on a cell phone with Julian Assange of WikiLeaks—strain credulity. Worse, halfway through the film, it certainly appears that the actors playing Matt are changed with no explanation. The two actors don't even look alike. That said, it's otherwise well done, interesting, and worth seeing.



***White As Snow***

(8/10)

112 minutes. R

(In French)

FuboTV

*We'll sing in the sunshine*

*We'll laugh every day*

*We'll sing in the sunshine*

*Then I'll be on my way*

—Gale Garnett, 1964

If you were around in 1964, that is one of the songs you were singing. And the girl you envisioned as you sang this song was probably Claire (Lou de Laâge), who stars in this film as the innocent, protected stepdaughter of Maud (Isabell Huppert).

It is difficult to write about this movie without giving away spoilers, and I don't like to do that. I saw this movie from the outset without having any idea what it was about—and it was much more enjoyable that way. Because it is a highly entertaining movie, I will refrain from commenting very much on its content. Directed and written (along with Pascal Bonitzer) by Anne Fontaine, this film is a fairy tale (very)

loosely based on the Grimm Brothers' *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. It is also a thriller with pervasive evil that is present every moment of the film. The acting is exceptional. Lou de Laâge is reminiscent of Brigitte Bardot in her prime, although in this film, de Laâge looks a lot younger than her 29 years. She is captivating, scintillating, and sexy as she seduces one man after another, finds her sexual freedom, and revels in it.

Huppert gives another of her masterful performances as Claire's evil stepmother. The way the cinematography (by Yves Angelo) captures the beautiful French countryside contributes immensely to the quality of the film. This movie moved along beautifully. Enough said.



***Val***

(8/10)

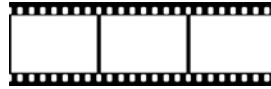
108 minutes. R

Prime Video

Val Kilmer was the youngest person to ever be admitted to the Juilliard School in New York City. In addition, he was prescient enough to be an early devotee of videotape cameras. He took his cameras with him wherever he went and kept all the tapes that he made, which added up to thousands and thousands of feet of material. Kilmer, along with directors Leo Scott and Ting Poo, sifted through that mass of material and put together an illuminating autobiography told in Kilmer's own words and using the films he had made throughout his life.

I did not know that Kilmer suffered from throat cancer and basically lost his voice, speaking now through a hole in his throat. But it has not stopped him; he still tells his story, although his voice is very rough. His son, Jack, speaks the narration for him sometimes. Kilmer had a one-of-a-kind look about him and the persona of

a star. If you are a fan, you will like this film. If you are not a fan, this might make you one.



***Roadrunner: A Film About Anthony Bourdain***

(7/10)

118 minutes. NR

Theaters and HBO Max

This film is mostly the charismatic Bourdain kvetching about his life before he ended it. I came away thinking that he owed everything to his producers, Lydia Tenaglia and Chris Collins. It had been their idea to make a TV series out of Bourdain's second book, *A Cook's Tour*, and they were really the geniuses behind his TV success. Lydia says that "life on the road with Tony is not all it's cracked up to be. The man can be a real pain in the &%\* sometimes ... I have this cold sore on my lip now, and it's due to Tony's lack of communication."

Just as The Beatles probably would never have achieved their worldwide fame without producer George Martin, Bourdain would probably just have been a successful author and not a world-famous TV personality without Collins and Tenaglia's creating and producing his travel shows. To the film's discredit, it grossly downplays and barely mentions the bullying Bourdain endured or his serious drug abuse, and those two factors probably had more to do with his depression and suicide than being dumped by actress Asia Argento.



***Final Set***

(9/10)

109 minutes. NR

(In French)

Available to rent via numerous virtual cinemas and at [www.filmmovement.com/final-set](http://www.filmmovement.com/final-set)

Sometimes, on rare occasions, at the start of a movie, I will say to myself, “I really like this movie.” The last time I did that was for *Emma*, last year. I liked it from the start; I liked it in the middle; I liked it at the end. When *Final Set* started, I said to myself, “I really like this movie.” And, although it was a little too long, I liked it all the way through.

Written and directed by Quentin Reynaud (who also appears in the film as JB), not only is the acting superb, but the tennis is exceptional in its quality and realism.

Thomas Edison (Alex Lutz) is a 37-year-old tennis player who was once France’s up-and-coming star. But he lost a big match when he was young and has been struggling ever since, confined mostly to playing satellite tournaments, making meager bucks to support himself and his wife and child. In the film, we find him entering the qualifying round for the French Open.

His wife, Eve (Ana Girardot), is beautiful and supportive but is becoming doubtful about Thomas proceeding with what seems to be a quixotic quest to resurrect his career. Their interactions capture a gritty picture of the tennis world that people rarely see. Girardot’s performance is award-quality.

Adding to the film is Kristin Scott Thomas as Thomas’s mother, Judith, a tennis teacher who taught Thomas beginning when he was a little boy. The film expertly presents the picture both of a mother who is disappointed in her son and of his reaction to that disappointment.

Just as important to the film as the tennis are the relationships between Thomas and Eve and between Thomas and Judith. I can’t say enough about the high quality of the acting in this film.

Although there are body doubles playing the tennis, there are closeups of Lutz on the court, and his form is exactly right. I am extremely judgmental on realism in sports movies. Most sports movies are ruined by the lack of credibility of the sports action scenes and the sounds attributed thereto. Not so in this movie. The points that are shown in the matches are completely realistic, as is the audio.

When a movie is this good, there’s no need to say more. This ranks with the best sports movies extant, comparing favorably with *Hoosiers* (1986) and *Miracle* (2004). [Ω](#)

