

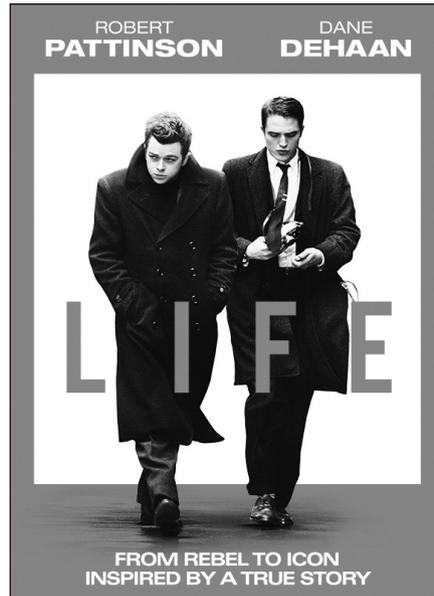
Life (2015), Cinedigm, 2016, 111 mins, \$14.93 • As readers of this column know, I'm a huge James Dean fan and Anton Corbijn's film serves up another winning portrait of the actor. Dane DeHaan as Dean is spellbinding. He expertly portrays many of Dean's mannerisms and artistry: the childlike goofy giggle; the quiet mumbling; his sincerity; his sleepy-eyed aloofness; his non-sequitur sense of fun; and his distrust of authority and refusal to play the Hollywood "glamour" game. Corbijn's story centers around Dean's friendship with photographer Dennis Stock (*Twilight's* Robert Pattinson), an indie artist who photographs the star prior to the release of his first big film, *East of Eden* (1955). Together the two men journey from LA, to Dean's hometown of Fairmount, Indiana, and on to Times Square, New York, where Stock takes his famous iconic photo of Dean, shoulders hunched, cigarette dangling, walking in the rain. Through Dean's presence and encouragement Stock discovers a hidden aspect to his own artistic vision. Inspiring and elegant.

Spotlight (2015), Universal, 2016, 129 mins, \$29.98 • When Marty Baron (Liev Schreiber), an outsider and a Jew, becomes Editor-in-Chief at *The Boston Globe*, he challenges his investigative reporters, the Spotlight team, to pursue a story that he subtly suggests has been buried for years: predatory Catholic priests and systemic child abuse. With his prodding, *Spotlight*, a group of earnest truth seekers (featuring an ensemble, powerhouse cast led by Michael Keaton, Rachel McAdams, and Mark Ruffalo), discover a decades-long cover-up that reaches the upper echelon of Boston's religious, legal, and government hierarchies. In a city of 1500 priests, 87 of them were abusing children. And the survivors' stories are harrowing. Many came from disadvantaged backgrounds and wanted to be loved and recognized by God. Yes, the psychosexual damage to their psyches was horrifying, but what these priests did to these young peoples' spiritual lives, destroying their belief systems,

Crosscuts

BRIEF DVD REVIEWS

GRANT TRACEY



was equally damning. A riveting, powerful tribute to investigative reporting and the pursuit of social justice.

Creed (2015), Warner Brothers, 2016, 133 mins, \$28.98 • Remake or rewrite? Who cares? Director Ryan Coogler serves up an intertextual delight linking this new story of Adonis Creed (Apollo's son) to the Horatio Alger-esque Rocky Balboa (now the young fighter's trainer). Adonis and Rocky were longshots; each got a surprising title shot; each specializes in body punches (remember Rocky and the bloody, knuckled-up sides of beef?); Rocky was trained by Mick (sporting a knit cap); Adonis is trained by Rocky (sporting a beaten Bowery Boys black fedora and then a knit cap!); Rocky had Adrian in his corner; Adonis has Bianca in his; both fighters were featured with stirring montage sequences showcasing their unorthodox workouts. And prior to the fight, Adonis sports a variation on the red, white, and blue trunks his father wore when he first fought Rocky. Ultimately the quest is for self-respect and the ring becomes a way to complete part of that journey. Michael

B. Jordan is intense and earnest as the sophisticated but hard-edged fighter. Sylvester Stallone turns in a meditative, affectionate performance as Rocky in the twilight of his years. "Your legacy" is indeed "more than a name."

Saint Jack (1979), Scorpion Releasing, 2015, 112 mins, \$19.95 • This character-driven cult classic, courtesy of Peter Bogdanovich (adapted from Paul Theroux's sharp-edged novel), centers on Korean War vet Jack Flowers (Ben Gazzara) and his Vietnam War-era "cathouse." Flowers's clients include a group of faded English colonialists who can't quite come to terms with the fall of Rue Britannia. His enemies include an angry knife-wielding triad. Eventually Flowers forms an unholy alliance with Schuman (ex-CIA?) who after the fall of Saigon asks Flowers to assassinate a gay US senator. Theroux's writing emphasizes small moments, dramatic beats, and low-key interactions. Gazzara takes his time, earning each authentic moment, and his final grand gesture is a real crowd-pleaser. Powerful. Deserving of rediscovery.

Panic in Year Zero (1962), Kino Lorber, 2016, 93 mins, \$19.95 • Dystopic shocker from American International Pictures (the cats famous for 1960s biker films) arrived in the theaters just before the Cuban Missile Crisis and plays more like a war film than an SF nightmare. An atomic blast scars the California skies and panic ensues as highways and small towns are jammed with greedy merchants, looting juveniles, and doped-out punks. Former Academy Award winner Ray Milland, who also donned the director's cap for this brooding film about survivalist strategies, sinks into violence as he grips his .45 and barks out orders to his family, driving their trailer and supplies into the hills for cover. Jean Hagen is his by-the-book wife and effervescent Frankie Avalon gives the film crossover appeal with the kids. Gilbert Warrenton's stunning photography rides a sharp line between pastoral tranquility and irrational chaos. □