

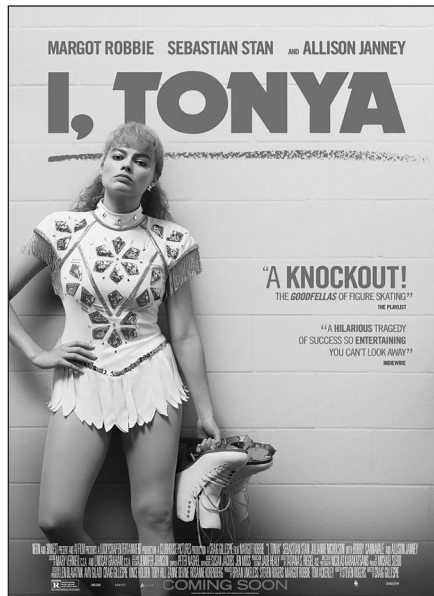
City Girl (1930), Eureka: Masters of Cinema Series, 2016, 90 mins, \$29.95 • A painterly pastoral from the legendary F. W. Murnau that revolves around dysfunction and issues of marital trust. A naive young man, Lem (Charles Farrell) visits Chicago to sell bushels of wheat for his father. At a diner he meets Kate (Mary Duncan), a young woman slinging hash, looking to be rescued from her dreary city life. They marry, arrive in Minnetonka, and face the bitter scorn of Lem's father and the leering jousts of the farm hands. Soon their idyllic marriage becomes claustrophobic, their love troubled. Lem needs to address his father's prejudices against waitresses. Murnau teases out delicate performances from the two leads, and his images of stillness, threshing machines working in a bright-lit sky, fully capture the lonely joys of farming. Subtle, poetic, full of quiet truths.

The Last Movie Star (2017), A24/Lionsgate, 2018, 94 mins, \$19.95 • A fun/fan film that plays with Burt Reynolds's biographical legend. Vic Edwards (Reynolds), a gridiron star turned Hollywood stuntman turned Hollywood star, is now in his 80s and has agreed to accept a Lifetime Achievement Award from a small indie film festival in Nashville. The festival, for Edwards, is low-fi: the limo is a beat-up clunker; the motel lodgings, cheap. Displeased, Vic stomps off-stage following a Q&A and goes on an inner journey. Accompanied by the festival's assistant (Ariel Winter as an engaging and disarmingly high-strung artist), Edwards reconnects with his first wife, and comes to terms with his past. Edwards is Reynolds; Reynolds is Edwards: charming, self-deprecating, and a bit of, well, at times, a real asshole. The final shot by writer/director Adam Rifkin wonderfully calls back *Smokey and the Bandit*, as Reynolds/Edwards's smile recalls an earlier smile that brashly broke the fourth wall. Edwards/Reynolds simultaneously exists in the past and the present; he is a film legend finding peace with his legacy. Splendid.

Crosscuts

BRIEF DVD REVIEWS

GRANT TRACEY



I, Tonya (2017), Universal, 2018, 119 mins, \$34.98 • Postmodern mash-up of moods, this multi-layered film from three differing perspectives (Tonya Harding, the first American woman to complete a triple axel; her ex-husband, Jeff Gillooly; and her mother, LaVona) reopens one of the tawdriest scandals in sports lore, and repositions us to more fully understand Tonya as a feisty survivor of parental and domestic abuse. Margot Robbie (Tonya) brings a defiant tenderness to the skating champ; Sebastian Stan (Jeff), who to some may appear charming and vulnerable, oozes primordial violence and is a scary case study; and Allison Janney (LaVona), in a much deserving Oscar performance, chain-smokes cloves and steals the film as Tonya's unrepentant mother, unwilling, and perhaps unable, to admit culpability. Together, this creative cocktail from writer Steven Rogers and director Craig Gillespie is a volatile mix of documentary expression, fourth-wall breaking asides, absurdist comedy, and family tragedy. Ironic, iconic, and must-see.

The Awful Truth (1937), Criterion, 2018, 91 mins, \$39.95 • Smart, sophisticated comedy courtesy of the improvisational Leo McCarey and the dynamic acting talents of his two principals, Irene Dunne (Lucy Warriner) and Cary Grant (Jerry Warriner). Grant, in the film that would make him a star, moves about the set as a circus acrobat, commanding screen space with athletic poise, as he sits jauntily on the backrest of a couch or has a comic mishap with a small table, drawer, and chair. Dunne, a gifted singer, possesses impeccable timing, radiating gravitas, every word, gesture, beat, seizing our attention. Together the couple ignite the screen with a comfortable intimacy. The plot? Through a misunderstanding and a lack of faith (Jerry thinks Lucy had an affair with her vocal coach), the couple divorce. They have ninety days to change their minds. In the interim, both get connected with others and Lucy and Jerry attempt to break up the new mismatches. Director McCarey serves up a series of tasty set pieces: Ralph Bellamy's goofy-galooted dancing; Dunne, in a moment of pure comic masquerade, posing as Jerry's "sister," singing a raunchy burlesque song, complete with costume "effects," to bust up any hopes of Jerry's marrying into a family of snobs; and an offscreen bedroom farce, with a host of shattered thuds, as Lucy attempts to carry on a conversation in the living room with her fiancé and his mother. The sequence ends with Jerry tearing out of the room, in hot pursuit of the vocal coach, and Lucy's Aunt Patsy waiting a beat before dropping the film's best comic zinger: "They forgot to touch second."

Small Town Crime (2017), Lionsgate, 2018, 92 mins, \$16.99 • Mike Kendall (John Hawkes) comes upon a badly beaten woman alongside a lonely highway. He rushes her to the hospital. She dies. Then, her cell phone, in Mike's possession, rings, and suddenly he's dropped into a demi-monde of dirty money, drugs, prostitution, and murder. Kendall, a disgraced ex-cop addicted to alcohol, seeks redemption. But in avenging the woman's death, he places his own family at risk. Hard-hitting neo-noir. Added bonus: Hawkes cruises town in a 1973-74 Nova, complete with tach on the dash. Badass, burnout, baby! □