

REVIEW



SOURD ON THE DREAM Riz Ahmed plays a Pakistani who returns to his homeland after becoming dissatisfied with America in *'The Reluctant Fundamentalist.'*

From the Lido

FOR THE next few weeks, studios will be rolling out their prestige films at international festivals. From the beachfront pavilion of Lido, here's a first report from the Venice Film Festival.

Based on Mohsin Hamid's popular post-9/11 novel, Mira Nair's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* recounts the tumultuous experience of Pakistani Changez Khan (Riz Ahmed) in America. After graduating from Princeton and becoming a successful Wall Street analyst, his comfortable niche slowly crumbles in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Falling victim to racial injustices, Changez's questioning of the American Dream leads him back home to Pakistan, where he enters academia. But when an American colleague disappears, Changez finds himself with a target on his back once more. While the political thriller aspect of the film is lacking, Nair's moving portrayal of Changez's personal journey echoes her excellent 2006 adaptation of *The Namesake*.

Canadian cinema darling Sarah Polley's first documentary feature, *Stories We Tell*, is a mash-up of interviews with friends and family regarding her deceased mother—a twice-married stage actress who also had an affair with a producer who Polley learned, at age 30, is her biological father. If the project sounds self-indulgent, it is. But by weaving together many perspectives, which often contradict one another, the film opens up a fascinating dialogue between memory and objectivity.

"Pourquoi?" constantly asks Martin Kazinski (Kar Merad), the nondescript IT guy in *Superstar* who becomes the subject of public attention thanks to a sudden onslaught of viral videos and candid photos featuring him. Within hours, he becomes an Internet sensation who can't take two steps outside without drawing a mob. The film begins as a promising mystery seeking to uncover the reason behind Kazinski's unexpected fame but then devolves into a tedious mess thanks in large part to a botched romantic subplot involving a selfish journalist. Director Xavier Giannoli thinks he's got a finger on the pulse of contemporary social media and celebrity culture, but rather than achieving smart social commentary he merely misfires with a lackluster dramedy.

Michael Shannon takes a turn as sociopathic New Jersey hit man Richard Kuklinski in Ariel Vromen's *The Iceman*. Like a disco-era Dexter, Kuklinski makes a killing doing mobster Roy's (Ray Liotta) dirty work and launches his unsuspecting family into the echelons of the upper middle class; that is until Kuklinski's greed and ambition land him in the crossfire between feuding mafia bosses. Chris Evans makes a memorable appearance as his business partner, an ice cream man who freezes his victims to confuse the authorities. The cinematography and editing create a sharp, stylish aesthetic, but it's not quite enough to disguise a middling script.

Misa Shikuma

lives, the most proactive character shades their growth: Max (Francois Cluzet), who is unnerved half to death by a close male pal's sudden confession. Cluzet slapstickish, nouvelle riche aggravator, makes for a kind of prouder Basil Fawlty (Max even names his boat after himself). The women who have to bear his ego include Marion Cotillard as an anthropologist who can't settle down, and Valérie Bonneton as Max's slow-burning spouse. Self-consciously like Sautet, but rather too much like *The Big Chill* (hark unto oldie needle-drop after needle-drop), it's not without interest but it would have been better as a serial—anything to avoid that pat ending. (*Opens Fri at Camera 3.*) (RvB)

SLEEPWALK WITH ME

(NR; 90 min.) See box on page 38.

THE WORDS

(PG-13; 96 min.) A struggling author (Bradley Cooper) makes an ethical compromise when he finds an unpublished and anonymous manuscript in an old briefcase gifted to him by his girlfriend (Zoe Saldana). After finding tremendous success, the truth catches up to him. From there, two narrative threads emerge in different states of fictionality. A heady melodrama also starring Dennis Quaid and Jeremy Irons. (*Opens Fri.*)

Revivals

NILES FILM MUSEUM

Regularly scheduled programs of silent films. Sep 8: D.W. Griffith's tale of adultery, *The Battle of the Sexes* (1928), a remake of his 1914 film. Based on a novel by Daniel Carson Goodman; Goodman was the physician who unsuccessfully treated Thomas Ince, and also the author of the novel that spurred the 1913 Supreme Court decision in *U.S. v. Kennerley*, regarding community standards as a guideline to judge

obscene material. Plus: In search of salmon, the cat heads to Alaska in "Felix Gets the Can" (1924) and "Vacation Waves" (1928) with the ever-macho Edward Everett Horton. Frederick Hodges at the piano. Sep 9: Laurel and Hardy in *A Chump at Oxford* (1940) with their short "Scram" (1932) and Our Gang in "Mush and Milk" (1933). (*Plays Sep 8-9 in Fremont at the Edison Theatre.*) (RvB)

SPACEBALLS

(1987) The quote-along version. "You fools! You've captured their stunt-doubles!" (*Plays Sep 7-9 in San Jose at the Retro Dome.*) (RvB)

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◆ **HOPE SPRINGS** (PG-13) | ◆ **LAWLESS** (R)
◆ **BOURNE LEGACY** (PG-13) | ◆ **CELESTE & JESSE** (R)
◆ **BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD** (PG-13)

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THE ODD LIFE OF TIMOTHY GREEN (PG)
THE CAMPAIGN (R) | **HOPE SPRINGS** (PG-13)

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◆ **THE POSSESSION** (PG-13) | ◆ **HIT AND RUN** (R)
◆ **EXPENDABLES 2** (R) | ◆ **BOURNE LEGACY** (PG-13)
◆ **THE ODD LIFE OF TIMOTHY GREEN** (PG)
◆ **PARANORMAN (2D/3D)** (PG) | ◆ **THE CAMPAIGN** (R)
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* **LITTLE WHITE LIES** (NR)
* **COMPLIANCE** (R) | **2 DAYS IN NEW YORK** (R)

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