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## MOVIES

## TOP 5 FILMS

1. The Little Things
  2. Wonder Woman 1984
  3. Zack Snyder's Justice League
  4. Justice Society – World War II
  5. Spider-Man: Far From Home
- Officialcharts.com

YOU don't have to like the characters in a film... but it helps.

There is not one vaguely agreeable character in Billie Piper's directorial debut – which she wrote and stars in – so it is a difficult watch.

We meet chaotic single mum Mandy (Piper) on a date with colleague Pete (Leo Bill).

That opening has promise, with feisty chat between the two.

Pete scoffs that Mandy has "a lot of teeth", adding: "I find women intolerable but I realise I can't live without them."

At the end of the date he tells her exactly what he is going to do with her Instagram pictures...

On its own, the scene is amusing. But from there, the confrontation feels relentless.

Pete isn't kooky and funny, just awful – as is Mandy's dad (David



### RARE BEASTS

(15) 91mins

★★

Thewlis) and her mum (Kerry Fox), who tries her best but deals with her own illness with a careless attitude.

Mandy's friends, who snort cocaine and jabber about their caesarean scars, are not great company either. There is a

nice dance scene at a wedding – with Lily James as the bride – and a decent performance from Piper.

But most of *Rare Beasts* feels like being thrown into a room full of angry people after drinking a gallon of some unpleasantly tangy energy drink.

YOU know what they say about New York: If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.

And that's exactly the feeling behind this sweet coming-of-age film, based on the memoir of US journalist Joanna Rakoff.

Wannabe writer Joanna (Margaret Qualley) quits university and her steady boyfriend for a bohemian life of poetry readings and smoky cafes in the Big Apple.

She gets a job at a literary agency, where her boss is technology-hating Margaret (Sigourney Weaver).

There, Joanna must hand-type everything and her main job is reading fan mail sent to the agency's one main client: *Catcher In The Rye* author J.D. Salinger, or "Jerry", as Margaret refers to him.

This opens the door to a fascinating world of Salinger obsessives. The pace is gentle but becomes



### MY NEW YORK YEAR

(15) 101mins

★★★★

more compelling as Joanna finds herself drawn in by the elusive author (whose only presence in the film is as a voice on the phone) and his fans.

Through her experiences with them, she battles with her own decisions and personal life with a

narcissistic poet boyfriend (Douglas Booth).

While sections of the film sleepwalk through the script, it is a perfectly pleasant and watchable take on a young woman finding her own creative path through those who have trodden it before.

# Dulcie Pearce



### PETER RABBIT 2

(U) 93mins

★★★★

**FOR many, the idea of being in a cinema surrounded by screaming kids munching on popcorn and kicking their chairs is a nightmare.**

But as I watched *Peter Rabbit 2* with a bunch of ageing film critics, that's just where I wanted to be for this riotous movie.

It was a joy to be back in front of the big screen, leaning back in my comfy red seat. Yet what was missing was the chorus of infectious laughter bouncing off the walls.

Critics rarely guffaw loudly and they were all sitting so far from each other that I wouldn't have heard a chortle if they did.

Yet the unrepentantly silly *Peter Rabbit 2* certainly made me laugh out loud with its mix of slapstick gags and in-jokes for grown-ups.

### Quick-fire finale

So it's sure to have an even more rib-tickling effect on your little ones. Domhnall Gleeson doesn't just throw himself into the role of bumbling farmer Mr McGregor, he jumps into it with hurricane-like gusto. Imagine *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*'s Frank Spencer after a crate of energy drinks.

Whether it's falling down a hill Looney Tunes-style or being beaten up by a CGI animal, Gleeson always pulls something extra out of the hat. But it's not just the visual gags which hit the mark in this sequel, it is the sharp writing as well.

It pokes fun at farmers' markets with their overpriced gifts, middle-class people with champagne in the fridge saved for a special occasion that will never come and James Corden's "annoying" voice. Kudos to the actor for being self-aware enough



HOP TO IT...  
Peter and pals

to realise his excitable tones as hero bunny Peter are "polarising".

The film begins with Mr McGregor marrying painter Bea (Rose Byrne), whose head is then turned by a publisher (David Oyelowo) wishing to transform her *Peter Rabbit* picture books into something tasteless.

When I saw Peter's image on a huge billboard, I feared this would turn into one of those clichéd sequels where the main character learns about the perils of fame. Thankfully, director and writer Will

Gluck goes in a totally different direction, with the loveable bunny meeting a gang of thieving pets.

This leads to a glorious heist set-piece and a quick-fire finale which hits you with one winning gag after another. Such enthusiasm suggests a five-star review, but there were times I wished I'd stuck veg in my ears like Peter does so I didn't have to listen to Corden so much.

If it wasn't for that, *Peter Rabbit 2* would be 24-carrot gold.

GRANT ROLLINGS

### MOVIE NEWS

● **WEST** End show *Dear Evan Hansen* is hitting the big screen, with *Pitch Perfect* star Ben Platt as the lead.

● **MILLIE** Bobby Brown and Henry Cavill are both returning for *Enola Holmes 2*.

● **SINGER** Camila Cabello, left, takes the lead of a new *Cinderella* adaptation, which will be released on Prime video.



## GAMES

By STUART CULLEN

THE first *Subnautica* made a big splash when it launched in 2017 with its mix of exploring, crafting and survival gameplay.

Now San Francisco studio Unknown Worlds Entertainment has returned with a sequel but this time it's got a lot colder.

*Subnautica: Below Zero* drops you headfirst into a frozen wonderland where to make it out in one piece you have to explore, craft and, above all, survive all over again.

You fill the wetsuit of Robin, a scientist who arrives on planet 4546B to search for

### Subnautica: Below Zero

Xbox One, Series X/S, PS5, PS4, Switch and PC £29.99

clues about the fate of the research team that vanished there – a research team which included Robin's sister. Although the official line is she died through her own fault doing dangerous research, Robin knows there is more to this than is being told so she must search for the truth and uncover more than just a few mysteries.

The story plays a much bigger part of

the game this time out and will also be pushing you on – even when you take a break to have a bit of fun.

You start with a small underwater lab but soon you'll be searching for resources to craft new kit, which in turn allows you to explore further and deeper to find even better stuff to craft even more gear which, on the whole, is a fun and compelling gaming loop.

You'll also run into a number of locals as the wildlife plays a

huge part in this game – from fun and curious creatures to hulking beasts that just want to eat you.

This game is stunning and follows in the same vein as the first, though this time you can explore above ground as well.

*Subnautica: Below Zero* is better and fans will love the return to unknown waters while newcomers will have a truly memorable voyage.

★★★★

## NEW MUSIC

By JIM GELLATLY

### HANNAH SLAVIN

**WHERE:** Glasgow.  
**FOR FANS OF:** Anne-Marie, Charlie XCX, Sigrid.

**JIM SAYS:** Rising Glaswegian singer-songwriter Hannah Slavin won BBC1 talent show *Pitch Battle* in 2017 as part of Leeds Conservatoire's Contemporary Singers.

She recalled: "We ended up performing with Will Young and Kelis in the final! It was an absolutely incredible experience. We definitely got a lot of performing opportunities off the back of it."

"But we were all very passionate about our solo careers, so didn't stay together for long."

Destined for the top with her edgy pop, Hannah broke in 2019 with her debut single *I'm A Mess* and some key live UK gigs.

Having been tipped by *Amazing Radio*, she made her Glasgow debut at the King Tut's Summer



Nights festival and was selected to showcase at XpoNorth in Inverness. The momentum continued with last year's IDGAFAY and Mac & Cheese singles.

The pandemic put a hold on the live shows but her stunning new single *I Don't Have A Clue* gives a great insight. Gloriously introspective, it's a thought-provoking look at these strange times.

She said: "I wrote it when I was struggling during lockdown. I genuinely just didn't know what to do with myself. Every day was Groundhog Day."

Premiered last Friday on the BBC Introducing in Scotland show, *I Don't Have A Clue* has been getting some serious traction. Watch out for a remix of the track set to be unleashed early next month.

**MORE:** [www.hannahslavin.co.uk](http://www.hannahslavin.co.uk)  
● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on *Amazing Radio*, Sundays 2-4pm.  
[www.amazingradio.com](http://www.amazingradio.com)  
[www.jimgellatly.com](http://www.jimgellatly.com)

## BOOKS

Edited by NATASHA HARDING

### THE CANCER LADIES' RUNNING CLUB

Josie Lloyd, £8.99

LIFE is going well for Keira, until she is diagnosed with breast cancer.

Slowly, cracks appear in the rest of her life and she discovers she can't rely on the people she thought she could.

Determined to fight back, Keira starts running with a small group of women who are also going through cancer treatment.

Although she hates it at first, she soon realises that every time she ties her laces and runs, she feels better – and it's her new friends that she turns to when the going gets tough.

You'll fall in love with Keira and her running buddies.

★★★★

