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MOVIES

TOP 5 FILMS

1. The Suicide Squad
2. Jungle Cruise
3. Space Jam: A New Legacy

4. The Croods 2: A New Age
5. Black Widow

● Source: FDA

ROAD trips in movies never go well.

Be it hangovers, serial killers or simply getting very lost, they are always problematic.

Zola's no exception. The bored waitress and sometimes-pole dancer (played by Taylor Paige) serves Stefani (Riley Keough) and the pair instantly hit it off and decide to go stripping together in Florida.

A disastrous – and often pretty horrifying – 48 hours follows, kicking off with a car journey that also involves Stefani's boyfriend Derrek (Nicholas Braun) and "friend" called X (Colman Domingo). The film is based on a true story that went viral on social media.

In 148 tweets, A'Ziah "Zola" King recounted her wild weekend with her new stripper friend, which went very wrong.

The tale captivated the internet – and writer Jeremy



FILM OF THE WEEK

JOY RIDE
stars Riley and Taylor

ZOLA
(18) 90mins ★★★★★

O Harris and director Janicza Bravo got to hear about it.

The film's opening line is equally transfixing: "Y'all wanna hear a story about why me and this bitch here

fell out? It's kind of long, but full of suspense."

The film is fast and sometimes ferociously funny, but brutal and tragic too. It also shines a light on the dark side of sex work that Hollywood often glosses over (see Hustlers).

A dangerous joyride that's perfect for these long summer nights.

INSPIRED by the 2007 murder of British student Meredith Kercher, this understated family drama sees Matt Damon play a working-class dad trying to free his daughter, four years after she was convicted of murder.

Stillwater is set in Marseille, where Allison (Abigail Breslin) is in jail for killing her girlfriend Lina.

Her father Bill (Damon), an oil worker from Oklahoma, does his best to visit and on his latest trip learns there might be evidence to find the man Allison claims is responsible for Lina's death.

With little money and a language barrier, Bill enlists the help of a French single mum Virginie (Camille Cottin). Their chemistry is palpable as new feelings arise on this fact-finding mission.

But there are only so many endearing cultural misunderstandings and



MISSION...
Matt plays Bill

STILLWATER
(15) 140mins ★★

tense moments to enjoy before the plot takes a sharp turn into far-fetched territory.

This negates much of the goodwill from the first half of director Tom McCarthy's movie, which is more

engaging and reflective. The script darts between various storylines, often veering away from the one you are most interested in.

Still, Damon is always a compelling presence and delivers an admirable performance here, giving layers to regretful roughneck Bill that many actors would not be able to achieve.

Dulcie Pearce

AT THE MOVIES

LOVE can be complicated. Especially if it involves affairs, amnesia, two stories from different centuries and relying on the Royal Mail to deliver romantic prose.

All of these problems get in the way of love-struck couple Jennifer Stirling (Shailene Woodley) and Anthony O'Hare (Callum Turner), who meet in 1965 while on a trip to the South of France.

Glamorous newlywed Jennifer is there with husband Lawrence (Joe Alwyn), a humourless, cold businessman who has little-to-no interest in what his wife has to say.

Thankfully, he has to go away on business, as businessmen do, and the pair launch into a sunset-watching, book-swapping friendship that quickly turns into a high-romance affair.

Fast-forward nearly 50 years and slapdash journalist Ellie Hawthorn (Felicity Jones) stumbles across one of the couple's mysterious love letters while researching a story.

We first meet Ellie when she's climbing out of a man's bed after calling him the wrong name twice and eye-rolling at the suggestion of a second date.

I think that's meant to mean she's a modern, independent woman. But, sadly, she just comes across as cruel and unlikeable.

Ellie soon becomes fascinated by the letters and spends her working days searching the archives at her newspaper to find more of them.

There, she meets straight-laced Rory (Nabhaan Rizwan) who, for some baffling reason, seems to fancy Ellie even though she's mean to him. The pair start an unlikely romance over their interest in the letters, while having zero chemistry.

This patchy adaptation of Jojo



WRITE STUFF
cast Shailene and Callum

THE LAST LETTER FROM YOUR LOVER
(12A) 110mins ★★

Moyes' novel is full of plot holes and clichés, but does look exquisitely beautiful, with the Sixties costumes and street scenes popping off the screen.

The excellent cast make this movie just about bearable, with the

standout performance being from sexy, deep-voiced Turner.

Two stories running together was never going to be easy – especially when Jennifer is struck with amnesia so she can't even remember that she fancies another man.

With an often rosey script, an insufferable key character and more than one moment when I wanted to scream, "Just get together already!" this love letter rather gets lost in the post.

FILM NEWS

- **TOM HARDY** returns to his Marvel role as the lethal protector Venom in *Let There Be Carnage*, directed by Andy Serkis.
- Quirky director Wes Anderson has signed Tom Hanks to be in his next movie.
- Russell Crowe is directing new thriller *Poker Face*.

GAMES

By STUART CULLEN

WHEN is a game not a game? When it's an interactive movie, where you pick not only how the story is shaped but ultimately the final outcome.

And when it comes to FMV movie titles Wales Interactive, the studio behind *The Bunker* and *Late Shift*, is leading the way.

There latest title the *Night Book* is billed as an interactive thriller with a dash of horror thrown in.

The tale follows Lorilyn – played by Julie Dray who was the French female voice of V in *Cyberpunk 2077* – a translator working night shifts remotely from

Night Book

Xbox One, PS4, Switch and PC £9.99

her home who is also pregnant. With her fiancé working away, she's also caring for her mentally-ill father, played by Mark Wingett (DC Jim Carver from *The Bill*), and desperately tries to keep her family safe as things take a supernatural turn.

Lorilyn has unknowingly translated a page from an ancient book which has awakened evil forces.

And they're not best pleased with what her fiancé's company has been getting up to, so she has to decide who

to sacrifice and who to save. Since the game is so story-driven, we'll avoid spoilers but over its two-hour run time, there are several different paths and fifteen endings you can find.

Gameplay is very light – you pick an option to push things forward at key points, very much like a classic choose-your-own-adventure tale but told through live action.

The acting side of

things is very well done – it's worth noting the whole game was filmed remotely during lockdown.

It has a found footage vibe and uses Skype calls, FaceTime chats or remote CCTV viewing to tell the story. This won't be everyone's cup of tea as it's extremely light on gameplay but if you're looking for a twist on your run-of-the-mill weekend viewing it's well worth a look.

★★★★

BOOKS

Edited by NATASHA HARDING

THE DYING SQUAD

Adam Simcox, £16.99

PICK OF THE WEEK WHAT happens after we die is one of life's biggest questions. So what would you do if you could catch your own murderer? That's the problem facing *The Dying Squad's* hero cop Joe Lazarus, who's just been killed in action.

Reluctantly partnering with his spirit guide Daisy-May, he faces dangers from both the living and the dead in the quest to find his killer. A thrilling ride with dark humour, action and a touching side that's hard to forget.

★★★★
JONATHAN WHITELAW

