

## FILM ROUNDUP

REVIEWED BY KEITH UHLICH



*Transit.* Photo: Marco Kruger © Schramm-Film

**Fyre** (Dir. Chris Smith). Documentary. In early 2017, the country was craving a distraction in the aftermath of a divisive presidential election. The failed Fyre Festival proved a perfect vehicle for some near-unanimous schadenfreude. Documentarian Chris Smith (*American Movie*) traces the abortive tropical music jamboree, cooked up by has-been rapper Ja Rule and frat-boyish entrepreneur/con-man Billy McFarland, from lush promo video to disaster-zone fallout. It's always compelling and frequently jaw-dropping, as when one of McFarland's underlings reveals he was prepared to perform fellatio on a customs agent to secure the release of some bottled water. The "bad guys" are tsk-tsked, though there's a clear conflict of interest in the fact that the upstart PR firm, Jerry Media, which promoted the Fyre Festival, is one of the film's backers. Watch this Netflix feature on a double-bill with Hulu's competing doc *Fyre Fraud* (also engrossing, though not without issues of its own) for a fuller sense of how this crash-and-burn event became a gleeful and, by now, a much-too-easy object of collective scorn. [N/R] ★★★1/2

**Glass** (Dir. M. Night Shyamalan). Starring: James McAvoy, Bruce Willis, Samuel L. Jackson, Sarah Paulson. A sequel few asked for, the protracted and tiresome *Glass* concludes M. Night Shyamalan's somnolent, self-satisfied superhero trilogy, which the writer-director began in 2000's *Unbreakable* and continued, stealthily, in 2016's *Split*. Crimefighter David Dunn aka The Overseer (Bruce Willis) and multiple personality-afflicted villain Kevin Wendell Crumb aka The Horde (James McAvoy) are locked up in the same asylum as *Unbreakable*'s big bad Elijah Price aka Mr. Glass (Samuel L. Jackson). There, a Nurse Ratched-like doctor, Ellie Staple (Sarah Paulson), tries to convince the trio to renounce their respective powers as delusions, though Glass has other things in mind. Only McAvoy, shuffling heedlessly between personas, brings any sense of fun to the proceedings, which otherwise tend toward the dour and the pompous. This is low-grade trash decked out in egocentric pretense. [PG-13]★★

**Serenity** (Dir. Steven Knight). Starring: Matthew McConaughey, Anne Hath-

away, Jason Clarke. Writer-director Steven Knight's seeming neo-noir is so shamelessly certifiable it demands both no stars and five stars. Let's split the difference at three stars and delight in the adolescent huffing and puffing of Matthew McConaughey as a virile fisherman named Baker Dill, who seethes his way around a remote tropical paradise. His ex-wife (Hathaway), with whom he has a distant teenage son, arrives one afternoon with a proposition: Kill my current abusive spouse (Jason Clarke), and you'll get \$10 million. From this point, the blood, sweat, and tears flow. For a good while, it seems like *Serenity* is a lost relic from the '90s erotic thriller phase that gave us horned-up pulp like *Basic Instinct* (1992) and *Wild Things* (1988). Yet Knight has bigger, um, fish to fry, and the pathos-ridden places the film ultimately goes are so stupid and ridiculous (and ridiculously stupid) that you almost have to applaud in awe. [R]★★★

**Transit** (Dir. Christian Petzold). Starring: Franz Rogowski, Paula Beer, Godehard Giese. German filmmaker Christian Petzold (*Phoenix*) transposes Anna

Seghers's 1942 novel about a concentration camp escapee hiding out in the French port city of Marseilles to the present day. Note that I didn't say update: The vehicles and locations are modern, but the story itself, in which the fugitive Georg (Franz Rogowski) assumes the identity of a dead writer and romances the man's wife (Godehard Giese), is still very much of the WWII era. This neither-nor approach to period signifiers lends an alluringly alien quality to the film, though it soon attains a different kind of power (at once pointedly political and profoundly emotional) akin to Alex Cox's great, anachronism-heavy western *Walker* (1987), in which a 19th-century tale of plunder illuminated the then-current Contra conflict. Here as there, the past and the present hold equal weight. One is not necessarily used to comment on the other, as you might expect from Petzold's choice, say, to make the Nazi occupiers into modern-day immigration forces. Time is, instead, beside the point because, as *Transit* argues with riveting insight and artistry, the trials and tribulations of history never truly go out of fashion. [N/R]★★★★1/2 ■