

FILM ROUNDUP

KEITH UHLICH



Under the Silver Lake.

Dragged Across Concrete (Dir. S. Craig Zahler). Starring: Mel Gibson, Vince Vaughn, Tory Kittles. The languorous pleasures of writer-director S. Craig Zahler's previous films (*Bone Tomabawk* and *Brawl in Cell Block 99*, assured slow-burners both) are near-nonexistent in this repellent cops-gone-bad thriller. Flagrant racism is chief among the demerits: The Caucasian characters (Mel Gibson and Vince Vaughn as old-school boys in blue pulling a heist to make ends meet) are photographed in supple golden hues—white supremacy viewed autumnally, romantically. By contrast, all non-whites, particularly co-lead Tory Kittles as an African-American ex-con trying to better his family via one last bit of thievery, are portrayed like red-haloed emissaries from hell, coming to steal money, jobs and societal stature from all light-skinned keepers of the flame. Zahler has a steady, often inspired compositional eye. But his ideological viewpoint, arguably complex in the prior two features, has here become sickeningly simplistic. [R] ★1/2

Long Day's Journey Into Night (Dir. Bi Gan). Starring: Tang Wei, Huang Jue, Sylvia Chang. There's a compellingly ruminative quality to the first half of this sleepy drama from Chinese writer-director Bi Gan (*Kaili Blues*). A doleful man (Huang Jue) takes an achronological journey into his past, recalling both the death of a friend and a lost love (Tang Wei). Midway through, he steps into a movie theater, where he puts on a pair of 3-D glasses. Suddenly the

film we're watching gains an added dimension and the camera traces the protagonist's journey through a shadowy dreamscape, all of it photographed in an unbroken, hour-long take. Sad to say the stereoscopic effects are a squint-inducing eyesore and the single-shot aesthetic an indulgent, muscles-flexing gimmick more than anything else. Rather than draw us in, Bi keeps us at a stiff distance. The story's overarching sense of regret is thus rendered in the shallowest terms. [N/R] ★★★

Our Time (Dir. Carlos Reygadas). Starring: Natalia López, Phil Burgers, Carlos Reygadas. A family affair, so to speak. Mexican filmmaker Carlos Reygadas (*Post Tenebras Lux*) writes, directs and stars, alongside his wife Natalia López, in this pensive, frequently surreal drama about a marriage unraveling. Juan (Reygadas) and Esther (López) run a country ranch where a "Gringo" named Phil (Phil Burgers) somewhat comes between them—somewhat, because the couple is in a long-term open relationship that this particular third-party just happens to upend. Why, exactly? Reygadas prefers to live with the question as opposed to concretely answering it (and that includes muddying, as he's done in promotional interviews, any autobiographical parallels). Love and lust are mysteries that can't be untangled. And neither can Reygadas' style, which has an uncanny ability—particularly via the expansive, blurry-edged CinemaScope photography—to feel at once grounded and unmoored. There are scenes here you won't likely

shake, such as an unearthly visit to a Mexico City opera house, or a drug- and drink-fueled party that culminates in an phantasmagorical appearance by a gender-bending Tijuana-based street performer named El Muertho. Wedded bliss is put through the wringer, which leads characters and viewers both to a different sort of revelatory ecstasy. [N/R] ★★★★★1/2

Under the Silver Lake (Dir. David Robert Mitchell). Starring: Andrew Garfield, Riley Keough, Topher Grace. Rejoice all of you clamoring for the millennial answer to *The Big Lebowski*. Writer-director David Robert Mitchell (*It Follows*) tells the narcotized, noirish tale of L.A. stoner Sam (Andrew Garfield, oozing odious charm), whose horny lethargy gets him into trouble after he meets comely neighbor Sarah (Riley Keough). After an abortive one-night stand, Sarah vanishes and Sam spends the rest of this wonky, digressive film trying to figure out what happened to her. It has something to do with an underground comic book artist, disappearing dogs, a maybe-murdered billionaire, an underground network of tunnels, a homeless guy dressed like the Burger King mascot, and the first edition of *Nintendo Power* magazine. Or maybe...not? The plot isn't the point so much as it is Sam's anger and aimlessness. He's a horrible person who spends two-and-a-half hours guided by his hedonistic cravings, learning absolutely nothing of value. It's *The Odyssey* without purpose, and a genius comedy about all-consuming apathy. [R] ★★★★★1/2 ■