

FILM ROUNDUP

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Guy Pearce and Eric Ebouaney in *Domino*.

Avengers: Endgame (Dirs. Anthony Russo and Joe Russo). Starring: Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans, Mark Ruffalo, Josh Brolin. The moguls at Marvel Studios close out a decade-plus of superhero saturation with this ostensible finale to the intertwining sagas of Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.), Captain America (Chris Evans), Bruce “The Hulk” Banner (Mark Ruffalo), et al. It would be tempting to describe *Endgame*, in which all caped and non-caped crusaders go after purple megalomaniac Thanos (Josh Brolin), as a bloated 181-minute monstrosity. But that would be imparting some sense of genuine human feeling to what is a transparently cold and calculating enterprise. (At least indigestion lets you know you're alive.) The outcomes, even the tragic ones, are never in doubt. And the filmmaking is functional at best, anonymous at worst; if there were any truth in advertising the credited director would be “Green Screen.” You can feel the movie slipping from your mind as you watch it, as if the genocidal Thanos were snapping his Infinity Stone-bedecked fingers every thirty seconds or so. The forgetting proves to be a blessing. [PG-13] ★

Domino (Dir. Brian De Palma). Starring: Carice van Houten, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Guy Pearce. The production process on Brian De Palma's latest—a sly, succinct and provocative Euro-thriller—was fraught, with incompetent producers and copious money troubles among the many issues. Yet somehow, De Palma and

his team concocted a formidable work. *Game of Thrones* vets Carice van Houten and Nikolaj Coster-Waldau play a pair of Danish cops investigating the murder of one of their own. Islamic terrorists and the CIA, the latter led by a deliciously officious Guy Pearce, are involved. But the main culprit (the villain in the shadows) is technology itself: television, the Internet, surveillance cameras, and drones—all tools utilized by the characters (and not just the villains) to sow discord and division. The ways in which people process upsetting images is a key concern. One prime De Palma set-piece, dizzily filmed in split-screen, even takes place at a film festival. And the final shot—which visualizes a sort of virtual world slate-cleaning—is among this great director's most incendiary. [R] ★★★★★

Pasolini (Dir. Abel Ferrara). Starring: Willem Dafoe, Ninetto Davoli, Riccardo Scamarcio. Though Abel Ferrara's excellent biopic charts the last day in the life of the Italian poet and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini (at the end of which he will be murdered by a male prostitute), there is little of the depressive sense of inevitability that afflicts many a true-life tale with a preordained outcome. Willem Dafoe plays Pasolini much as he did Christ in Scorsese's *Last Temptation*, as a flesh-and-blood man upon whom iconic stature has been forced. He has a mask for every scenario, which also extends to his words: Among “respectable” society (family, financiers, interviewers), this avatar Pasolini

speaks English. But in his imagination and during his clandestine homosexual encounters, he thinks and talks in Italian. The language games are just one of Ferrara's aesthetic strategies. He also visualizes scenes from the film (a to-the-stars-and-back philosophical fable) that the director was working on before he died, featuring one of Pasolini's regulars, Ninetto Davoli. This is a strange and sublime love letter from one fire-brand artist to another. [N/R] ★★★★★1/2

When They See Us (Dir. Ava DuVernay). Starring: Jharrel Jerome, Asante Blackk, Caleel Harris, Ethan Herisse, Marquis Rodriguez. The (mostly) tragic and (semi) triumphant tale of the wrongly convicted youths known as “The Central Park Five” is retold in co-writer and director Ava DuVernay's prosaic four-part drama, which is premiering on Netflix. Episode one explores the racist, hysteria-fueled manhunt for the black perpetrator(s) who raped a white female investment banker. Episode two details the two trials that ended with the quintet, all sixteen and under, sentenced to long stretches in prison. Neither episode is especially captivating since, as an artist, DuVernay tends to dirge-like tedium. She's on a bit surer footing in parts three and four as she details the boys' rough times in prison and afterward (*Moonlight*'s Jharrel Jerome, who carries most of the final installment, is especially affecting as Korey Wise). This is still an angry story told with little infectious pulse or passion. [N/R] ★★ ■