

s f t w

## MOVIES

TOP 5 FILMS  
THIS WEEK

1. Mary Poppins Returns
2. The Favourite
3. Aquaman

4. Event Cinema: Andre Rieu's 2019 Live New Year Concert From Sydney
5. Bumblebee

●launchingfilms.com

IN 1987, Gary Hart was the Democrats' golden boy, seemingly certain to win the party's nomination to battle George Bush Snr in the 1988 US Presidential campaign.

Then it all came crashing down, amid revelations of a scandalous extramarital love affair.

The film stars Hugh Jackman, JK Simmons and Vera Farmiga.

It is based on Matt Bai's book and details the campaign's swift collapse, asking thought-provoking questions on the way.

What is privacy? Where is the line drawn? Are a candidate's personal foibles relevant to their ability to hold public office?

It's great seeing Jackman get his teeth into playing a bad guy for a change.

Ultimately, though, I expected more answers to those searching questions. Perhaps the ambiguity is



**HART LUCK**  
... Jackman as doomed candidate

### THE FRONT RUNNER

(15) 113mins

★★★★

intentional. But it left me wondering what message director Jason Reitman (Juno, Thank You For Smoking) was trying to get across. Was this a turning point in the now-toxic relationship between America's Press and the White House? It feels like that, reading the story. But

on screen, the newspapers are given a nobler, more innocent sheen than I find believable. The Front Runner is a great look behind the scenes of a fast-moving political campaign, while Reitman delivers a robust and occasionally flashy film. I'm just not quite sure it manages to get it all across.

HERE we have an incredible true story of how Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette, France's most celebrated female novelist and actress, struggled to get her voice heard in the early 1900s.

Growing up in a sleepy village in central France, she is transported by husband Henry to the metropolitan lifestyle in Paris.

Henry, a libertine who is 16 years her senior, is an author and publisher who uses the pen-name "Willy" – but his work is ghostwritten.

When the couple find themselves in danger of bankruptcy, Colette writes a semi-autobiographical story about her childhood.

The novel Claudine At School – the first of four to appear under her husband's name – is a huge success, making Willy a feted writer and the pair one of Paris's first celebrity couples.

Under Willy's command, Colette writes more books.

He urges her to make



**FRENCH FANCY...**  
Knightley and West as literary duo

### COLETTE

(15) 112mins

★★★★

them titillating and exotic, exploring Colette's own bisexuality and their open marriage. But the affairs and power struggles between the pair take their toll.

Colette falls in love with Mathilde de Morny, an openly gay noblewoman known as Missy.

She causes a stampede

by kissing Missy on stage. Keira Knightley as Colette gives her best performance for years, while Dominic West, as Willy, elaborates on ground well trodden as Noah Solloway in The Affair. It is funnier than you might expect and a timely look at prejudice and the creative process.

## TALKFILM

# Jamie East

Download the **TalkFILM** podcast every Thursday



## NOT being a Laurel and Hardy aficionado is something I've always been faintly embarrassed about.

I can do the awful impressions the same as everyone else and know the catchphrases.

But I can go a bit quiet when people begin to reference the actual films.

Thankfully, director Jon S Baird's Stan & Ollie pays tribute to the duo without any feeling that he is "showing off" his knowledge of the double act.

That means people like me who have only a passing familiarity with them get looked after just as well as hardcore fans.

We join the pair at the top of their game, with one hell of an opening tracking shot. Baird took advice from Martin Scorsese on the composition of the shot and it shows. It's truly magnificent.

The comedians are in the studio quibbling over contracts.

They are not getting the spoils they feel they deserve, but Los Angeles studio boss Hal Roach has cunningly signed them to separate contracts and enjoys playing them off against each other.

### Gleaming Savoy to the dusty seaside B&Bs

And the pair are still sore over the conflict some 16 years later when we join them in Newcastle, on a tour that is not so much "must see" as "if we're not busy we could drop in I suppose".

Stan (Steve Coogan) and Ollie (John C Reilly) are valiant in their approach to the 1953 tour but you feel the empty seats sting.

The act is still as charming as ever, but times are moving on, especially when you have a plucky young upstart called Norman Wisdom on the scene.

Age and health are now an issue, as is the cinematic comeback they are attempting.

Both men know that whatever happens, movie producers must not see the lukewarm reception they are getting from British people.

So with the help of theatrical impresario Bernard Delfont (Rufus Jones) they up their promotional antics, trying to sell the show – but still relying on tired routines.

Keeping their spirits up and more than an eye on the goings on are their wives – Lucille Hardy,



**DOUBLE ACT**  
... Steve Coogan and John C Reilly as Stan and Ollie

# THIS CHARMING STAN

### STAN & OLLIE

(PG) 97mins

★★★★

brilliantly portrayed by Shirley Henderson and Nina Arianda as Ida Laurel. Her excellent performance bears more than a passing resemblance to Alan Partridge's girlfriend Sonja.

The film is sumptuous-looking, making a threadbare Britain look cosy and charming.

The wardrobe, set dressing and colouring are absolutely spot-on and it's clear painstaking care has been given by everyone concerned.

Indeed, the recreation of the England of the Fifties is one of the highlights – from the gleaming Savoy and the Strand in the capi-

tal, to the dusty seaside B&Bs. It's a marvel. Meanwhile, Baird draws out career-best performances from both his leads.

It's the first time I've watched Coogan and didn't immediately think of Partridge.

You can also tell both actors have really taken the time to get under the skin of their respective men. The mannerisms, prosthetics, voices – it's all very impressive.

This is not a film that carries any particular heft or grand statement. It is a small story about friendship done on a large scale.

Sure, it is emotive and knows which muscles to flex at various points, but it isn't soupy.

It is simply a lovely, unscandalous tale about two people who needed each other very much.

### DVD OF THE WEEK

**THE LITTLE STRANGER, 12A, out Monday:** An uncanny, understated tale of loss and loneliness wrapped up in a slow-burning ghost story. Domhnall Gleeson plays buttoned-up Doctor Faraday, revisiting the crumbling stately home of his youth. Supernatural intrigue is soon afoot. Ruth Wilson and Charlotte Rampling disappear beautifully into their parts, with much left unsaid. When the shocks come, you feel them all the more. ★★★★★

CHARLIE WRIGHT



## BOOKS

Edited by  
**NATASHA HARDING**

### DON'T SAY A WORD

Kate Marshall, £8.99

THE author had an idyllic childhood until her parents divorced when she was eight. Her mother invited various different men into her life – and one of them was a paedophile who abused Kate for years.

As a traumatised adult, Kate took "Uncle Phil" to court, where he was finally brought to justice.

This is a harrowing memoir that shines a light on the importance of speaking out against abuse.

★★★★



### SHAME

Dr Joseph Burgo, £14.99

EVER felt your face go red in public, wanted to avoid a person's gaze or longed to disappear because of an awkward conversation?

Then you were probably experiencing shame.

The author, who is a clinical psychologist, takes a detailed look at the sensation and argues it is not the toxic feeling many people seem to think.

He reveals how upbringing affects the way in which people react to the emotion and how shame can hold some back from living their lives to the full.

An interesting and often illuminating read.

★★★★



### THE FLOWER GIRLS

Alice Clark-Platts, £12.99

YOUNG sisters Laurel and Primrose are dubbed "the Flower Girls" after they abduct, torture and kill a two-year-old.

Laurel, ten, is jailed while six-year-old Primrose is given a new identity.

Nineteen years later, another child goes missing – and the pair have more to lose as adults than they did as children.

Can the two women ever find genuine happiness if they both have blood on their hands? A dark, disturbing and all-consuming mystery.

★★★★



### TELL ME A SECRET

Jane Fallon, £7.99

WORKMATES Holly and Roz are firm friends and share everything, including dreams for the future.

But when Holly lands a promotion and becomes Roz's boss, things change.

It soon becomes apparent that someone is out to sabotage Holly's job.

As Holly gets to grips with her new role, as well as supporting her pregnant daughter, the campaign to oust her intensifies. But she is not going to take it lying down.

There is only going to be one winner – and things are going to get messy.

★★★★

