

## Films on release Nigel Andrews

### Mission: Impossible — Fallout

Christopher McQuarrie  
147 mins (12A) ★★★★★

Tom Cruise hurtles around Paris in a BMW, jumps off a roof, falls in a river, is stabbed, shot and variously savaged, and climaxes his heroics with a shuddering helicopter chase through snow-clad mountains. No change of style here then for the *MI* series. The only change at all is the quantity of talky intrigue. Alec Baldwin, Rebecca Ferguson, Henry Cavill, Simon Pegg and TC himself stand about in vaults and sewers playing verbal cat's cradle with the overextended plot bulletins. But the climactic chopper chase — terrific — makes up for much.

### Cocote

Nelson Carlo de Los Santos Arias  
106 mins ★★★★★

If you can stand its rollercoaster style — colour/monochrome, silence/cacophony, passion/dispassion — this prizewinning film from the Dominican Republic is quite a ride. Debut film-maker Nelson Carlo de Los Santos Arias follows a rich family's gardener (Vicente Santos) to the home-town funeral of his murdered father. Revenge will out? Not before the twists, turns and avant-garde tropes of a film whose most astounding scenes dwell on the florid, extravagant grieving rites, nearly Bacchanalian, of rural Dominicans.

### Tracking Edith

Peter Stephan Jungk  
91 mins (PG) ★★★★★

Edith Tudor-Hart, born Suschitzky in Austria in 1908, was a Britain-dwelling photographer and spy. Peter Stephan Jungk's documentary has a fascinating topic but a maddeningly low-key approach to it. His voiceover narration is like that of a schoolteacher on Mogadon.



Molly Wright plays Alex in 'Apostasy', Daniel Kokotajlo's film about a family of Jehovah's Witnesses

### Apostasy

Daniel Kokotajlo  
95 mins (PG) ★★★★★

In this calm and murderously watchable first feature from Britain's Daniel Kokotajlo, the anaemia-afflicted girl from the Jehovah's Witness family is dying. Dying from her faith: she is not allowed blood transfusions. She lives with her mum and sister Luisa on a Lancashire housing estate. Molly Wright plays the girl with a shy, pining, quietly anguished grace. Luisa (Sacha

Parkinson), pregnant though single, is a different matter. If she leaves home she will be "dis-fellowshipped" — cast out by the church's elders — which may be fine with her.

Or not. Nothing is truly fine here, except the hairsplitting interdicts and lethal, punctilious commandments. (Kokotajlo himself is a former sect member, bearing witness against the Witnesses.) The family faith is a family business, however. It ensures prosperity, continuity, social acceptance. To break or doubt the

faith is to bring down division, schism, damnation.

The film has a Hardyesque implacability. Choice, we feel, was surrendered to fate long ago. Writ, not reason, now runs the religion of choice. One sister's cumulative tears and rage are the most we're allowed for emotional release; although a plot turn occurs earlier, so startling it forces us to ask, "How can the story now carry on?" But carry on it does, with a quiet, caustic, piercing-eyed gaze at blinkered rites and traditions.

In rounding up witnesses, though, he gets quite a crowd, including Edith's brother Wolfgang and Wolfgang's son Peter (*The Empire Strikes Back*), both fine cinematographers. And if Edith was responsible for recruiting Kim Philby and the Cambridge Five, she clearly deserves her footnote in history.

### Iceman

Felix Randau  
96 mins (15) ★★★★★

The cinematic task: to reconstruct the life and death of the mummified

5,300-year-old man found in the Ötztal Alps in 1991. The chosen option: have bearded, fur-clad folk clump about snowy wastes with no dialogue except a few snatches of extinct Rhaetian. Have them attack each other bodily or with arrows. Show icy mountains, gorgeous and merciless. Felix Randau's film is like watching extended out-takes from *The Revenant*. But then so was *The Revenant*. Oh for Werner Herzog! He would have found a way to be visionary, surreal, or stark, stareably mad.

### The Nun

Jacques Rivette  
140 mins (12A) ★★★★★

Reissue of the week, number one. Jacques Rivette's 1966 film of Diderot's 18th-century novel *La Religieuse* is bleak, strong and voluptuously austere. It reveals, subversively and almost covertly, in the sensual qualities this story of harsh convent rule tries to suppress. Rivette doesn't only cast Anna Karina, Godard's incandescent muse, in the main role of the suffering novice. Alain Levent's photography has a

pearly, irresistible glow, as if throwing pagan affirmation in the face of Catholic cruelty and abnegation.

### Maurice

James Ivory  
140 mins (15) ★★★★★

Reissue of the week, number two. There'll always be an England while there's a Forster-Ivory revival industry. James Wilby and Hugh Grant (30 years before gay-ing up again as Jeremy Thorpe) are the star-crossed youngsters in this lustrous but sensitive adaptation of EMF's homosexual romance.

The story was once thought not publishable, never mind filmable. Now it seems sweet, thoughtful, tenderly anguished, and graced on screen by a pre-fame Grant with teen looks and hair like a Beardsley Adonis.

### A Prayer Before Dawn

Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire  
116 mins (18) ★★★★★

Jail brutality comes jumbo-sized in this Thai drama. It's a true story. But director Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire goes beyond truth into passion play, a pageant of pain photographed and edited with choric power. Hymns to the violent-homoerotic; steamy stanzas of S&M. Some shots of luminous suffering could go straight into a Kitsch Martyrdom calendar for 2018. But the virtuosity can't be denied. The viewer feels he's in there with the cellmates and hell-mates, flung among the tattooed and indigenous. The boomy throb of the film's music keeps us penned inside a prison as much mental-emotional as literal. It's a remorseless, compelling sentence, just shy of two hours, with no remission for good behaviour.

### Generation Wealth

Lauren Greenfield  
106 mins (18) ★★★★★

Money makes the world go round, says the song, but what if it goes round the wrong way? Documentarist Lauren Greenfield (*The Queen of Versailles*) sets out to depict a western empire built on greed, since Ronald Reagan's 1980s, and heading for decline and fall. Her vision is overambitious, like the people she targets. Almost everything counts towards the condemnation tally, from Wall Street to plastic surgery to poor parenting by career couples. But there is energy in her visual essay-writing, casting wide its net to include newsreel footage, movie clips and interviews.

## On digital and DVD



### Wonderstruck

Todd Haynes, 2017  
Studiocanal ★★★★★

It's a Todd Haynes film, so we know not to expect bleak social realism; Haynes is a romantic. But still: this film of two parallel storylines, 50 years apart, takes us to some dark places — bereavement, the loneliness of its two young protagonists, sudden deafness, the mean streets of New York in the 1970s, and finally to the half-light of New York's Queens Museum, where a panoramic model city is the setting for the film's revelatory encounter. The dialogue is sparse — music and Haynes's pacy camerawork tell the story, or rather stories. What links the two apparently disparate narrative strands? Let's just say that when all becomes clear, it stretches credulity with its sentimental improbabilities. But then: this is a Todd Haynes film. **David Cheal**



### Journeyman

Paddy Considine, 2017  
Studiocanal ★★★★★

Subtlety isn't a quality synonymous with boxing, so it is perhaps fitting that *Journeyman* — about a middleweight champion suffering from a debilitating brain injury — features all the nuance of a jab to the gut. Writer-director Paddy Considine stars as Matty, a veteran pugilist transformed into a vulnerable infant after receiving one blow to the head too many in his last

bout. He wins the title, but later loses the ability to speak fluently, or to move naturally, and most devastatingly, to interact caringly with his wife (Jodie Whittaker) and baby. Too many scenes are engineered to amplify the pathos — there is no need to show Matty smashing his memorabilia; a shot of his face is enough. Things are less maudlin in the final act when he begins the arduous road to recovery and it becomes clear that the fighter still remains. **Dan Einav**



### Unsane

Steven Soderbergh, 2018  
Fox ★★★★★

Claire Foy slips off *The Crown* for something completely different: playing a woman trapped in a restrictive institution who longs to be treated as normal. Even before her forced incarceration at the Highland Creek Behavioral Center, Sawyer Valentini's life is claustrophobic: days spent sequestered in a tiny office cubicle, nights spent jumping at memories of her former stalker. Unsurprisingly, it gets no better after she is locked up and forced to protest her sanity. For the first hour Steven Soderbergh's iPhone-shot thriller is a tense, nervy affair, all cold institutional lighting, skittish soundtrack and acute camera angles that reflect Sawyer's inner state (a committed performance from Foy). But tension and ambiguity are maddeningly squandered as stalker and victim are reunited, the dialogue as padded as the cell they sit in, before the film slips further into genre cliché and contrivance. **Raphael Abraham**