

#061 AUG 07, 2015

eNEWS

Magazine

*Angry
Birds 2*

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BIRDIER."

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FANTASTIC FOUR

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A close-up, partial view of Amy Schumer's face on the left side of the page. She has blonde hair and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark blue.

Comic Amy Schumer, Sen. Schumer Call For Better Gun Control

Comedian Amy Schumer spoke tearfully of two women who were shot to death during a screening of her movie, "Trainwreck," and asked lawmakers Monday to support a gun control bill sponsored by her second cousin, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer.

"I've thought about these victims each day since the tragedy," she said at a news conference at the senator's office in New York.

"People say, 'Well, you're never going to be able to stop crazy people from doing crazy things,' but they're wrong. There is a way to stop them," she said.

The legislation would try to improve a flawed background check system by creating monetary incentives for states that submit a robust amount of information to the federal database used to block sales to people with criminal records or a history of serious mental illness. Movie theater gunman John Russell Houser shot 11 people during a screening of the film last month in Lafayette, Louisiana, before then killing himself.

He bought the gun in Alabama last year following a background check that failed to reveal that he had a history of psychiatric problems and had been the subject of domestic violence complaints. A Georgia judge ordered Houser detained for a mental evaluation in 2008 after relatives claimed he was dangerous.

Sen. Schumer emphasized that his bill, which would also create penalties for states that fail to submit records to the database, is about improving the background check system, not putting new restrictions on buyers.

Known best for her humor on women's sexuality and gender inequality, Amy Schumer was asked by reporters Monday whether she thought Houser purposely picked her film because of his negative views about feminism and liberals.

"I got about a million emails from friends telling me, 'It could have been any movie,' and I'm trying to believe that. But I'm not sure," she said. "I think the idea of women's equality making anyone upset is not anything I'll ever understand."

She said that she's always been in favor of smarter gun laws but that the shootings had made the issue "extremely personal."

Schumer also said she expected backlash for speaking out about guns, but she didn't care.

"I'll handle it the way I've handled it the last 10 years," she said. "I've had death threats and a lot of hate directed toward me. But I want to be proud of the way I'm living and what I stand for."







TAX FILING
PROBLEMS
COULD
JEOPARDIZE
HEALTH LAW
AID FOR 1.8M



About 1.8 million households that got financial help for health insurance under President Barack Obama's law now have issues with their tax returns that could jeopardize their subsidies next year. Administration officials say those taxpayers will have to act quickly.

"There's still time, but people need to take action soon," said Lori Lodes, communications director for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which runs HealthCare.gov.

The health care law provides tax credits to help people afford private insurance. Nationally, that aid averages \$272 a month, covering roughly three-fourths of the premium. By funneling the aid through the income tax system, Democrats were able to call the overhaul the largest middle-class tax cut for health care in history. But they also spliced together two really complicated areas for consumers: health insurance and taxes. Confusion has been the result for many.

Consumers who got health care tax credits are required to file tax returns that properly account for them, even if they are unaccustomed to filing because their incomes are low. Unless they follow through, "they will not be able to receive tax credits to help lower the cost of their health insurance for 2016," Lodes explained.

Treasury officials said 1.8 million households are at risk of losing subsidies for next year, and that number breaks down as follows:

- About 710,000 households that have not filed a 2014 tax return, although they were legally required to account for health insurance tax credits that they received.
- Some 360,000 households that got tax credits and requested an extension to file their returns. They have until Oct. 15.
- About 760,000 households that got tax credits and filed their tax returns omitted a new form that is the key to accounting for the subsidies.





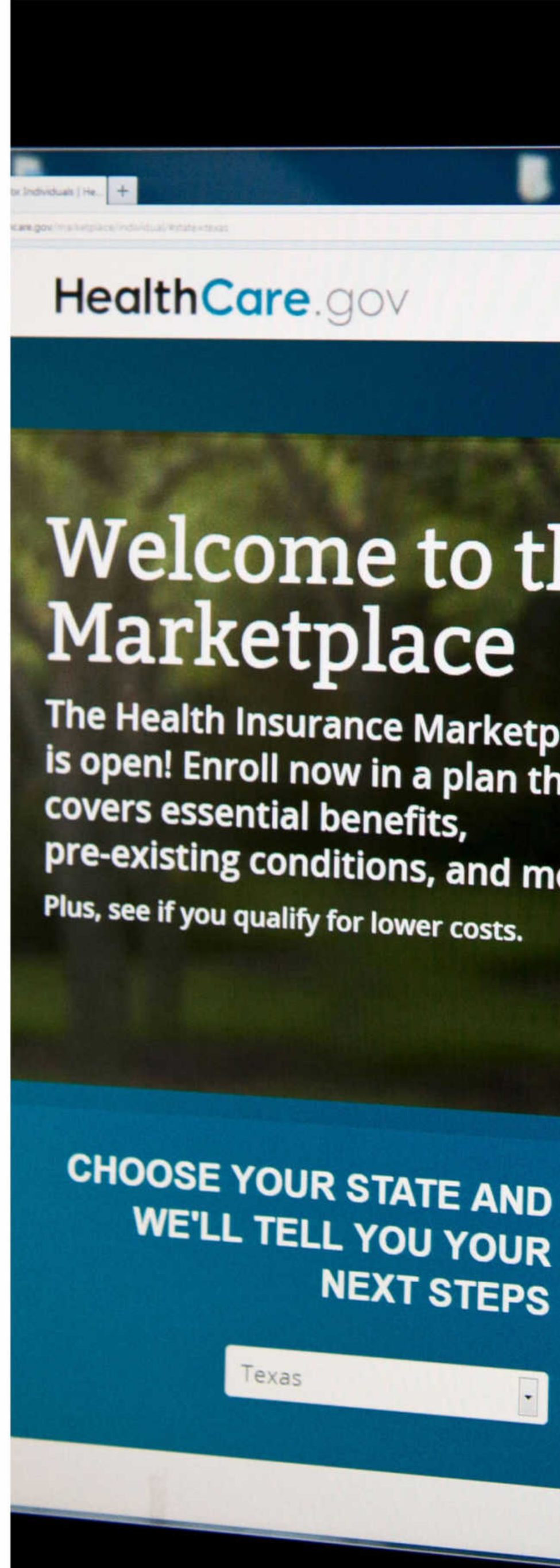
Called Form 8962, it was new for this year's tax filing season.

"I think it was definitely confusing for people," said Elizabeth Colvin of Foundation Communities, an Austin, Texas, nonprofit that helps low-income people with health insurance and taxes. "It could have been worse, quite honestly. I think a lot of tax preparers didn't know how to do these (forms) either."

The 1.8 million households with tax issues represent 40 percent of 4.5 million households that had tax credits provided on their behalf and must account for them. The rest had their returns successfully processed by the IRS as of the end of May. Earlier this summer, a Supreme Court decision preserved health care tax credits for consumers in all 50 states, turning back a challenge from conservatives opposed to "Obamacare." Because of the law's built-in complexity, some of those consumers may now be at risk of losing their assistance.

Administration officials say they're working hard to prevent that. An estimated 16 million people have gained health insurance since HealthCare.gov opened for business in late 2013, and the White House does not want any slippage.

The IRS has started reaching out to consumers with tax issues. HealthCare.gov is reporting an increase in tax-related calls to its consumer assistance center. That telephone number is 1-800-318-2596. The Health and Human Services department plans another outreach campaign in the fall, coordinated with the start of the 2016 sign-up season on Nov. 1. "What the IRS is doing here is sending these people a not-so-gentle reminder that they need to file or they will put their subsidy at risk," said Mark Ciaramitaro, vice president for tax and health care at H&R Block, the tax preparation company. He cautioned that many consumers will find the process cumbersome, so they should waste no time getting started.



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at

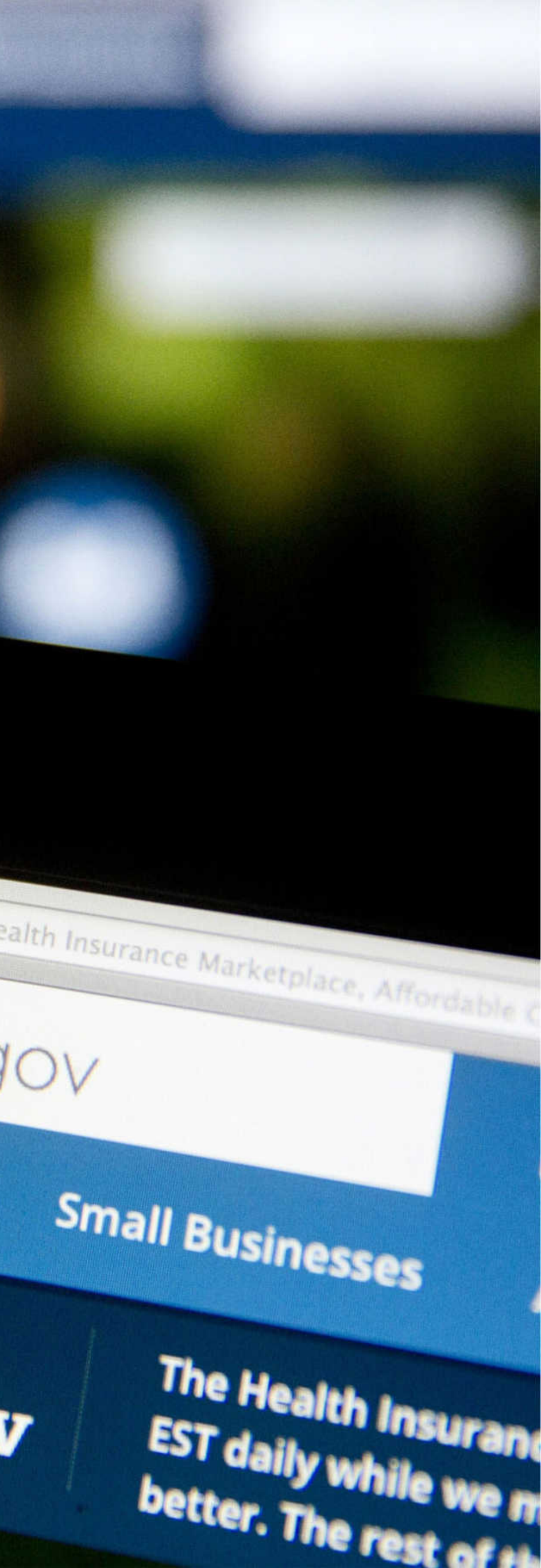
ore.



If you live in Texas, you'll use this website, [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov), to apply for coverage, compare plans, and enroll. Specific plans and prices are available now and coverage can start as soon as January 1, 2014.

APPLY NOW





Despite a thinning out of taxpayer services due to budget cuts, IRS Commissioner John Koskinen says the tax-filing season went relatively smoothly, even with the health care law added. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that there's a learning curve for everybody on health care.

"This is the first year for this new provision," Koskinen wrote in a letter to lawmakers last month. "We expect that taxpayers will continue to better understand this process as it becomes more routine."

The administration and the health law's supporters could be doing a better job educating consumers, said Judy Solomon of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which advocates for low-income people.

"There is definitely room for improvement to make sure people understand how it works," she said. "They are getting an advance payment of a tax credit, and to finish the process they need to file a tax return. They have to look at it as a process that is a year long and has multiple steps."

Online:

HealthCare.gov: <https://www.healthcare.gov/taxes/marketplace-health-plan/>



Filmmakers Respond To Criticism Of Lego 'Brickumentary'



Verizon

2:50 PM

Genres

Featured

Chart

A LEGO BRICKUMENTARY

In Theaters Now—Watch It

New and Noteworthy



Home
Kids & Family



Far from the
Madding Crowd
Drama



The Divergent
Series: Insur
Action & Adv

EVERY
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THING
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Movie of the Week

The
Outsiders

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The filmmakers behind a documentary on the toy powerhouse Lego say critics who see the film as a 92-minute commercial for the tiny building blocks are missing the point.

“A Lego Brickumentary” opened Friday in limited theatrical release to mixed reviews, with some reviewers complaining the film took an uncritical eye to the toy that captivates children and adults alike. “If there is anyone out there that’s looking for a hardcore controversial film they are looking at this film through the wrong lens,” Kief Davidson, the film’s co-director, said in an interview Friday.

His co-director, Daniel Junge, said the film was guided by a genuine affection for the bricks, not any input from the Dutch toymaker.

“Lego had no editorial control over the film,” Junge said. “The love that you see in the film is coming from us as filmmakers.”

Their zeal for Lego bricks led some critics to liken the film to a corporate ad or promotional video. “As a movie, it can be as annoying as stepping on a stray LEGO brick with your socks off,” New York Daily News reviewer Jordan Hoffman wrote in one of the more unflattering reviews.

It clicked better with moviegoers; audiences gave it a 71 score on review site Rotten Tomatoes on Friday night. “A Lego Brickumentary” explores the culture surrounding Legos, which are no longer confined to tables and toy boxes, but include books, video games and a successful feature film. The documentary shows how builders create jets, replica movie sets and functional cars from a product initially created for children.

“I don’t think anyone would have seen the omnipresence of Legos we see now,” said Junge, who won an Academy Award in 2011 for the short documentary, “Saving Face.”





The film includes recording artist Ed Sheeran, basketball player Dwight Howard and South Park creator Trey Parker describing their love for the toy. Jason Bateman narrates the feature length documentary as an animated Lego mini-figure.

The majority of the film, however, explores the bricks' huge adult fan base, known as "Adult Fans of Lego," or AFOLs. Junge was approached to create the film about Brickworld, an annual convention of Lego enthusiasts who show off elaborate creations and learn new building techniques. "We were continuously just lured by the level of quality in the builds and the massive artistic endeavors at the conventions," Davidson said.

That prompted the filmmakers to explore the use of Legos for real-life uses such as therapy and architecture, and its role as a gender-neutral toy.

"Brickumentary" provided Junge and Davidson the chance to create a movie they can share with their children. Junge's upcoming film "Being Evel" focuses on daredevil Evel Knievel and Davidson is working on a documentary about the ivory crisis.

Junge said this is the first time his 7-year-old daughters will see his work and the film gave Davidson an opportunity to bond with his son.

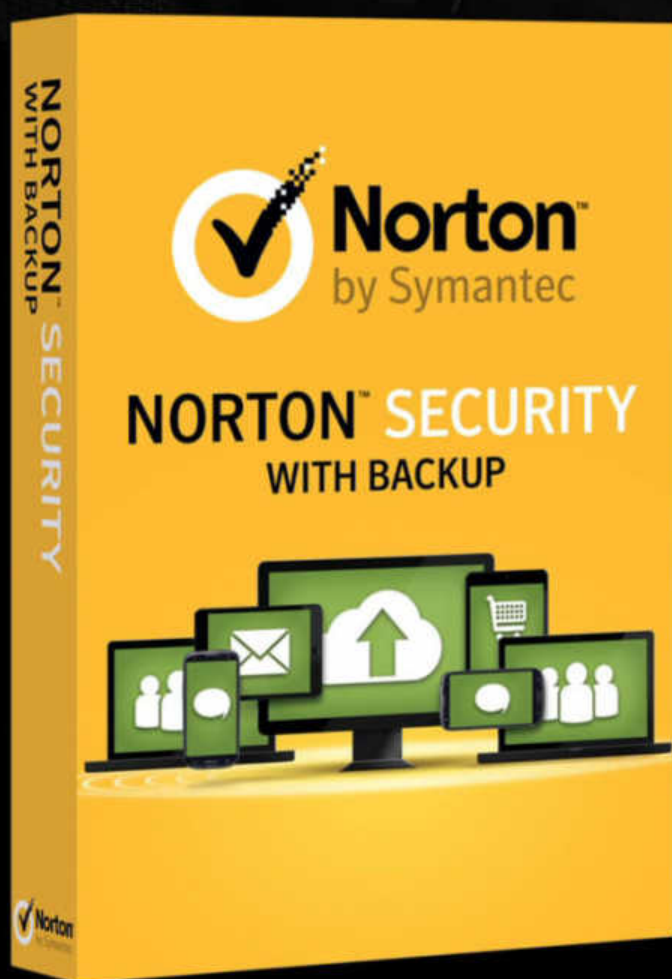
"It drew us closer together as father-son and that's something 10 years from now I'll definitely remember," Davidson said.

A dense, overlapping collage of Apple Magazine covers, creating a mosaic effect. The covers feature various headlines related to Apple products and events, such as 'iPhone 5', 'iPad mini', 'Windows 8', 'Angry Birds Star Wars', and 'The New iMac'. The Apple logo is prominently displayed on many covers.

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**"Bigger.
Badder.
Birdier."**

But is this enough for Angry Birds 2?

We look at the
Angry Birds
licensing phenomenon



On 30 July, Rovio Entertainment launched Angry Birds 2, the first direct sequel to the original Angry Birds - a puzzle game which developed from what initially seemed an amusing, if addictive, distraction into a world-conquering cultural phenomenon, encompassing not only games, but also cartoons, foods and even theme parks. However, since the franchise's peak of popularity in 2012, more and more cracks have been forming. With Angry Birds 2, has Rovio Entertainment just - ahem - hatched the remedy for a franchise in danger of fading into irrelevance?

FROM TINY ACORNS... BLOB-SHAPED CARTOON BIRDS GROW

All of this started with just one game: a modest-looking puzzler called Angry Birds released as a cheap iOS game, available in an App Store that was then not yet two years old, in December 2009. Its premise, when introduced in an article like this so many years later, still comes across as utterly crackers: the player uses a slingshot to fire flightless birds at pigs to stop them stealing eggs. These pesky pigs use wooden, metal and glass houses as their shields, but the player can tweak the power and direction of their shots to wipe out the structures.

Even back then, however, the idea wasn't exactly world-shaking. In a review published just two months after its release, IGN's Levi Buchanan acknowledged its close similarity to another mobile game, Crush the Castle, but declared that "Angry Birds outstrips that



Image: Gary He







addictive puzzler in personality". He added that, "**thanks to precise controls, great puzzle designs, and excellent atmosphere, Angry Birds is outrageously addictive.**"

The rapid growth in the popularity of Angry Birds soon after its earliest release led to the kind of lucrative franchising that had long seemed a practical possibility only for much more firmly-established cultural properties like Star Wars and Batman. This has only been encouraged by the little blob-like avians appearing in successive Angry Bird games - some adhering to the original's gameplay, others moving into genres including action, racing and role-playing.

ANGRY BIRDS' SUCCESS IS ROVIO ENTERTAINMENT'S SUCCESS

Given the staggering cultural reach, let alone mere commercial success, of Angry Birds, it could seem peculiar that it is only now that a proper sequel to the original game has been uncaged. However, it begins to make a lot more sense when the general trajectory of the franchise is studied more closely. As the long term decline of Angry Birds threatens to also undermine Rovio Entertainment, the launch of the series' first direct sequel is a serious statement of intent by the company the future of which could be heavily reliant on its success.

However precarious the company's standing might currently be, however, it has clearly built a huge prestige that could help cushion it against any fall. **Rovio Entertainment began in very inconspicuous circumstances in 2003** - when, under the name Relude, its intentions were very much those of simply a mobile games developer, and a fledgling one at that. In fact, the company, which changed its name to Rovio Mobile in 2005, made over fifty games before it finally turned its attention to the game which would utterly dwarf the rest of its portfolio in mainstream popularity and commercial success: the original mobile game of Angry Birds for iOS.

In July 2011, the company changed its name again, this time to Rovio Entertainment. This was a telling reflection of how much the success of Angry Birds as a cultural force, not merely a series of games, had led













the business to shift its overriding focus. In June 2014, one of Rovio's most high profile staffers, Peter Vesterbacka, insisted that **it was no longer just a games developer, but instead now an entertainment and education company** - apparently driven by the fact that merchandising and licensing was responsible for about half of its 2013 revenue of \$216 million.

FROM MORE GAMES, TO CARTOONS, TO EVEN PARKS

It seems a good moment, then, to look more closely at that merchandising and licensing. Naturally, huge demand for the original Angry Birds game made further Angry Birds games an easy sell for Rovio. Perhaps due to a desire to stick to what the company must have then perceived as a winning formula, many of the early Angry Birds follow-ups did not actually stray from the first game's fundamental mechanics. Instead, the big changes were cosmetic, as Angry Birds Rio, Angry Birds Star Wars and Angry Birds Star Wars II tied in with popular films.

However, once a few years had passed and the Angry Birds brand had become more familiar, the situation must have seemed ideal for branching out into other genres. Hence, there was the arrival of another tie-in, Angry Birds Transformers, which is a side-scrolling shooter with the wonderful catchphrase of "Birds Disguised as Robots in Disguise". There was also Angry Birds Go!, the wingless wonders' answer to Mario Kart.





Given the birds' cute appeal, placing them in their own animated adventures must have seemed like a no-brainer. Surely enough, **such animated adventures, including Angry Birds Toons and Angry Birds Stella, can be watched through ToonsTV** - the online video network that Rovio launched in March 2013 and has proved yet another success for the firm, having attracted 4 billion views by the following year's end. These programmes have obvious appeal for children, who can also enjoy the official Angry Birds parks that have opened in various places, including **public spaces in Finland** and the British theme park Lightwater Valley, **which operates an Activity Park with slides and touchscreen devices running the game.**

HOPES PLACED IN ANGRY BIRDS 2 AND A BIG MOVIE NEXT SUMMER

These all read like pleasing developments for Rovio, but one serious dilemma that has emerged particularly recently has been that of the Angry Birds apparently losing popularity - and, with it, revenue. In September 2014, **it was reported that the number of monthly active players of Angry Birds had fallen to 200m, from a cited peak of 263m at the end of 2012.** This was a drop of 24% - and, **in March, Rovio reported that its revenues in 2014 totaled €158.3m,** compared to €173.5m the year before. Much poorer sales of the Finnish company's consumer products, which include Angry Birds merchandise, were responsible for the overall decline in revenue.



Still, the firm's recently-appointed CEO, Pekka Rantala, has eyed the upcoming Angry Birds feature film for new licensing opportunities, reporting that it is "getting very positive reactions from major retail and license partners as well as from consumer focus groups". As this movie, which will count Jason Sudeikis, Josh Gad and Peter Dinklage among its cast, will not be arriving in theaters until May 2016, it seems too early to judge how well it will likely be received by the public and critics.

Regardless of its quality, however, it could gain a valuable boost in attention should Angry Birds 2 take off in the time before the

movie's release. The chances of that look promising; at the time that we type these words, the game is topping the chart for free iOS games, and has already amassed almost 4,000 ratings just a few days after launching. The game's average rating, by the way, stands at four stars out of five. How much new life this game will breathe into the Angry Birds brand remains to be seen. However, it's safe to say that, pending a great reception for that film, however Rovio Entertainment feel about the performance of their impressively diverse Angry Birds portfolio as a whole this time next year, it is unlikely to be angry. ■

by Benjamin Kerry & Gavin Lenaghan





U2 Welcomes The Clintons, Springsteen at New York Show


For its last of eight shows at Madison Square Garden, U2 welcomed some very famous guests.

On Friday night, lead singer Bono gave a shout out to former President Bill Clinton for helping to negotiate peace in the 1990s in the band's native Ireland. Bono later praised the former president and Hillary Rodham Clinton, who is running for president, for their efforts in fighting AIDS.

U2 performed for more than two hours, including such favorites as "Pride (In the Name of Love)" and "Beautiful Day." For their encore they brought an old friend on stage, Bruce Springsteen, who joined them for "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" and the Ben E. King hit "Stand By Me."

The New York shows were part of U2's "Innocence & Experience" tour.



A photograph of Angelina Jolie and Aung San Suu Kyi walking through a crowd of people, likely female factory workers, in Myanmar. Jolie is in the foreground, wearing a black top and holding a white folder. Suu Kyi is slightly behind her, wearing a white shirt with a UNHCR logo. They are both looking towards the right. The background shows a crowd of people and a building with a corrugated metal roof.

Jolie, Suu Kyi Visit Myanmar Female Factory Workers

Angelina Jolie has joined Myanmar's opposition leader and democracy icon, Aung San Suu Kyi, in sitting down with female workers to learn more about their dire conditions.

Jolie, who is a special envoy for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, is on a four-day visit to the Southeast Asian nation.





During her meeting with the factory workers on the outskirts of an industrial zone in Myanmar's largest city, Yangon, Jolie and Suu Kyi witnessed first-hand the conditions the women live in, mostly low-cost hostels. Jolie also toured inside the factory.

She traveled to Kachin state earlier this week, home to more than 10,000 displaced people since a cease-fire between Myanmar's government and ethnic rebels has broken down in 2011.

According to her trip details, it is unlikely that Jolie will be able to travel to western Rakhine State, where more than 100,000 Muslim minority Rohingya live in apartheid-like conditions in camps. It is Jolie's first visit to Myanmar, which only recently emerged from decades of military rule. More than a dozen ethnic minority groups, mostly in Myanmar's border areas, have been fighting for greater autonomy since the country attained independence from Britain 67 years ago.

Recently, the world attention has turned to the plight of stateless Rohingya Muslims who have been trafficked from Myanmar and Bangladesh aboard overcrowded boats. Dozens of graves as well as pens likely used as cages for Rohingya have been found in abandoned jungle camps on both sides of the Thailand-Malaysian border.



A dramatic illustration of a dragon breathing fire in a dark, cavernous setting. The dragon is positioned on the left, with its head and front legs visible, breathing a large plume of orange and yellow fire towards the right. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a cave or dungeon. The overall tone is fiery and intense.

'Dungeons & Dragons' Feature in Development at Warner Bros.

Dungeons & Dragons is coming to the big screen.

The studio announced Monday that the popular fantasy role playing game is being developed as a feature film franchise at Warner Bros.

David Leslie Johnson, who wrote "The Conjuring 2" and "Wrath of the Titans" has already written a screenplay.

Greg Silverman, President, Creative Development and Worldwide Production at Warner Bros. said that there are "endless creative possibilities" to explore in the fantastical world of the Forgotten Realms. No other details have been confirmed about the production.

The announcement also signals the resolution of a lawsuit concerning a dispute over the Dungeons & Dragons property. The films will be a joint production between Warner Bros., Hasbro's Allspark Pictures and Sweetpea Entertainment with "The Lego Movie's" Roy Lee attached as a producer.





Investigation Discovery Network Can Get You Hooked On Crime

Henry Schleiff wants to simplify your life.

He wants to school you in life lessons.

He wants to hook you on crime.

As a group president at Discovery Communications, Schleiff is boss of Investigation Discovery, or ID for short, a network whose motto might be: "Where bad things happen to good (or hapless or downright clueless) people."

ID is awash with real-life tales of greed, passion and outright evil served up with sassy titles like “A Crime to Remember,” “I Almost Got Away With It” and

“Who the (Bleep) Did I Marry?”

Hooked?! Think of watching ID as being turned loose in a frozen yogurt shop: one delectable product in countless flavors you just can’t stop spooning up.

Meanwhile, ID guarantees you practical tips.

“If you live on a farm and it’s Halloween and there’s a storm, you don’t go down to the barn when you hear the door clanging,” advises Schleiff, reflecting on a sample episode’s message. “Or: If you meet a guy in a library who’s writing a book on serial murders, you don’t invite him to move in with you right away.”

Good to know. But what about ID making life simpler? “Mystery and suspense is the most popular storytelling genre in the world,” says Schleiff, “and there are lots of places on TV where you can watch it in bits and pieces. But we’re the only network dedicated to it 24/7, 365 days a year. In a world of confusion, with 8,000 TV networks, we can simplify things: We tell a good story any time.”

So you might say ID is like whodunit wallpaper?

“It is absolutely wallpaper!” Schleiff agrees proudly. He is a showman, a tireless promoter, a man who, at 67, describes his unflagging workplace gusto by citing Woody Allen’s statement of affection in “Annie Hall”: “Forget ‘like’ or ‘love,’” says Schleiff. “I ‘luuurve’ this stuff!” He arrived at Discovery in 2009, when the fledgling ID was ranked 50th among cable networks. Now available in 86 million homes, it is a top 10 network in the 25-to-54 demo and No. 1 in all of television among women 25-to-54 for how long they watch before changing the channel - nearly an hour. In addition, he oversees



American Heroes Channel, Destination America, Discovery Family Channel and Discovery Life Channel. Until 2009, he was head of Hallmark Channel and Hallmark Movie Channel, and from 1998 to 2006, the boss of Court TV, which he pulled from the brink by introducing forerunners of ID-like crime fare to its prime-time lineup.

He began as a lawyer who, on the sly, submitted jokes to “Saturday Night Live,” though without success. But his comic muse has served him since, like during staff powwows where prospective shows, and the wacky titles for them, are cooked up. He counts “Wives With Knives,” a title as self-explanatory as it is euphonious, among his creations.

“We do the titles with a wink,” Schleiff says. “Marketing, showmanship - we do anything, including those titles, to bring attention to our programming.” Concepts for series come from the network’s development team as well as from the stable of independent producers tapped to make the shows.

What results are constantly replenished variations on a theme, with many ID series drawing from a shared pool of conventions: a victim and a perpetrator (often bonded by blood, marriage or raw passion); on-camera testimony from friends and family, law enforcement officials, maybe a psychologist, and a journalist who covered the story. There are dramatizations, whose characters may closely resemble their real-life counterparts or, strangely, bear scant resemblance. It can go either way.

And most of the shows boast overheated narration, such as with the close-knit family whose “fabric will soon be torn under the strain of sex, lies and extraordinary allegations.”

And don’t forget the teenage girl who may have gone too far with her boyfriend: “There could be hell to pay if Ashley’s parents think she’s spreading more than her wings.”







However soothingly familiar are the elements of each case, there is no end of fresh cases. The network airs 650 hours of originals each year, nearly two new hours every day. It does that by keeping production costs low- about \$350,000, Schleiff says, roughly 1/10th the typical cost of a broadcast network's prime-time scripted hour.

ID mostly relies on its own stable of stars (such as Candice DeLong, former FBI agent and profiler, who hosts "Facing Evil" and "Deadly Women"), though Jerry Springer, Paula Zahn and Tamron Hall all have series. New shows in the pipeline include Wendy Williams with "Death by Gossip," "Barbara Walters Presents American Scandals" and filmmaker Joel Schumacher with "Do Not Disturb: Hotel Horrors" ("Guess what's going on in THAT hotel room!" laughs Schleiff).

The network is also dabbling with scripted fare, but it, too, will always draw from real life.

"We have a formula and we know how to do what we do," Schleiff explains. "We just want to find ways to do it better."

And he wants to keep spreading his crime wave.

"There are still people who don't know what ID is, never heard of it," he acknowledges.

But he doesn't seem worried: "If they watch five minutes, they're more likely than not to watch to the end. Then they'll watch episode 2. And then they'll watch another series."

Case closed.

"Then they're halfway to becoming an ID addict!"

Online:

<http://www.investigationdiscovery.com>

The most sophisticated blockbuster
since *The Dark Knight Rises*?

**ANOTHER
PROMISING
MARVEL
ADVENTURE
ON THE WAY
WITH THE
FANTASTIC FOUR**





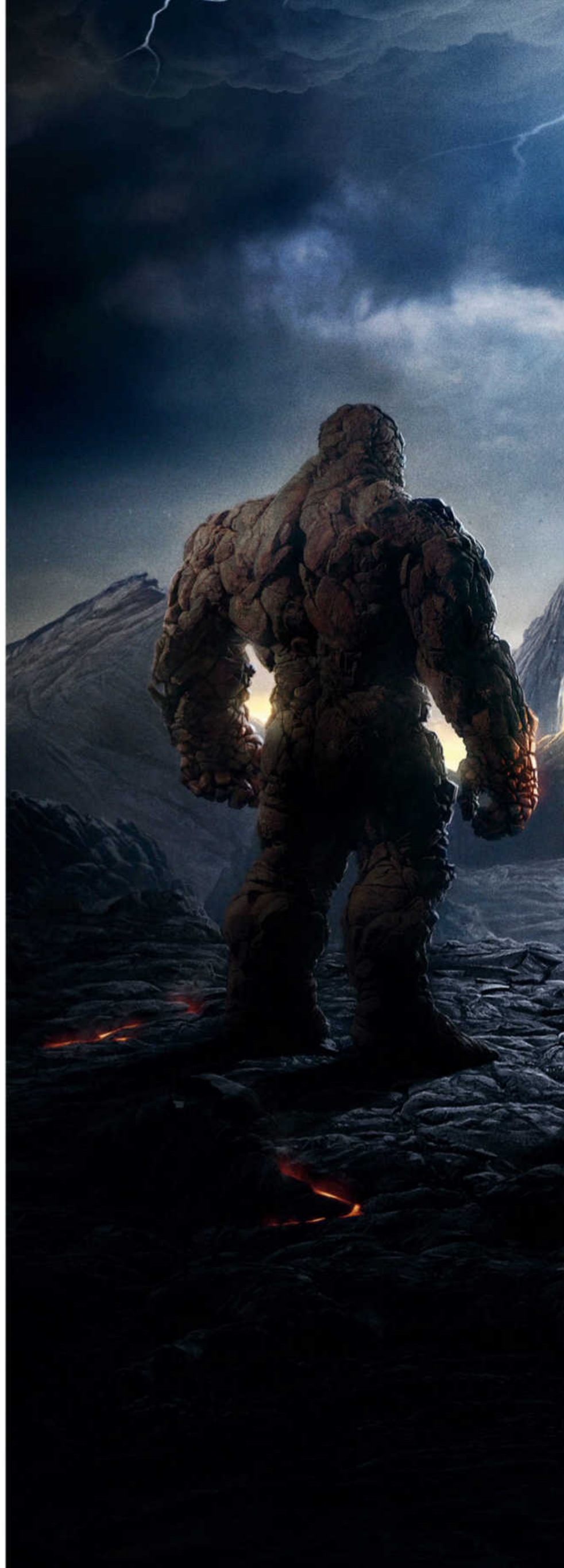
One of life's near-certainties, it seems, is that as long as there's a summer, there's a raft of superhero films gathering plaudits left, right and center. Surely enough, with us having only just recovered from the thrills of Avengers: Age of Ultron and Ant-Man, there's now yet another promising comic book adaptation in the form of the rebooted Fantastic Four. And, after a few less-than-fantastic false starts, the foursome could finally be getting the stellar adventure that they have been waiting for.

A RATHER UNORTHODOX CRIME-FIGHTING TEAM

Since their comic book debut in 1961, the Fantastic Four have proven themselves a somewhat unconventional superhero team. Comprised of super-stretchy leader Mr. Fantastic, sole female member Invisible Woman, literally fiery Human Torch and intimidating stony-fleshed Thing, the four are prone to squabbles and yet maintain effectiveness as team players to rival the Avengers. They have yet, however, to match the Avengers in big screen popularity - though it hasn't been for want of trying...

THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE LONG WAITED FOR A FANTASTIC MOVIE

Think of many of the enduring comic book icons conceived in the twentieth century and it likely won't be long before you can also think of a classic movie franchise adapted from each of them. With Superman, there's the Christopher Reeve series of the late









and 1980s, while Batman was shed of his previously established camp persona to deliciously dark effect in the Tim Burton and Christopher Nolan films. And then there are the various Marvel stablemates, including Iron Man, Captain America and Thor, who have much more recently been catapulted from relative obscurity into mainstream stardom on the back of excellent films.

For the Fantastic Four, however, the wait for any comparable golden moment has been long... too long. The very first live-action Fantastic Four film, called *The Fantastic Four*, was made in 1992, but only a small number of very discerning Fantastic Four fans and movie buffs have even seen it. That's because it was never actually released to theaters or on video; Stan Lee, the original creator of the characters in the comic books, said in 2005 that German producer Bernd Eichinger had opted to quickly make the film on a meager budget **only in order to keep the Fantastic Four film rights, the cast left completely unaware during shooting.**

Eichinger was, however, involved in the production of the first big-budget live action adventure for the quartet. This movie, called simply *Fantastic Four*, was thankfully brought to **theaters in 2005, where it amassed about \$330,579,700 globally.** The cast, which included Jessica Alba as Sue Storm and the future Captain America, Chris Evans, as Johnny Storm, was certainly more starry than its obscure predecessor's, but this did not save the film from a disparaging critical reception.

IT'S THAT WORD AGAIN: REBOOT!

That film's main cast and director, Tim Story, returned for a sequel, *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*, two years later - but another slew of less-than-positive reviews was this time accompanied by a **poorer box office** return for 20th Century Fox. It is understandable, then, that **the studio later decided that a reboot of the franchise was the step forward**. Reboots of other comic book movie franchises have differed in their success, but there is good reason to believe that the new *Fantastic Four* film could join *Batman Begins* among the relatively few reboots to have breathed whole new life into a wilting cinematic series.

For a start, the studio appears to have chosen the new director carefully. If casual comic book fans are unlikely to recognize the name of Josh Trank, dedicated film buffs certainly should; he was responsible for 2012's science fiction thriller *Chronicle*, which **topped the US box office upon its release** and attracted positive reviews. Renowned late critic Roger Ebert remarked that it "**grows into an uncommonly entertaining movie that involves elements of a superhero origin story, a science-fiction fantasy and a drama about a disturbed teenager**".

There are worthy parallels to be drawn here between Trank's emerging stature as a young director and that of Christopher Nolan in the early 2000s - when, as avid film buffs will not need to be reminded, he was handed the job of completely starting over with the *Batman* franchise. The *Dark Knight* had,





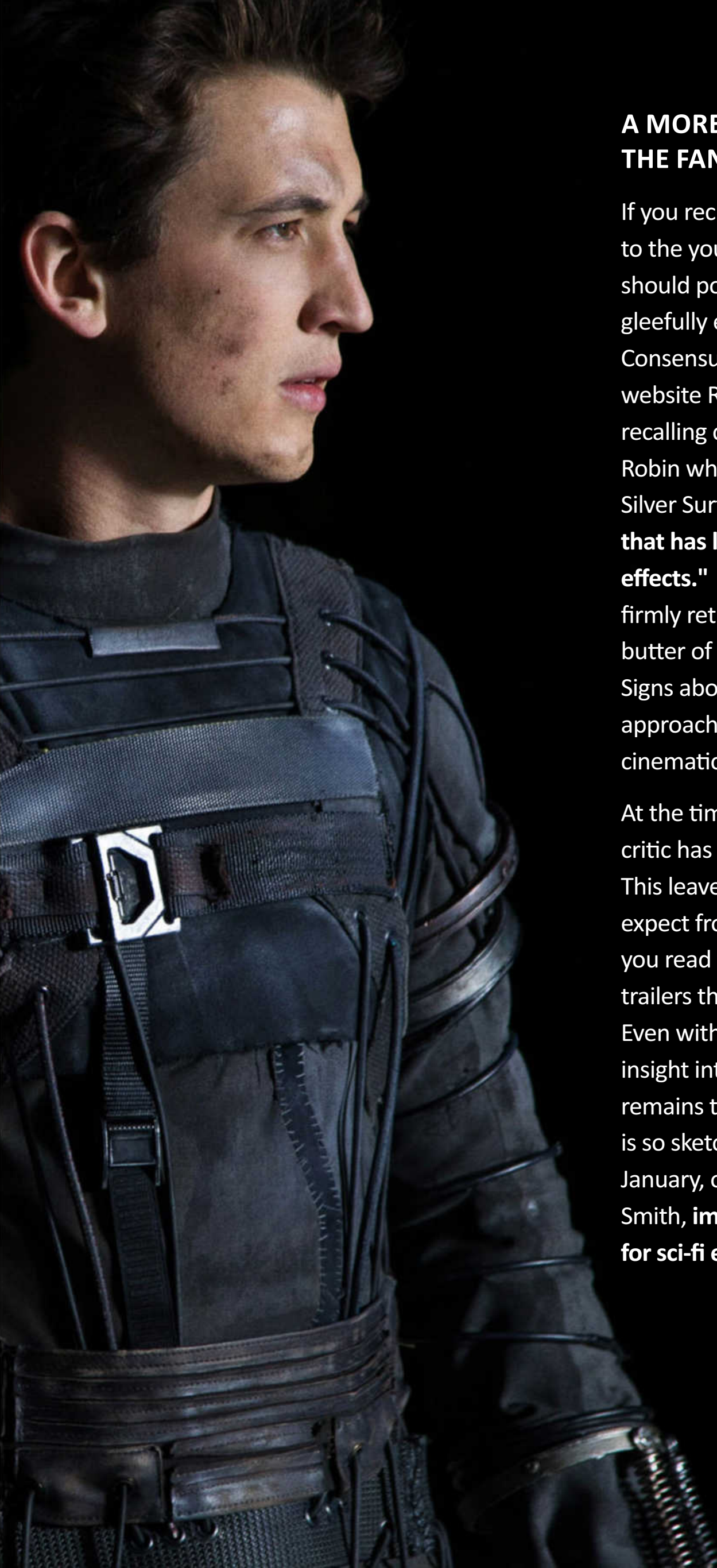




metaphorically-speaking, sheepishly slinked back to the Batcave following the disgrace of one of the most famous flops in movie history, Batman & Robin, in 1997. It had taken several years for him to regather the confidence to pull back on the cloak and return to Gotham's streets - but when he did...



Image: Alan Markfield



A MORE GROUNDED APPROACH TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR

If you reckon that we are brave to liken Trank to the young Nolan at this early stage, we should point out that we are far from merely gleefully engaging in hyperbole. In its Critics Consensus, the film review compilation website Rotten Tomatoes could almost be recalling contemporary attacks on *Batman & Robin* when it deplores that *The Rise of the Silver Surfer* is "a **juvenile, simplistic picture that has little benefit beyond its special effects.**" With *Batman Begins*, Nolan had firmly returned the focus to the bread-and-butter of good filmmaking: good storytelling. Signs abound that Trank has taken a similar approach in retooling the *Fantastic Four* as a cinematic property.

At the time that we write this, not a single top critic has publicly had their say about the film. This leaves us, for discerning what you should expect from a movie that will be in theaters as you read this, very reliant on the two teaser trailers that the studio has so far released. Even with these trailers, however, meaningful insight into how the adventure will pan out remains thin on the ground. The first trailer is so sketchy that, following its release in January, one Newsarama contributor, Zack Smith, **implied that it could pass as a trailer for sci-fi epic *Interstellar*.**

Nonetheless, most press reactions to this trailer, including our own, are positive. Anyone who watches it should be able to see the merits of our Batman Begins comparisons; that movie's director, incidentally, also having been at the helm for Interstellar. The cheesiness and reliance on special effects that characterized the Tim Story efforts have apparently been largely banished in favor of greater focus on characterization and dialog and an all-round brooding atmosphere. Could we be about to see the most intelligent blockbuster to arrive in theaters since Nolan left the world of Batman behind?

A WHOLE NEW FRANCHISE WITH WHOLE NEW STARS?

Should this Fantastic Four indeed prove a classic to launch a whole new cinematic superhero franchise, a whole new level of stardom could be in store for the young lead cast. Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans and Chris Hemsworth all owe much of their current stardom to their established roles as, respectively, Iron Man, Captain America and Thor in brilliant Marvel blockbusters. There is no obvious reason why Miles Teller as Mr. Fantastic, Michael B. Jordan as Human Torch, Kate Mara as Invisible Woman and Jamie Bell as Thing could not take their own treasured places in Marvel history - provided, crucially, that the new movie, and not just its leading characters, can now authentically be called fantastic. ■

by Benjamin Kerry & Gavin Lenaghan

Image: Ben Rothstein








Amazon Drama 'Hand of God' is Actors' Delight, Stars Say

Ron Perlman is reveling in his role in Amazon's "The Hand of God" and the expanding TV world.

"This is the most exciting period I've ever seen in television and it's probably the most exciting place to be if you're a storyteller," Perlman told a TV critics' meeting Monday.





He added a wry postscript: “Ten years from now it will be all (expletive) up, but for now it’s a beautiful place.”

Perlman stars in the 10-episode “Hand of God” as a judge who’s seeking vengeance - which he believes is God-directed - for a violent crime against his family. The series is available Sept. 4.

Coming off a satisfying run in FX’s “Sons of Anarchy,” Perlman said he wanted to see if lightning strikes twice.

With “the infusion of so many new voices and new venues” like streaming service Amazon, the increased competition has put originality at a premium, Perlman said.

“The notion of just having a gig that reflects a bunch of stuff I’ve already visited ... doesn’t have as much resonance as coming into something where there’s no playbook,” he said.

For Andre Royo, “Hand of God” is a chance to break away from his memorable role as drug addict Reginald “Bubbles” Cousins in “The Wire.”

“I guess I played a junkie really, really, really well,” Royo said, recalling the “rabbit-hole” feeling of being typecast.

His friend Samuel L. Jackson wisely advised him to take the opportunities that came his way and play every character to the best of his abilities, Royo said. Executive producer Ben Watkins said the actor’s talented portrayal of Mayor Robert “Bobo” Boston “forced us to see him as the mayor.” “The defining role will not be Bubbles for him. It will be” Bobo, Watkins said.

The series also stars Dana Delany, Garret Dillahunt and Alona Tal. Guest stars will include Erykah Badu, Lance Bass and Jon Tenney.



Trailer

Movies & TV Shows

A LEGO Brickumentary

Since 1958, The LEGO Group has made more than 400 billion bricks - and, in that time, this fun toy has grown considerably in global popularity. It has also been used for an increasing variety of unorthodox purposes. Jason Bateman narrates this playful documentary which looks at Adult Fans of LEGO, how LEGO is being put to educational and therapeutic uses, and much more.

FIVE FACTS:

1. This feature was released in theaters and on iTunes on the same day: July 31, 2015.
2. The narrator is an animated Lego minifigure voiced by Jason Bateman.
3. Adult Fans of LEGO have become commonly referred to as AFOLs.
4. The original title was **Beyond the Brick: A Lego Brickumentary**.
5. Co-director Daniel Junge has responded to complaints about the film's uncritical stance towards the little plastic bricks by pointing out that "Lego had no editorial control over the film" and so "the love that you see in the film is coming from us as filmmakers."



iTunes Preview



by Kief Davidson &
Daniel Junge
Genre: Kids & Family
Released: 2015
Price: \$14.99

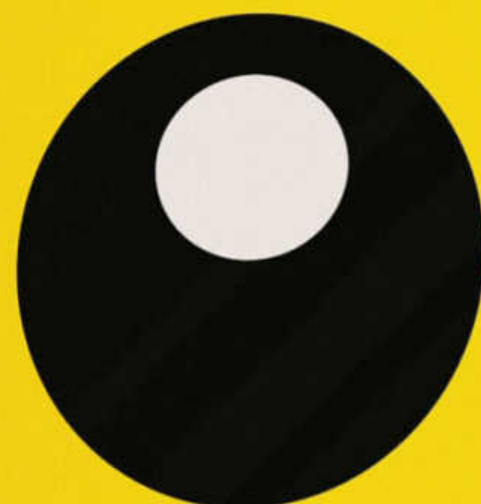
★★★★★
83 Ratings

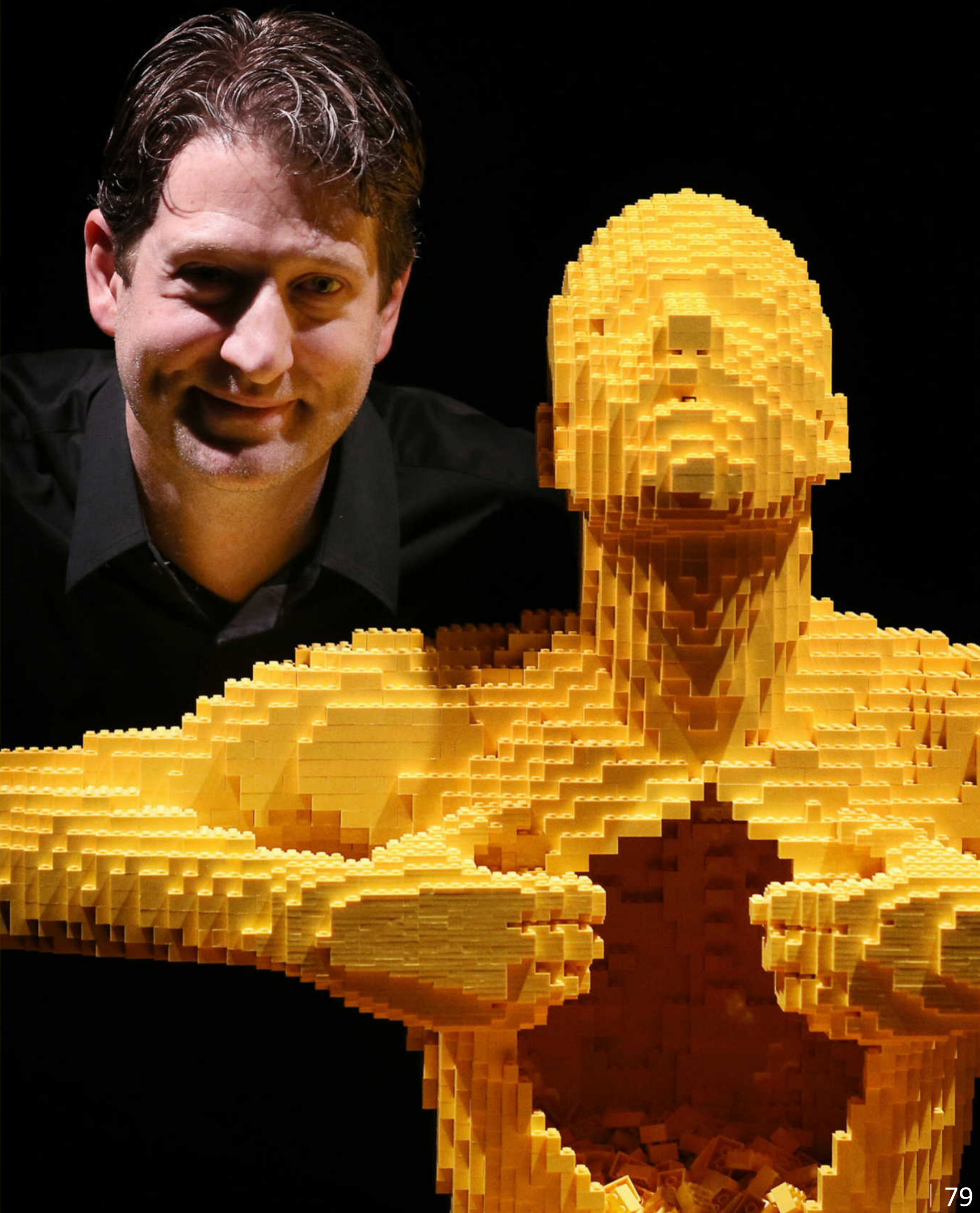
Rotten Tomatoes
 53%

See more in
iTunes



Director Interviews





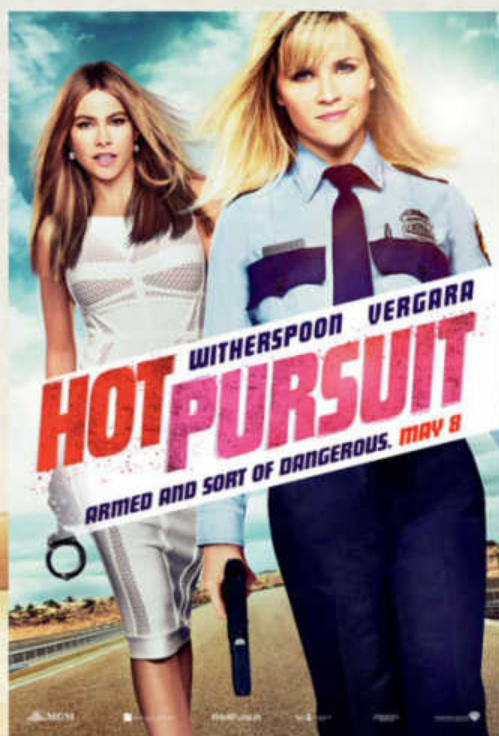
Hot Pursuit

Straight-laced San Antonio Police Department officer Rose Cooper (Reese Witherspoon) is endeavoring to keep safe Daniella Riva (Sofía Vergara), drug boss Filipe Riva's (Vincent Laresca) alluring and outgoing widow. The two women are on the run through Texas, while crooked cops and violent gunmen remain in - yes - hot pursuit. What will the fleeing pair do to escape their grasp?

FIVE FACTS:

1. The movie has attracted widespread derision from critics; the Critics Consensus on Rotten Tomatoes reads: "Shrill and unfunny, Hot Pursuit bungles what should have been an easy opportunity to showcase Reese Witherspoon and Sofía Vergara's likable odd-couple chemistry."
2. Rob Kazinsky, who plays Randy in this film, had been set to play Fili in Peter Jackson's The Hobbit trilogy, but **dropped out "for personal reasons", according to Jackson.**
3. A particularly revealing blunder for Apple fans is that, when Daniella's iPhone is run over and its screen becomes detached early in the film, the home screen remains showing. **A genuine iPhone's screen would actually have gone black upon incurring damage.**
4. Remarkably, this film's US release date came **exactly 28 years after that of the 1987 John Cusack movie of the same name.**
5. **The original title was Don't Mess with Texas** - and this title can still be seen in the URL of Hot Pursuit's page on Rotten Tomatoes.





Trailer

iTunes Preview



by nne Fletcher
Genre: Action & Adventure
Released: 2015
Price: \$19.99

93 Ratings

TEXAS

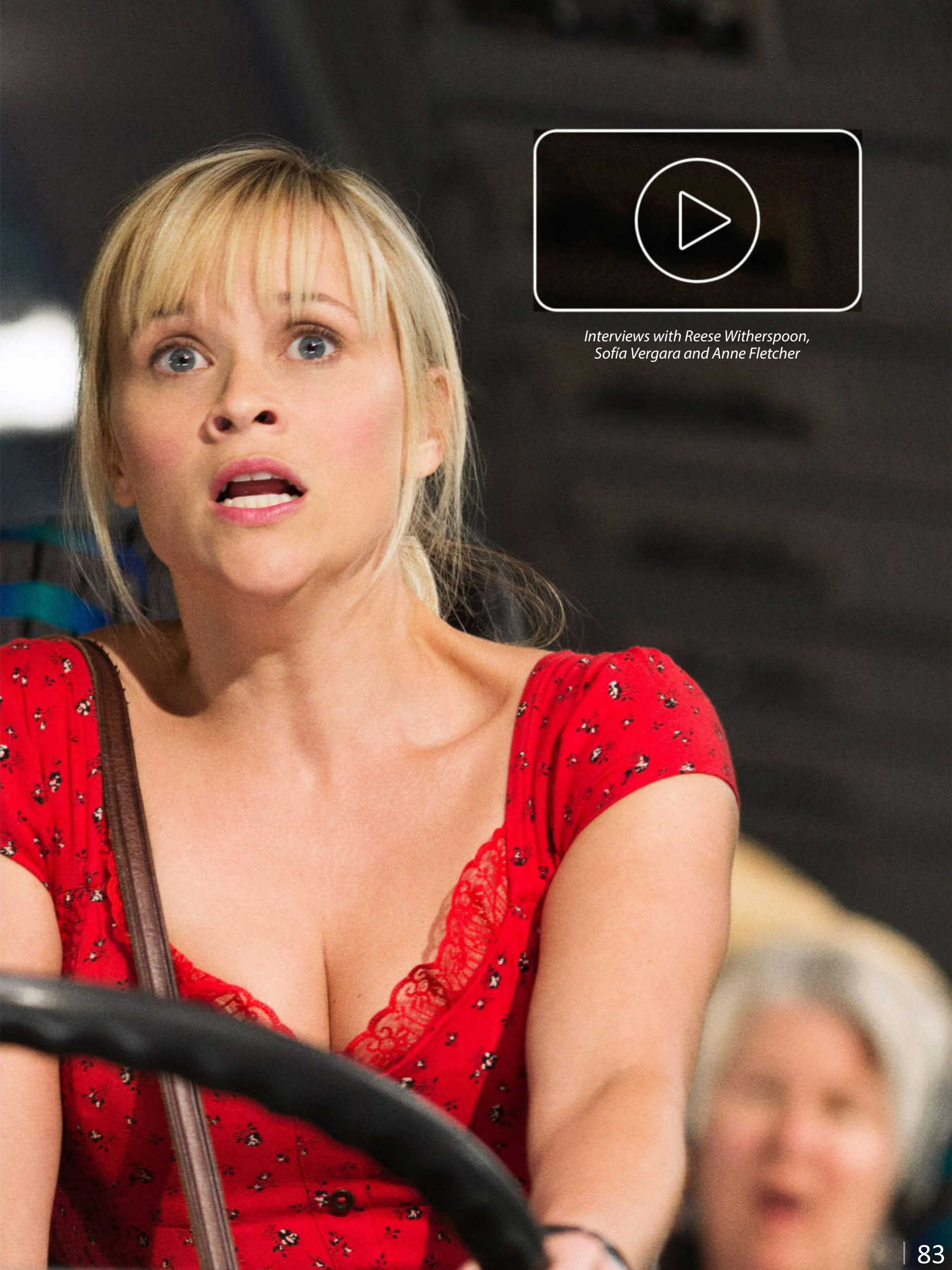
The Lone Star State

Rotten Tomatoes



08%





*Interviews with Reese Witherspoon,
Sofía Vergara and Anne Fletcher*



Music



iTunes Preview



Genre: Alternative
Released: Jul 31, 2015
11 Songs
Price: \$9.99



9 Ratings



Marks to Prove It

Marks to Prove It

The Maccabees

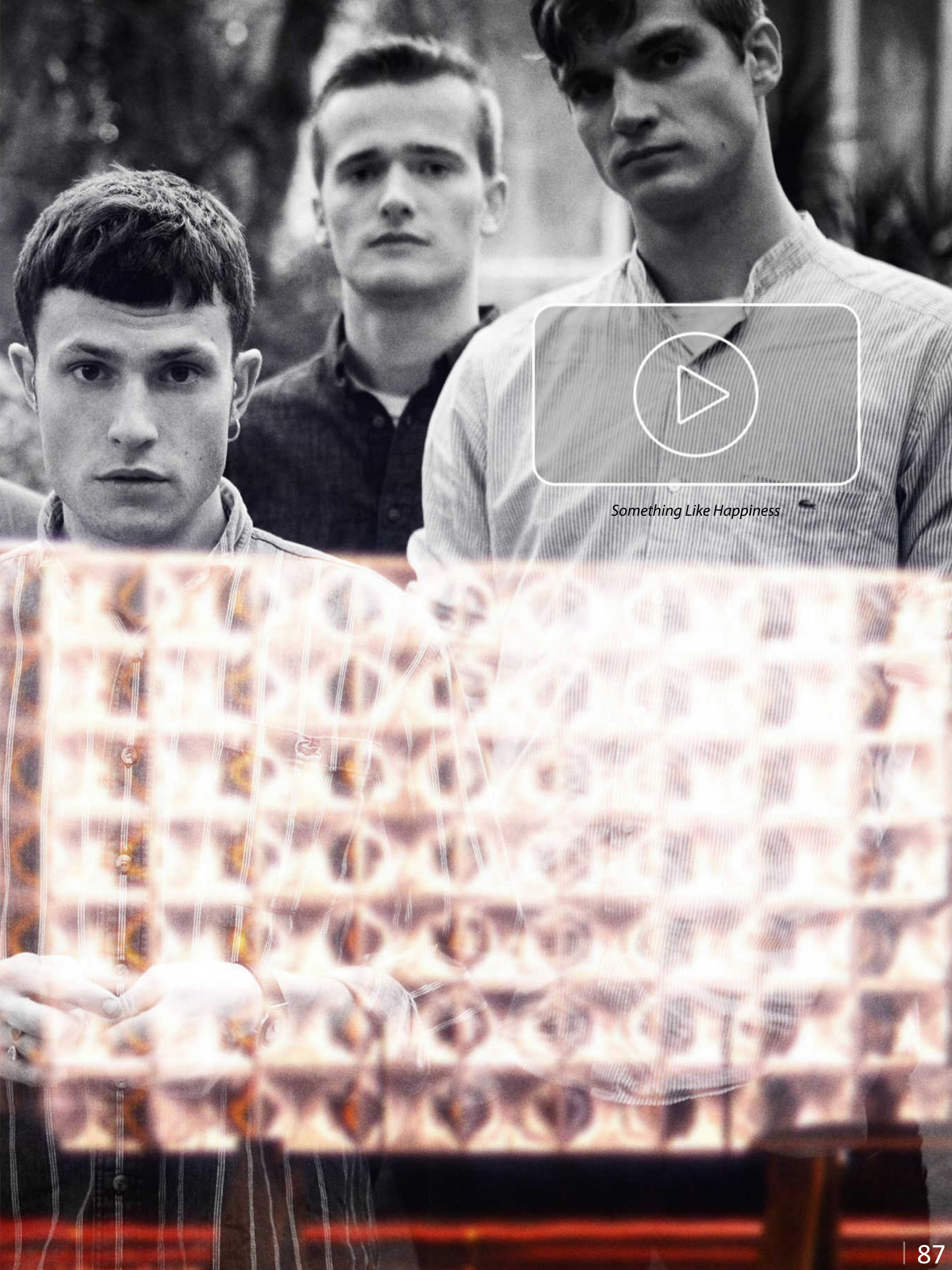
This is the long-awaited new studio album from the British indie rock band The Maccabees. The band received little exposure with their very first single, "X-Ray", back in 2005 - but, since then, have amassed more fans and acclaim through positive word of mouth. Their last studio compilation, 2012's *Given to the Wild*, was even Mercury Prize-nominated and certified gold in their native UK.

FIVE FACTS:

1. This is The Maccabees' fourth studio album.
2. The band members **grew up in London, where the band itself was formed in 2004.**
3. The Maccabees decided on their band name by **flicking through a copy of the Bible and choosing a word in it largely at random.**
4. The band started working on this album **as early as the start of 2013.**
5. Explaining in January 2014 why progress on the album had been slow, guitarist Felix White said: "We've got a lot of songs but every time you write something new, it raises the standard."

See more in
iTunes





Something Like Happiness

Simply Eva

Eva Cassidy

The American vocalist and guitarist has become popular for her interpretations of musical classics in various genres, including jazz, gospel and country. Tragically, however, she had little fame outside her native Washington, D.C. before her death in 1996. Simply Eva has just been released on iTunes and is great listening for people who want to hear Cassidy's guitar-playing in an acoustic environment.

FIVE FACTS:

1. Cassidy was born on February 2, 1963 in Washington, D.C.
2. **She was given a guitar by her father, who also taught her how to play chords, when she was nine years old.**
3. She died of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, in Bowie, Maryland, aged 33 on November 2, 1996.
4. Honors that Cassidy received during her short lifetime included **three "Wammies" from the Washington Area Music Association.**
5. **Anglo-Georgian singer Katie Melua's first album, Call Off the Search, includes a song called "Faraway Voice" that pays tribute to Cassidy.**



iTunes Preview



Genre: Pop
Released: Jul 31, 2015
12 Songs
Price: \$9.99

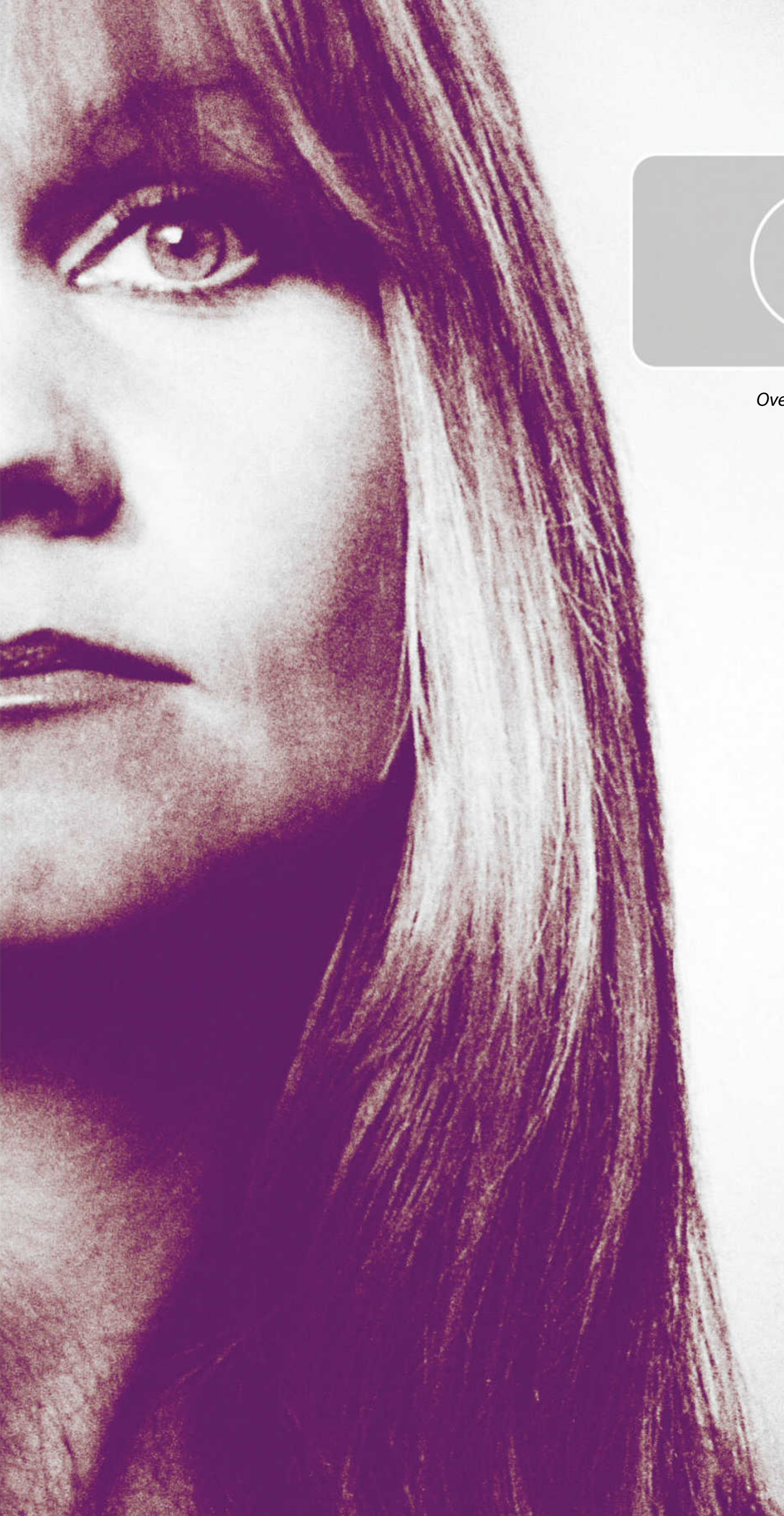
We have not received enough ratings to display an average for this album.



Songbird







Over the Rainbow





TOP 10 SONGS

CAN'T FEEL MY FACE

THE WEEKND

CHEERLEADER

(FELIX JAEHN REMIX RADIO EDIT)

OMI

WATCH ME (WHIP / NAE NAE)

SILENTO

FIGHT SONG

RACHEL PLATTEN

GOOD FOR YOU (FEAT. A\$AP ROCKY)

SELENA GOMEZ

LEAN ON (FEAT. MØ & DJ SNAKE)

MAJOR LAZER

HONEY, I'M GOOD.

ANDY GRAMMER

SHUT UP AND DANCE

WALK THE MOO

KICK THE DUST UP

LUKE BRYAN

WHERE ARE Ü NOW (WITH JUSTIN BIEBER)

SKRILLEX & DIPLO





TOP

10 ALBUMS

JST

WOMAN

JILL SCOTT

1989

TAYLOR SWIFT

NOT AN APOLOGY

BEA MILLER

KILL THE LIGHTS

LUKE BRYAN

MONTEVALLO

SAM HUNT

BLURRYFACE

TWENTY ONE PILOTS

THE BLADE

ASHLEY MONROE

COVERED: ALIVE IN ASIA (DELUXE VERSION)

ISRAEL & NEW BREED

X (DELUXE EDITION)

ED SHEERAN

KILL THE FLAW

SEVENDUST





TOP

10

MUSIC VIDEOS

WATCH ME (WHIP / NAE NAE)

SILENTO

BAD BLOOD (FEAT. KENDRICK LAMAR)

TAYLOR SWIFT

GOOD FOR YOU

SELENA GOMEZ

CHEERLEADER (FELIX JAEHN REMIX)

OMI

UPTOWN FUNK (FEAT. BRUNO MARS)

MARK RONSON

GIRL CRUSH

LITTLE BIG TOWN

LEAN ON (FEAT. MØ & DJ SNAKE)

MAJOR LAZER

SHAKE IT OFF

TAYLOR SWIFT

BACK IT UP

(FEAT. JENNIFER LOPEZ & PITBULL)

PRINCE ROYCE

FIGHT SONG

RACHEL PLATTEN





TOP 10 TV SHOWS

MEETING CAIT

I AM CAIT, SEASON 1

ALONE AND UNAFRAID

THE LAST SHIP, SEASON 2

FORT DEFIANCE

THE STRAIN, SEASON 2

EPISODE 5

HUMANS

TOE TO TOE

SUITS, SEASON 5

NON-ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL

FALLING SKIES, SEASON 5

MEI MEI

HELL ON WHEELS, SEASON 5

O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU

PRETTY LITTLE LIARS, SEASON 6

EPS1.4_3XPLOITS.WMV

MR. ROBOT, SEASON 1

A RICKLE IN TIME

RICK AND MORTY, SEASON 2



The background of the page is a photograph. On the left, a red, dome-shaped lamp is visible. Below it, a book cover with a green and white checkered pattern is partially shown. At the bottom left, the letters 'ER' and 'IN' are visible on a white surface, likely part of the book cover. A large, diagonal red band runs from the top right towards the bottom left, serving as a background for the title and list.

TOP 10 BOOKS

GREY

E L JAMES

PAPER TOWNS

JOHN GREEN

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN

PAULA HAWKINS

GO SET A WATCHMAN

HARPER LEE

THRILL ME

SUSAN MALLERY

CIRCLING THE SUN

PAULA MCLAIN

BADLANDS

C. J. BOX

CODE OF CONDUCT

BRAD THOR

LUCKIEST GIRL ALIVE

JESSICA KNOLL

NEW ENGLAND SOUP FACTORY COOKBOOK

MARJORIE DRUKER & CLARA SILVERSTEIN






Debate Illustrates Power of Fox News in Gop Campaign

Iowa and New Hampshire are still on the horizon - but first there's the Fox primary, and the buildup to this week's first Republican presidential debate shows that the influence of Fox News Channel on the GOP selection process is stronger than ever.





The musical chairs-like rules for participation in Thursday's televised debate require candidates to reach a certain threshold in opinion polls, making national exposure to an interested audience vital at a stage in the campaign when candidates are usually shaking hands in early primary states. And where better to find that audience than on Fox News Channel?

The 17 candidates made a total of 273 separate appearances on Fox News in May, June and July, according to a count by liberal-leaning group Media Matters for America. Six hopefuls - Donald Trump, Rand Paul, Mike Huckabee, Bobby Jindal, Carly Fiorina and Rick Perry - have appeared 20 times or more each on Fox or Fox Business Channel, the network said. Besides interviews, candidates have joined the panel of talk shows like "Outnumbered" or "The Five."

"It is the most important forum for a Republican running for president," said Matthew Dowd, chief strategist for President George W. Bush's 2004 campaign and now an ABC News analyst.

Fox was to determine after 5 p.m. EDT on Tuesday which 10 of the 17 declared Republican candidates will be on stage for Thursday's prime-time debate in Cleveland. The remaining candidates will be included in a secondary forum that starts four hours earlier.

Trump, who is leading in the polls, leads in time spent on Fox (just under five hours, Media Matters said). Sean Hannity's prime-time show, which hosted Trump, Ted Cruz and Chris Christie one night last week, has offered the candidates twice as much airtime as any other individual show, Media Matters said.

Part of the draw for candidates is the size of Fox's audience: second only to shark-obsessed Discovery among cable networks in July and typically larger than that of CNN and MSNBC combined in prime time. And there's the guarantee of finding like-minded voters; 47 percent of voters who described themselves as





“consistently conservative” said Fox was their main source of news about government and politics, according to a 2014 survey by the Pew Research Center.

Of the people who watch Hannity’s show, 78 percent described themselves as conservative, according a 2012 Pew study. Sixty-five percent identified as Republican and 6 percent as Democrats. “With the number of candidates we have, the gatekeeper becomes more powerful,” Dowd said. “If there were only three or four candidates running, the power would be less.”

That’s evident in the amount of attention paid to the rules for Thursday’s debate. With the largest field of contenders in modern memory, Fox argues that setting a cap on the size of the prime-time debate is necessary for a coherent event, yet some experts believe a failure to be included in the first tier could itself deal a death blow to a candidacy. Republican pollster Frank Luntz told the AP last month that “if you’re not on that stage, you’re irrelevant, you don’t matter.”

CNN’s Sept. 16 debate will also have two separate tiers, although the two forums will run back-to-back. The network hasn’t yet specified how many candidates will be in each tier.

Fox has said that it will determine participation by averaging the results of the five most recent national opinion polls done by nationally recognized organizations, not affiliated with a party or a candidate. Since the network didn’t specify in advance the polls that it would be using, that led to grumbling that was encapsulated by Jon Stewart on “The Daily Show.” “Basically, they’re going to look at the polls and (Fox News Chairman) Roger Ailes is going to pick whoever he wants,” Stewart said.

Fox said it didn’t know in advance which would be the final five polls, and promised to detail that methodology when the selection is made.

“Common sense would tell you that there is no formal schedule for who releases polls and when,” said Michael Clemente, Fox’s executive vice president of news. “And fairness would tell you that we can’t judge any poll until you can see the methodology. When the results are released, everyone will see that common sense and fairness prevailed.”

Still, some resentment seemed apparent Monday night at a forum in New Hampshire, when Fiorina thanked the hosts for “reminding the political class that we don’t have a national primary and managing to get all of the candidates here.”

Although Fox’s dominance in viewership is unchallenged - July marked its 163rd straight month atop the prime-time cable news ratings - this early stage of the campaign hasn’t necessarily been a boon to the network. Fox’s full-day viewership in July was down 4 percent from July 2014, the Nielsen company said. CNN was up 6 percent and MSNBC, where Rachel Maddow has done segments critical of Fox’s impact on the GOP candidate selection process, was up 17 percent, Nielsen said.










Brian Williams Still Weeks Away From Reappearing at Msnbc

Next week marks the end of Brian Williams' six-month suspension from NBC News for exaggerating his role in news stories, but he isn't expected back on the air in his new job at MSNBC for at least another month.

Williams was suspended on Feb. 10 after his story about flying in a helicopter hit by enemy fire in Iraq in 2003 was shown to be false, triggering an investigation into other incidents of self-aggrandizement in talking about his reporting. He lost his job as NBC's "Nightly News" anchor and was named a breaking news anchor at the cable news outlet. MSNBC hasn't announced a start date for Williams. The tentative target for his return is for the network's coverage of Pope Francis' visit to the United States, scheduled for Sept. 22-27, according to an executive there who spoke on condition of anonymity because plans aren't fully set. Williams won't have a regular time slot at MSNBC, but will work during daytime hours on busy news days.





MSNBC - which along with CNN runs a distant second to Fox News Channel in prime-time viewership - is in the midst of a makeover driven by poor ratings, jettisoning much of its opinionated daytime programming. New NBC News chief Andrew Lack is seeking to turn MSNBC into a breaking news outlet during the day, with assistance from NBC News personalities, and restrict its liberal viewpoint to the evening.

Other than announcing Williams' role and the start of a new late afternoon show hosted by "Meet the Press" moderator Chuck Todd, many of the details about MSNBC's plans remain under wraps. Besides giving MSNBC more time to retool, the pope's visit offers a relatively predictable news event for Williams to start back with. Williams' representative, Robert Barnett, declined comment on Monday.

It also enables him to at least initially avoid stories that called to mind his transgressions. For example, Williams traveled to New Orleans several times to cover Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, and took pride in that work. However, some of his recounting of reporting in New Orleans was questioned in NBC's internal investigation. NBC also hasn't detailed its plans for marking the upcoming 10th anniversary of Katrina making landfall in New Orleans; Williams is not expected to have a hand in it.

Williams has remained out of NBC's offices, except for a day in June when he spoke to colleagues in New York and Washington and apologized for his actions. He also gave an interview to Matt Lauer on the "Today" show, where he said his misstatements had been driven by ego: "I had to be sharper, funnier, quicker than anybody else, put myself closer to the action."

NBC News never released the results of its investigation into Williams' reporting.





Disney Movie 'Descendants' Proves a Big Hit

The teenage progeny of some of Disney's favorite villains proved to be a winning idea for a film, as the Disney Channel's "Descendants" easily became the most-watched cable movie of the year. The Nielsen company said 6.6 million people watched the movie in its Friday night premiere.

Television being what it is today, that's only a portion of who watched. Another 6.2 million people watched reruns of "Descendants" on either Saturday morning or Sunday night, Nielsen said. Disney said more than one million people saw the movie during the five days before it premiered on TV through the network's app.





And the numbers don't include viewers who saved the movie on their DVR, which Nielsen didn't immediately have available.

The offspring of characters like Maleficent, Cruella de Vil and Jafar were featured in the flick, tormenting the children of heroic Disney characters. Disney has not committed to a sequel, but the door is wide open. The last scene of the movie featured a voiceover that said the story is not over.

CBS won the week in prime time, averaging 5.1 million viewers. NBC had 4.9 million, ABC had 3.9 million, Univision had 2.1 million, Fox had 2 million, Telemundo had 1.4 million, ION Television had 1.2 million and the CW had 1.1 million.

Disney was the week's most popular cable network, averaging 2.41 million viewers in prime time. TNT had 1.8 million, Fox News Channel had 1.63 million, USA had 1.6 million and TBS had 1.59 million.

NBC's "Nightly News" topped the evening newscasts with an average of 7.8 million viewers. ABC's "World News" was second with 7.6 million and the "CBS Evening News" had 6.1 million viewers. For the week of July 27-Aug. 2, the top 10 shows, their networks and viewerships: "America's Got Talent," NBC, 10.33 million; "60 Minutes," CBS, 8.46 million; "The Bachelorette," ABC, 8.13 million; "NCIS," CBS, 8.01 million; "The Bachelorette: After the Rose," ABC, 7.94 million; "Best of America's Got Talent," NBC, 7.85 million; "The Big Bang Theory," CBS, 7.16 million; "Zoo," CBS, 7.09 million; Movie: "Descendants," Disney, 6.55 million; "Big Brother" (Thursday), CBS, 6.38 million.

Online:

<http://www.nielsen.com>



Snl Stars Armisen, Meyers, Hader Reunite For Parody Series



Here's a roundup of news Friday from the Television Critics Association summer meeting, at which TV networks and streaming services are presenting details on upcoming programs:

ROCK ON

The shaggy-haired rocker who set up his amplifier in the posh hotel lobby looked a lot like Fred Armisen. And wasn't that Seth Meyers snapping his picture?

It was indeed a bewigged Armisen getting in a few guitar licks and Meyers recording the moment, part of the promotion for IFC's new "Documentary Now!"

The series parodying famed documentaries and genres reunites former "Saturday Night Live" colleagues Armisen, Meyers and Bill Hader, with the trio serving as writers and producers (with Rhys Thomas) and Armisen and Hader also starring. "I love that we figured out a way to keep working together," said Meyers, who fitted the project in with his duties as an NBC late-night host. His partners in comedy also are busy: Armisen is the creator and star (with Carrie Brownstein) of IFC's "Portlandia" and the bandleader for Meyers' show, while Hader stars in the Amy Schumer film "Trainwreck." The series, which boasts Helen Mirren as the host, debuts 10 p.m. EDT Thursday, Aug. 20. As younger viewers, Meyers and Hader said they were impressed by "The Thin Blue Line," the 1988 documentary about a wrongly convicted man. Armisen, on the other hand, fondly recalled being influenced by the 1970s pop parody film, "The Rutles."

"That to me was the turning point for a new kind of entertainment," Armisen said.





WU'S HOMECOMING

Hong Kong movie star Daniel Wu is bringing martial arts back to TV in the U.S. with his upcoming series "Into the Badlands," premiering Nov. 19 on AMC.

Born in California, Wu fell into acting while on a post-college trip to Hong Kong. He was discovered in a bar for a TV commercial, which quickly led to his film career. He's gone on to make more than 60 movies.

The six-episode first season of "Badlands" is based on the Chinese novel "Journey to the West." Wu plays a skilled warrior named Sunny who teams up with a young boy named M.K. (Aramis Knight) on a search for enlightenment in a dangerous land. Sunny teaches M.K. martial arts and he becomes an unrivaled fighter.

"I knew the action had to be kick-ass but also knew we really needed a compelling story," said Wu, who stars on the show and is also an executive producer.

The actor is excited to expand his career to America but says he is grateful to Hong Kong for making him a star.

"Everything I have now is because of what the Hong Kong (film) industry gave me," he said.

CUBA IS TRENDING

Starz is developing "Cuban Quartet," a series starring Antonio Banderas and based on a popular book series by Leonardo Padura.

Banderas will play a Cuban detective who always dreamed of being a writer. He will also executive produce the series, which will get international distribution by EntertainmentOne.



Cuba is a hot commodity for Hollywood right now. Discovery Channel recently premiered its series “Cuban Chrome,” Conan O’Brien shot recent episodes of his late-night talk show, “Conan,” in Cuba, and the American Heroes Channel will air a one-hour documentary on Fidel Castro.

THE DOCTOR IS IN FOR ‘GAME OF THRONES’ STAR

When viewers see Maisie Williams on the new season of “Doctor Who,” she’ll be a brand-new character, not someone from the Doctor’s past.

“Once you see what she’s up to ... you’ll appreciate what a clever idea it was,” showrunner Steven Moffat said. “It’s a significant role. We’re not just getting star value and throwing it away. It’s a great part, and she’s terrific in it.”

Williams is best known as Arya Stark on HBO’s “Game of Thrones,” and Moffat says her role on “Doctor Who” is different for the 18-year-old actress.

“If people are hugely associated with a much-loved show, then it’s good to have them on your show. The audience is clever. They know you’re playing somebody else. They don’t get confused,” he said.

Moffat also teased that “it will take you a moment or two to realize what we’re up to” with Williams’ character.

Season nine of “Doctor Who,” which stars Peter Capaldi as the Doctor and Jenna Coleman as his companion, Clara, premieres Sept. 19 on BBC America.





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