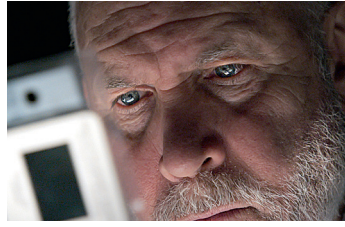




CONFETTI TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT 21 OCTOBER
 CINEMAS

Writer/director Ann Hu draws on her own experiences in this heartfelt family drama about a Chinese mother who travels to New York in search of adequate support for her dyslexic daughter. Lead actor Zhu Zhu carries the story as Lan, a desperate parent striving to overcome a significant language barrier in order to find the best education possible for her child. Although the plot leans at times towards the formulaic, Hu injects it with authentic emotion and astute observations about the cultural differences Lan is forced to confront. **MATT LOOKER**



MCCURRY: THE PURSUIT OF COLOUR TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT 19 OCTOBER
 DIGITAL

This 90-minute documentary zips through the career of Steve McCurry, the renowned US photojournalist best known for Afghan Girl, the 1984 portrait of refugee Sharbat Gula snapped in Pakistan during the Soviet-Afghan War. McCurry's startling, painterly images also famously captured the war in Kuwait and the collapse of the World Trade Center. Denis Delestrac's film is rather less in focus, only partially revealing the man beneath the photographer who's lived a largely lonely, peripatetic life. Viewers will yearn for a fuller picture. **JAMIE GRAHAM**



DIONNE WARWICK: DON'T MAKE ME OVER 12
 ★★★★★ OUT 7 NOVEMBER
 DVD, BD

Shockingly presented as a white woman on one record sleeve, the 'Walk On By' singer emerges as an immovable icon in this conventional but engaging portrait. Tracing her career back to church, the doc takes in Bacharach, 'Heartbreaker', Whitney, Aids charity singles and more, with Warwick herself a forthright presence. If the result runs light on context and personal insight, it still pays vivid tribute to Warwick's rapturous voice and presence, with Elton John, Smokey Robinson, Snoop Dogg and others showing all due reverence. **KEVIN HARLEY**



HOPPER: AN AMERICAN LOVE STORY TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT 18 OCTOBER
 CINEMAS

Released to coincide with a major show at New York's Whitney Museum, Phil Grabsky's insightful documentary explores the life of the taciturn American artist and his tempestuous relationship with wife and muse Jo. Grabsky offers clues on how to interpret his work, but the big draw here is the paintings themselves: stark, depopulated and steeped in pensive melancholy. Along the way we learn of the artist's love of film noir and how Hitchcock reciprocated by basing the Bates mansion in *Psycho* on a Hopper tableau. **NEIL SMITH**

THE STRANGER 15

Caught in a trap...

★★★★★ OUT 19 OCTOBER NETFLIX

A film that operates on a need-to-know basis, Thomas M. Wright's elliptical but gripping *The Stranger* circles one of Australia's most horrifying crimes: the kidnap and murder of 13-year-old Queensland boy Daniel Morcombe. Thankfully, the film avoids any depiction of this 2003 atrocity. Instead, the focus is on the ensuing police operation – the sting to end them all – that took eight years to reach its conclusion.

From the off, *The Stranger* feels worthy of comparison with such notable Aussie crime yarns as *Animal Kingdom* (with which it shares star Joel Edgerton) or *Chopper*. Henry (Sean Harris) is a nefarious drifter who is gradually, carefully, recruited into a criminal organisation. Inducting him is Mark (Joel Edgerton) who, as we come to learn, is an undercover cop. In fact, the entire gang is a fake, designed to win Henry's trust and ultimately elicit a confession.

Light on real-life detail, Wright's film is less procedural and more psychological portrait, especially of Edgerton's character – a single father who finds it near-impossible to shake off the case when he's at home. Aided by Sam Chiplin's brooding cinematography, resonant sound design and deep-in-character turns by Edgerton and Harris, Wright crafts a fascinating (and respectful) look at what it takes to bring a murderer to justice – and the human cost involved.

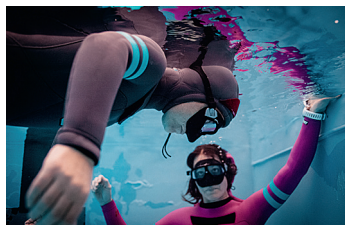
JAMES MOTTRAM

THE VERDICT Moody and atmospheric, this is a superior true-crime tale. Edgerton and Harris are on knockout form.



Joel Edgerton digs deep in this fact-based thriller.

NETFLIX; MIRACLE COMMS; DOGWOOD; EXHIBITION ON SCREEN; TULL STORES; LIGHTHOUSE FILM DISTRIBUTION; VERTICAL ENTERTAINMENT; WARNER



BIG VS SMALL TBC
 ★★☆☆☆ OUT 21 OCTOBER
 CINEMAS

There is plenty of ice broken – and ice-cold water submerged in – when Portuguese big-wave rider Joana Andrade meets up with Finnish free diver Johanna Nordblad, seeking advice from her fellow athlete on how to defeat her fear of drowning. Even at a trim 75 minutes, though, Minna Dufton’s documentary gets unfortunately stuck in the shallows. Talking heads celebrate Andrade’s elite skills, but there’s a frustrating dearth of footage of her actually on her board. Elsewhere, her historical struggles with personal demons offer intriguing avenues that go unexplored. **NEIL SMITH**



Emma Mackey reaches new heights as the troubled teen scribe.

EMILY TBC
 It’s she, Mackey, she’s so cool...

★★★★★ OUT 14 OCTOBER CINEMAS

Passion shakes the young Emily Brontë just as harshly as winds batter her *Wuthering Heights* in this fresh, sparky, speculative drama, which shows us the rebel in the reclusive writer.

Actor turned first-time writer/director Frances O’Connor digs deeply into Emily’s (a moody Emma Mackey) revolt against oppressive vicarage life. The narrative finds her pinballing between dangerous drunken pranks with waster brother Branwell (a perky Fionn Whitehead) and one of those ultra-Victorian slow-burn bondings with flinty but flirty curate Weightman (a subtle Oliver Jackson-Cohen).

Brontë buffs can find clues about what fuelled her classic novel, but O’Connor’s skill is in making Emily a recognisable frustrated teen. The camera revels in her trysts with wary Weightman and whirls about her as she takes ecstatic moorland hikes, high on pilfered opium.

For a heritage biopic, it’s nicely energetic, throwing in a spot of Gothic horror with a creepy séance, atop a triangle of fierce jealousies and betrayals that tear Emily between family and lover. If it’s a tad overlong, the film’s emotional intensity and jagged Abel Korzeniewski score reel you in (it’s not a playful, pop-inflected take like TV’s *Dickinson* or *The Great*). But watching Mackey’s mobile face dart from sullen slump to rapt inspiration in a second confirms that her big, breakout performance is what brings the movie to electric life. **KATE STABLES**

THE VERDICT
 Out on the wily, windy moors, there’s the thrill of forbidden love and fierce inspiration. Mackey stuns.



MIDWIVES TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT NOW CINEMAS,
 DIGITAL

This powerful documentary follows two midwives from different religious backgrounds working at a makeshift clinic in western Myanmar, where violent tensions between their respective communities have escalated. Hla is the Buddhist owner, risking her life by providing healthcare to Muslim patients, while Nyo Nyo is her Muslim apprentice, facing persecution in the country. Director Snow Hnin Ei Hlaing captures their struggles over five years: even as bombs and gunfire ring in the background, their poignant story becomes one of courage and faith in the face of turmoil. **MATT LOOKER**



SOMETHING IN THE DIRT TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT 4 NOVEMBER
 CINEMAS

Returning to the well of indie sci-fi after their *Moon Knight* excursion, Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead write, direct and star in this cosmic slacker film, playing neighbours who uncover paranormal activity in their building. The documentary the pair create is the film’s framework, complete with cleverly deployed unreliable narrator. As forest fires blacken the sky, *Dirt*’s vision of LA becomes enriched by doomsday cults and ancient conspiracies. But it’s the character work that entrances, layered with nuance and bittersweet humanity. **JOEL HARLEY**



MEDIEVAL TBC
 ★★★★★ OUT 28 OCTOBER
 CINEMAS, DIGITAL

Ben Foster stars as Jan Žižka in this near-impenetrable retelling of the real-life Czech icon’s military feats at the turn of the 15th century (the mercenary turned commander reputedly never lost a battle). Matthew Goode and Michael Caine round out an impressive cast but Petr Ják’s film is ultimately a slog, besieged by bland characters, dull dialogue and copious exposition. The occasional dynamic swordplay and frequent blood-spilling aren’t enough to offset the drab storytelling or passionless romance between Žižka and Sophie Lowe’s kidnapped political pawn. **MATT LOOKER**