

Brief Reviews of Three Films

By JOHN MULDERIG

The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by Catholic News Service.

“The Commuter” (Lionsgate)

Lively action sequences help mask the muddled premise of this Liam Neeson vehicle. He plays a police officer-turned-insurance-salesman who, on the very day he is let go from the latter job, finds his train trip home to the suburbs transformed into a test of character when a stranger (Vera Farmiga) offers him a large sum

to identify one of his fellow passengers on the basis of a few scanty clues. It soon becomes apparent that she is not on the side of the angels and that her proposal is as much blackmail as bargain. With his wife (Elizabeth McGovern) and son (Dean-Charles Chapman) in danger, he turns for help to a friend and fellow cop (Patrick Wilson) who is still on the force but must largely fend for himself in his frantic search. Director Jaume Collet-Serra’s generally efficient thriller presents its protagonist with a fundamental moral dilemma. The logical shortcomings of its story blunt its perfectly respectable ethical message. Much brawling and some lethal violence with brief gore, a scene implying use of pornography, about a dozen profanities, a couple of rough



CNS/LIONSGATE

TRAIN TRAVEL—Vera Farmiga and Liam Neeson star in a scene from the movie “The Commuter.”

and several crude terms, an obscene gesture. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III—adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13—parents strongly cautioned.

“Paddington 2” (Warner Bros.)

This endearing blend of animation and live action finds the much-loved talking bear of the title (voice of Ben Whishaw) far from his roots in the Peruvian jungle, having settled into a cozy domestic life with the very British human family (led by Hugh Bonneville and Sally Hawkins) that adopted him in the first film. His routine of munching marmalade sandwiches and helping his neighbors in small but thoughtful ways is rudely interrupted

when he is wrongly convicted of stealing an antique book. Though imprisoned, he still manages to exert his trademark charm on his fellow inmates, including the jail’s initially ferocious hardened criminal of a cook (Brendan Gleeson). Writer-director Paul King’s follow-up to his 2015 original, which features Hugh Grant as the egotistical actor who makes himself Paddington’s nemesis. The warm goodness and jaunty joking are only slightly marred by some ridiculous wordplay that may have a few parents frowning momentarily, while the smallest members of the family may be scared by a few action scenes. Perilous situations, brief childish anatomical humor. The Catholic News Service classification is A-I—general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG—parental guidance suggested.

“The Post” (Fox)

Nostalgic account of The Washington Post’s publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 has Meryl Streep as publisher Katharine Graham and Tom Hanks as editor Ben Bradlee fighting both the Nixon administration and their own notions of how journalists should behave around prominent public officials. Director Steven Spielberg aims to make a rouser along the lines of 1952’s “Deadline U.S.A.” and, according to that film’s formula of a crusading newspaper in financial peril triumphing over government secrets and crooked politicians, he succeeds. Scenes of military combat, fleeting rough language. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III—adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13—parents strongly cautioned.

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