

March / April '26 Movie Roundup

Transcript

Welcome to Pickup and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I step off the train and deliver an episode to you while I walk home. I'm Brendan Riley.

[opening music]

Well, greetings listeners. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. And when I say lovely, I mean lovely temperature. It's not lovely cloud cover. It's very cloudy. It looks like it could drizzle at any moment, although it doesn't feel like it's going to. So I'm walking home under cover of clouds. I've got an umbrella with me, which pretty much guarantees it won't rain because that's the way these things work.

So I was thinking about what I had talked about and hadn't in a while, and it occurred to me that I've moved into May now, which means that I could talk about some movies from April. That's right. It's time for a movie roundup. For those of you new to the podcast or who haven't encountered this before, the Movie roundup is a segment I do semi-regularly about once every two months throughout most of the year, where I talk about the films that I've watched since the last time I did a roundup. Often I will describe the films, give a little bit of feedback about them, and then talk about if you wanted to play a game and sort of do a game night with the movie, what game I would suggest to go with that film. So if you're not into movies, this maybe isn't the episode for you. I encourage you to listen, but I'd understand if you want to jog on. All right, let's jump right in. So my March and April movie roundup.

The first movie that I watched in March was **An honest Liar**. This is a twenty fourteen documentary about the magician and skeptic James Randi. James Randi was a sort of polarizing figure because he was very confrontational. He really enjoyed public spectacle, but he was intensely committed to the art of magic and the craft of like, stagecraft of magic. And he also felt very strongly that people who used that stagecraft to trick people were jerks, sort of like Harry Houdini, who loved to talk about stage illusions and thought that the social contract of the stage illusion was, you and I both know I'm tricking you, but you're going to delight in it, and I'm going to delight in doing it. When people use those arts to do some sort of trickery against people who don't know, who haven't engaged in that contract, he found it really disreputable.

And he hated hated when people did that. So he spent his life advocating for truth. Randi was an interesting figure or complex figure because he. In his personal life, he had to keep keep things secret. He. It appears by the documentary anyway, that he was gay and he grew up in a time. Of course, when being gay would not be generally okay. He had a life partner who also had some trouble with the law because he had stolen someone's identity. The documentary is very sympathetic to what happened with Randy's life partner, and they explore that toward the end of the story. It's a really interesting documentary and really somewhat frustrating because a lot of the people that Randy exposed as being charlatans disappeared from the public eye for a little bit, and then they came back as though nothing had happened. And apparently people didn't mind that they'd been exposed as liars and continued to give them attention and money and power. Um, an interesting figure.

That's an honest liar is the name of that, uh, if you were going to play a game. Alongside that, I would lean into James Randi's role as a magician and perhaps play **Trickerion**, which is a game about stage magicians. I don't think there's any seances or anything like that. I can't think of a game that's about like illusionists. I guess you could also play, or about people revealing charlatans. I guess the other game you could play would be **Unmatched**. One of the characters that unmatched is Harry Houdini. So you could play as Houdini in Unmatched. But I think that's maybe less true to his historical record than the documentary might have been.

So next up we have **Listers**. Lister's is a, I think, 2024 film on YouTube. It's a full length documentary. It's not marked. It's not on Letterboxed, which is an interesting development because Letterboxed is built using the API and source data from the Internet Movie Database, and the Internet Movie Database apparently has a rule that if something is only available on YouTube, it cannot be listed as a film on the Internet Movie database. As a movie, it has to be associated with some other platform as well. I don't know which platforms are required before it can be listed, but apparently if it's just on YouTube, they won't list it. My guess is the

same is true of Twitch, but I think the idea is if they were to allow things that are just on YouTube to be listed, they would have to allow everything or it would be much harder to disallow things. They'd have to constantly be spending time deleting things that they don't think should be in the Internet Movie database. And so instead they just say, if it's only on YouTube, it can't be listed as a film.

And *listers* is challenging that way because it is a full length documentary, but the creators of it have decided to feature it only on YouTube. So the only way to watch it is to watch their YouTube channel, and then they get money from advertising from it. It is a documentary about two brothers who decide they want to learn about birding by birding for a year. They sort of. It sounds like in the second half of 2024 or maybe second half of 2023, they decide they're going to try birding. I think they raised a Kickstarter to raise some of the money that they used. They retrofitted a Kia Sedona to be a camper van, and then they spend the year going around birding.

They start out not knowing anything about birding, and they slowly learn over the course of the year, all about birding. It's called *listers* because people who like to bird often make lists. The documentary focuses particularly on the Cornell University software eBird, which is the kind of gold standard among birders for recording the lists that you. The lists of birds that you watch and the people. There are people on the Cornell on that software, who look at the birds that you log and discuss whether or not that is whether or not you saw what you saw or whatever. They encourage you to post photos of unusual birds and so on.

It's a really interesting documentary. The two guys who are featured are brothers, and they have a sort of paupers to princes approach. In talking about the film or talking about the hobby. They're talking to famous ornithologists. They're talking to people who are sort of leading lights of the birding community. They're talking to high achievers on the annual birding lists, and then they also talk to like random guy on the side of the road, literally random guy on the side of the road, or random person on the birding path when they're out birding. It's a really refreshing take on the hobby. It's very funny, a little dark and thoroughly delightful, that is *listers*.

And of course, if you're going to play a game about birding, it ought to be **Wingspan**. There are other games about birding, sure, but none of them is as good as wingspan for my money. So wingspan it is.

Next up, we have **Project Hail Mary**. This is a 2026 adaptation of the novel of the same name by Andy Weir. It stars Ryan Gosling as a character named Ryland Grace, who is a middle school teacher who just happens to be a world class level biologist as well, and science geek. It could be called. It could be in the category of what I've read is called competency porn, where characters are incredibly good at things and it's fun to watch competent people solve problems. And I definitely fit in the category of people who enjoy a story like that. It's a heartwarming tale as well. I won't tell you too much about it in case somehow you've never watched it and it hasn't been spoiled for you at all. I would say going in with knowing as little as possible is great.

If you're going to watch or play a game alongside Project Hail Mary, it feels like there are a couple of ways you could go. One of the ways is the overarching plot of Project Hail Mary is that they are trying to solve the problem of a global environmental catastrophe. Namely, the sun is getting dimmer, and it's likely going to wipe out the world's food population and kill a lot of people. So they're trying to solve. The world is working together to solve a global environmental catastrophe. Gee, that sounds a lot like **Daybreak**. So one option would be to play daybreak. It's not very spacey, but it is a delightful game.

Another approach would be to play **search for planet X**, which is about the scientific search for a specific place, which is also part of what's happening in Project Hail Mary. There is a search for a solution to the problem that is facing the solar system. Either of those, I think, would work fine.

[interruption music fades in]

Future Brendan here. It turns out that my next recommendation is a minor spoiler for Project Hail Mary. So if you don't want to know anything about the movie, go ahead and skip ahead 25 seconds. [Transcription note: skip the next paragraph to avoid this spoiler.]

[interruption music fades out]

I guess one other sort of sideways recommendation could be the visitor in Blackwood Grove, which was a game a little bit about trying to communicate with an alien, which the game, some of the movie hinges on the

complexities of communication. So maybe that would be a game you could play as well. So those are three options for games that you might play alongside Project Hail Mary.

Next up, I watched **The Naked Gun**, the 2025. I guess it's a it's not a remake, it's a prequel. It is a sequel. It is a new version of The Naked Gun, but it actually does tie in thematically to the previous Naked Gun movies. They do suggest a continuity there, and so it would be a recoil, not a remake. It is just as dumb as you would have thought it would be in the movie. Leslie. Uh, not not Leslie Nielsen. Um, Liam Neeson plays Lieutenant Frank Drebin, a member of the police Squad, which is an elite police organization. And a lot of hilarious shenanigans ensue. It's really dumb, too, but there are a lot of very funny moments.

I literally laughed out loud quite a bit when I was watching it. I think the first ten minutes or first fifteen minutes are very, very funny. And then it slowly gets less funny as the movie goes along. I don't know if it gets less funny because the jokes become less dense, or it just becomes a point where, okay, I kind of get it now and it's not as funny. Hard to say. There is a very, very funny sequence involving a TiVo and recorded episodes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, which Frank shows a remarkable knowledge about that show. I love it. So that is The Naked Gun from 2025.

If you're going to play a game alongside The Naked Gun, I suppose you could play a game about being a police officer. There aren't that many now that I think about it. Games about being a police officer, particularly ones where you're not trying to find a corrupt police officer. There's **deception. Murder in Hong Kong**, perhaps, but I can't think of very many other games about being a police officer. There certainly aren't any funny ones. So this is a hard game to work to.

Maybe I would point to some, uh, silly party games like something like **poetry for Neanderthals**, which is a game in which you have to speak in one sentence, one syllable words, and if you get it wrong, your opponent gets to hit you on the head with an inflatable club. That's funny, because getting hit on the head with an inflatable club is funny, and it's hard to speak in one syllable words. So maybe that would be the answer. A game that's just silly to go along with the naked gun.

Next up, we have **Empire Records**. Empire records is a 1995 teenage comedy. If you have been listening for a few weeks, you'll remember I did an Empire Records episode in the in early April, uh, just after Rex Manning Day. So I think that I won't go into that movie too much in too much detail right now, except to say it's a movie you should check out if you haven't. That's Empire Records 1995 and. I. In that episode, I talked about a number of games that you could play that I think go with that theme.

Next up, I watched **Red, white and royal Blue**. Uh, this is a romance movie that I think was a direct to Netflix film based on a young adult or slightly older adult romance novel. Uh, in the movie, you have the dashing son of the United States president, and you have one of the dashing sons of the royal crown in Britain. And at the beginning of the movie, they are at a party at the same time, and they get in a sort of feud and cause a big a big stink. They accidentally cause a scandal. And in punishment for causing the scandal, they are then ordered by their respective families to spend time together to repair the public relations disaster they visited upon their families. as the movie emerges.

It turns out both of them are closeted gay men and they fall in love. This is a pretty straightforward romance movie, with a little bit of secrecy involved and high stakes politics. And what would how would I describe it? Like scenes of expense and lavishness, right? Like, romances are often fun because they go to big like dramatic balls and other important events where there's nice clothes and fancy stuff to look at. I thought this movie was okay. I generally prefer my romances to be more romantic comedies, and while there were a few moments of humor in the movie, there weren't as many as I would like. It was more of a straightforward romance, which I generally do not find particularly compelling. So I thought that was fine. If you like romance movies directly, it probably is right up your alley. If what you prefer is more of a romantic comedy. I would probably give it a pass because it just wasn't that funny. That's red, white and royal blue. Uh.

For romances, I almost always would suggest playing a game of **fog of love**. Uh, fog of love, of course, is a game about telling the story of romantic comedy movies, but it is heavily tied into romances. It does come with a module so that you can play same sex characters having a love affair. So if you wanted to closely match the story of red, red, white and royal blue, you could do so. So that's a 2023 film.

Finally, one of the podcasts I listened to regularly is free with ads. This is a comedy podcast on the Maximum Fun network, and the hosts are Jordan Morris and Emily Fleming, as well as their producer, whose name I can't recall at this time, but he. He also features regularly in the show. He doesn't just say a comment occasionally. He is kind of the third host. Matt Lees, I think is his name, although I think Matt Lees is the name of a guy on Shut Up and Sit Down, so I might be wrong about that. But anyway, the podcast, the premise is that they watch movies that are available for free with ads on various streaming services around the internet, and they talk about them. It's a movie goof and review podcast. They have lots of funny stings and lots of bits. It's silly, pretty dirty. They make a lot of dirty jokes, and it certainly is has the explicit tag if you're going to listen to it. But I find the podcast really amusing and fun to listen to.

So they did an episode about **Road House**, the Patrick Swayze movie, and I started to listen to it, and I realized I've never watched Road house. And what time, what better time to watch it than when there's a free ad free with ads episode to listen to afterward. So I watched Road house over a couple days and it was fun. I mean, it was very classic nineteen eighties action movie kind of movie. There was a variety of fights and small town trouble and hilarious 1980-style shenanigans. The villain, for some reason, has a big monster truck, which he drives around in the town, and he actually drives it through a car dealership at one point for no good reason that I can see. Uh, and Patrick Swayze plays a famous bar bouncer. Apparently that's the thing. Like, people have heard of him and he's got a reputation to uphold. Uh, he seems to have training in eastern arts, like yoga and perhaps some sort of martial arts, whereas everybody else fights like American bar brawlers. It's a silly movie, but pretty fun. Uh, well made. And, you know, if you're looking for a top notch 1980s action movie, you could do way worse than Road house. Uh, I enjoyed it quite a bit.

This kind of movie isn't something that generally is going to yield a board game. I think the closest I could point to would be something like **vengeance**, which isn't a game I've played, but turns on the operating idea of a ha, a high octane, uh, punch them up kind of movie like John Wick. Uh, the characters in that film or the characters in the game. You play a character who is taking the kind of revenge that a character in John Wick, or that John Wick or that style character would take, I don't think. I can't think of another game that gets close to the theme of Roadhouse the way that vengeance might. So those are the films that I watched in March and April of 2026.

What movies did you watch? Head over to BoardGameGeek Guild 3269 and share your experiences there. You could head over to letterboxd and look at my reviews of these films. A lot of them I didn't actually take time to write a review, but some of them I did. And generally you can tell me what you think of my thinking about the movies.

Well, that's about it for me today. I want to say thanks for joining me on my walk today, and I hope that your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye.

[closing music]

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