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Taylor Swift (left) wears a sequin-embroidered bodysuit and vinyl ankle boots from Dior Haute Couture, a black rhodium silver and gray diamond earring from Lynn Ban Jewelry, a white gold and diamond ring from Ana Khouri. Swift (right) wears a sequin-embroidered bodysuit and vinyl ankle boots from Dior Haute Couture, a gold-finished brass ear chain cuff from Louis Vuitton, a black rhodium silver and gray diamond earring from Lynn Ban Jewelry, a white gold and diamond ring from Yeprem, and a gold and diamond ring from Ana Khouri. To get Swift's look, try Diorskin Nude Air Nude Healthy Glow Ultra-Fuild Serum Foundation, Diorskin Nude Shimmer Instant Illuminating Powder in Amber, 5 Couleurs Couture Couleurs & Effects Eyeshadow Palette in Montaigne, Diorshow Khôl in Smoky Brown, and Rouge Dior lipstick in Trump L'Oeil. All, Dior. Photographed by Michael Thompson (styled by Barbara Baumei; hair by Serge Normant of Jed Root Inc.; makeup by Dotti at Streeters; manicure by Sheri Bailey of Jed Root Inc.; production by Dan Foley of 3 Production Inc.)



Clockwise from top left: David Burton; Katherine Walkoff; Damon Baker; Jeffrey Westbrook; Peter Montgomerie; David Burton



Dano and the Boys at an oceanside shoot; (bottom) Banks and Cusack

master class in how hugely complex recordings such as “Good Vibrations” were made before the era of digital effects and computerized syncing—and it is transfixing. The ensemble Brian was working with went by the working name of the Wrecking Crew (vividly memorialized in an eponymous documentary released earlier this year), which included gloriously antiglamorous, horn-rimmed-glasses-sporting bassist extraordinaire Carol Kaye and legendary session drummer Hal Blaine. When Blaine tells Brian that, while the Crew has played with dozens of top acts, he’s different from them all—“You’re touched, kid”—we already register it as both a blessing and a curse.

Brian had several strikes against him from early on. First, the Wilson boys’ father, Murry (here, a remorseless Bill Camp), was by all accounts a soul-murdering stage dad from hell. Later—around the time we pick up his story in the movie—Brian began to suffer from auditory hallucinations and to become increasingly disturbed by growing dissension within the band and his family about where his muse was taking them. (Mike’s pungent complaint: “Even the happy songs are sad!”) Depression set in, and for several years Brian became

Francis Duhamel (2)

BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET

An uncanny, nonlinear drama about a gifted pop musician’s star-crossed stardom (and beyond) that is both deep and moving. By Ben Dickinson

Early in the tour de force Brian Wilson biopic *Love & Mercy*, Melinda Ledbetter (Elizabeth Banks), a hard-luck-but-pulled-together woman who’s selling Cadillacs in Southern California, encounters a guy in the dealership showroom who’s behaving like a man who fell to Earth—sneakers off, socked feet protruding from the driver’s door of a huge sedan, sprawled more or less horizontally across the front seat. That man is Wilson (John Cusack); they proceed to have a spectacularly nuanced close encounter of the third kind. On this inspired note, *Love & Mercy* goes about upending one assumption after another about everything from the core mystery of Wilson’s fragile and not always sane genius to how we think

about, and experience at second hand, mental illness.

These small epiphanies immediately begin accumulating when the film jumps back to the mid-1960s heyday of the Beach Boys—Brian (his younger self played with consistently inspired passion by Paul Dano) and his brothers Carl and Dennis, their cousin Mike Love, and pal Al Jardine. The first stereotype we’re reminded to discard is that they were just a bubbleheaded apotheosis of the beach-movie subculture of the time. When we first encounter him here, Brian has stopped touring with the band. While the rest of the Beach Boys triumphantly tour Japan and utterly conquer Beatles-dominated England in 1966 (true story!), Brian’s already deep into

making what would become *Pet Sounds*, the Beach Boys’ big break from the familiar and hugely successful territory of “Surfin’ U.S.A.,” “Little Deuce Coupe,” “California Girls,” and other early hits about waves, babes, and hot rods.

Brian seizes on a brilliant scheme: He will engage the best session musicians available in L.A. to execute his proliferatingly complex compositions; then he’ll bring the band in to lay its signature vocal sound over them. Here we get a





Dano onstage

unable to function—musically or in any other way. In the face of his faltering mental health, which was further compromised by his abuse of various drugs, legal and illegal, his marriage failed. Finally, the psychologist who eventually took Brian in hand and treated him, Eugene Landy (here a marvelously monomaniacal Paul Giamatti), threatened to become an exterminating angel—a sulfurous Dr.

Feelgood who convinced himself that he alone could preserve Brian from self-annihilation, under conditions of constant overmedication, as a childlike, querulous, easily cowed shell of his former self.

The core drama of *Love & Mercy* is set in motion as Ledbetter is gradually drawn into nearly uncontrollable conflict with Landy. As the film toggles between this showdown (which

unfolded during the late 1980s and early 1990s) and Brian's triumphs and tragic meltdown two decades earlier, we become utterly enthralled by Ledbetter and Landy's battle royal over who has the right to seize control of Brian's indeterminate fate. This film, directed by Bill Pohlad, a prominent, prolific, and plutocratic Hollywood producer who hasn't directed in 25 years, is a creative triumph. Dano, Banks, and Cusack could hardly have given more to, or been better served by, this transfixing take on an epic American life. Cusack, in particular, doing some of the best work of his impressive career, captures the subtlest manifestations of Brian's off-kilter wit and wobbliness in exquisite detail. ●

(MOVIES)

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STRAIGHT OUTTA SOUTH CENTRAL
In *Dope*, a coming-of-age tale narrated by coproducer Forest Whitaker, the charismatic Shameik Moore shines as a geek who must pursue his scholastic promise past the formidable obstruction of high school thugs, big-time drug racketeers, and highly distracting girls (hello, Zoë Kravitz) while making sweet music with two bandmates, including the marvelously gifted Kiersey Clemons (*Transparent*).



THE STOLEN SPRING
Alicia Vikander leaves it all onscreen, devastatingly and with convincing authority, in *Testament of Youth*, based on the epoch-defining memoir by Oxonian Vera Brittain. As thoroughly as any film may ever be able to, it shows how Europe, poised on the promise of modernity, threw it all away on World War I and left the likes of our heroine to clean up the mess.



HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT
Following a chance sidewalk encounter, documentarian Crystal Moselle befriended the six Angulo brothers, who had been raised in public housing on New York City's Lower East Side while very rarely being allowed to leave their apartment. The intense camaraderie of this brotherhood, schooled about the outside world almost exclusively via the movies their parents let them watch, virtually without limit, is captured in informal, vérité style in *The Wolfpack*, which casts an uncanny light on the way we think about how we all grow up.—B.D.

(DIRECTOR'S SPOTLIGHT)

LIFE WITH FATHER

A daughter/director's homage to a most difficult man

After serving as a major creative force behind the fabled *Larry Sanders Show* in the 1990s and then writing the animated 2009 hit *Monsters vs. Aliens*, Maya Forbes had another story to tell—her own. Hailing from a mixed-race family with a Boston Brahmin father beset by severe manic-depressive disorder, Forbes had a lot of baggage to unpack. She does so with surpassing grace in *Infinitely Polar Bear*, starring Mark Ruffalo in perhaps the juiciest role of his career so far, Zoe Saldana as a mother with an instinct for saving her family by leaving it, and two girls who give remarkably honest, emotionally charged performances as the stubbornly self-protective daughters of this mismatched pair.

While struggling to line up funding for her indie effort, Forbes at least had the luxury of working with Ruffalo on his role for several years. "We talked a lot about my father's love of

words, the way he'd carry himself, his bearing, his carriage," Forbes recalls. The result: a character study that is an all but irresistible one-to-one mixture of grandiosity and vulnerability.



Saldana, Wolodarsky, and Aufderheide; (bottom) Saldana, Ruffalo, and Forbes on set

One of Forbes's most momentous decisions was casting her own daughter, Imogene Wolodarsky, as the older daughter in the film. "It was actually incredibly comforting," Forbes says, to connect her real-world daughter with her fictionalized tribute to her complicated father. The seemingly lionhearted Ashley Aufderheide won the role of the younger daughter in an open casting.

Talking about how she directed the girls—whose characters, unlike those of so many other child actors in dramas about doomed marriages, are central to the film—Forbes says, "I worked to bring the reality of the movie to them as *life*. We ended up getting a lot of improvisational feeling." Ruffalo would throw the girls a curveball on set and then let them work with it to add spontaneity to the proceedings. "This isn't about, Oh, these poor kids!" says Forbes. "It's definitely about love." And, indeed, that's the bottom line in *Infinitely Polar Bear*, a movie that persuasively portrays the enduring blessings and complexities of an improvised family life.—B.D.



106 INTEL Movies

For a glimpse of the treasure trove of talent in the Sundance hit *Dope*, blip this page to watch the trailer now.

Clockwise from top left: Francois Duhamel; Rachel Morrison; courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics; courtesy of Magnolia Pictures; Sony Pictures Classics (2)