

## Costner gives voice to sappy tear-jerker

RICHARD ROEPER

“Nation’s Dog Owners Demand To Know Who’s A Good Boy” — classic headline from The Onion.

### The Art of Racing in the Rain

★★½

**Cast:** Milo Ventimiglia, Amanda Seyfried, Kevin Costner (voice)  
**Rating:** PG for thematic material.

Even if you’re one of those humans prone to blurring out “I’m not really a dog person,” you’re going to find it a challenge to get through “The Art of Racing in the Rain” without experiencing a lump in the throat and some watering of the eyes.

At times it feels as if the filmmakers watched all the “crying-est” dog movies ever, from “Old Yeller” to “My Dog Skip” to “Marley and Me” to “A Dog’s Purpose,” and collectively said, “Oh, we can go sadder than that!”

There’s no denying the emotional impact of many a scene in “The Art of Racing in the Rain” — some involving the incredibly empathetic golden retriever named Enzo who is our travel guide on this journey, some involving the people in his life. We’re instantly rooting for this wonderful dog and for the good and caring man who took him in as a pup and became his lifelong friend.

But when I say, “many a scene,” that’s not hyperbole. Eventually, it felt as if we had been inundated with *too* many scenes designed



DOANE GREGORY/TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Milo Ventimiglia and Enzo, voiced by Kevin Costner, are shown in a scene from “The Art of Racing in the Rain.” The film opens Friday at Jasper 8 Theatres.

and orchestrated to turn on the waterworks, to the point where even Enzo the dog seemed to be exhausted and ready to tap out.

Hey. If you kick off your movie with a moment that will have some viewers tearing up before they’ve taken that first dive into the popcorn, and you keep sprinkling even sadder developments throughout the film, you run the risk of wearing us out before the finish line.

Based on Garth Stein’s 2008 novel of the same name, which was on The New York Times’ bestseller list for 156 weeks, “The

Art of Racing in the Rain” is the story of the talented but not quite star-level race car driver Denny Swift (Milo Ventimiglia), as told from the viewpoint of Denny’s golden retriever, who has been named “Enzo” in honor of the legendary Italian auto-maker Enzo Ferrari.

For the live-action adaptation (written by Mark Bomback, directed by Simon Curtis), Kevin Costner voices Enzo — not in a “Lion King,” Enzo-can-talk kind of way, but as the narrator expressing Enzo’s thoughts and feelings and interpretations of events.

Costner’s voice is so instantly identifiable, it’s a distraction at first. (We can practically picture him in a sound booth, delivering his lines.)

Then again, who better to personify the folksy and warm, resilient and intelligent, immensely popular breed of the golden retriever than Kevin Costner?

From the moment when Ventimiglia’s Denny makes the impulsive decision to get a puppy, human and dog connect as kindred spirits. Denny is hoping to make the climb all the way to the elite Formula One class, and Enzo

shares his human’s love and appreciation for racing — as a sport and as a metaphor for life.

For a while it’s just the two of them, best buddies for life, which suits Enzo just fine. But then Denny meets and falls in love with Amanda Seyfried’s Eve, a saintly schoolteacher who “isn’t really a dog person” (ahem), which is just fine by Enzo, because he’s not really much of an Eve person, at least initially.

Over the course of the next decade, as Denny experiences the highest of highs and the lowest of lows (professionally and personally), Enzo always has to be in the room, so to speak, because the entire movie is told from his point of view. Sometimes it makes sense for Enzo to be present. Nearly as often, it’s a real stretch.

We also experience some truly bizarre tonal shifts, e.g., Enzo’s hallucinogenic encounters with a stuffed zebra toy he believes is a demon. What might have worked as a prose metaphor becomes jarring and weird in the cinematic translation.

“The Art of Racing in the Rain” also overplays its hand in the depiction of Eve’s father (Martin Donovan), a hiss-worthy villain so cartoonishly awful he would be booted off the set of a daytime soap opera.

Thanks in large part to Costner’s robust, earnest, growling, deadpan voice work as a dog who can be brilliant one moment and fantastically clueless the next, “The Art of Racing in the Rain” still comes close to winning us over ...

Until the final scene, which was so shameless and manipulative, I wanted a refund on every lump in the throat and teary-eyed moment I had experienced to that point.

## Science fiction game puts player in unfamiliar situation

GAMING REVIEW

By CHRISTOPHER BYRD  
WP News Service

Story-focused video games often invite some sort of identification with a relatable protagonist. “Observation,” a captivating sci-fi-puzzle-game from a number of the creative minds behind “Alien Isolation,” takes a slightly different approach.

Rather than cast players in the role of an astronaut struggling for survival onboard a damaged space station, “Observation” inserts players into the circuits of the onboard AI. And because it is difficult to overlook how unnatural it is for a human mind to mimic the smooth functionality of a machine, the game effects a gap between the player and the player’s avatar that is intriguingly disorienting.

“Observation’s” peculiar strength is in harnessing and undermining one’s capacity for detachment. The game opens with Dr. Emma Fisher, an astronaut on an International Space Station, sending out an S.O.S. call after an incident knocks the station from its trajectory and damages its operating AI, S.A.M. After Emma reboots the system, the first task for the player is to accept or reject her voice authentication by moving a slider along the screen that serves as a voice analyzer then clicking a tab to indicate S.A.M.’s response.

Curious to see what would happen if I decided to be uncooperative, I rejected Emma’s voice signature a couple of times before she ran a bypass code on me. Since I was the ghost in the machine, I took perverse pleasure in that exchange. As I recollected past crises with uncooperative computers, I wondered how long I’d keep up an apathetic front.

Not for long.

One of the first dramatic moments occurs after Emma directs you to see if different modules on the station are still functional. Odd symbols and coordinates flash across the screen which looks like an artfully distorted video feed. (Like “Alien Isolation,” “Observation” channels an analogue vibe.)

A high-pitched sound swells in the background prompting a reasonably panicked Emma to ask S.A.M. what’s going on. There is nothing the player can do but watch as the words “Bring Her” briefly appear on the screen followed by a flash to a mysterious landscape then grows dark. It’s interesting to have your avatar do things you don’t understand; in the game, no one is all-powerful or outside of the scope of someone else’s observation.

The situation grows increasingly strange after Emma realizes the station is hovering near Saturn and S.A.M. admits that he took them there but doesn’t know why. From that point on, I was committed to helping Emma however I



DEVOLVER DIGITAL/WP NEWS SERVICE

“Observation” is a captivating sci-fi-puzzle game from a number of the creative minds behind “Alien Isolation.”

could. Usually that meant consulting one of the game’s subgenus to locate cameras throughout the station that I could access and, from there, manipulate electronic devices in the vicinity - monitors, hatch doors, laptops, etc.

Though it is easy to feel detached behind a camera, working through a number of the game’s puzzles reminded me that I was a varyingly slow witted-human. Listening to Emma chide me to hurry up with some urgent matter or feeling at a loss for what to do next made me aware that I made for a poor AI companion.

The puzzles in “Observation” are varied. They feel “technical”

without being overly so. There are knobs to adjust, coordinates to enter, schematics to copy, and wires to connect. These user interfaces are well designed and further the game’s retro aesthetic. At a certain point, Emma hooks S.A.M. up to a spherical device so that he can float around and outside of the ship. Guiding the Connection Sphere through the ship’s corridors leads to the impression that one is orchestrating a series of lovely tracking shots. The game’s cinematic flair is obviously indebted to films such as “2001: A Space Odyssey,” and “Gravity.”

Although “Observation’s” story ultimately falls back on one of the biggest tropes in pop culture — multiple dimensions — I thoroughly enjoyed my time with it. On an audiovisual level this is a beautifully executed game with good voice acting. Aspiring space cadets take note.

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## ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

All times are Eastern unless otherwise noted.

## Current cinema

## New releases

**The Art of Racing in the Rain** ★★½ (Jasper 8 Theatres) Thanks in large part to Kevin Costner's voice work as a dog taking us through the life of his race car-driver owner (Milo Ventimiglia), this adaptation of the best-selling novel comes close to winning us over. But eventually it feels as if we've been inundated with too many scenes designed to turn on the waterworks. (Drama, PG, 1 hr. 49 min.)

## Currently playing

**Hobbs & Shaw** ★½ (Jasper 8 Theatres) This loud and lazy and lumbering actioner is a sequel/spinoff to the "Fast and Furious" franchise, reuniting the Hulk-ish American lawman Hobbs (Dwayne Johnson) with the outlaw loner Shaw (Jason Statham) on a mission to stop a terrorist threat recycled from other movies. (Action, PG-13, 2 hrs. 15 min.)

**The Lion King** ★★½ (Jasper 8 Theatres) Jon Favreau's live-action/CGI remake of the Disney animated classic "The Lion King" is a solid and at times stunningly beautiful film with breathtaking attention to detail. The insanely talented duo of Donald Glover and Beyoncé are great as Simba and Nala, Billy Eichner and Seth Rogen kill as Timon and Pumbaa, and the CGI version of Scar (Chiwetel Ejiofor) is a work of art. This "Lion King" rules. And roars. (Fantasy adventure, PG, 1 hr. 58 min.)

**Once Upon a Time in Hollywood** ★★★★★ (Jasper 8 Theatres) In a movie filled with sparkling acting, Brad Pitt dominates as the best friend and former stunt double of a fading TV star (Leonardo DiCaprio). Quentin Tarantino's deeply personal, darkly funny period piece, set in 1969, brilliantly and sometimes outrageously mashes up real-life events and characters with pure fiction. (Comedy drama, R, 2 hrs. 39 min.)

**Toy Story 4** ★★★★★ (Jasper 8 Theatres) Woody (Tom Hanks), Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen) and Co. return in this worthy addition to the "Toy Story" library, bringing back some of the most beloved characters in the history of animated film and introducing us to a fantastically entertaining new bunch of toys. (Animated adventure, G, 1 hr. 40 min.)

## On DVD

**Avengers: Endgame** ★★★★★ Amid all the soaring and the blasting, this superhero adventure for the ages is a genuinely moving drama involving characters we've come to know and love. It's a serious contender to be the best of the Marvel series and the undisputed champion when it comes to emotional punch. (Superhero drama, PG-13, 3 hrs. 2 min., 2019)

## IMAX

**Showplace Cinemas East**, 1801 Morgan Center Drive, Evansville: "Hobbs & Shaw." www.showplacecinemas.com

## Events

## Attractions

**Angel Mounds Historic Site**, 8215 Pollack Ave., Evansville. **Hours (CT):** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. Closed major holidays. www.angelmounds.org

**Big Splash Adventure**, Valley of the Springs Resort, 8505 W. State Road 56, French Lick. 877-936-3866 or www.bigsplashadventure.com

**Falls of the Ohio State Park Interpretive Center**, at the end of West Riverside Drive, Clarksville. **Hours:** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and Saturdays and 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. Closed major holidays. www.falloftheohio.org

**Holiday World & Splashin' Safari**, Santa Claus: **Hours (CT):** **Spashin' Safari opens one hour after and**



**The Redwood Preservation Society, featuring David Warren, left, Jennifer Vela and Michael Flake, will be among the region's singers-songwriters who will share their original works from 4 to 6:30 p.m. Sunday in the 70-seat theatre of St. Benedict's Brew Works. The fifth-annual Ferdinand Folk Festival Singer-Songwriter Showcase is a benefit concert to help keep the festival free. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for those younger than 18. Reservations can be made by calling or texting 812-631-2856.**

**closes one hour before the rest of the park):** 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Friday, Sundays through Aug. 25 and Aug. 31; 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Saturday; 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Aug. 17 and 24. www.holidayworld.com

**Indiana Caverns**, 1267 Green Acres Lane S.W., Corydon. Features a 25-minute boat ride, a waterfall, thriving cave life and Big Bone Mountain. **Hours:** 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily April through October and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily November through March. Closed Christmas. www.indianacaverns.com

**Indiana Railway Museum**, French Lick. Excursion trains depart from the former Monon Railroad Passenger Station. The two-hour, 20-mile trip takes passengers through several limestone rock cuts, part of the Hoosier National Forest and the 2,200-foot Burton Tunnel. **Train rides:** 1 p.m. Sundays, Thursdays and Saturdays, through Aug. 27. **Special events: Wild West Hold-Ups**, Saturday-Sunday and Aug. 31-Sept. 2. **Museum hours:** 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, free. 800-748-7246 or www.indianarailwaymuseum.org

**Jasper City Mill**, 160 Third Ave. The mill features cornmeal ground on site, craft items, old-fashioned candy and local products. **Exhibit (changes every six months): Dubois County Art Guild Gallery Walk**, items from artisans and rustic Amish furniture available in the gift shop. **Featured Artist: Diane Elkins Winger of Crystal**, through October. **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and noon to 5 p.m. Sundays. Closed major holidays.

**Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial**, Lincoln City (all times CT). **Park hours: Memorial Visitor Center**, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. daily, through Sept. 30; **farm**, staffed daily through Labor Day; **nature center**, open, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays; **Colonel Jones Home**, noon-4 p.m. Thursdays-Sundays, June-August. www.nps.gov/libo/ or 812-937-4541

**Louisville Zoo**, 1100 Trevilian Way. **Hours:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m., through Sept. 22. www.louisvillezoo.org

**Marengo Cave Park:** The Crystal Palace walking tour features a formation-filled room and huge flowstone deposits, while the Dripstone Trail walking tour is known for its profusion of delicate soda straw formations, slender totem pole stalagmites and penny ceiling. **Hours:** 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. http://marengocave.com

**Mega Cavern**, 1841 Taylor Ave., Louisville. **Historic Tram Tours, Mega Zips and Mega Quest**, an underground ropes challenge. Closed

major holidays. 877-614-6342 or www.louisvillemegacavern.com

**Mesker Park Zoo**, 1545 Mesker Park Drive, Evansville. **Hours (CT):** 9 a.m.-4 p.m. daily. 812-435-6143 or www.meskerparkzoo.com

**Spirit of Jasper: Ride and Dine**, Jasper Train Depot, 201 Mill St., 6 to 8:30 p.m. Aug. 17 and Sept. 7 and 21. The train travels to Cuzco. A catered meal and beverage from the Schnitzelbank Restaurant are served and a cash bar is available. Reservations preferred. www.spiritofjasper.com or 482-9229.

**Spirit of Jasper: Jasper to French Lick Express**, Jasper Train Depot, 201 Mill St., 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sept. 14 and Oct. 5. The train ride takes 1 hour and 45 minutes each way; passengers spend about 3½ hours in French Lick. A cash bar in available and beverages and light snacks are sold. \$40. www.spiritofjasper.com or 482-9229.

**Spirit of Jasper: Chocolate, Wine & Dine**, Jasper Train Depot, 201 Mill St., 6 p.m. Oct. 12. Reservations preferred. www.spiritofjasper.com or 482-9229.

**Spirit of Jasper: Pizza & Beer Ride and Dine**, Jasper Train Depot, 201 Mill St., 6 p.m. Aug. 24 and Sept. 28. Reservations preferred. www.spiritofjasper.com or 482-9229.

**Spirit of Jasper: Fall Foliage Ride and Dine**, Jasper Train Depot, 201 Mill St., 4 to 7:30 p.m. Oct. 19 and 26 and Nov. 2 and 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 6, 13, 20 and 27 and Nov. 3. The train travels to Cuzco. A catered meal and beverage from the Schnitzelbank Restaurant are served and a cash bar is available. Reservations preferred. www.spiritofjasper.com or 482-9229.

**Wilstem Ranch**, Paoli: **Grizzly, Giraffe and Kangaroo Encounters**. www.wilstemranch.com or 812-936-4484

## Other events

**Jasper Farmers Market**, 8 a.m.-noon Saturdays through September.

**Huntingburg Farmers Market**, 7-10 a.m. Saturdays through Oct. 19, Market Street Park.

**Ferdinand Farmers Market**, 9 a.m. Saturday and Aug. 24, Sept. 14 and 28 and Oct. 13, lawn of Soup-N-Such Bistro, Wollenmann Home, 1150 Main St.

**Nine and Dine Couples Scramble**, 5:30 p.m. Friday, Sultan's Run Golf Club. Reservations required. 812-482-1009

## Upcoming events

**Evansville BBQ Festival**, between Locust and Walnut and Fifth and

Sixth streets, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Aug. 17. (Aug. 16 VIP event for ages 21 and older.) www.EvansvilleBBQFest.com

**Evansville Hydrofest 2019: Roar on the River!**, Aug. 16-19. www.tropevansville.com/event/events/evansville-hydrofest-2019

**Frog Follies**, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. CT Aug. 23-24 and 8 a.m.-2 p.m. CT Aug. 25, Vanderburgh County 4-H Center, Evansville.

**Latino Festival**, Aug. 30-31, Huntingburg City Park.

**Holland Community Festival 160th Celebration**, Sept. 13-15, Holland Park.

**Ferdinand Folk Fest**, Sept. 21, 18th Street Park.

**Herbstfest**, Sept. 26-29, Huntingburg City Park.

**"Ghostbusters": 35th Anniversary Presentation**, Saturday, Oct. 12, Lincoln Amphitheatre, Lincoln City. lincolnamphitheatre.com

## Exhibits

## Krempp Gallery

**Exhibit: Patoka Valley Quilter's Guild**, through Aug. 29. **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursdays and noon to 3 p.m. Sundays. Closed major holidays.

## Saint Meinrad

## Archabbey Library

**Exhibit: Icons and Drawings by Br. Michael Moran, CP**, through Aug. 30. **Hours:** Call 357-6401 or 800-987-7311 or visit www.saintmeinrad.edu/library/hours/

## Other galleries

**Ivy Tech Bower-Suhrheinrich Visual Arts Center**, 3501 N. First Ave., Evansville. **Hours (CT):** 1-6 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays. Closed major holidays. www.ivytech.edu/southwest

**Flame Run Glass Studio and Gallery**, 815 W. Market St., Louisville. **Hours:** 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Closed major holidays. 502-584-5353 or www.flamerun.com

**The Green Building Gallery**, 732 E. Market St., Louisville. **Hours:** 9-5 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Fridays and 4-9 p.m. Saturdays. Closed major holidays. www.thegreenbuilding.net/gallery/index.html or 502-561-1162

**New Harmony Gallery of Contemporary Art**, 506 Main St. **Hours (CT):** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Closed major holidays. 812-682-3156 or www.nhgallery.com

## Dubois County Museum

**Membership:** 2019 memberships are available.

**Storytime for Kids**, Saturday (theme is bees); and Sept. 14 (theme is apples).

**Jasper Strassenfest displays**, Thursday-Sunday, Aug. 1-4.

**Johnny Applesed Comes to the Museum**, 10:30 a.m., Saturday, Aug. 24.

**Archaeology Day**, 10 a.m.-noon, Saturday, Sept. 7.

**Permanent exhibits:** Our Eldest Daughter, The Cold War (1945-1991), Black Heritage in Dubois County, Grand Army of the Republic, A Bicentennial Remembrance: The Story of German Immigration to Dubois County, Safari Room, The Story of Bill Schroeder and the Jarvik Heart; Main Street Dubois County (a model town from the 1900s featuring 17 businesses, including Stewart Hotel, Schutz's Shoe Service and a funeral home, doctor's office, jail, barbershop, church, bank, surveying office and bar), Grand Army of the Republic, Little Pioneer Children's Play Area (includes one-room schoolhouse, book nook, toy area and dress-up area), Lewis and Clark keel boat, The Law in Dubois County, Honoring the Military, The Civil War Diary of William C. Benson, Model Trains, Dubois County in World War I, The Spanish-American War and Dubois County, Huntingburg Wagon Works, Girl Scouting in Dubois County, People of the Woodlands, Trace the Buffalo, Pioneer Area, Germans, Land Owners Map, Early Settlers of Dubois County, Cheering our Champions, Furniture, Civil War Flag, Prisoners of War, The Mills of Dubois County. Also, Heidet Blacksmith Shop, depicts the original shop from Ferdinand; Lindauer Sandstone Quarry and Grindstone Works of St. Henry, displays days of sandstone manufacturing; Eckert Log Home, assembled log home inside the museum shows building material and home life inside a German-style log home; Women's Work is Never



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