

NOW PLAYING IN THEATERS >>

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This issue's rating system: Things [friday] is thankful for:	★★★★ leftover turkey	★★★ leftover stuffing	★★ leftover pumpkin pie	★ that we only have to eat cranberry sauce once a year
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FILM/GRADE	RATING/TIME	CAST	WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW	LOCAL TIMES
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opening this week >>				
FANTASTIC MR. FOX Grade: ★★★	Rated PG for action, smoking and slang humor. 88 min	Owen Wilson, George Clooney, Jason Schwartzman, Bill Murray, Wallace Wolodarsky	PLOT: Mr. and Mrs. Fox live an idyllic home life with their son Ash and visiting young nephew Kristopherson. But after 12 years, Mr Fox slips back into his old ways as a sneaky chicken thief. He endangers not only his beloved family, but the whole animal community. Trapped underground and with not enough food to go around, the animals band together to fight against the evil Farmers — Boggis, Bunce and Bean — who are determined to capture the audacious, fantastic Mr Fox at any cost. COMMENT: It may not merit the adjective in its title, yet the animated yarn “Fantastic Mr. Fox” offers some of the most goofy fun you’ll have at a theater this season. With George Clooney, Meryl Streep and Bill Murray leading the top-notch voice cast, director Wes Anderson has found an ideal story and medium — stop-motion animation — to bring his cockeyed vision to the cartoon world.	(11:30 a.m.), 1:50, 4:10, 6:45, *9:10
NINJA ASSASSIN Grade: ★½	Rated R for strong bloody stylized violence throughout, and language. 99 min	Rain, Rick Yune, Naomie Harris, Ben Miles	PLOT: Raizo is one of the deadliest assassins in the world. Taken from the streets as a child, he was transformed into a trained killer by the Ozunu Clan, a secret society whose very existence is considered a myth. But haunted by the merciless execution of his friend by the Clan, Raizo breaks free from them and vanishes. Now he waits, preparing to exact his revenge. COMMENT: The makers of “Ninja Assassin” want you to revere the ninja. The movie has a funny way paying its respects to the sword-wielding saboteurs. Director James McTeigue (“V for Vendetta”) and his producing partners, Larry and Andy Wachowski (“The Matrix”), are clearly more interested in spraying geysers of digital blood than in establishing the ninja as a foe to be taken seriously.	(11:50 a.m.), 2:10, 4:50, 7:30, *9:50
OLD DOGS Grade: ★½	Rated PG for some mild rude humor. 89 min	John Travolta, Kelly Preston, Ella Blue Travolta, Robin Williams, Matt Dillon	PLOT: Two middle-aged business partners' lives are turned upside down when they find themselves in the care of 7-year old twins. COMMENT: Travolta and Williams truly put some energy into their characters, but there's nothing there for them to play. “Old Dogs” is so empty-headed, all they can do is put on goofy, sometimes creepy, faces and try to make observations about their aging bodies sound amusing. But come on, guys. Did the family dog eat all the other big studio scripts you had piled by your bedsides, leaving only this poo to thumb through?	(11:40 a.m.), 2:00, 4:30, 6:50, *9:30

<<currently playing				
2012 Grade: ★½	Rated PG-13 for intense disaster sequences and some language. 158 min	John Cusack, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Danny Glover, Thandie Newton, Oliver Platt	PLOT: Seismic events all over the planet concern a government geologist. “Earth crust displacement” is coming. The continents will shift and the world, “as we know it,” will end. The president mobilizes the G-8 nations to act. Years of secret labor ensue, with nobody knowing about it but a select few. And as predictions, based on end-days prophecies from Mayan and other ancient cultures start to come true, sometime science writer, now limo-driver Jackson Curtis (Cusack) goes on a mad dash to rescue his estranged wife and kids from soon-to-be-sea-floor Los Angeles. COMMENT: The end is not near enough for this latest nihilistic disaster flick, directed by end-of-the-world specialist Roland Emmerich (“The Day After Tomorrow,” “Independence Day”). The 2½ -hour film hews close to genre standards: the redeemed deadbeat dad, the coming together of different peoples, the toppling of monuments. The most grounded thing here is the acting, which almost convinces you that something decent is at work in “2012.”	(11:40 a.m.), 3:20, 7:00, *10:30
BLIND SIDE Grade: ★★½	Rated PG-13 for one scene involving violence, drug and sexual references. 125 min	Quinton Aaron, Sandra Bullock, Kathy Bates, Lily Collins, Tim McGraw	PLOT: Michael Oher, a homeless African-American youngster from a broken home, is taken in by the Touhys, a well-to-do white family who help him fulfill his potential. At the same time, Oher's presence in the Touhys' lives leads them to some insightful self-discoveries of their own. As a football player and student, Oher works hard and, with the help of his coaches and adopted family, becomes an All-American offensive lineman. COMMENT: This redemption-minded sports flick serves its inspiration straight-up with no twist. That direct focus delivers a feel-good crowd-pleaser, but it also drains the film of the kind of subtle nuances that might have separated it from other Hollywood Hallmark-like efforts. Bullock brings her trademark spunkiness to the mother hen role, delivering an iron-willed woman who looks past appearances to do the right thing.	12:40, 1:20, 3:40, 4:20, 6:40, 7:10, *9:40, *10:10
A CHRISTMAS CAROL Grade: ★★	Rated PG for scary sequences and images. 95 min Additional \$3.00 charge for 3D	Jim Carrey, Bob Hoskins, Christopher Lloyd, Robin Wright Penn, Colin Firth	PLOT: Ebenezer Scrooge begins the Christmas holiday with his usual miserly contempt, barking at his faithful clerk and his cheery nephew. But when the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come take him on an eye-opening journey revealing truths Old Scrooge is reluctant to face, he must open his heart to undo years of ill will before it's too late. COMMENT: Carrey's zest for the undertaking comes through clearly enough — after all, the rubber-faced “Ace Ventura” and “Man on the Moon” actor has always been a contortionist. His Scrooge is exceptionally gaunt, topped by limp white hair, and features a downturned mouth below an Ichabod Crane nose. But on the whole, the film feels suffocated by its design, and the liveliness of Carrey and the rest of the cast (including Gary Oldman, Colin Firth and Cary Elwes) struggles to shine through.	1:10, 3:45, 6:15, *8:50
COUPLES RETREAT Grade: ★½	Rated PG-13 on appeal for sexual content and language. 110 min	Jon Favreau, Vince Vaughn, Faizon Love, Jason Bateman, Kristen Bell	PLOT: Four Midwestern couples embark on a journey to a tropical island resort. While one of the couples is there to work on their marriage, the other three set out to jet ski, spa and enjoy some fun in the sun. They soon discover that participation in the resort's couples therapy is not optional. Suddenly, their group-rate vacation comes at a price. What follows is a hilarious look at real world problems faced by all couples. COMMENT: “Couples Retreat” suggests what life might have been like if the guys from “Swingers” had grown up, moved to the suburbs and turned into lame, sitcommy cliches. Under the direction of Peter Billingsley (Ralphie from “A Christmas Story”), another longtime Vaughn friend and collaborator making his first feature, “Couples Retreat” veers back and forth in a jarring way between crude sexual humor and supposedly poignant moments.	1:30, 4:15, 7:20, *10:20
PLANET 51 Grade: ★½	Rated PG for mild sci-fi action and some suggestive humor. 91 min	Voices of: Gary Oldman, John Cleese, Dwayne Johnson, Jessica Biel, Justin Long	PLOT: An animated adventure revolving around astronaut Chuck Baker, who lands on Planet 51. To his surprise, he finds that this planet is inhabited by little green people who are happily living in a world reminiscent of a cheerfully innocent 1950s America, and whose only fear is that it will be overrun by alien invaders — like Chuck! With the help of his robot companion and his new friend, Chuck must find a way off Planet 51 before he becomes a permanent part of the Alien Invaders Space Museum. COMMENT: This sci-fi family tale offers passable computer imagery but is an aborted liftoff when it comes to the story of a human astronaut among little green aliens who, for some uninspired reason, are living the serene “Ozzie and Harriet” life of 1950s America. Though set on another world, the jokes are as derivative as they come, the filmmakers endlessly mining human pop culture in a vain search for laughs.	12:50, 3:50, 6:30, *9:00
TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON Grade: ★½	Rated PG-13 for some violence and action. 130 min	Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Taylor Lautner, Dakota Fanning, Chaske Spencer	PLOT: Bella Swan is devastated by the abrupt departure of her vampire love, Edward Cullen, but her spirit is rekindled by her growing friendship with the irresistible Jacob Black. Suddenly she finds herself drawn into the world of the werewolves, ancestral enemies of the vampires, and finds her loyalties tested. COMMENT: “New Moon” is boring, eternally so. The soap-opera melodrama of Stewart, Pattinson and Lautner's performances provides some unintentional laughs. Mopey teenager Bella has all the luster of, well, a mopey teenager. Yet Stewart is on screen almost all the time, and her Bella is just a drag to be around. With her flat speech and listless presence, it's unfathomable how two different sets of monsters could fixate so completely on her.	12:20, 1:00, 1:40, 3:30, 4:00, 4:40, 6:20, 7:00, 7:40, *9:20, *10:00, *10:40

An * indicates Friday-Saturday late show times only. Parentheses indicate Friday-Sunday matinee only. — “Comments” from Christy Lemire and David Germain, AP movie writers; McClatchy Newspapers