

The Town

15 (125mins)

★★★★☆

Enter the Void

18 (135mins)

★★★★☆

The Wildest Dream

PG (89mins)

★★★★☆

True Legend

15 (114mins)

★★★★☆



Watch the Eat, Pray, Love trailer and our video report from the premiere of *Wildest Dream*

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Is *The Town* Ben Affleck's bid for Clint Eastwood's actor-director mantle? Co-written, directed by and starring Affleck, this snappy, oddly charming Boston crime thriller is set among generations of Irish miscreants in the skanky blue-collar Charlestown neighbourhood. The movie has a traditional heist-chase-love plot, but the cast is on blistering form — most thrillingly *Mad Men*'s Jon Hamm as an FBI agent. The slick-haired Hamm just adds a gun and more menace to his Don Draper persona.

Affleck himself plays Doug MacCray, a street-smart guy from the projects and the mastermind of a team of four professional bank robbers, who disguise themselves in Hallowe'en masks on each raid. Some rubber-faced nuns conduct an old-school car chase in the narrow streets with particular ingenuity and relish. Affleck's love interest — and unfortunately a key witness to the crime — is the bank manager Claire, played by the now-risen star Rebecca Hall with captivating naturalism. There's delicious dramatic irony in the scenes between Claire and MacCray. An accomplished film.

Hedonism elides with horror in *Enter the Void*, an unparalleled, drug-fueled trip inside the mind of a young American in Tokyo. This psychedelic melodrama would make Timothy Leary, the prophet of LSD, proud, and requires a cast-iron digestion from viewers. That said, it's like nothing else on screen, mind-blowingly cool from the title sequence. Two orphans — a brother and sister in their late teens — brave a storm of hallucinogens in the alien Japanese streets and neon clubs. When the young man is shot in a grotty lavatory, his story continues from the afterlife, in flashbacks and looking down upon his sister's life. With psychotic, weird photography, this film is indeed your brain

on drugs, fried. The director, Gaspar Noé, describes himself as “a former enfant terrible”, but there's still terrible stuff here: graphic car crashes and an abortion. Noé's camera will enter any void, diving into bellybuttons, bullet holes and vaginas. Yet his huge fields of colour — throbbing white screens held for a whole minute, later red and orange — work like a mood-changing Rothko. Fascinating — but expect a headache, hangover or the munchies afterwards.

Much more of a visual treat is *The Wildest Dream*, a terrific National Geographic adventure film about George Mallory, the British explorer who may have been the first man to climb Everest in 1924. Explaining his then-insane desire to mount the mountain, Mallory famously said, “Because it's there,” and found a path up, despite limited oxygen, gabardine trousers and hobnailed boots. The film leaves you dangling from ice-cliffs and marvelling at the literally breathtaking slopes. Mallory is voiced by Ralph Fiennes, while Liam Neeson narrates and the late Natasha Richardson voices Ruth, Mallory's wife. The story cuts between Conrad Anker — the present-day climber who discovers Mallory's frozen body, shockingly intact — and old black-and-white footage, photographs and moving letters from Mallory to his wife. Did Mallory die on the way up — or down?

True Legend is a kung-fu *Lord of the Rings* meets *Rocky*, in Chinese. Su, the great fighter, battles with his evil stepbrother, who is fabulously equipped with “five venom fists” and has armour sewn onto his skin. Su goes into exile and trains for victory, in a tacky 3-D action sequence. Plenty of flying swords, spurting blood and drunken kung-fu. Plus cameos from Michelle Yeoh and the late David Carradine. **Kate Muir**