“Lizzie” is definitely a movie with an ax to grind. Producer-star Chloe Sevigny has reimagined the 1892 Massachusetts double murder case as a feminist parable against oppression in an interesting and, at times, absorbing indie film. Adding spice is the casting of Kristen Stewart as Bridget, the maid who might have had a lesbian affair with Lizzie. First, a bit of history. The ax murders associated with Lizzie Borden were brutal, bloody, shocking and cannot have been the work of a balanced mind. The victims were Borden’s father and stepmother. Lizzie was the only serious suspect, and her murder trial was a public sensation, the first “trial of the century.” And the result was acquittal. Nonetheless, 126 years later, Lizzie remains the prime suspect. “Lizzie,” however, is not a sensationalist horror film or a rigorous docudrama. It is an absorbing, though at times off-putting, look at an era that took a particularly scorched-earth approach to the oppression of women. Lizzie is portrayed as an independent woman who likes to attend the opera and other public functions alone, something women did not do in that day. That draws the ire of her father, Andrew (Jamey Sheridan), and stepmother, Abby (Fiona Shaw). Within the confines of that dreary household, Lizzie finds Bridget to be a much-needed confidante, despite their differences in station. Bridget is enduring her own pain; she is repeatedly raped by Lizzie’s father. Inevitably, Lizzie and Bridget find comfort with each other beyond conversation, and Sevigny’s chilly Lizzie and Stewart’s warm-blooded Bridget are a good match. “You’re an abomination, Lizzie,” Andrew says after Lizzie’s latest transgression of decorum. “Then at last, we are on equal footing, father,” Lizzie retorts. Lizzie and sister Emma (Kim Dickens) — she, too, is an unmarried spinster — also have a battle on their hands in the form of their uncle John (Denis O’Hare), who might be trying to cut into Andrew’s wealth at their expense, thereby further ratcheting up the tension in the household. In fact, there seem to be several people who would like to see Andrew dead over any number of motives. So as bloody as the murders were, was it justifiable homicide? Directed with restraint by Craig William Macneill, “Lizzie” never quite gets to what made Lizzie Borden tick, but it’s possible no film ever could. But it remains an entirely watchable drama thanks in no small part to the charisma of its two lead women. G. Alan, Johnson, San Francisco Chronicle
THE WIFE
1 hr 40 min  Rated R

09/28 Friday 6:00 pm
09/29 Saturday 6:00 pm
09/30 Sunday 6:00 pm
10/01 Monday 6:00 pm
10/04 Thursday 6:00 pm
10/05 Friday 9:00 pm
10/06 Saturday 3:30 & 9:00 pm
10/07 Sunday 3:30 pm

"I don’t want to be thought of as the long-suffering wife,” Joan Castleman pronounces with quiet emphasis. But it’s clear that, after decades of marriage of Joe, who’s just been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, that something is amiss. The Wife is a well-crafted story about relationships and about duty, including subverting one’s own needs in deference to another. With Glenn Close in the lead role, it’s also unexpectedly poignant and powerful. From the opening scene when Joe (Jonathan Pryce) playfully forces himself on his wife — he’d probably call it seduction, she’d rather be doing something else — the dynamics of the relationship are set. Joan is dutiful, though not submissive, even as her eyes project a sense that rivers of emotion are roiling beneath the surface. We initially see Joe as not a bad man per se, just intensely self-involved and too wrapped up in his own needs to spare his son, a budding writer, a few moments of praise and encouragement for a short story. Clearly, David (Max Irons) longs for his father’s approval and just as clearly, pater’s lifelong love affair with himself means it’s not going to come easily. The story unfolds in two time periods, one in 1992, with the Castleman jetting off to Stockholm for the prize ceremony, and one starting in the late 1950s when young Joan falls under the thrall of her married creative-writing professor. Even back then, Joe’s budding narcissism is evident. (Director Bjorn Runge cannily casts Annie Starke, Close’s real-life daughter, as young Joan, a nice touch that works.) On the plane to Stockholm, an unctuous writer named Nathaniel Bone (Christian Slater) attempts to ingratiate himself with the couple, but Joe’s too vain and Joan’s too smart to fall easily into his trap. However, Bone may or may not know something that could upend everything. There’s already talk of a seventh Oscar nomination for Close and for good reason. Her performance is subtle and nuanced and even a little mysterious as Joan, a woman whose placid exterior hints at a range of deep emotions as well as inner strength. Pryce strikes a fine counterpoint and like Close never overplays the role of Joe while conveying a sense of entitlement and vanity that is sure to strike a chord, particularly among women who know the type. Elizabeth McGovern deserves kudos for a lively performance as a crusty older woman who offers some unfortunate advice to young Joan. Runge ably guides the enterprise to a shattering and satisfying conclusion.  

FAHRENHEIT 11/9
2 hr 08 min  Rated R

Say what you will about Michael Moore, but the man isn’t afraid to ruffle some feathers. As someone who has been a supporter of Michael Moore’s career since Roger and Me, I can honestly say that he has a very loyal fanbase and is one of the most famous documentary filmmakers in the world. That being said, his documentaries are geared explicitly towards democrats or those who label themselves as liberals. I don’t think I have ever heard a Republican friend, colleague, or family member say, “oh, hey, do you want to go see the new Michael Moore documentary?” Moore is left-leaning, but with his last few films, I’ve noticed a massive change in his personality as he has gotten a lot angrier over the past decade. It seems to be that he has gotten fed up with the political system in America and has been making films with the hope that they will invoke action. Fahrenheit 11/9 is being marketed as an anti-Trump documentary, which while it indeed is, there is a lot more to the film than 2 hours of Trump bashing. Fahrenheit 11/9 is sort of a sequel to Fahrenheit 9/11 because the film touches upon various things that have happened in the United States since that documentary was released. If you have seen other documentaries by Michael Moore, you probably know that his films tend to have a specific agenda like exposing the American health care system and taking a look at the history of gun violence in America. His latest documentary is a lot less structured than his previous films. This one tends to jump around quite a bit while covering a lot of ground in its two-hour runtime. As most would expect, Moore opens the film showing Donald Trump becoming the President of the United States and immediately posing the question, “how the *%ck did this happen?” After that initial setup, Moore begins to focus on how corrupt the government is. This is refreshing to see since Fahrenheit 9/11 was 2 hrs of Bush bashing. Instead, while Moore does come back to Trump at various points throughout the film, he decides to cover other topics such as the Flint Water Crisis, Bernie Sanders being outvoted as the Democratic candidate, and the Parkland School Shooting. With a much broader focus than his previous documentaries, Fahrenheit 11/9 is easily Moore’s most well-rounded outing to date. When comparing Fahrenheit 11/9 to Moore’s previous films, you can he is a lot angrier and disgusted by what continues to occur in the United States. He attacks Barack Obama for going down to Flint and trying to joke about the water quality rather than solving it. He shows how the Democrats are just as untrustworthy as Republicans when it comes to lining their pockets with profits at the expense of the American people. Moore doesn’t pick a side this time around but instead exposes both parties as corrupt. Moore typically ends all of his films with a grand speech which poses a question to the viewer right before the end credits begin to roll. This time around, Moore starts to make his typical optimistic statement but is interrupted by a series of clips showing violent acts occurring all across the United States. These clips are compelling as they highlight how we as Americans are treating one another and allow the violence of seeing people being killed or attacked to speak for themselves. These clips serve as a call to action as we should no longer stand by and allow men, women, and children to be attacked and killed. Moore is no longer giving us advice or asking what we should do but instead is showing what is going on all across the United States. Fahrenheit 11/9 is the most important film of the year and one that serves as a wake-up call to all Americans. This is Michael Moore’s call to action that change is a must occur within the United States. Changes are necessary and our government, as well as our leaders, need to be held accountable for their actions. A must-see documentary and one of Moore’s best documentaries to date.

THE CAKEMAKER
Saturday, 09/29 3:00 & 9:00 pm; Sunday, 09/30 3:00 pm

REQUIEM FOR THE AMERICAN NATION
Tuesday, October 2 7:00 pm
This year Manhattan Short received 1565 entries from 73 countries from which nine finalists were selected. These nine short films will screen more than 1000 times in over 350 cities on six continents during the week of September 27 - October 7. AND THE JUDGES OF THESE FILMS ARE YOU, THE AUDIENCE. On entry to each venue, you will be handed a ballot card that allows you to VOTE for the BEST SHORT FILM and ACTOR at the conclusion of the program. Votes will be sent to MANHATTAN SHORT’S headquarters and the winner will be announced at ManhattanShort.com on Monday, October 8 at 10:00 am EST (the Vickers Theatre’s website will also have a list of the winners of the Manhattan Short).

The directors and actors anxiously await your decision!

See our website www.vickerstheatre.com for a list of entrees to the Manhattan Short Film Festival
**JULIET NAKED**

1 hr 38 min  Rated R

10/19  Friday  6:00 pm  
10/20  Saturday  6:00 pm  
10/21  Sunday  6:00 pm  
10/22  Monday  6:00 pm

10/25  Thursday  6:00 pm  
10/26  Friday  9:00 pm  
10/27  Saturday  3:00 & 9:00 pm  
10/28  Sunday  3:00 pm

The time is getting to the point where we’re all just going to have to appreciate Ethan Hawke and the particular qualities that he has been bringing to movies for more than 20 years. “Juliet, Naked,” based on the novel by Nick Hornby finds him in what could be called his typical mode. But what a flexible and complex thing a typical Ethan Hawke role is, filled with warmth, and an awareness of absurdity, and the suggestion of real depths of thought and feeling. He is capable of blowing it big time — the best don’t fail; they bomb grunting through the dreadful Maudie — as an English provincial. But consider the range and consistency of what we’ve come to expect from him, from the humor and deepening sensitivity of his performances in the “Before” series and “Boyhood” to his spiritual anguish in “First Reformed.” Perhaps the key to Hawke as a performer is that, even in light material — sometimes in the very moment of being funny — he carries with him an awareness of the essential, the air of someone in touch with some true current of life. In “Juliet, Naked,” he is a former musician, Tucker Crowe, a singer-songwriter who made a few records and then walked away from an emerging career. Now, 25 years later, few remember him, and almost nobody knows where he is, but he’s the obsession of a small coterie of rabid fans. The most fanatical of these is Annie (Chris O’Dowd), who, in between teaching what looks to be a fairly worthless college course about television, spends his life collecting Tucker Crowe memorabilia and arguing with other Crowe obsessives on Skype. Rose Byrne, in what might be her most charming showcase, is Annie, who lives in Duncan in a small English city and is beginning to realize she made a wrong turn somewhere. She’s almost 40, wishes she had kids, and has come to see Duncan for what he is — an antisocial pedant/weirdo. But as Pink Floyd might say, hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way, and so she goes one day into the next, not miserable, but with no discernible path to happiness. Then one day, unable to take it anymore, she posts a comment to Duncan’s review of an obscure Tucker Crowe album. She doesn’t like it, and says so. And the next day she gets an email all the way from the United States: It’s Crowe himself, telling her how much he agrees with her. He doesn’t have much use for his old albums, either. “Juliet, Naked” is very like a Hornby novel in that its irresistible and appealing and full of tenderness and idiosyncrasy, and yet when you try to tell people what was so great about it, you can’t do it justice. You just wind up insisting more emphatically and hoping someone will believe you. How’s this for a try? “Juliet, Naked” is very much like a lot of romantic comedies, except it’s better. And better, in this case, means better every scene — fuller, richer, with wit and emotion and winning dialogue; with surprises that knock you back on your heels, with unexpected encounters, and without any gimmicks, such as fake arguments. It’s just people acting like people, going through an interesting moment in their lives. Hawke brings to Tucker the weight of unspoken regret and the wise yet dumbfounded look that’s the mark of a complicated past. And Rose Byrne has demonstrated impressive comic facility and unerring truthfulness in an array of recent films, now gets to be funny and vulnerable in a way that’s new for her on screen. Is there anything more to say? Just one thing: Director Jesse Peretz (Our Idiot Brother; The Chateau) was the ideal director for this material, because of his light touch, subtle observation and genuine feeling for the human comedy. Yet even with that, there’s no accounting for the fairy dust that got sprinkled on “Juliet, Naked.” There’s just something... 

**TEA WITH THE DAMES**

(NOTHING LIKE A DAME)

1 hr 24 min  Not Rated

10/05  Friday  6:30 pm  
10/06  Saturday  6:30 pm  
10/07  Sunday  6:30 pm  
10/08  Monday  6:30 pm

10/11  Thursday  6:30 pm  
10/12  Friday  9:00 pm  
10/13  Saturday  3:00 & 9:00 pm  
10/14  Sunday  3:00 pm

Here in the States, the populace worships the Kardashians. In the U.K., there’s nothing like a Dame. In a sane world, there’s no contest. So do have tea with the Dames: Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, Eileen Atkins and Joan Plowright. Director Roger Michell (Notting Hill) has had the good sense to round up this quartet of acting royalty and listen to each of them dish about the highs and lows of their careers, theirs fears, their tears, and their love lives. From acting to aging, no subject is off limits. How do I love this movie? Let me count the ways. The setting is the garden of a rural cottage that Plowright built with her late husband, Lord Laurence Olivier, the legendary actor. Mags, as her friends call Dame Maggie, allows that working with the demanding Olivier — they were both Oscar nominated for 1965’s Othello — was “tricky.” Playing Shakespeare is discussed. Jude, as the diminutive Dame Judi is tagged, recalls being openly mocked as a “menopausal dwarf” when she took on the role of the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, opposite Anthony Hopkins, in the Bard’s Antony and Cleopatra. To the sound of laughter, Dame Joan — who costarred with her husband in The Entertainer, on stage and screen — notes slyly that “none of us was ever in the front ranks of world beauties.” Perhaps so, but the glorious clips from films and stage productions that Michell generously sprinkles through Tea With the Dames shows each actress radiating talent, youth, smarts and sexual vitality. Plowright, the eldest of the group (they’re all in their eighties now) complains of the failing eyesight that halted her career. Mags sneers at her success in Downton Abbey, claiming never to have watched the PBS series that won her three Emmys. She adds, teasingly, that Jude gets all the plum parts, including playing M in eight James Bond films. A bizarre claim since Smith figures prominently in the entire series of Harry Potter films. Atkins, who co-created the TV series Upstairs, Downstairs and currently stars as Queen Mary on The Crown, is the first to admit to a crippling stage fright. “On my way to the theater I always think, ‘Would you like to be run over now, or in a massive car accident?’ And I only just about come out on the side of ‘No’.” Nodding in agreement, the four Dames talk about the perils of acting with their husbands, now divorced or dead. Dame Joan uses the word “privilege” to describe acting and living with Olivier, adding that it was also “a nightmare.” Director Roger Michell wisely just turns on his cameras and lets the ladies rip. No point in giving away any more of what gets said in that garden and in that cottage. Just know that it’s delicious — sweet, tart, surprisingly moving and funny as hell. Tea with the Dames is an invitation to a conversational feast with four acting paragons who are not above a little profanity and confessions that make them human. Don’t miss the chance to bask in the pleasure of their company. Peter Travis, Rolling Stone

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