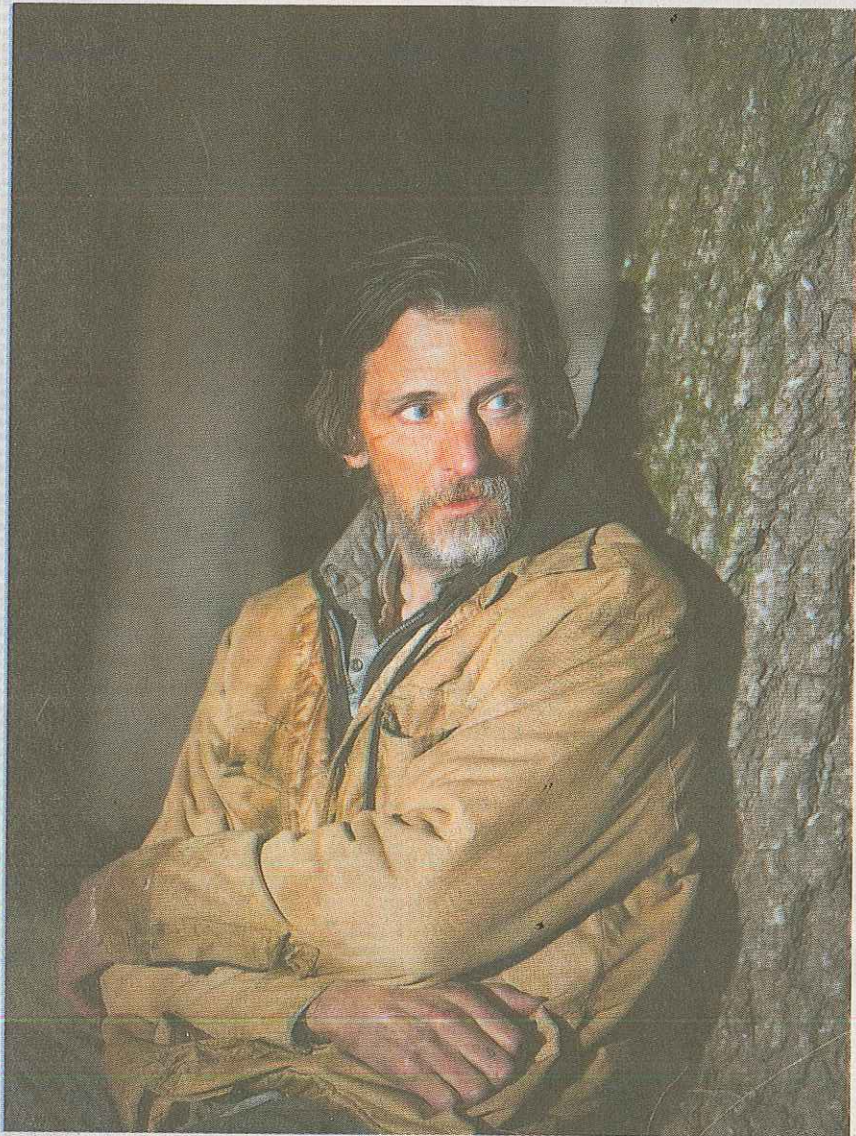


SUMMER MOVIES

KAREN DURBIN

A Season of Attention Getters



SEBASTIAN MLYNARSKI/ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Jonah Hill

'Cyrus'

Jonah Hill, the 26-year-old actor who has the title role in Jay and Mark Duplass's "Cyrus" (July 9), is nothing if not busy. He also writes and produces and has two more movies opening this year and no less than seven lined up after that.

He began his film career at 20 with a bit part in the offbeat comedy "I ♥ Huckabees." But things really took off two years later when he became a member in good standing of Judd Apatow's comic troupe, with a series of ever larger roles in the Apatow hits "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," "Knocked Up" and "Superbad." Mr. Hill (below) was consistently funny, but his comedy had an acrid edge; by "Superbad" he began to seem typecast as the fuzzy-haired, foul-mouthed fat kid who rails at the girls who won't divest him of his virginity.

So it's a treat to see him make the leap into something richer in the Duplass brothers' dark-edged comedy. Not that Mr. Hill is playing a nice guy — far from it. Twenty-one and still living at home with his long-divorced mother, Molly (Marisa Tomei), Cyrus is a mama's boy, a term that suggests babyish clinging and weakness. Mr. Hill has the character's clinging down, but he makes it an iron grip, a piece of calculated psychological voodoo intended to keep Molly all to himself that roars into high gear when a likely suitor (John C. Reilly) appears, and there's nothing weak or silly about it.

Anger is a frequent undertone in the boy-men Mr. Hill has played. There's anger in Cyrus too, though it's just one of the facets that flicker in his interpretation, which ranges from hilarious anxiety attacks that fool no one but Mom to a duplicity so taunting, sly and determined that it gives you a chill. But perhaps Mr. Hill's most notable achievement is how he gets away from his familiar nasty clown roles and makes this comic character utterly human.



Alexander Siddig

'Cairo Time'

The Sudanese-born Alexander Siddig is a successful British stage actor, and Trekkies know him for his seven-year role in the 1990s as Dr. Julian Bashir in "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine." But American filmgoers have had to make do with tantalizing glimpses of him in undersize parts, most notably his striking performance as the idealistic Arab prince in "Syriana." Now his leading role opposite another uncommonly talented actor, Patricia Clarkson, in Ruba Nadda's understated love story, "Cairo Time" (Aug. 6), may help to change that. He has also signed on to play the lead in Ms. Nadda's next film, a thriller.

Mr. Siddig can bring even the smallest roles to complicated life, but "Cairo Time" gives his talent and sexual charisma the room they deserve. Ms. Clarkson's character, Juliette, has come to Cairo to enjoy a holiday with her husband, Mark (Tom McCamus), a United Nations official who is tem-

porarily stranded by a political crisis in Gaza and has arranged for a friend and former colleague, Mr. Siddig's Tareq, to look after her. As the crisis stretches on, Tareq and Juliette find themselves caught in the eddies of an unexpectedly deep attraction.

Tall, boyishly slim and blessed with extraordinarily beautiful eyes, Mr. Siddig has a subtle physical expressiveness that makes him perfectly suited to a story in which what doesn't happen is even more dramatic than what does. Tareq is a gracious host, so his querulous reaction to Juliette's presumptuous but well-intentioned take on Cairene poverty is jarring. But when she's not looking at him, he studies her with a mix of hunger and distress, and you realize that his outburst is an attempt to erect barriers. They fall, of course, with a reluctance that makes his desire all the more moving for being tinged with sadness as well as joy.



COLM HOGAN/IFC

John Hawkes

'Winter's Bone'

Gentle men are a specialty of John Hawkes, whether it's the jilted shoemaker dad in Miranda July's "Me and You and Everyone We Know" or Timothy Olyphant's business partner, a rare beacon of soft-spoken civility in HBO's wondrously potty-mouthed, greed-crazed frontier town, "Deadwood." But it's possible to get halfway through "Winter's Bone" (June 11) before realizing that the actor who has

ther's look-alike older brother, for help.

As his nickname and small facial tattoos suggest, Teardrop knows violence in and out of prison. Mr. Hawkes, 50, can look frail, but not here. His Teardrop is at times a villain worthy of Shakespeare, a lean and hungry man who often seems murderous because he probably is. Those big basset eyes have a gaze so hard and sharp it could cut glass, and the slight gauntness that

Jacki Weaver

'Animal Kingdom'