

EVENTS

‘Billions’ and ‘The Big Short’ question wealth and virtue

BY ALYSSA ROSENBERG
THE WASHINGTON POST

With income inequality dominating the race for the Democratic presidential nomination and billionaire Donald Trump touting his fortune as evidence of his virtue on the stump in the Republican race, America is awash in difficult conversations about money.

And in this environment, I've found myself returning to Adam McKay's Oscar-nominated film about the financial crisis, "The Big Short," and Showtime's slickly engaging new series about the clash between a hedge-fund billionaire and a U.S. attorney, "Billions."

What "Billions" and "The Big Short" have in common is

the idea that very large amounts of money are, in and of themselves, morally neutral. But those piles can be applied in ways that are either moral or immoral, virtuous or selfish.

Part of what makes "Billions" genuinely intriguing is that it doesn't make the easy mistake of suggesting that hedge-fund superstar Bobby Axelrod ("Homeland" veteran Damian Lewis) is either good or bad simply because he's rich. Instead, the show is interested in how he uses money.

In one episode, Axelrod decides he wants his name on a university building. But because the naming rights have already been assigned, the school tells him he'll have to

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talk to the original donors. Axelrod learns that the family is in deep debt and offers them what is effectively a buyout. And then the show turns what might have been an indulgence of Axelrod's ego, the sight of a very wealthy man dropping a jaw-dropping, but to him inconsequential, amount of money on a whim, into something more complicated.

The patriarch of the family Axelrod is dealing with once got the younger man fired from his job caddying years ago. The family, of course, has no idea that their carelessness might ever have cost someone something that they really needed. As the deal is supposed to go down, Axelrod reveals that history and says he'll pay the family less than what he promised, knowing

their financial desperation will compel them to go through with it anyway. The story turns out to be about vengeance rather than vanity, new money punishing old wealth for sloth and a lack of consideration.

"Billions" was renewed for a second season shortly into its run and will probably keep riding its moral teeter-totter all the way until the show's conclusion, whenever that day might come. But in slightly more than two hours, "The Big Short" comes to a more despairing conclusion.

The film follows a group of investors who come to believe that a housing bubble is about to burst, bringing down with it bonds created from big packages built from mortgages. But what initially seems like the deal of a lifetime comes to see like a terrible moral compromise.

"You just bet against the American economy," Ben Rickert (Brad Pitt), a former trader who is helping two young investors with their short, tells them when they begin to celebrate their vision. "If we're right, it means people lose homes, jobs, retirement savings, pensions. These aren't just numbers. For every point unemployment goes up, 40,000 people die. Did you know that?"

And Ben is less of an activist than Mark Baum (Steve



Cast members Brad Pitt and Ryan Gosling at the premiere of "The Big Short" in New York in 2015.

Carell), who comes to believe that his shorts are a way to punish people who are both stupid and greedy. But right at the moment when his bet is about to pay out, it becomes clear that government bailouts will prevent the kind of catastrophic agony Baum wanted to cause.

"The whole time we were wondering how the big banks could be so stupid. ... They didn't care. They knew the taxpayers had to bail 'em out," Baum laments. "I bet in a few years we'll be doing what people always do when the economy goes south: blaming immigrants and poor people."

Money, in "The Big Short," is more powerful than the men who wield it. And no matter

the moral ambitions of the people who know how to manipulate it, the drive to profit is more powerful than even the smartest bets.

"Making money is not like I thought it would be," Mike Burry (Christian Bale), an eccentric but prescient hedge-fund manager, writes in a letter closing down his fund toward the end of "The Big Short." "This business kills the part of life that is essential: the part that has nothing to do with business."

That's not a revelation that Bobby Axelrod will be reaching anytime soon. But wherever you land on the question of wealth and morality, the queasiness of both "Billions" and "The Big Short" feels essential and unsettling.



Damian Lewis (left) plays a hedge-fund mogul who is tested by a U.S. attorney played by Paul Giamatti in Showtime's "Billions."

Things to Do

BANGOR and **ELLSWORTH** — Bangor YMCA's Vegas to Camp adult prom, 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, newly winterized Bangor YMCA Wilderness Center at Camp Jordan, 101 Camp Jordan Way, on Branch Lake. Open to people 21 and older, featuring DJ Disco, hors d'oeuvres buffet and cash bar in the center's King Dining Hall; door-to-door shuttle service by reservation. Tickets \$35 per person, \$50 per couple, \$250 for table of 10. Tickets available in advance only at the Y, 17 Second St., Bangor, or online at BangorYMCA.org. All proceeds support Y programs and services.

BANGOR — Valentine's Day card-making session, 2-4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, University of Maine Museum of Art, 40 Harlow St. Free and open to all. Materials provided. 561-3360.

BANGOR — Photographs by artist Leon Vanella, through Thursday, Feb. 11, Robert E. White Gallery in Peabody Hall, Husson University. Leon-Vanella.com.

BANGOR — Chinese New Year parade to celebrate Year of the Monkey, 1:30-3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, Bangor Mall. Registration, 1:30-1:45 p.m.; parade starts 2 p.m. Includes lion and dragon dances. Crafts activities for children will be available before and after parade. Open to all. 944-8000 or info@mainechina.org.

BANGOR — Bangor Historical Society Victorian Valentines crafting session for children, 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, Thomas Hill House, 159 Union St. \$5, free to children with a family museum membership. To register, 942-1900 or bangorhistorical-society.org.

BANGOR — Penobscot County 4-H Leaders' Association's annual 4-H Silent Auction, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, at Bangor Mall, near JCPenney entrance. All proceeds will benefit scholarships and programs for 4-H members in Penobscot County, making it possible for all youth to participate in enriching youth development activities.

BELFAST — Habitat for Humanity of Waldo County Have a Heart for Habitat dinner, 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, First Church, 8 Court St. Entertainment, 6:30 p.m. Tickets \$20 each, avail-

able at Mailloux and Marden Law Offices, 151 High St.; Camden National Bank, 156 Main St.; Belfast Chamber of Commerce office, or 338-2344. Chem-free event. Benefit Habitat for Humanity of Waldo County. mandie@waldo-countyhabitat.org.

BELFAST — Valentine's Day craft fair, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, in Abbott Room, at Belfast Free Library, 106 High St. Jewelry, pottery, cookies, candy, scarves, felted wool and more. Call Anne Saggese at 322-0651 for information.

BREWER — Brewer Firefighters Union A Night of Laughs comedy show featuring three Boston comedians, 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12, Jeff's Catering, 15 Littlefield Road. Benefits firefighter education, youth athletics and scholarships. Tickets available by donation. 221-2995 or brewerfirefighters2016@gmail.com.

BREWER — Chuck Lakin conducting a workshop on funeral choices, 1-3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11, Brewer Public Library. Information or to sign up, 989-7943.

BREWER — Storytime for preschool children and caregivers, 10:30-11:15 a.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, Feb. 10, 16, 17, 23 and 24, Brewer Public Library. Read, sing, do crafts and have a snack with Miss Shelley. 989-7943.

DEXTER — Contradance with caller John McIntire and live music by Some Reel People, 7-10 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, at the First Universalist Church of Dexter, Route 7. All dances are taught; all ages welcome. Admission is \$7 singles; \$12 families. For information, contact Jim Bunn 924-3925, or Georgia Prickitt 277-3961.

ELLSWORTH — Gilbert and Sullivan Society live production of "Patience," 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12; 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 13-14, The Grand. \$21, \$19 seniors and students. The Grand box office, 667-9500 or grandonline.org.

ELLSWORTH — Downeast Dancers Valentine's dance 7:30-10:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, Ellsworth YMCA gymnasium. Music furnished by big band Sentimental Journey. \$12, \$8 seniors and students. 664-3355.

HAMPDEN — Hampden Kiwanis Club monthly Texas Hold'em Poker Tournament, 11 a.m. Sat-

urday, Feb. 13, Hampden Kiwanis Civic Center, Main Road. Doors open 10:30 a.m. Limited to 100 players. \$103. Benefits Hampden Kiwanis charities. Keith, 356-9949.

PITTSFIELD — Concert and talent show, 7 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, Pittsfield Community Theatre, 137 Main St. Benefits Nolan's H.E.R.O. Foundation. Performances by Riff Johnson, NB13, LoveNeverDies, Rock-TheOrange and The Resistance. \$7, \$5 students.

ROCKLAND — Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge film series highlighting refuges around the country: Misisquoi National Wildlife Refuge in Vermont, Park-er River National Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland, 2 and 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11, The Art Gallery, 9 Water St. 594-0600.

ROCKPORT — "Telling Our Stories: A Retreat for the Grieving" workshop to develop transformative stories of loss and love, build community and cultivate compassion for the grieving in others in an intimate group setting, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13, The Riley School, 73 Warrenton Road. Limited to 10. Fee of \$50 includes coffee, tea, pastries and vegetarian soup lunch. Kali Bird Isis, 602-0872 or abrushwithfire@gmail.com.

SOUTHWEST HARBOR — Writing workshop with playwright Andrea Lepcio, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10, Southwest Harbor Public Library. Open to all. Bring something to write on. 244-7065.

STEUBEN — "Megamind," 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12, Henry D. Moore Library and Community Center, 22 Village Road. Free. Refreshments sold by donation. moorelibrary.org or facebook.com/HenryD.MooreLibrary.

UNION — Neil Lash, co-founder and director of internationally recognized Heirloom Seed Project at Medomak Valley High School, talking about the project, 7-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11, Vose Library, 392 Common Road. Part of Vose Library Plant Series programs. 785-4733 or voselibrary@voselibrary.org.

For a complete listing of calendar items or to submit your event, visit www.bangordailynews.com.

Hall & Oates heading to Bangor

BY EMILY BURNHAM
BDN STAFF

Waterfront Concerts announced Tuesday morning that multiplatinum duo Hall & Oates will perform at the Darling's Waterfront Pavilion on Thursday, July 14, with special guests Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings and Trombone Shorty. Tickets for this show will go on sale via Ticketmaster or at Mark's Music in Brewer at 10 a.m. Friday, Feb. 12. For more information, visit waterfrontconcerts.com.

Hall & Oates have countless top 10 or No. 1 hits, including "Private Eyes," "I Can't Go For That," "Rich Girl," "Maneat-

er" "Kiss on My List," "Rich Girl," "Sara Smile" and many more. In 2014, Daryl and John were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Daryl Hall and John Oates are in 2016 very much at the height of their powers making their own kind of soul, with a new generation of musicians recognizing not only their historic track record of success but also their continuing influence and achievements. Hall & Oates last performed in Bangor in October 1984 at the Bangor Auditorium for the kickoff for their Big Bang Boom tour.

Joining Hall & Oates will be Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings, featuring the electrifying soul

singer Sharon Jones, who was plucked from obscurity in the mid-2000s after decades spent working a regular job and singing on the side. The Dap-Kings are one of the finest funk/soul bands in the world, playing a revivalist sound indebted to the classic soul era of the 1960s and 70s. In 2013, Jones was treated for and recovered from a cancer diagnosis; she went on to receive a Grammy nomination for the band's 2014 album, "Give the People What They Want."

Trombone Shorty is a funk, soul and rhythm and blues artist from New Orleans, who last performed in Bangor in 2013 with the Avett Brothers.

Wednesday prime time										MOVIES
	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	
BROADCAST	2 NBC 207 Inside Ed.	The Mysteries of Laura	Law & Order: SVU	Chicago P.D. (N)	(HD)	News				
	4 CBC Dragons' Den (N)	X Company (N)	The National (N)	CBC	Coronation	Rick Mercer				
	5 CBS Big Bang	Broke Girl	Mike	Criminal Minds (N)	Code Black (N)	(HD)	News			
	52 CW Family Guy	Arrow (N)	(HD)	Supernatural (N)	News	Seinfeld	Cougar			
	6 NBC 207 Inside Ed.	The Mysteries of Laura	Law & Order: SVU	Chicago P.D. (N)	(HD)	News				
	7 ABC Wheel	Jeopardy!	The Middle	Goldbergs	Mod Fam	blackish (N)	American Crime (N)	News		
	WAGM FOX	The Insider	American Idol (N)	(01) Hell's Kitchen (N)	News	Big Bang	Big Bang			
	8 ABC Wheel	Jeopardy!	The Middle	Goldbergs	Mod Fam	blackish (N)	American Crime (N)	News		
	MPBN PBS	PBS NewsHour (N)	(HD)	Nature (N)	(HD)	NOVA (N)	(HD)	Humanity From Space (HD)		
	9 IND Code Black (N)	(HD)	Arrow (N)	(HD)	Criminal Minds (N)	News-Lisa	CTV News	Daily Show		
KIDS	13 CBS Ent. Tonight	The Insider	Broke Girl	Mike	Criminal Minds (N)	Code Black (N)	(HD)	News		
	22 FOX Mod Fam	Mod Fam	American Idol (N)	(01) Hell's Kitchen (N)	FOX 22 News at 10 (N)	The Closer				
	33 IND M*A*S*H	M*A*S*H	Andy Griffith	Andy Griffith	Happy Days	Laverne	Hogan Hero	Hogan Hero	C. Burnett	
	38 IND Big Bang	Big Bang	The Closer (HD)	The Closer		WBZ News (N)	(HD)	Seinfeld		
	NICK Paradise	Henry	Henry	Nicky, Ricky	Full House	Full House	Full House	Full House	Friends	
	DISN K.C. Under.	Jessie	Radio Rebel (2012)	Debby	Ryan. (NR)	K.C. Under.	Liv-Mad.	Austin	Bunk'd	
	FREE (6:00) ** 17	Again	Young	Baby Daddy	** The Lucky One (2012)	Zac Efron. (P-6-13)			700 Club	
	HIST American Pickers	American Pickers	American Pickers	(N)	Pawn Stars	(32) Billion Dollar Wreck				
	DISC Dual Survival	Dual Survival: Untamed	Dual Survival (N)	(02) Snaketacular	Survival					
	TLC My 600-Lb. Life	My 600-Lb. Life	My 600-Lb. Life (N)	Skin Tight (N)	My 600-Lb					
LEARN	A&E Duck D.	Duck D.	Duck D.	Duck D.	Duck D.	Jep	Duck D.	Duck D.		
	ANPL Treehouse Masters	Treehouse Masters	Treehouse Masters	Treehouse Masters	Treehouse: Out on a Limb	Treehouse				
	CSNE Celtics Pre.	NBA Basketball	Los Angeles Clippers at Boston Celtics. (L)	Celtics	SportsNet	Sports				
	ESPN NBA Countdown (N)	(L) NBA Basketball	Los Angeles Lakers at Cleveland Cavaliers. (N)	NBA Basketball						
	ESPN2 College Basketball	LSU at South Carolina. (N)	(L) College Basketball	Washington at Utah. (N)	(L) SportCtr					
	NBCSP NHL Live (N)	(L) NHL Hockey	New York Rangers at Pittsburgh Penguins. (N)	(L) (45) NHL Overtime (N)						
	NESN College Basketball	Wake Forest at Georgia Tech. (N)	C. Moore	C. Moore	Sports	Sports	Sports	Sports		
	CNBC The Profit	Shark Tank	Shark Tank	Restaurant Startup (N)	Shark Tank					
	CNN Erin Burnett OutFront (N)	Anderson Cooper 360	Anderson Cooper 360	CNN Tonight	Tonight					
	FNC Greta Van Susteren	The O'Reilly Factor (N)	The Kelly File (N)	Hannity (N)	O'Reilly					
NEWS	MSNBC Hardball	Chris Matthews	All In With Chris Hayes	Rachel Maddow Show	The Last Word	All In With				
	AMC (5:00) A Few Good Men (R)	** Jurassic Park III (2001)	Sam Neill. (P-6-13)	** Jurassic Park III (2001)	Sam Neill.					
	BRV Housewives/NJ	Housewives/NJ	Happens	Happens	Newlyweds	Happens				
	CMT Last Man	Last Man	Last Man	Steve Austin's	Party Down South	Down South				
	COM South Park	South Park	South Park	South Park	South Park	South Park	Daily Show			
	E! News (N)	Just Jillian	Total Divas	Total Divas	El News					
	FOOD Diners	Diners, Drive	Diners	Diners	Guilty Pleas.	Top 5	Diners			
	FX (6:00) * R.I.P.D. (2013)	** The Heat (2013, Comedy)	Sandra Bullock, Demián	Bichir. (R)	** The Heat (2013)	(R)				
	GAC Going RV	Going RV	Going RV	Flippin' RVs (N)	Flippin' RVs	Flippin' RVs				
	HALL Last Man	Last Man	Perfect Match (2015)	Danica McKellar, Paul Greene.	The Middle	The Middle	Golden Girls			
VARIETY	HGTV Property Brothers	Property Brothers	Property Brothers (N)	Hunters	Hunters Int'l	Property				
	LIFE Little Women: LA	Little Women: LA (N)	Little Women: LA (N)	Little Women: Atlanta (N)	Little					
	MTV Teen Mom 2	Teen Mom	Teen Mom	The Challenge: Bloodlines	True Life (N)					
	OXY Preachers	** Enough (2002, Suspense)	Jennifer Lopez. (P-6-13)	Preachers of Atlanta (N)	Enough					
	SPIKE (5:00) *** Star Trek	** Iron Man 2 (2010, Action)	Robert Downey Jr., Gwyneth Paltrow. (P-6-13)	Inc Hulk						
	SYFY (5:30) ** The Box	Face Off	Face Off (N)	The Magicians	Face Off					
	TBN Greg Laurie	Potters	John Gray	Turning Prince	S. Furtick	Living Proof	Blessed Life	John Gray		
	TBS Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Big Bang	Big Bang	Big Bang	Big Bang	Conan (N)			
	TCM (6:15) Pat and Mike (1952)	*** The Great Escape (1963, War)	Steve McQueen, James Garner. (NR)	Bullitt (1968)						
	TCM (6:10) ** Delivery Man	** Hellion (2014) (ESP)	Aaron Paul. (R)	(40) *** Kelly & Cal (2014)	Juliette Lewis. (R)					
PREMIUM	TNT Castle	Castle	Castle	Castle	CSI: NY					
	TRAVEL Expedition Unknown	Expedition Unknown	Expedition Unknown (N)	Wild Things With Dominic	Expedition					
	TRU truTV Top Funniest	truTV Top Funniest	Adam Ruins	Adam Ruins	Adam Ruins	Billy-Street				
	TVL Andy Griffith	Andy Griffith	Raymond	Raymond	Younger	Teachers	King			
	USA NCIS	NCIS	NCIS	Suits (N)	Mod Fam					
	VH1 Mob Wives	Mob Wives (N)	(02) * Foot's Gold (2008, Action)	Matthew McConaughey. (P-6-13)						
	WGN-A Person of Interest	Person of Interest	Person of Interest	Outsiders	Person					
	ENC (6:10) ** Never Been Kissed (1999)	*** Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991)	Arnold Schwarzenegger. (R)	(20) *** The Evil Dead Cyborgs battle over a youth who holds the key to the future. (R)	(1981) (NC-17)					
	HBO ** All the Pretty Horses (2000)	Matt Damon. Two Tex-as buddies seek the cowboy life in 1949 Mexico. (ESP)	Vice (ESP)	** True Story (2015, Crime Drama)	Adam Ruins	Adam Ruins	Fighting ISIS			
	MAX (5:50) ** The Judge (2014)	Robert Downey Jr. (15) ** This Is Where I Leave You (2014, Comedy-Drama)	(ESP) Jonah Hill, James Franco. (R)	Ben Affleck, Rosamund Pike. (R)						
SHOW	(6:00) *** Freedom Writers (2007) (P-6-13)	(15) Michael Jackson's Journey From Motown to Off the Wall "Off the Wall."	(02) Black Sails (ESP)	Black Sails (ESP)						
	STARZ Black Sails	Eleanor is offered clemency. (ESP)	Black Sails (ESP)							