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Review: Film

'La Vie en Rose' Is Stark, Passionate Edith Piaf Biopic

Spot-On Portrayal; A Hilarity-Free 'Ocean's Thirteen'

By JOE MORGENSTERN

IN THE SPIRIT of Edith Piaf's signature song, I regret nothing about "La Vie en Rose"—not the narrative confusion, not the sketchy details, not the lack of historical context or the music-video editing. Olivier Dahan's phantasmagorical biopic gives us a brilliant performance by Marion Cotillard as the passionate, tortured Piaf, and Ms. Cotillard gives us something new in a show-business portrait—a sense of what the song does to the singer.

The process reveals itself early in the time-hopping film, when Piaf stands on stage to sing her imperishable "Milord," a mini-drama that progresses from jaunty to tender to frightening. It's clear that the passage of time has already taken a terrible toll. France's premiere chanteuse looks empty, spent, a weary soul waiting for the fix that only music can provide. Then the orchestra starts to play, she opens her mouth and a song she has sung countless times restores her to life as it flows through her.

Flows through her and then out into the auditorium with the intensity of a cyclotron beam; anyone who has known Piaf's voice can recognize it from a single syllable. The film sees her passion as the product of a wretched, sickly childhood—abandoned by her alcoholic parents, raised by her grandmother among prostitutes in a brothel. From the age of nine she sang songs for sours on the streets of Paris. (When little Edith lets loose with "La Marseillaise" it's enough to send bourgeois passersby to the barricades.) As a young woman she had unerring taste in music and disastrous taste in men. At the age of 44, wracked by illness and addiction, she looked like a harridan. Before turning 48 she was dead.

"La Vie en Rose," photographed superbly by Tetsuo Nagata, honors Piaf's life by refusing to sentimentalize it. The film is long and sometimes harrowing, but also enthralling. And the script declines to bother with such events as World War II, which slips by unnoticed. It took me a while to realize this wasn't negligence, but a reflection of

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The Oldest Crop

Big-name collectors, million-dollar fossils, angry scientists and ranchers with pickaxes.

Kelly Crow on a new Western shootout.

A DECADE-LONG DROUGHT has scorched a swath of the plains from Montana to Minnesota down to Texas, forcing ranchers to sell off their herds and farmers to take shifts at factories and oil companies.

But other ranchers and farmers are turning to a lucrative new crop. Wielding pickaxes, backhoes and duct tape, they are unearthing the remains of Triceratops, Velociraptors and Tyranno-



A Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton found by rancher Bucky Derflinger (below, with T. rex tooth).

saurus rexes and selling the skeletons to museums and private collectors. One rancher sells T. rex teeth on eBay.

Helping drive the big dig is the soaring price of prehistoric fossils. The going rate for a Triceratops skull is \$250,000, up from \$25,000 a decade ago, and a full T. rex skeleton with all its teeth can fetch anywhere from \$1 million to \$8 million. Serious fossil enthusiasts include actor Nicolas Cage and Nathan Myhr-

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Neal Larsen/SHOOT.com (Crow); Scott Wiseman Photography (Catalog Critic)

The Oldest Crop

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vold, Microsoft's former chief technology officer. Interior designers are incorporating fossil fish and fossil palm fronds as décor. And in Europe, art collectors who formerly fell for Damien Hirst's pickled animals are circling natural-history auctions, looking to buy dusty bones as sculptures.

Larry Tuss, a lifelong farmer who manages 6,000 acres near Winifred, Mont., close to the center of the state, plans to quit planting wheat and barley and focus more on his backyard expeditions. In the past six years, Mr. Tuss has found five dinosaurs on his property—including a Triceratops-like Certopian, a duck-billed Hadrosaur and two long-necked sea lizards called Plesiosaurs. All are being readied for sale by a fossil company, "Ranching isn't cutting it anymore," he says. "I'm into fossil farming now."

But the amateur dinosaur hunters have angered academia, and paleontologists complain that the ranchers and farmers—and the handful of fossil companies they usually hire to do the prospecting—are destroying valuable specimens with clumsy handling. They say the practice is putting new and rare species into the hands of private collectors, rather than researchers, and inspiring bone poachers to raid federal parks. Landowners dismiss such claims as misplaced snobbery, but the tension has boiled over in the past couple years, as scientists ostracize ranchers at paleontology conventions and curators refuse to allow them behind the scenes at museums for fear they will glean secret locations of new digs.

Tad Rust, a commercial fossil hunter in Hill City, S.D., says he's no longer allowed to visit a Mosasaur, a prehistoric marine lizard, he donated to his alma mater, the University of Alabama. The last time he tried to visit, he says a school researcher threatened to call police to escort him off campus. "I was desperately hurt," he says. (A university spokesman says the public—including past donors—aren't routinely allowed to mill around research areas.)

Mammoth for the Mantel

Jack Horner, a paleontologist at Montana State University who was the inspiration for the scientist in Michael Crichton's "Jurassic Park," says some new hunters dig up specimens too fast without taking proper field notes about the bones' locations or soil surroundings, which can be valuable for science. "Anybody can sell fossils," Dr. Horner says. "Some are honest, but some are just seeing a market and jumping at it."

Among those who don't care about the supporting sedimentary data are the growing number of collectors who want to mount mammoth skeletons in their living rooms. On April 16 in Paris, Christie's sold \$1.5 million worth of paleontology objects, doubling its pre-sale estimate. The sale included a \$97,560 dinosaur egg, a \$162,600 woolly-rhinoceros skeleton, and a \$422,760 Siberian mammoth nicknamed "President" after Boris Yeltsin, which had been estimated to sell for up to \$245,000. These

top lots, among others, were bought by European contemporary art collectors who liked their shapes and "amusing yellow color," says François Curiel, president of Christie's Europe. In Los Angeles, Bonhams & Butterfields expects to bring in \$3.5 million with three natural history sales this year, up from none five years ago.

"I love looking at things that have been around for millions of years," says John Babiarz, a collector who runs a nursery in Phoenix. He picked up the hobby after a customer invited him to a fossil dig in 1972. Since then, he's collected at least 37 species of saber-toothed tiger and paid under \$500,000 for pieces of a T. rex, now on loan to Arizona State University. "I don't care where the bones come from so long as they're legal."

American private-property laws make it easy to buy and sell the bones. What's excavated from private sites on U.S. soil can be sold at will, unlike in other bone-rich countries like China, Italy, Peru or Argentina, which discourage or forbid commercial excavation of ancient objects and have been caught up in cultural patrimony lawsuits lately.

Bucky Derflinger, a 29-year-old rancher from Faith, S.D. (population 474), stumbled into the industry nine years ago when he happened upon a pair of T. rexes jutting out of crumbling hillsides on his father's land. "I found this cheekbone with 12 teeth



Rancher Larry Tuss found the bones of a Hadrosaur, and four other dinosaurs, on his property.

in it, and they were big old honking teeth," he says. "I seriously did a flip right there all by myself."

He says his German and Irish ancestors, like other local homesteaders in the early 1900s, kept quiet about any fossils they found because they worried the government might reclaim their land. When Mr. Derflinger found the dinosaurs, he used his hands to pick up a few bones but eventually hired a commercial fossil company to excavate the rest. The first dig, for a teenage T. rex nicknamed "Bucky," involved using a Payloader to scoop a 30-foot-tall wall of dirt from a bone bed the length of a football field.

Three years ago, he and his father sold "Bucky" to the Children's Museum of Indianapolis for just over \$1 million, splitting the profits evenly with the fossil company, Black Hills Institute of Geological Research in Hill City, S.D. Mr. Derflinger used his cut to make a down payment on his own 4,000-acre ranch near his father's. Bones from the other T. rex are still being cleaned, but in the meantime Mr. Derflinger has unearthed and sold a duck-billed Hadrosaur for \$30,000. Plus, he's started selling \$20 bundles of fossil crocodile teeth and petrified wood on eBay.

"There are some people at the museums around here who don't like me because I find these dinosaurs," he adds. "But I've never met an academic who can dig as good as I can."

Fossils can be found in 70% of the Earth's surface, but paleontologists and hobbyists gravitate to areas where vegetation has eroded, bettering their odds of finding bones. Geological maps help pinpoint exposed prehistoric rock, often in undeveloped parts of the West. Scientists may get permits to dig on the nation's 258 million acres of public land, but self-taught diggers must gain access to private land. Typically,

landowners can lease "digging rights" to outsiders in exchange for 10% to 50% of the value or profits of any major finds. Fetching the highest prices: carnivore remains with claws and jaws.

Not all fossils yield big paydays. One weekend in late April, a few fossil-hunting friends set out for a ranch in eastern Wyoming. Two of the hunters—Mr. Rust and Jared Hudson, another fossil hunter from Hill City, S.D.—had won permission from the ranch owner to dig in exchange for a one-third cut of any profitable finds. The group drove past gnarled cottonwood trees and stopped beside an expanse of eroding hillside made of Oligocene rock roughly 33 million years old—prime time for mammals like saber-toothed tigers and dog-sized horses.

Fanning out with pickaxes in hand, they scoured the rock for anomalies. Within half an hour, Mr. Rust made a discovery: a rhino skull.

He did the initial excavation by

Skeleton Crews

Amateur fossil hunters can try their luck at a growing number of excavation spots open to the public, from state parks to private ranches.

NAME/LOCATION/PHONE	COST	DIG THIS	COMMENTS
Beltzville State Park Lehighton, Pa. 610-377-0045	Free	Fossil snails, corals	On Aug. 23, a park guide will take visitors onto usually restricted parkland to dig for signs of life dating back 365 million years. The park lets diggers carry home a "handful" of fossil souvenirs, but a spokeswoman warns, "Don't try to bring a big bag." Under strict conditions, the park allows fossil hunting in certain patches year round.
Mammoth Graveyard Hot Springs, S.D. 800-776-0188	Adults, \$2,549; kids aged 13-17, \$2,149	Mammoths, camels, llamas, bears	From June 24-30, Earthwatch Institute will take family teams of up to 16 people to this ancient sinkhole where at least 100 Columbian mammoth skeletons lie in piles. Participants will learn how to preserve bone fragments and digitally map new finds. Expedition includes a hotel stay and family-style meals, but guests must do K.P. duty.
Paleo Park Newcastle, Wyo. 307-334-2271	\$20 for a 2-hour dig; \$2,800 for one week	Triceratops	Digs run continually through Labor Day at this cattle ranch in eastern Wyoming—ask to see the fossil path with over 100 kinds of dinosaur footprints. Overnight stays include meals at the barracks-style lodge. "Folks like my Cretaceous Salad," says ranch owner Arlene Zerbst Rapp.
Timescale Adventures Bynum, Mont. 800-238-6873	One-day dig: \$120; 10-day dig: \$1,000	Daspletosaurus, an older cousin to T. rex	Run alongside the Two Medicine Dinosaur Center, daily digs are held on private ranches all summer long—reservations are a must—and include a paleontology primer on how to recognize and preserve dino bones. Best find so far: a cluster of seven duck-billed Hadrosaurs.
White Mound Sulphur, Okla. 580-622-5366	\$25 per group, plus \$5 each	Trilobites and fossil clams	Oklahoma is known for its Trilobites, bug-like ancestors to the horseshoe crab. Rancher Pat Howe doesn't limit dig amounts (tourists can haul off specimens by the bucket), but he says he has other rules: "Watch out for my heifers, and close the gate behind you."

hand, pulling away the crumbly rock with his hands and his field knife until the lower jaw poked out. He coated the bones with a clear glue called Paleo-Bond to keep any from splintering, and then the others helped hack away the nearby rock, leaving the skull poised as though on a pedestal. Mr. Hudson stepped in, detaching the skull and wrapping it in aluminum foil and duct tape. Less than 30 minutes after the discovery, another group member carried it back to the truck like a 20-pound silver turkey breast. Its value: up to \$5,000. "Cool," says Mr. Rust, but not uncommon, "like finding a Dali print." After eight hours of hunting, the skull was the day's only substantial find.

Paleontologists complain that commercial digs can be disastrous, with self-taught hunters accidentally backing over bones with bulldozers or crumbling specimens by excavating too quickly. Dr. Horner at Montana State says it's fine to wrap a rhino skull in glue and foil, but he says studying and excavating most specimens should take days or months, not hours. He's spent as long as three years studying a dinosaur in the ground before it was excavated. Ranchers and hunters insist they take

precautions but say they sometimes need to remove a protruding bone immediately to stave off further erosion. Fossil dealer Henry Galiano, who owns a New York fossil store called Maxilla & Mandible, says he has turned down offers to buy ranchers' dinosaur skeletons after learning they "yanked it out of the ground" without first checking for tiny but crucial bones lying nearby. Mr. Galiano says, "They'll tell me, 'Oh, I couldn't get the rest out,' and I have to tell them, 'Well, you just ruined it.'"

There's some disagreement over which kinds of dinosaur bones and fossils should be studied but never sold. Some paleontologists treat every specimen as research, not commercial, objects. Others like Mark Norell, who studies dinosaurs at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, do not mind the selling of small, plentiful fossils (like crab-like ammonites or fish) but draw a line at big dinosaurs and under-represented species like fossil bats and spiders. What's more, scientists have praised some

private diggers for uncovering new species but then complained after the relics were sold to collectors because universities could not afford to buy them.

"It's painful because too many really important species never get to see a scientist," says Catherine Badgley, a research scientist at the University of Michigan and president of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology. "They wind up over a mantel."

Fake Dino Eggs

Dino provenance is also growing problem. Buyers and sellers of Picasso's paintings keep detailed ownership histories of his works to prove their value, but sellers of fossils rarely do the same. Instead, they focus on the specimen's age, rarity and quality of preservation. At fossil trade shows, items are rarely sourced beyond the country or county where they were found. Outright fakes—including some ammonites from Morocco and dino eggs from Mongolia—abound, especially online. Scientists can weed out impostor bones using isotope tests and CAT scans, unlike average collectors.

The two cultures even clash over nomenclature. Anyone who finds a new species gets to name it, and scientists traditionally include their name in the Latin classification. (Dr. Horner discovered the *Maiasaura peeblesorum* hornermakela.) A few years ago, 12-year-old Wesley Linster discovered

a new turkey-sized genus of Velociraptor on his family's Montana land and christened it "Bambiraptor." That dinosaur now belongs to the American Museum of Natural History, where the Linster family likes to say it's sitting on the desk of its star paleontologist, Dr. Norell. But Dr. Norell says the raptor is packed into his office cabinet marked by its specimen number: AMNH-DVPPFARB 30556. "I don't call it Bambi," he says.

Some hunters have taken extra steps to polish their reputations. Mr. Hudson consults GPS systems to avoid treading on restricted federal or state land, which may not have clearly marked borders. Japheth Boyce of Rapid City, S.D., says a majority of what he sells comes from his own land and he turns down lease offers from out-of-towners. To appease academics, and cut down on costs, he has started selling larger specimens still in the ground to universities so that professors and graduate students can study and dig out the bones themselves.

Others hope the public will pay to dig at their ranches, with at least six ranches doubling as tourist destinations. Arlene Zerbst Rapp, who has dubbed her Wyoming cattle range "Paleo Park," found a pair of Triceratops a few years ago and sold them to museums in Texas and Indiana. About 100 people visited her ranch last year, even though the nearest town is 56 miles away. But Ms. Zerbst Rapp has one bone-yard rule that doesn't always go over well with outsiders: Paleo Park gets first dibs whenever tourists find anything "amazing," she says. Two years ago, she had to tell a Boy Scout from Iowa that he couldn't keep a T. rex tooth he'd found on her land.

"We made sure he got lots of badges," she says.

Elsewhere, private partnerships among ranches have grown complex. The country's dozen heavyweight fossil companies each claim between 20 and 60 land leases for hun-

dreds of thousands of acres across several states. The industry's biggest rivals, Black Hills Institute of Geological Research and Triebold Paleontology in Woodland Park, Colo., started more than 15 years ago as small operations by ranching and farming families. Today, both send crews to dig on leased land from May to October, leaving other employees to churn out polystyrene replicas of their prize finds—\$100,000 can get you an exhibit-hall-sized T. rex.

Charles Lieberman, a chief investment officer at Advisors Capital Management in Paramus, N.J., has found other inspiration in fossils. He keeps an \$11,000 3-foot-long herbivore called a Psittacosaurus mounted in his reception area, and at home, he displays megalodon teeth, ammonites and other ancient reptiles. Lately, he's considered digging a bit in his own backyard. But, he says, "My wife would kill me for messing up the grass."



Christie's sold this foot-tall dino egg from Madagascar in April for \$97,560.



A streambed slab, 260 million years old, sold for \$7,800 this month at Bonhams.



This 'giant' armadillo, over four million years old, just sold at Bonhams for \$36,000.

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Online Today: See a slideshow of more dino discoveries at WSJ.com/Weekend.