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## Spacey Rides on Wall Street Roller Coaster; Deported Kids: Film

By Rick Warner - Oct 21, 2011

Eric Dale, the financial analyst played by Stanley Tucci in “Margin Call,” is a numbers cruncher who could make Rain Man envious.

Sitting on the steps of his Brooklyn brownstone, the former engineer recites a long list of complex figures and calculations from a bridge project he designed. It’s a mind-boggling display of math and memory.

Equally impressive is filmmaker J.C. Chandor’s feat of turning a story about the financial crisis into a roller-coaster thriller.

Chandor’s first feature chronicles a 24-hour, high-wire act at a Wall Street investment firm on the brink of ruin. It’s sharply written, crisply directed and wonderfully acted by a cast that includes Kevin Spacey, Jeremy Irons, Paul Bettany, Simon Baker, Demi Moore, Zachary Quinto and Penn Badgley.

Though the subject is finance, “Margin Call” is more about people than money -- specifically, how members of the firm deal with a potential calamity that requires swift practical and ethical decisions.

Chandor, whose father worked at Merrill Lynch for almost 40 years, resists the easy path of turning his characters into saints and sinners.

### Dying Dog

Spacey’s aggressive sales director hardly blinks when more than half his staff is axed, but tears up over his dying dog.

Irons’s chief executive orders a ruthless plan to save the company, while admitting that he can’t comprehend a spreadsheet.

Quinto’s inexperienced analyst blows the whistle on the firm’s financial woes, yet watches passively as the take-no-prisoners rescue plan unfolds. Bettany, who plays Spacey’s second-in-command, is troubled by

Irons's actions but does nothing to defy him.

Most of the movie takes place in the firm's high-rise Manhattan headquarters, which underscores the insular mood. Dark lighting and a percussive soundtrack contribute to the noirish feel, along with punchy dialogue such as Irons's summation of how to succeed: "Be first, be smarter or cheat."

"Margin Call," from Roadside Attractions, is playing across the U.S. Rating: \*\*\*\*

## 'Oranges and Sunshine'

In the two decades following World War II, an estimated 10,000 poor British children were deported to Australia, where they were forced to live in overcrowded institutions rife with physical and sexual abuse.

The kids were told they were going to a better place, but the real motive was to dump undesirables in an underpopulated colony. Though some were orphans, many had been living in state- run or church facilities and were sent away without their parents' knowledge.

The operation was kept secret until an English social worker, Margaret Humphreys, uncovered the scandal and publicized it in the late 1980s. Her story is told in "Oranges and Sunshine," a moving drama whose title comes from the rosy picture officials painted of the children's new home.

Emily Watson captures the obsessive dedication of Humphreys, who leaves her family in Nottingham for long stretches so she can interview the victims in Australia, including two men (Hugo Weaving, David Wenham) desperate to find their mothers. She also establishes the Child Migrants Trust to provide social services for the victims.

The Australian and British governments apologized to the children in recent years, a move that was obviously too little and too late.

"Oranges and Sunshine," from Cohen Media Group, is playing in New York and Los Angeles. Rating: \*\*\*

### What the Stars Mean:

****	Excellent
***	Good
**	Average
*	Poor
(No stars)	Worthless