

## The Honourable Rebel

PG, 97min

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

## The Lesson

15, 107min

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

## The Show of Shows

12A, 73min

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

## Krampus

15, 92min

★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

**T**he Honourable Rebel is a documentary portrait of the late Elizabeth Montagu: aristocrat, car enthusiast, actress, intelligence agent, composer, TV producer, anti-nuclear activist and English eccentric. It is hampered by a dreary narrative and giggle-inducingly stiff re-creations (the “car chase” with the Gestapo has to be seen to be believed).

Plus the film’s central contention, that Montagu was a high-risk spy during the Second World War, seems to be over-egging the pudding (based in Switzerland, she translated German documents from Allied sympathisers).

Informative; a little dull; it’s a Wikipedia page come to life.

**The Lesson** takes a simple, and hardly extravagant premise — a teacher’s feckless husband spends the

mortgage payment on a gearbox for his van — and constructs a gripping, increasingly desperate and often intense narrative rollercoaster.

Nadezhda (Margita Gosheva, below) lives in Bulgaria, and when the bank forecloses her mortgage she is bounced along a chain of events that includes a face-off with a bank manager, a marital meltdown, a trip to

a loan shark and the procurement of a handgun that leads to the execution of an outrageous set-piece crime. Stirring stuff, with a magnetic turn from Gosheva (a Bulgarian Cate Blanchett, but without the showboating).

You want to love **The Show of Shows**, a wordless archive documentary infused with a trip-hop soundtrack from the Icelandic hipsters Sigur Rós of dreamlike montages of circus performers and acts through the ages.



For the first 30 minutes at least, the director Benedikt Erlingsson (*Of Horses and Men*) creates an eerie and beguiling atmosphere, with newsreel belly dancers, lion tamers and human cannonballs — all long dead. By the 45-minute mark, however, fatigue sets in. We get it. It’s a parade of lonely, lost souls and outcasts, doing strange and wonderful things in the name of entertainment. But it’s still a circus. And by the time the dancing polar bears appear you’ll be struggling.

*Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale* was a charming Finnish movie from 2010 about an evil Santa Claus terrorising a rural family. **Krampus**, although not officially a remake, is the dumb Hollywood version. This time, the family members are mostly repellent. So when the Santa monster (hoofs, horns, chains, beard) comes calling, we’re cheering him on to finish them off and end the entire sorry mess.

**Kevin Maher**