

November-December 2019

# Video Librarian

VOL. 34 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 6



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# Entertainment

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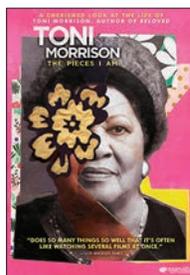
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### Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am

★ ★ ★ 1/2

*Magnolia*, 120 min., PG-13, DVD: \$26.99

"Words have power," says the late Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winning author Toni Morrison (1931-2019) in filmmaker Timothy Greenfield-Sanders's PBS-aired and theatrically-released *American Masters* documentary. Beginning with her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison consciously chose not to write for what she here calls the "white gaze," instead depicting black life unapologetically and without added explanation for white readers. Born in a multi-ethnic area in Lorain, OH, Morrison would enjoy a diverse career in which books were always at the center (she was an academic teacher, an editor at Random House, and an award-winning author), even as she struggled as a single mother raising two sons. A who's who of celebrities and literati are on hand here to sing Morrison's deserved praise, including Angela Davis, Oprah Winfrey, Sonia Sanchez, Walter Mosley, Fran Lebowitz, Russell Banks, Morrison's longtime editor Robert Gottlieb, and critics such as Hilton Als. The discussion of Morrison's life and work focuses on her earlier career and novels, primarily *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), and *Beloved* (1987). No mention is made of the



death of one of her sons, and—aside from brief remarks about *Paradise* (1997)—none of her later books are covered. But the conversational jewel in the crown of this engaging and entertaining documentary is Morrison herself, who appears in lengthy contemporary interviews and makes insightful comments on her work while also telling wonderfully charming stories about her childhood, writing habits, life in academia, and the Nobel Prize experience (Morrison laughingly recalls that she was skeptical when the call came from Sweden; she asked if they could send her a fax confirmation). A warm and wonderful portrait of a great American writer, this is highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Toni Morrison wrote 11 novels, but only one was made into a movie: 1998's *Beloved* (Touchstone, DVD: \$6.99), adapted from her 1987 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and starring Oprah Winfrey as Sethe, a former slave whose ramshackle house is home to the titular wild child ghost who is a haunting reminder of an unspeakable act from Sethe's past (see review in VL-3/99).



Cover Photo: 2017 © Timothy Greenfield-Sanders. Courtesy of Magnolia Pictures and the photographer.

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# A FROZEN CHRISTMAS

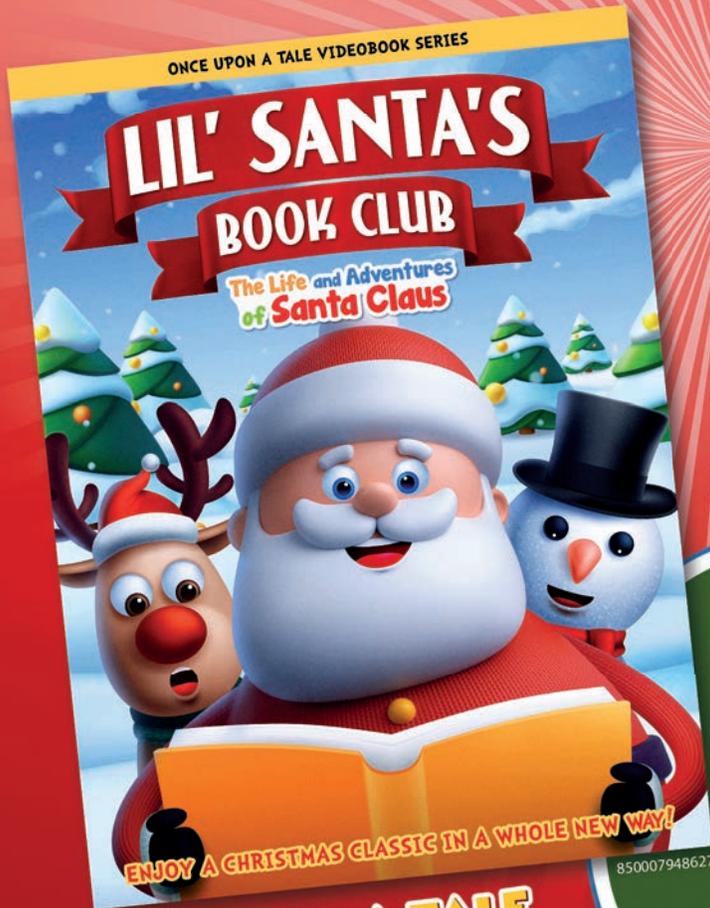


It's the biggest event of the year - the Christmas Dance Party - and all the animals and friends in town are eager to show off their moves on the big day! Join Santa and Mittens the reindeer, along with dancing baby animals Violet the bunny, Peepz the turkey, Lily the cow, Bennie the bear, and Fritz the ice cream monkey, as they strut their stuff onstage! Yuletide has never been this much fun! It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas - with a beat! It's A Frozen Christmas Time!

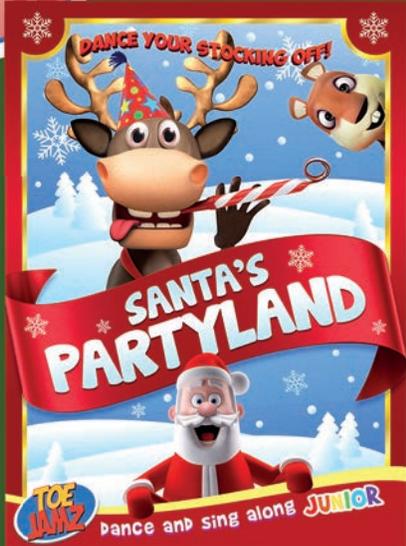


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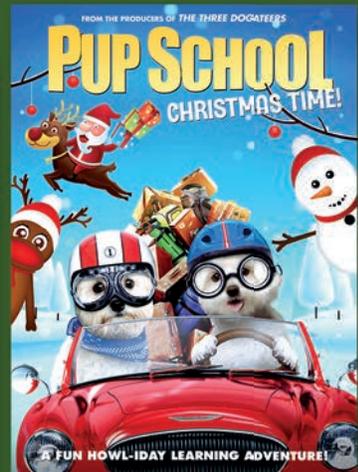
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**MORE CHRISTMAS MOVIES!**

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**GOING WHERE NO SANTA HAS GONE BEFORE!**



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**CHRISTMAS REALLY BUGS HIM!**



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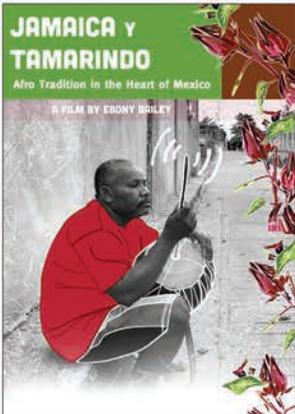
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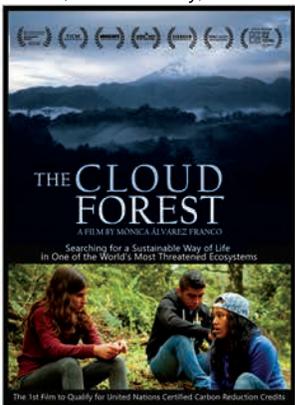
African Studies, Latin American Studies



This documentary explores African identity in Mexico City. It is an identity that goes beyond the color of one's skin.

21 mins, DVD \$29.95, PPR \$250, UPC: 6-82086-16023-8

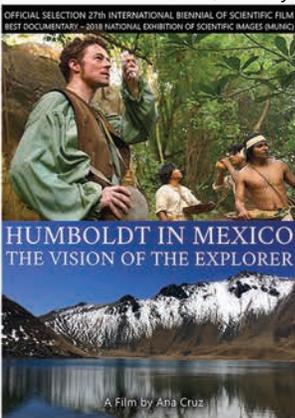
Environment, Sustainability, Latin American



A small community in Mexico searches for a sustainable way of life in one of the world's most threatened ecosystems.

95 mins, DVD \$29.95, PPR \$250, UPC: 6-82086-16022-1

Environmental Science, History



18th Century environmentalist Alexander von Humboldt is the first person to describe human induced climate change.

83 mins, DVD \$29.95, PPR \$250, UPC: 6-82086-16017-7

## Francis Ford Coppola's "The Cotton Club" Encore Special Edition Slated for December 10 Release

A brand-new director's cut of Francis Ford Coppola's critically acclaimed 1930s period film *The Cotton Club* is slated for release on DVD and Blu-ray on December 10. Screened at this year's New York Film Festival and shown in select theaters, *The Cotton Club Encore* is a new version of the 1984 film, which features an all-star cast including Richard Gere, Gregory Hines, Diane Lane, Lonette McKee, Bob Hoskins, Laurence Fishburne, and others. In this lavish 1930s-era drama, Harlem's legendary Cotton Club becomes a hotbed of passion and violence as the lives and loves of entertainers and gangsters collide. Coppola's extraordinary film is brought to vivid new life with never-before-seen scenes and musical sequences that deepen and enrich the storylines in a remastered and restored version that represents Coppola's fully realized vision of the film. Additional scenes include an extended Gregory Hines and Maurice Hines tap performance, Lonette McKee's brilliant rendition of Ethel Waters's "Stormy Weather," and Coppola's originally envisioned ending.

## "Betty Blue," Bette Davis, Oscar-Nominated "Cold War," and More on Criterion Collection's November Slate

The Criterion Collection's November slate leads off November 12 with a 4K restoration of Greg Mottola's 1996 feature debut comedy *The Daytrippers* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), starring Hope Davis, Parker Posey, Anne Meara, Liev Schreiber, and Stanley Tucci in a tale that is centered on the case of a wife who turns to her strong-willed family when she discovers a love letter written to her husband by an unknown paramour. Coming November 19 is a three-hour director's cut of Jean-Jacques Beineix's intoxicating 1986 arthouse smash *Betty Blue* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), in which an easygoing would-be novelist (Jean-Hugues Anglade) begins a love affair with the tempestuous and troubled Betty (Béatrice Dalle) in a sunbaked French beach town that sees the pair turning their backs on conventional society in favor of the hedonistic pursuit of freedom, adventure, and carnal pleasure. Also arriving No-

vember 19 is the home video debut of Paweł Pawlikowski's sweeping Oscar-nominated 2018 drama *Cold War* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), a tumultuous, passionate 15-year love story between a folk song-collecting musician (Tomasz Kot) and a captivating young singer (Joanna Kulig). Slated for November 26 is Joseph L. Mankiewicz's beloved 1950 theater-world satire *All About Eve* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.95), a multiple Oscar-winning classic featuring Bette Davis in an acid-tongued comeback performance as a Broadway legend who soon realizes that her supposed admirer (Anne Baxter) intends to use her as a stepping-stone for her own rise to stardom. Also scheduled for November 26 and starring Bette Davis is Irving Rapper's swoon-inducing 1942 *Now, Voyager* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95)—debuting on Blu-ray—featuring the screen icon as a nervous spinster who looks for love and independence on a South American cruise in this melodrama backed by an Oscar-winning score from legendary composer Max Steiner.



## Chuck Berry Spotlights in "Hail! Hail! Rock 'N' Roll" Doc Coming from Shout! Factory on November 19

Shout! Factory has announced the upcoming release of *Hail! Hail! Rock 'N' Roll* (Blu-ray: \$24.98), slated for November 19. The unforgettable life and music of legendary rock pioneer Chuck Berry are celebrated in Taylor Hackford's landmark feature film documentary, capturing a once-in-a-lifetime 1986 gathering of rock 'n' roll's finest when Keith Richards invited a roster of brilliant musicians to honor Berry and commemorate the latter's 60th birthday. Featuring performances by Eric Clapton, Robert Cray, Linda Ronstadt, Etta James, and Julian Lennon, along with archival footage of an unforgettable duet by Berry and John Lennon, bonus features include an introduction by Hackford, rehearsal footage, "The Reluctant Movie Star" making-of documentary, the two-part documentary "Witnesses to History," a collection of "Chuckisms," and "The Burnt Scrapbook" retrospective with Berry reminiscing over musical memories with The Band's Robbie Robertson.

# Professional Development Online

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For more information, contact NMM Chair **Jeff Tamblyn: [Chair@nmm.net](mailto:Chair@nmm.net)**

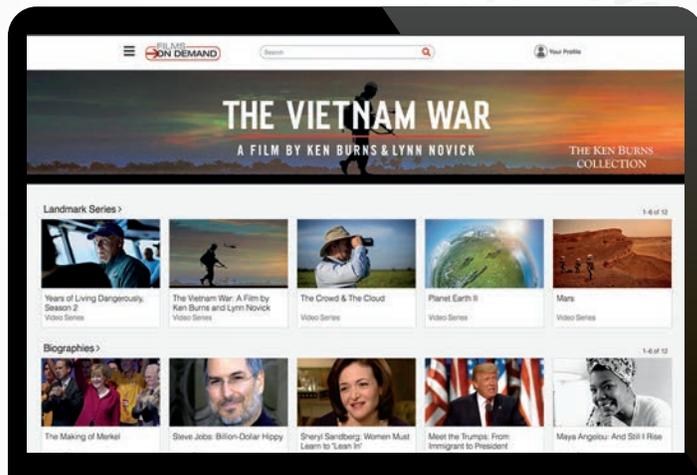
**Please note:** NMM offers this service in order to encourage the preservation and appreciation of the educational films, motion pictures, documentaries, and other works that are increasingly out of reach because of the obsolete technology. ALVT is not a streaming service or distributor, and content files are only accessible by authorized library staff.



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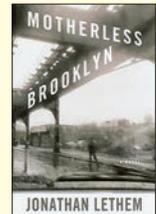
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## Books Into Movies

The following films based on books are slated to open during November and December. Movie release dates are subject to change.

### Coming in November

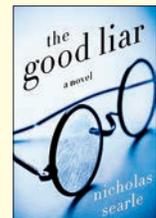
**Motherless Brooklyn** (Nov. 1) is based on Jonathan Lethem's 1999 novel about an NYC detective with Tourette's. Directed by and starring Edward Norton, the cast also includes Willem Dafoe, Bruce Willis, and Gugu Mbatha-Raw.



**Doctor Sleep** (Nov. 8) is an adaptation of Stephen King's 2013 follow-up to his 1977 classic *The Shining*. Directed by Mike Flanagan, the film stars Ewan McGregor, Rebecca Ferguson, and Carl Lumbly.

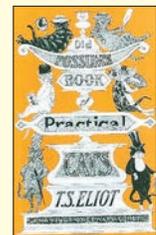


**The Good Liar** (Nov. 15) is based on author Nicholas Searle's 2016 thriller. Directed by Bill Condon, the film stars Ian McKellen, Helen Mirren, and Russell Tovey.

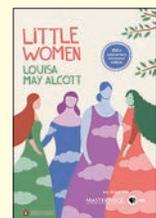


### Coming in December

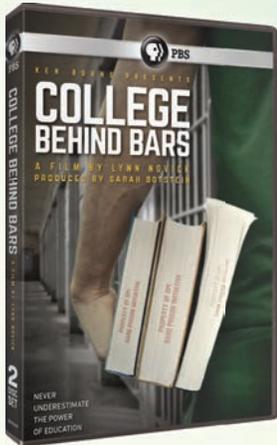
**Cats** (Dec. 20) is based on T.S. Eliot's 1939 poetry collection *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* and the titular Andrew Lloyd Weber musical. Directed by Tom Hooper, the film features a star-studded cast that includes Jennifer Hudson, Taylor Swift, Idris Elba, Ian McKellen, and Judi Dench.



**Little Women** (Dec. 25) is the latest adaptation of the 1868 Louisa May Alcott classic centering on the four March sisters. Directed by Greta Gerwig, the film stars Meryl Streep, Saoirse Ronan, Timothée Chalamet, Florence Pugh, Emma Watson, and Laura Dern.

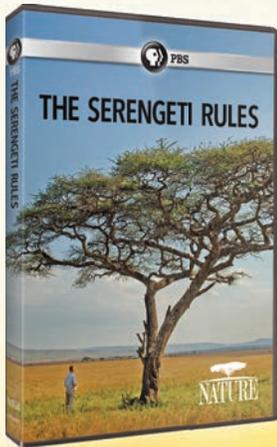


# New Releases from PBS



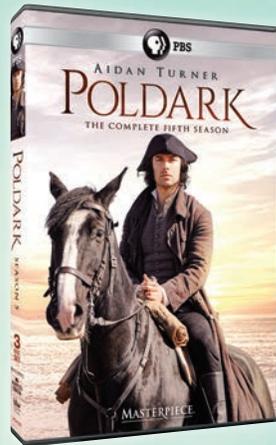
## COLLEGE BEHIND BARS

*College Behind Bars* tells the stories of 12 incarcerated men and women determined to turn their lives around and earn college degrees. Shot in maximum and medium security prisons in New York state, the series puts a human face on mass incarceration and reveals the transformative power of education.



## THE SERENGETI RULES

Working in some of the most remote and spectacular places on Earth, a group of scientists discovered a set of rules that govern all life. These ecological pioneers share their adventures, reveal how their work on "keystone" species flipped views of nature, and show the world as it could and should be.



## POLDARK

Following the death of Elizabeth, Ross Poldark resolves to put Westminster behind him. But when an old friend pleads for help, Ross is compelled to challenge the establishment again, drawing the Poldarks into greater danger than ever before. Aidan Turner returns for a final season of drama in Cornwall.



## THE CHAPERONE

Society matron Norma Carlisle volunteers to accompany a young Louise Brooks for a summer in New York. But why does she want to go? It's a story full of surprises – about who these women really are and who they eventually become. Written by Julian Fellowes (*Downton Abbey*) and based on the novel by Laura Moriarty.



## FOR SAMA

The astonishing personal story of a young Syrian mother's perseverance through the siege of Aleppo. Told as a love letter from a mother to her daughter, *For Sama* explores the agonizing dilemma of whether to abandon Aleppo and the fight for freedom.

## JUST FOR KIDS



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*Mixed Media features new release information on upcoming video games and TV series on DVD/Blu-ray, as well as notable older titles that are re-priced or new to DVD/Blu-ray.*

**Video Games**

Note: Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) ratings for video games are: E (Everyone), E10+ (Everyone 10+), T (Teen), M (Mature), and RP (Rating Pending). Some titles are not rated until just prior to release date.

**Available Now**

**Atelier Ryza: Ever Darkness & the Secret Hideout** (Koei Tecmo, PS4/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this latest entry in the popular third-person *Atelier* RPG series, players step into the shoes of teenage tomboy Ryza, who dreams of escaping her mundane village lifestyle.



**Children of Morta** (Merge Games, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$29.99-\$34.99, Rated: T). In this story-driven third-person overhead action-RPG game about an extraordinary family of heroes, players lead the Bergsons, with all their flaws and virtues, against the Corruption.

**Disney Classic Games: Aladdin and the Lion King** (Nighthawk, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: E10+). Two beloved Disney side-scrolling action-platformer games make their long-awaited debut on modern consoles.

**Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair** (Team17, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$29.99-\$39.99, Rated: E). In this platform-adventure 2D/3D hybrid game, players must run, jump, and roll their way through a series of challenging levels.

**November 3—November 9**

**Death Stranding** (Sony, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action game from famed developer Hideo Kojima, players take on the role of Sam Bridges, who carries the stranded remnants of the future in his hands, and must reunite a shattered world one step at a time.



**Disney Tsum Tsum Festival** (Bandai

Namco, Switch: \$49.99, Rated: E). Players control cute and fluffy toy characters in this party game featuring a wide variety of activities.

**Jumanji: The Video Game** (Outright Games, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action-adventure game based on the 2017 movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, players face a number of environmental challenges.



**Just Dance 2020** (Ubisoft, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). The latest iteration of the popular dance game franchise features 40 hot tracks, including chart-topping hits such as “Old Town Road (Remix)” by Lil Nas X (featuring Billy Ray Cyrus) and “God Is A Woman” by Ariana Grande.

**Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games: Tokyo 2020** (Sega, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). In this third-person sports-action game, players compete with Mario, Sonic, and other favorite characters in over 30 action-packed 3D and classic 2D sports games.

**Need for Speed Heat** (Electronic Arts, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). This bestselling racing franchise returns with a new action-driving adventure that pits players against a city’s rogue police force while battling to become part of street racing’s elite.

**November 10—November 16**

**Pokémon Shield** (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: E). In this third-person RPG, players embark on a journey in the new Galar region to catch, battle, and trade Pokémon. Also newly available at the same price is **Pokémon Sword**.



**Risk of Rain 2** (Gearbox Publishing, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$29.99-\$39.99, Rated: T). In this 3D action sequel to the original 2D rogue-like game, players face randomized stages, enemies, and bosses.

**Slay the Spire** (Humble Bundle, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$29.99-\$39.99, Rated: E10+). In this fusion of card games and rogue-likes, players craft a unique deck, encounter bizarre creatures, and discover relics of power as they ascend a tower.

**Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order** (Electronic Arts, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). A galaxy-spanning adventure awaits in this new third-person action-adventure game that puts players in the role of a Jedi Padawan who narrowly escaped the purge of Order 66 following the events of *Episode 3: Revenge of the Sith*.



**November 17—November 23**

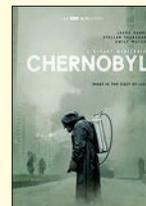
**Shenmue III** (Deep Silver, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). The 20-year-old franchise returns in this third-person RPG sequel that puts players in the shoes of Ryo Hazuki in a story-driven, revenge-fueled adventure full of thrilling locales to explore, puzzles to solve, and enemies to thwart.

**Sid Meier’s Civilization VI** (2K, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). In this turn-based strategy game, players will explore new land, research new technology, and conquer enemies to build an empire that will stand the test of time.

**TV on Video**

**Available Now**

**Chernobyl** (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.99). Nominated for 19 Emmy awards, this HBO-aired 2019 five-part miniseries on the titular 1986 Soviet Union nuclear accident stars Jared Harris, Stellan Skarsgård, and Emily Watson.

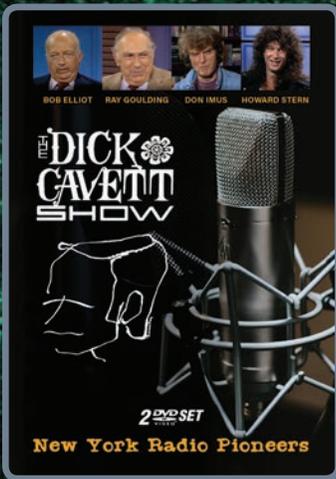


**Deadwood: The Movie** (HBO, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$19.98). Aired on HBO, this 2019 TV movie sequel to the 2004-06 19th-century period Western series features returning stars Timothy Olyphant, Ian McShane, Molly Parker, and Gerald McRaney.

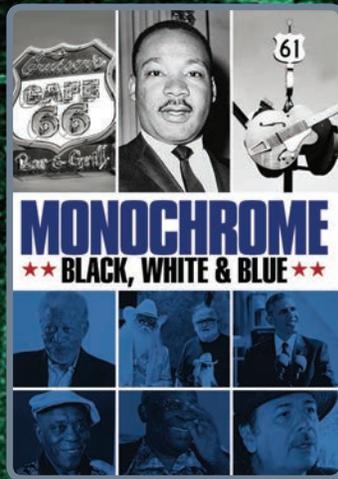
**Doom Patrol: The Complete First Season** (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$29.98). Starring Diane Guerrero, April Bowlby, Matt Bomer, Brendan Fraser, and Timothy Dalton, this 2019 debut season of the DC Comics web series follows the titular team as they try to rescue their kidnapped mentor.

**gen:Lock: The Complete First Season** (Warner, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.98).

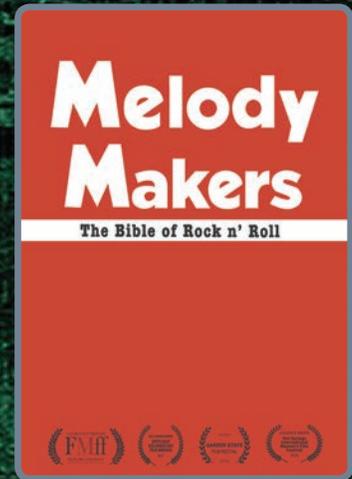
# ALWAYS INTERESTING ALWAYS RELEVANT ALWAYS MVD



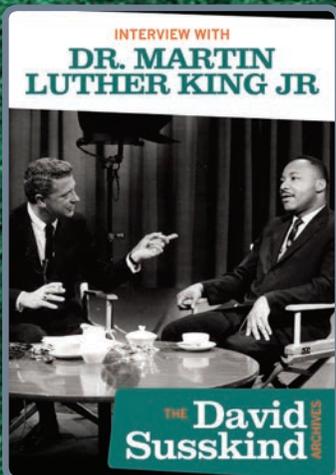
**Dick Cavett**  
Pioneers Of New York Radio  
Legendary NY radio personalities  
Bob & Ray, Don Imus and Howard Stern  
discuss their lives with Dick Cavett



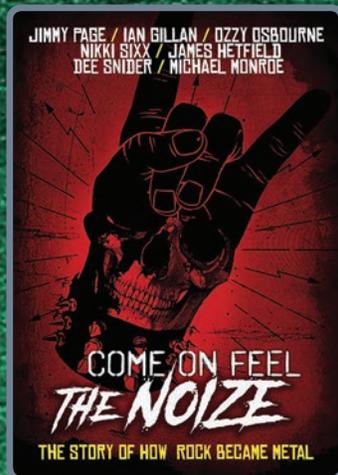
**Monochrome**  
Black White & Blue  
This captivating documentary traces  
the evolution of blues through pivotal  
moments in American history



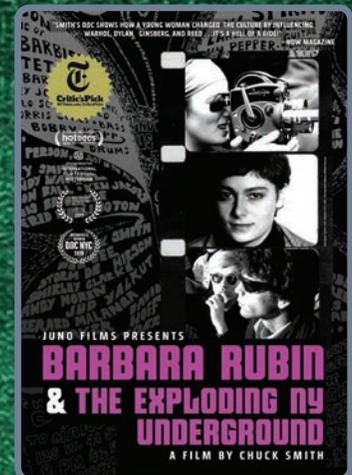
**Melody Makers**  
Should've been there



**David Susskind Archive**  
Interview With  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.  
The historic interview that  
stopped JFK in his tracks



**Come On Feel The Noize**  
The story of how rock became  
heavy metal



**Barbara Rubin & The Exploding NY Underground**  
This bold, enthusiastic  
documentary details the role  
played by Barbara Rubin in the  
1960s artistic counterculture

Featuring an impressive voice cast including Michael B. Jordan, Dakota Fanning, David Tennant, and Maisie Williams, this 2019 first season of the Adult Swim-aired animated series follows members of the titular program who meld minds with experimental mecha armor.

**Good Witch: Season Five** (ITV, DVD: 2 discs, \$20.99). Enchantress Cassie (Catherine Bell) finally marries her long-time neighbor love (James Denton) in this 2019 fifth season of the fantasy comedy drama series that includes the 2018 TV movie special "Tale of Two Hearts."



**Holocaust** (Paramount, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$55.98). Starring Meryl Streep, Michael Moriarty, and James Woods, this Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning 1978 four-part miniseries is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray.

**Mystery Science Theater 3000: Volume Twelve** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.99). This 12th volume from the cult series spoofing B-movies includes *The Rebel Set*, *Secret Agent Super Dragon*, *The Starfighters*, and *Parts: The Clonus Horror*.

**NOS4A2: Season One** (RLJ, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$44.99). Produced by AMC, this 2019 debut season of the supernatural horror series based on the 2013 novel by Joe Hill follows an artist (Ashleigh Cummings) trying to thwart the plans of an immortal (Zachary Quinto) who feeds off children's souls.

**Pitching In** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). The denizens of a camping-park community on the Welsh coast are the focal point of this 2019 debut season of the family drama series starring Larry Lamb, Caroline Sheen, and Hayley Mills.



**The Stand** (Paramount, Blu-ray: \$42.99). Newly available on high-definition Blu-ray, this 1994 miniseries adaptation of the 1978 post-apocalyptic horror novel by Stephen King stars Gary Sinise, Molly Ringwald, Jamey Sheridan, Ruby Dee, and Ossie Davis.

**The Truth Will Out** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). This 2018 Swedish miniseries about a detective (Robert Gustafsson) who must assemble a ragtag team to solve cold

murder cases also features Ia Langhammer and Johan Ulveson.

**Vikings: The Fifth Season, Volume Two** (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99). This second volume of episodes from the 2018-19 fifth season of the historical drama series stars Alex Høgh Andersen, Katheryn Winnick, and Jonathan Rhys Meyers.

**Vindication: Season One** (Vision Video, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). This 2019 first season of the Christian-themed drama series follows a veteran detective (Todd Terry) who solves cases in a small town in Texas.

### November 5

**Bronx SIU—Season 2: Vengeance** (RLJE, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98). Set in the Boogie Down Bronx in New York City, this action thriller series' 2019 sophomore season stars Brian J. White and Shanti Lowry.

**Good Omens** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: \$29.98). Based on the 1990 novel by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman, this 2019 Amazon series about immortal beings who try to stop the Antichrist stars Michael Sheen, David Tennant, and Miranda Richardson, with narration by Frances McDormand as "God."



**Ms. Fisher's Modern Murder Mysteries: Series 1** (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99 each). This 2019 debut season spin-off of an earlier Australian series based on the books by Kerry Greenwood features Geraldine Hakewill as the long-lost niece of the original private detective.

**The Simple Heist: Series 2** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Lotta Tejle and Sissela Kyle are back for another thieving escapade in this 2019 sophomore season of the Swedish-language crime comedy series.

**Yellowstone: Season 2** (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$42.99). Kevin Costner, Wes Bentley, Kelly Reilly, and Cole Hauser star in this 2019 second season of the drama series revolving around the clashes between a ranch owner and various parties.



### November 12

**The Big Bang Theory: The Twelfth**

**and Final Season** (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). The 2018-19 12th and final season of the long-running Chuck Lorre comedy features guest appearances by Kathy Bates, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and William Shatner.

**Cobra Kai: Seasons 1 & 2** (Sony, DVD: 4 discs, \$30.99). Set nearly four decades after the original *Karate Kid* franchise, this compilation of the 2018-19 first and second seasons of the web series features Ralph Macchio and William Zabka reprising their original roles.



**Line of Duty: Series 5** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). This 2019 fifth season of the BBC police procedural series centering on the wake of corruption that follows an organized crime drug hijacking stars Stephen Graham, Martin Compston, Vicky McClure, and Adrian Dunbar.

**Poldark: The Complete Fifth Season** (PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.99). The dawn of a new century spells change for British Revolutionary War veteran Ross Poldark (Aidan Turner), but an old friend pulls him back into the fold in this 2019 fifth season of the historical period series based on the novels by Winston Graham.

**Star Trek Discovery: Season 2** (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$55.98). The USS *Discovery* tries to uncover the mystery behind seven red signals in this 2019 second season of the sci-fi franchise series starring Sonequa Martin-Green, Anson Mount, Doug Jones, and Wilson Cruz.

### November 19

**Catch-22** (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Executive produced by costar George Clooney, this 2019 black comedy series based on the 1961 satirical war novel by Joseph Heller also features Christopher Abbott, Kyle Chandler, and Hugh Laurie.

**The Handmaid's Tale: Season Three** (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$39.99). Reunions and betrayals come to the forefront of this 2019 third season of the Hulu-aired dystopian drama series starring Elisabeth Moss, Joseph Fiennes, and Alexis Bledel.

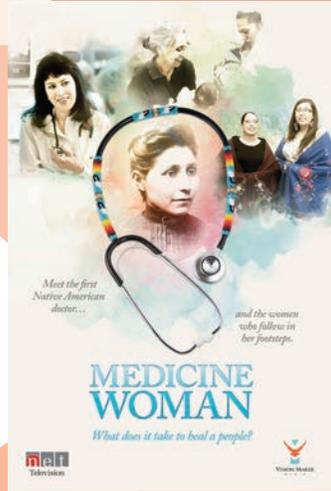


VISION MAKER MEDIA  
NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH  
**TOP FILM**  
SELECTIONS

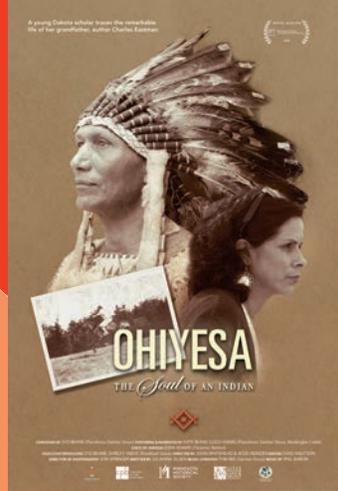
Vision Maker Media is the premiere source for documentary film that represents the experiences, values and cultures of American Indians and Alaska Natives. With free curriculum or Viewer Discussion Guides available on [www.visionmakermedia.org](http://www.visionmakermedia.org), celebrate Native American Heritage Month in November.



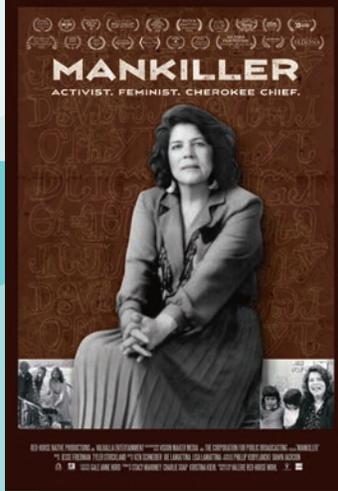
**WHAT WAS OURS**  
Two Native youth attempt to learn why thousands of ancestral artifacts are in archives of museums and churches, boxed away and forgotten.



**MEDICINE WOMAN**  
*Medicine Woman* interweaves the lives of Native American women healers of today with the story of America's first Native doctor, Susan La Flesche Picotte.



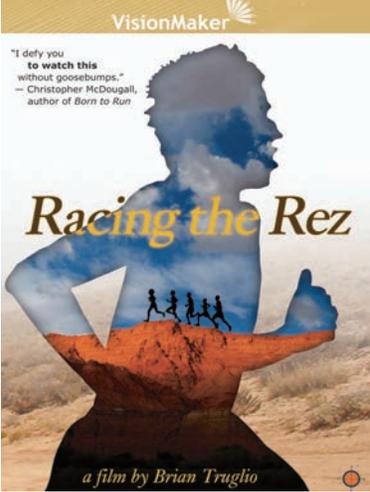
**OHIYESA: THE SOUL OF AN INDIAN**  
This film follows Kate Beane and her family as they trace the remarkable life of their celebrated relative, Ohiyesa (Charles Eastman).



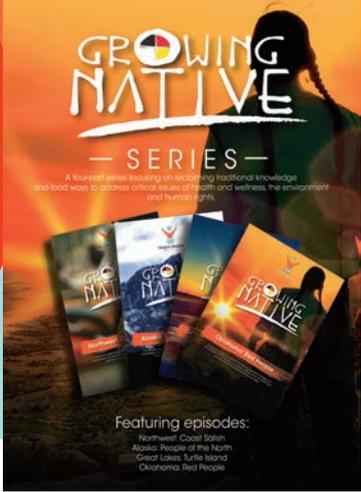
**MANKILLER**  
*MANKILLER* explores the life of Wilma Mankiller, the first female Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation who led her people in building one of the strongest Indian Tribes in America.



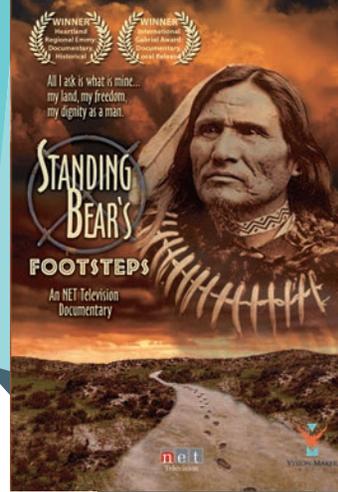
**LAKE OF BETRAYAL**  
*Lake of Betrayal* explores the history of Kinzua Dam on the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania and its impact on the Seneca Nation of Indians.



**RACING THE REZ**  
*Racing the Rez* moves beyond the Native American stereotypes of the past and present by delving deep into the daily grind of Native teenagers.



**GROWING NATIVE SERIES**  
*Growing Native* is a four-part series focusing on reclaiming traditional knowledge and food ways to address critical issues of health and wellness.



**STANDING BEAR'S FOOTSTEPS**  
*Standing Bear's Footsteps* follows Chief Standing Bear's journey to prove that an Indian is a person under the law.

**The Kominsky Method: The Complete First Season** (Warner, DVD: \$19.99). Michael Douglas, Alan Arkin, and Nancy Travis star in this 2018 first season of the Netflix-aired acting coach comedy.



**Taken Down: Series 1** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). A Dublin center for asylum-seekers is at the center of this 2018 first season of the Irish drama series featuring Aïssa Maïga, Brian Gleeson, Lynn Rafferty, and Orla Fitzgerald.

### November 26

**London Kills: Series 2** (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). This 2019 second season of the Acorn TV series centering on the cases of an exclusive murder investigation squad stars Hugo Speer, Sharon Small, and Bailey Patrick.

**Mystery Science Theatre 3000—The Gauntlet: Season 12** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.98). Featuring episodes from the 2018 12th season of the Netflix revival series, this compilation of back-to-back bad movies with riffing commentary stars Jonah Ray, Patton Oswalt, and Felicia Day.

**The Returned: The Complete Second Season** (Music Box, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.95). Anne Consigny, Frédéric Pierrot, and Clotilde Hesme star in this 2015 second and final season of the French supernatural drama about dead people who reappear.

### December 3

**City on a Hill: Season One** (Showtime, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). An assistant D.A. and an FBI vet with a troubled history join forces to solve crime in 1990s Boston in this 2019 debut season of the Showtime-aired series starring Kevin Bacon, Aldis Hodge, and Jonathan Tucker.



**Doc Martin: Series 9** (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99 each). Martin Clunes returns as the titular small village GP in this 2019 ninth season of the ITV-aired medical dramedy series.

**The Durrells in Corfu: The Complete**

**Fourth Season** (PBS, DVD: \$38.99). Aired stateside on *Masterpiece*, this 2019 fourth and final season of the period dramedy series based on the autobiographical novel trilogy by Gerald Durrell stars Keeley Hawes, Milo Parker, and Josh O'Connor.

**Game of Thrones: The Complete Eighth Season** (HBO, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$74.99). The Iron Throne is finally filled in this 2019 eighth and final season of the critically acclaimed and wildly popular medieval fantasy series based on author George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels.



### December 10

**Father Brown: Season Seven** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). This 2019 seventh season of adapted short stories by G.K. Chesterton stars Mark Williams as the titular crime-solving Roman Catholic priest.

**The High Chaparral: The Final Season** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$34.99). Guest stars for this 1970-71 fourth and final season of the Arizona Territory-set ranch series include William Conrad, Nehemiah Persoff, and Malachi Throne.

**Suits: Season Nine, The Final Season** (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). The 2019 ninth and final season of this USA Network legal drama features guest stars including Wendell Pierce, Eric Roberts, and Neil McDonough.

### December 17

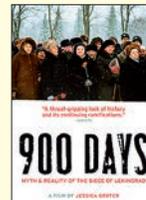
**Fuller House: The Complete Fourth Season** (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98). The Tanner family is back with corny heartwarming kitsch in this 2018 fourth season of the Netflix comedy series that includes guest appearances by Lee Majors, Lindsay Wagner, and Josh Peck.

**Killjoys: Season Five—The Final Season** (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98). This fifth and final season of the Canadian sci-fi series reunites the bounty hunter triumvirate (Hannah John-Kamen, Aaron Ashmore, and Luke Macfarlane) for one last push to save the galaxy.



## Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

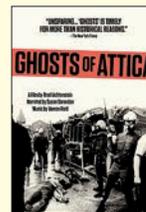
**900 Days** (Icarus, DVD: \$29.98). Newly available priced for home video, filmmaker Jessica Gorter's piercing documentary (VL-3/13 ★★★1/2) about the German siege of Leningrad incorporates archival clips and interviews with people who experienced the horrors of life during the blockade. Bonus features include additional interviews with director Gorter and survivors.



**Around India with a Movie Camera** (Icarus, DVD: \$29.98). Filmmaker Sandhya Suri incorporates hand-colored footage, home movies, newsreels, and segments from the BFI National Archive to spotlight life in India from 1899-1947 in this 2017 documentary (VL-3/19 ★★1/2) that features a score from composer Soumik Datta. Bonus features include additional featurettes.

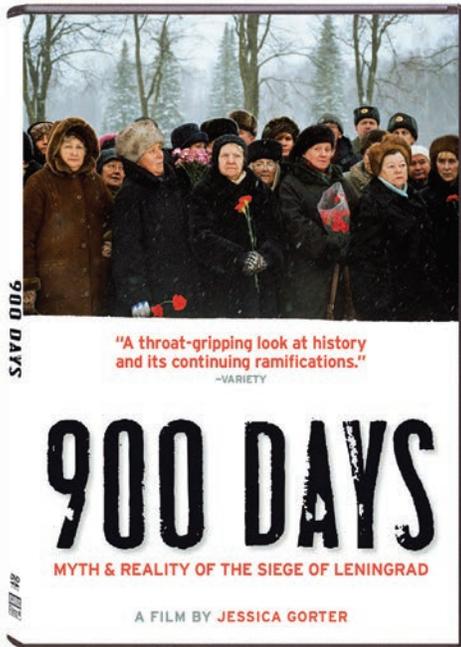
**Divest! The Climate Movement On Tour** (Bullfrog, DVD: \$24.98). Serving up highlights of the 2012 "Do the Math" lecture-variety tour (mostly of college communities) put on by anti-fossil-fuel website 350.org, filmmakers Josh Fox and Steve Liptay's 2016 documentary (VL Online-6/16 ★★1/2) features a roster of musicians, scientists, writers, activists, and celebrities who call attention to global warming, impending mass-extinctions, rising sea levels, and the untrammelled greed of the oil, coal, and gas industries.

**Ghosts of Attica** (Icarus, DVD: \$29.99). Directed by Brad Lichtenstein, this 2001 documentary (VL-5/02 ★★★★★) chronicles the 1971 revolt at New York's Attica Correctional Facility and features narration by Susan Sarandon. Bonus features include rare archival footage from the NY state archives, and an audio recording of Liz Fink (lawyer for the Attica inmates).



**Leaving Home, Coming Home: A Portrait of Robert Frank** (Kino Lorber, DVD: \$29.99). Iconic Swiss-American photographer and filmmaker Robert Frank is the subject of this 2005 biographical documentary from director Gerald Fox. Also newly available is **Zen for Nothing** (DVD: \$29.98).

## 900 DAYS



**"SUPERB!"**  
—Variety

Contrasts the devastating stories recounted by survivors of the Siege of Leningrad, the infamous German blockade, with the triumphant memoirs fabricated by the Russian state.

**"Highly recommended."**  
—Video Librarian

**"Required viewing."**  
—Slavic Review

900 DAYS • A film by Jessica Gorter • An Icarus Films Release  
2017 • 77 min • Color • in English and Russian w/Russian subtitles • Not Rated  
SRP: \$29.98 • UPC # 8-54565-00293-7  
**AVAILABLE NOW!**

## OLIVIA



**"WITCH-CRAFT!"**  
—Los Angeles Review of Books

The story of a 19th century boarding school for young girls, one divided into two camps where all the shots, even the most underhanded, are allowed.

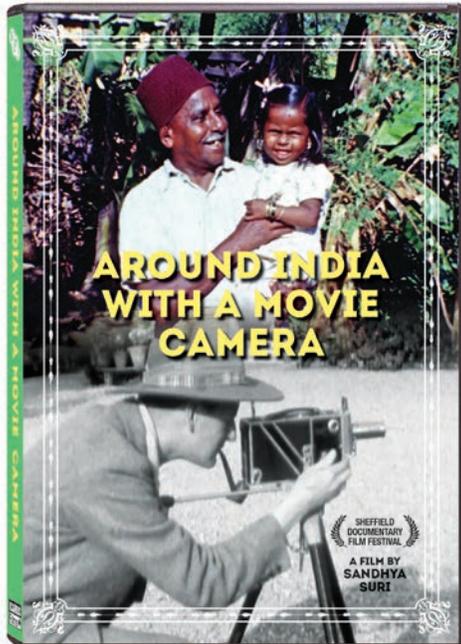
**"Wildly ahead of its time!"**  
—RogerEbert.com

**REDISCOVERED AND RESTORED!**  
Available on DVD and Bluray!



OLIVIA • A film by Jacqueline Audry • From Icarus Films and Distrib Films  
Starring Edwige Feuille and Simone Simon  
1951 • 96min • B&W • in French w/ English subtitles • Not Rated  
DVD SRP: \$29.98 • UPC # 8-54565-00295-1  
BLU-RAY SRP: \$34.98 • UPC # 8-54565-00296-8  
**AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 26**

## AROUND INDIA WITH A MOVIE CAMERA



**"BRILLIANT!"**  
—Asian Movie Pulse

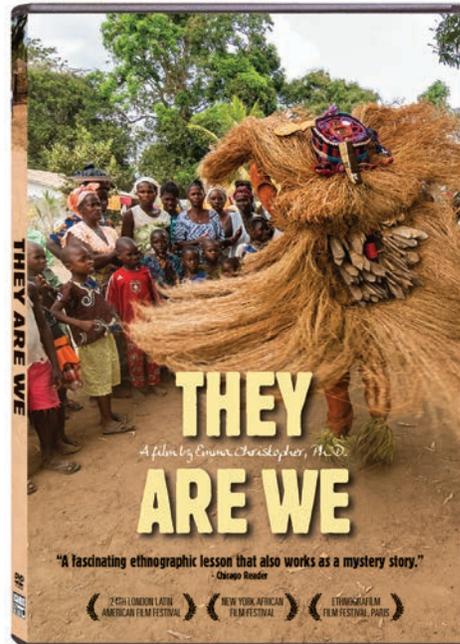
Skillfully weaves together archival footage – including hand-colored sequences – to create an emotionally resonant story about life across India from 1899 to 1947.

**"Richly inventive."**  
—Sight & Sound

**"A compelling lesson of visual rhetoric and world history."**  
—V Cinema Show

AROUND INDIA WITH A MOVIE CAMERA • A film by Sandhya Suri • An Icarus Films Release  
2017 • 72 min • Color and B&W • English • Not Rated  
SRP: \$29.98 • UPC # 8-54565-00289-0  
**AVAILABLE NOW!**

## THEY ARE WE



**"A joyous transcontinental reunion."**  
—Chicago Tribune

The incredible true story of how a family separated for nearly 200 years by the transatlantic slave trade sing and dance its way back together. An unforgettable account of a remarkable celebration, and a tribute to the tenacity and resolve of a people beset by terrible injustice.

**"An uplifting saga of people who did much, much more than just survive."**  
—Straight.com

THEY ARE WE • A film by Emma Christopheri • An Icarus Films Release  
2014 • 79 min • Color • in English and Spanish w/English subtitles • Not Rated  
SRP: \$26.98 • UPC # 8-54565-00298-2  
**AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 12**



This section features reviews of current and classic studio, independent, and foreign feature films. Each review includes pricing information, as well as running time, rating, subtitling information, and street dates for yet-to-be-released titles. Most titles reviewed here are widely available through most distributors.

- ★★★★ = Excellent
- ★★★ = Good
- ★★ = Fair
- ★ = Poor

## Current Films

### Aladdin ★★★

Disney, 128 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



Disney's live-action remake of its 1992 animated classic stars Will Smith as a mariner/storytelling father and as the jovial Genie. In the fabled Middle Eastern kingdom of Agrabah, thieving Aladdin (Mena Massoud)—with his mischievous monkey Abu perched on his shoulder—nimblely lifts dates from a marketplace vendor and steals a bracelet from incognito Princess Jasmine (Naomi Scott). Thinking that she is the princess's handmaiden, Aladdin returns Jasmine's jewelry. But while they definitely connect, the princess must marry a prince, not a pauper. Enter evil Jafar (Marwan Kenzari), ambitious advisor to the Sultan (Navid Negahban), who dispatches plucky Aladdin to retrieve a magic oil lamp from the Cave of Wonders. In possession of a magic carpet, along with the lamp, Aladdin summons the CGI-enhanced Genie, who explains the concept of the three wishes. Aladdin's first wish is to become Prince Ali to properly pursue Princess Jasmine with the Genie as his wisecracking wingman. From there on, it's scrappy fun and games, peppered with the familiar Alan Mencken/Howard Ashman/Tim Rice music, along with the new song "Speechless," in which empowered Jasmine asserts her independence. Writer-director Guy Ritchie doesn't venture far from Disney's original animated *Arabian Nights* fantasy, but while this won't rank with Disney's best it is still reasonably entertaining. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### American Woman ★★1/2

Vertical, 111 min., R, DVD: \$18.99

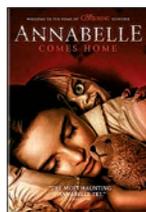
Filmmaker Jake Scott's *American Woman* tells the story of a woman who endures a succession of travails before accepting her

life as it is rather than as she might like it to be. Deb Callahan (Sienna Miller) is an attractive but abrasive single mother working as a supermarket cashier while carrying on an affair with a married man. Her teen daughter Bridget (Sky Ferreira) has a child named Jesse with Tyler (Alex Neustaedter). One night Bridget goes off on a date with Tyler and doesn't come home, leading Deb to blame him for her disappearance, which extends into years, during which Deb—helped by her mother (Amy Madigan), sister (Christina Hendricks), and brother-in-law (Will Sasso)—raises Jesse (Aidan McGraw) on her own. Unfortunately, she also links up with Ray (Pat Healy), an abusive control freak who she finally breaks up with, and then with Chris (Aaron Paul), a seemingly nice guy who turns out to be much less than the perfect catch. The story eventually comes full circle when the truth about Bridget's disappearance is finally revealed. *American Woman* is intermittently affecting and features committed performances (Miller is especially convincing), but it often feels like a hectoring soap opera trimmed down to a compilation of dramatic (or melodramatic) highlights. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



### Annabelle Comes Home ★★★

New Line, 106 min., R, DVD: \$28.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99



Having lived in Connecticut for many years, I spent time with "ghost-hunters" Lorraine and Ed Warren and saw Annabelle in her glass case in their home/museum. Both have since died, but the spooky, fictionalized tales of their paranormal investigations continue. Set in 1968, this installment finds supernaturalists Ed (Patrick Wilson) and Lorraine (Vera Farmiga) receiving creepy Annabelle from two frightened nurses who claim that the demon inside the malevolent doll is trying to possess a human soul. As they cautiously transport Annabelle home, their car breaks down near Maryville Cemetery, where Annabelle, perched in the back seat, apparently rouses the dead from their graves. Clairvoyant Lorraine believes that Annabelle is a conduit or beacon for other spirits, as Ed is almost run down by a semi-trailer. When the Warrens arrive at their split-level house, Annabelle is ensconced in their artifacts room, along with evil objects like the toy monkey, spirit bell, and haunted samurai armor. A priest sprinkling holy water while reciting a protective blessing apparently immobilizes Annabelle until the arrival of an unexpected visitor. Preparing a 10th birthday celebration for the Warrens' daughter Judy (McKenna Grace), Daniela (Katie Sarife)—a friend of

their teenage babysitter Mary Ellen (Madison Iseman)—sneaks into the artifacts room, hoping to achieve a spiritual re-connection with her recently deceased dad. Ignoring the "Warning! Positively Do Not Open" sign, she releases Annabelle's demonic power to animate a knife-wielding bride, a grim reaper, and other ghoulish things. Screenwriter Gary Dauberman makes his directing debut, creating a predictably tense atmosphere with the usual creaking doors and jump scares in this somewhat tired franchise entry. Optional. (S. Granger)

### The Art of Racing in the Rain ★★★

Fox, 109 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99, Nov. 5



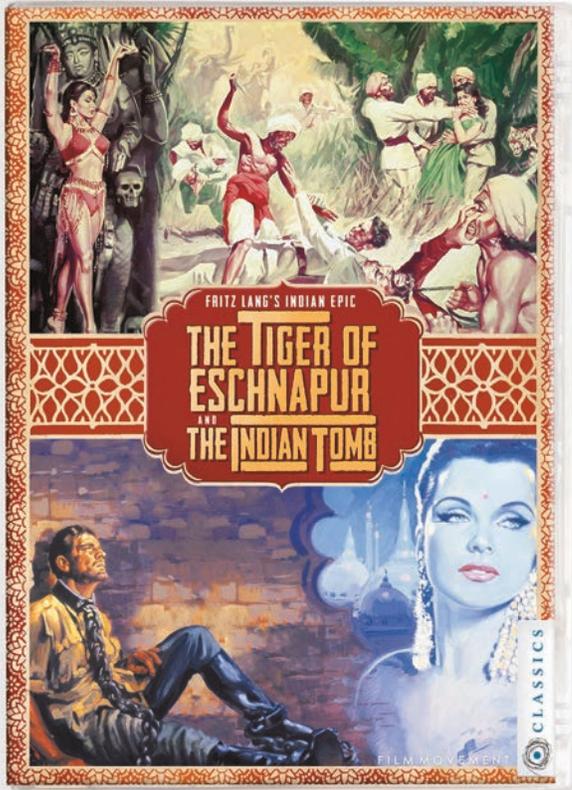
Based on Garth Stein's bestselling 2008 novel, this dramedy centers on a golden retriever named Enzo (voiced by Kevin Costner) whose earnest owner, Denny Swift (Milo Ventimiglia), named him after Italian racing legend Enzo Ferrari. Set in Seattle, the tepid story opens as elderly Enzo is nearing death, so his esoteric reminiscences and erudite observations are presented as flashbacks. Denny's goal is to achieve success as a race car driver; his particular skill is his ability to drive effectively and face adversity while racing in the rain. Along the way, Denny meets and marries angelic Eve (Amanda Seyfried). "Denny was clearly taken with her grooming," Enzo warily observes. Eventually, of course, shaggy Enzo accepts Eve and becomes protective of their daughter Zoe (young Ryan Kiera Armstrong/teenage Lily Dodsworth-Evans). But there is no love lost between Enzo and Eve's wealthy, disapproving parents (Kathy Baker, Martin Donovan). When he's not in the car, Enzo loves to watch television with Denny, particularly a documentary about Mongolia where certain tribes believe that if dogs learn everything they're supposed to learn they will be reincarnated as human beings. Directed by Simon Curtis, it's a contrived, overly melodramatic entry in an increasingly crowded genre. Optional. (S. Granger)

### The Banana Splits Movie ★★

Warner, 89 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.99



*The Banana Splits Adventure Hour* was a Saturday morning variety program for kids that ran on NBC from 1968-70 and then for a decade afterward in syndication. The Splits were a band of goofy animal characters—Fleegle the Beagle, Bingo the Ape, Drooper the Lion, and Snorky the Elephant, all played by extravagantly costumed actors—who performed as a rock band and introduced live-action and animated segments. This



**"A sweeping adventure filled with tigers, snakes, romance and the camp-connoisseur favorite Debra Paget."**

—The New York Times

**"Long before INFINITY WAR, IT, and KILL BILL came Fritz Lang's INDIAN EPIC – a yarn the auteur saw as too grand to be contained in a single film. These [films] deserve to be seen in their original form."**

—The Hollywood Reporter

**"A clear precursor to the INDIANA JONES series."**

—Combustible Celluloid

After more than two decades in exile, master filmmaker Fritz Lang returned to his native Germany to direct this two-film adventure epic (THE TIGER OF ESCHNAPUR & THE INDIAN TOMB). Featuring breathtaking location photography and cliff-hanging suspense, this newly remastered 4K restoration presents both films in their entirety for the first time to U.S. audiences.

**BONUS:**

- Commentary by film historian David Kalat
- The Indian Epic documentary
- Debra Paget, For Example documentary

**FRITZ LANG'S INDIAN EPIC**

(AVAILABLE 12/10)

Film Studios, German, Classics

2-DVD Set: \$39.95 / PPR: \$200 each

DRL: \$499 each / PPR + DRL: \$599 each

UPC: 850003924366



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**"A stirring ode to a politically engaged artist."**

—The Progressive

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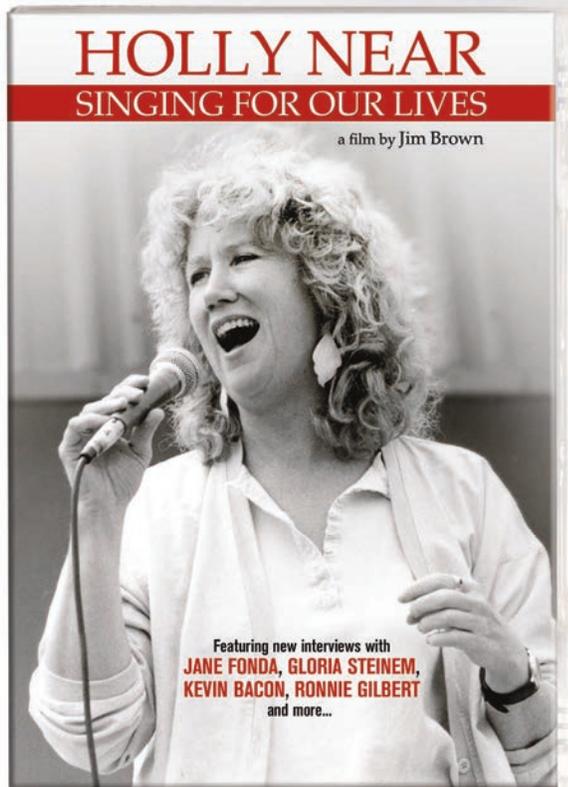
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oddball revival is a campy horror movie in which a family is visiting the set of the show on the day when the Splits—depicted as robots—are informed that they have been cancelled. The loopy engineer who designed the robots alters their programming and they go berserk, killing the programming vice president and their detested human costar as well as some of the adult audience members, while also taking child fans captive. Everything is played for laughs, although the humor is distinctly dark, the execution clumsy and cheap, and the acting is strictly amateur hour. Fans of the old show are unlikely to be amused by this film that is definitely not for kids. On the other hand, devotees of really cruddy horror flicks—the kind relegated to cable channels and midnight movie slots in theatres—might find it ghoulishly amusing. Optional. (F. Swietek)

### Canal Street ★★1/2

Cinedigm, 103 min., PG-13, DVD: \$14.99



Rhyan LaMarr's drama about a black high school student accused of killing a white classmate on a Chicago-area street is an earnest but also terribly preachy tale, with strong religious overtones—as well as reflections on community divisions—tossed into the mix at every turn. After the death of his wife, lawyer Jackie Styles (Mykelti Williamson) has moved with his teen son Kholi (Bryshere Y. Gray) from the South Side to the suburbs, where at his new high school he gets into an altercation on the gym floor with Brian (Kevin Quinn). After the two go to a party, Kholi drives Brian home, only to hear a shot as he then drives off. Rushing back, Kholi finds Brian wounded and he is seen by the boy's father, who—along with many others—assume Kholi's guilt. Much of the film is devoted to the trial as Jackie defends his son against a politically ambitious D.A. (Mekhi Phifer), but the narrative is repeatedly interrupted by excerpts from radio talk-show hosts taking sides on the case, as well as divergent phone-in opinions offered by whites and blacks. Kholi's cellmate, meanwhile, is a Christian proselytizer, and Brian's father engages with an African American pastor who lost his daughter to street violence. *Canal Street* reveals the identity of the shooter in the end, but this seems less significant than the closing funeral service for Brian at which all the major players come together in grief and reconciliation. Well-meaning but also heavy handed, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Child's Play ★★1/2

Fox, 90 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

This reboot of the Chucky franchise serves up a different origin story for the maniacal doll. Instead of the voodoo curse that sent

the soul of a Chicago-based serial killer into a child's toy that appeared in seven films (1988 to 2017), the new *Child's Play* opts for a more technological explanation. Kaslan Corporation is a huge company that operates a sweatshop in Vietnam where AI-enhanced "Buddi" dolls are assembled. An angry, abused worker deliberately changes one Buddi doll's computer-chip safety settings by deleting its moral programming (relating to learning and violence) before then committing suicide. This defective, deranged doll (voiced by Mark Hamill) winds up stateside in a Walmart-like superstore, landing in the hands of struggling single mom Karen Barclay (Aubrey Plaza), who gives it to her lonely adolescent son Andy (Gabriel Michael Bateman), who is coping with an auditory deficiency. The ginger-haired doll seems all-too-eager to become Andy's best friend/constant companion, helping him with homework and joining him when he watches Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*. But soon that rogue smart-doll becomes out-of-control Chucky, who can wirelessly connect to all the other Kaslan robotic devices: drones, cameras, modem software, TVs, automobiles, etc.—wreaking carnage everywhere. Eventually, a local detective (Brian Tyree Henry) becomes involved. Based on the mean-spirited character created by Don Mancini, Norwegian director Lars Klevberg's savage saga of a sociopathic doll is a gore-filled slasher that will likely appeal to franchise fans. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



### Crosscurrent ★★★

Cheng Cheng Films, 115 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$44.99



Writer-director Yang Chao's *Crosscurrent* is set on a cargo boat going up the Yangtze River. The young captain, Gao Chun (Qin Hao), recently inherited the vessel after his father's death. Chun finds a handwritten book of poems written by a former deckhand, and he charts the boat's journey by the ports cited in the poetry. Along the way, Chun keeps encountering the same woman in different ports: An Lu (Xin Zhilei), whose seemingly ubiquitous presence hypnotizes Chun (and it is a bit curious that she seems to be growing younger with each encounter). But after passing the Three Gorges Dam, Lu mysteriously exits Chun's life, leading him to search for her along the river. Much of the film's appeal can be attributed to Mark Lee Ping-Bing's cinematography, which offers some of the most stunning views of the Chinese landscape captured on camera. And both Hao and Zhilei are perfect in their roles as the captivated captain and the elusive beauty who takes control of his emotions. The

pacing can be too leisurely at times, and the supporting characters of the boat's two-man crew (an elderly inebriate and a malcontented youth) don't add much to the story, but this mystical odyssey is an overall beguiling film. Recommended. (P. Hall)

### Descendants 3 ★★1/2

Disney, 106 min., TV-G, DVD: \$19.99



Like its predecessors, this Disney Channel TV movie focusing on the sons and daughters of the Mouse House's famous heroes and villains is a colorful, energetic, but also rather empty diversion aimed at teens, fashioned in the mold of the *High School Musical* movies. This time around, Mal (Dove Cameron), the daughter of Maleficent, and Ben (Mitchell Hope), the son of Belle and the Beast and ruler of the blissful kingdom of Auradon, are a loving couple preparing to wed. But when the portal between Auradon and the so-called Isle of the Lost is opened, the presumably nefarious denizens of the latter—including Mal's nemesis Uma (China Anne McClain), who is the daughter of Ursula the Sea Witch and Hades (Cheyenne Jackson), ruler of the underworld, threaten to cross over and cause havoc. *Descendants 3* includes numerous musical numbers, and veteran director-choreographer Kenny Ortega brings athletic brio to the ensemble dances. Cameron Boyce, who plays Conrad, the son of Cruella de Vil, died suddenly after filming was completed, and his performance here serves as a proper tribute to a career cut sadly short. Given the popularity of the series, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Dogman ★★★

Magnolia, 103 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99



Italian filmmaker Matteo Garrone directed the award-winning *Gomorrah*, an epic exploration of the corrosive effect of the Mafia in Naples. His *Dogman* is a much smaller and more intimate crime story set in a rundown seaside town in southern Italy that is being terrorized by a mad dog thug who bullies local businessmen without any opposition. Marcello Fonte stars as Marcello, a meek dog groomer who loves dogs, lives for his daughter, and deals cocaine on the side for extra money (which he spends on scuba diving trips with his kid). He's easily coerced by the hulking Simone (Edoardo Gero) into giving him coke on demand and serving as wheelman on his petty robberies. There's a mix of humiliation and reflected glory in Marcello's involuntary association with Simone—the little guy tagging along with the tough guy—but when Marcello takes the fall for a job he wanted no part of

and is rebuffed when he demands his cut for serving a year in prison, he's finally pushed too far. *Dogman* is as much a tragic character study as it is a revenge drama, a portrait of a nice guy who won't stand up for himself and then comes back from prison hardened and unwilling to roll over anymore. But is there any redemption in revenge? Garrone sets his tale in a neglected neighborhood living in a culture of fear and apathy that is as discomfiting as it is evocative. Fonte won the Best Actor award at the Cannes Film Festival for his heartbreaking performance. A powerful film, this is recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

### Don't Let Go ★★

Universal, 103 min., R, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99, Nov. 26

Filmmaker Jacob Aaron Estes's thriller features a faintly clever premise. Jack (David Oyelowo), a Los Angeles police detective, and his niece Ashley (Storm Reid) are very close. Since Jack's brother and sister-in-law have a troubled marriage, Jack acts as Ashley's surrogate father, and they regularly communicate on their cell phones. One day Jack gets a frantic call from Ashley, and upon investigating he discovers that she and her parents have been brutally murdered.



Jack's partner (Mykelti Williamson) and their boss (Alfred Molina) insist that the shattered man take time off to come to terms with the loss. But soon he begins getting more calls from Ashley, eventually accepting the fact that they are somehow coming from the past, when his niece was still alive. The pair then work together to solve the riddle of who was responsible for the murders—or from her perspective—murders-to-be. Can Jack save Ashley from dying? This time-twisting tale is obviously fantastic, and Estes deliberately muddies the waters with so much hyperkinetic editing and abrupt shifts of perspective that viewers will have difficulty following the plot twists. By the time the absurd resolution arrives—in an incredibly verbose shout-fest in which images whirl around desperately—most will have given up trying to make any sense of the goings-on, or even caring. Not a necessary purchase. (F. *Swietek*)

### Echo in the Canyon ★★

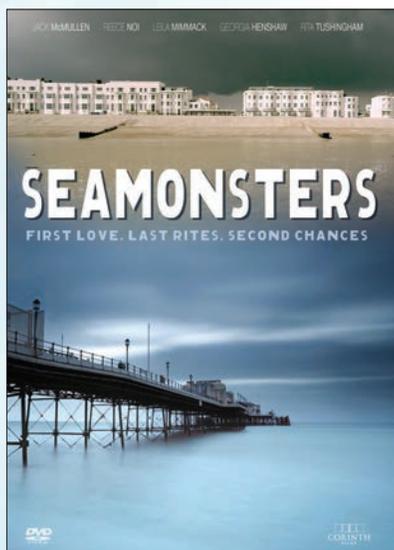
MPI, 83 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

In this star-studded nostalgic documentary, veteran music industry honcho Andrew Slater (former Capitol Records CEO) recalls a bygone era, focusing on folk rock bands of the 1965-67 Los Angeles music scene. In the early part of the 19th century, bucolic Laurel Can-

yon—nestled behind Sunset Boulevard in the Hollywood Hills—was full of rustic cabins and hunting lodges. Fifty years later, some of the most memorable music came from its residents, including Roger McGuinn and David Crosby of the Byrds, Michelle Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas, Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys, and Stephen Stills of Buffalo Springfield, along with Ringo Starr, John Sebastian, Eric Clapton, and music producer Lou Adler. Jakob Dylan (son of Bob) explains that when eccentric rock star Frank Zappa rented a bungalow on Lookout Mountain, friends enjoyed his wild parties, and settled in the area. But what sealed Laurel Canyon's '60s appeal was The Beatles, specifically George Harrison's 12-string Rickenbacker guitar which sparked interest in—as McGuinn puts it—"taking an old folk song and souping it up with a Beatle beat." Tom Petty says they walked the line between "cross-pollination" and "outright theft." What's fascinating is how residents dropped in for jam sessions and impromptu parties. Unfortunately, Slater spends too much time pointlessly stargazing at Dylan and there is far too much emphasis on Dylan and his musician friends (Beck, Norah Jones, Cat Power, Regina Spektor)



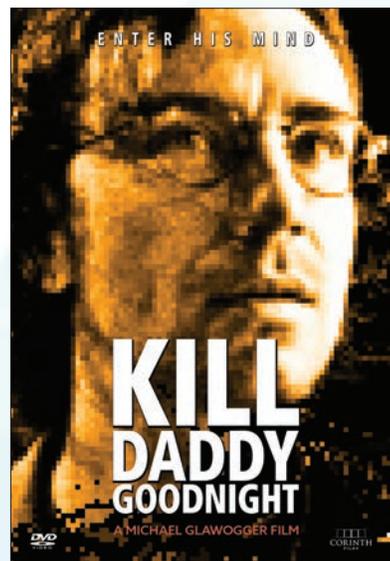
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performing karaoke-like covers of the “real” thing. Optional. (S. Granger)

### The Farewell ★★★

Lionsgate, 98 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99, Nov. 12



Written and directed by Lulu Wang, this compassionate, endearing, inter-generational-bonding, autobiographical comic drama revolves around a Chinese-American artist, Billi (Awkwafina), living in Brooklyn, who returns to her hometown in northeastern China when she learns that her adored Nai Nai (grandmother in Mandarin) has Stage IV lung cancer. The family decided not to tell Nai Nai (Zhao Shu-zhen) that she only has a short time to live, believing that anxiety could kill her before the cancer. Instead, Nai Nai's two sons, their wives, and children gather in Changchun, ostensibly for the wedding of Billi's cousin Hao Hao (Chen Han) and his Japanese girlfriend, Aiko (Aoi Mizuhara). Billi believes that suppressing her grief and hiding the severity of Nai Nai's illness is wrong but—as the family reunion progresses—she begins to appreciate the intrinsic value not only of the deception but also of her Chinese culture/heritage. Wang's story was previously told on NPR's *This American Life*, both before and after Nai Nai outlived her original diagnosis. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw ★★

Universal, 137 min., PG-13, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Nov. 5



Positioned as a spin-off from *The Fast and the Furious* franchise, this installment re-introduces disgraced DSS agent Luke Hobbs (Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson), who now partners with former adversary Deckard Shaw (Jason Statham), a rogue military operative. These enemies-turned-allies reluctantly join forces when Shaw's estranged sister, MI6 agent Hattie (Vanessa Kirby), steals a deadly bioengineered virus and goes on the lam. She is pursued by anarchist Brixton Lore (Idris Elba), a billionaire British “Superman” with cybernetic enhancements. And there is a ticking doomsday clock. After 18 years and eight feature films, this macho-men fantasia series has become known for its goofy bickering banter, explosive car chases, and gratuitous violence. Director David Leitch continues the lunacy, noting Shaw's short “Hobbit legs” and Hobbs's looking like “a giant tattooed baby.” As superspy Hattie, Kirby is hardly a damsel-in-distress but given the actual age gap of 21 years between Kirby and Statham as the sibling Shaws, it's hard to believe that they played together as children (even Helen Mirren, as Shaw's criminal-mastermind

mother, cannot rectify the incredulity over the age difference). Ryan Reynolds and Kevin Hart appear briefly in uncredited cameos, while Johnson's real-life cousin, WWE's SmackDown superstar Roman Reigns, plays Hobbs's onscreen brother. Silly and shallow, *Hobbs & Shaw* spins its wheels for an exhausting 137 minutes, although it will still likely appeal to franchise fans. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

### The Girl in the Fog ★★1/2

Icarus, 127 min., in Italian w/ English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$26.99



Making his directorial debut with this ambitious noir-ish crazy-quilt of a film, Donato Carrisi—author of the titular 2015 bestselling novel—takes chances with structure and sense. When a young teenaged girl from an ultra-religious small-town northern Italian family mysteriously disappears, local police chief Vogel (Toni Servillo) must come up with a kidnapper and quickly. So he makes brazen use of unscrupulous methods such as cajoling the media to harass potential suspects to see if they will crack and confess (a method viewers learn has backfired on Vogel at least once before). But when he sets his sights on a seemingly innocuous high school professor as the culprit, he gets much more than he bargains for. The teacher (Alessio Boni) turns the tables on his unscrupulous cop pursuers, after which the line between pursuer and pursued/victim and victimizer starts to get a bit fuzzy. The film's eventual descent into directorial self-indulgence leads to a free-for-all non-conclusion that leaves too many loose ends dangling and never fulfills the promise of the movie's first half. A strong optional purchase. (M. Sandlin)

### Girls of the Sun ★★★

Cohen, 115 min., in French, Kurdish, English & Arabic w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Inspired by a 2014 raid by Islamic State fighters on Kurdish territory, *Girls of the Sun* is a somewhat turgid yet effective story about Kurdish women who survive kidnapping and abuse by ISIS, reinventing themselves as soldiers helping to clear the enemy from Northern Iraq. Mathilde (Emmanuelle Bercot), an eyepatch-wearing French journalist embedded with a female combatant unit, serves as the entry point into their lives and backgrounds. The story's anchor is unit commander Bahar (Golshifteh Farahani), whose mission includes liberating an area where her young son is being held captive. The bond she shares with Mathilde allows her to open up about her pre-capture life as a wife and mother, underscoring her

startling metamorphosis into a weary warrior. (Jihadists believe that women soldiers are a particular threat because being killed by one denies the dead an afterlife in heaven.) While writer-director Eva Husson is guilty of overblown dialogue and unnaturally pumping up the valor of Bahar and others, the film overall is still a compelling portrait of courage. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Good Boys ★★1/2

Universal, 89 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99, Nov. 12



Despite my misgivings about preteens' spewing raunchy vulgarities, filmmaker Gene Stupnitsky's smutty coming-of-age story is amusing, particularly in this era of sensitivity towards topics like sexual identity, bullying, and objectification of women. Opening with a father-and-son talk about masturbation, the story centers on three awkward, affably innocent sixth grade boys who are nervously anticipating their first kissing party. Known as Bean Bag Boys, Max (Jacob Tremblay), Lucas (Keith L. Williams), and Thor (Brady Noon) have been friends since kindergarten. At their suburban middle school, they're mocked as uncool by the Scooter Squad, led by Atticus (Chance Hurstfield). When Max develops a crush on a skateboarding girl (Millie Davis), he turns to Lucas and Thor to search for kissing information on the Internet, practicing on what they think is a CPR doll. When that fails to satisfy their curiosity, they use Max's dad's (Will Forte) expensive drone to spy on a real couple making out. Eventually, they embark on a precarious, five-mile trip to the mall. Meanwhile, Lucas's parents (Retta, Lil Rel Howery) are planning to get a divorce. It soon becomes obvious that 12-year-old boys aren't quite ready to cope with the harsh reality of adult sex toys, BDSM gear, and explicit pornography. *Good Boys* mixes shocking, fresh-faced spontaneity with snappy set pieces revolving around adolescent angst and child-proof locks. While hardly a classic, this is better than expected and should be considered a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

### The Ground Beneath My Feet ★★★

Strand, 108 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Dec. 3



Presenting a brutal study of a highly disciplined survivor of lifelong trauma, this German drama features a remarkable performance by Valerie Pachner as Lola, whose self-containment and buttoned-down world spiral out of her rigid control. A competitive executive in a corporate consultant firm that trims costs at other companies (largely by



At a time when others are conforming, three teenagers stand their ground and assert their right to love and be free. A continued exploration of the adolescent themes introduced in director Philippe Lesage's *The Demons* (also available).

**GENÈSE (AVAILABLE 11/19)**

French Language, Coming-of-Age, Drama  
 DVD only: \$24.95 / PPR: \$200  
 DRL: \$499 / PPR + DRL: \$599  
 UPC: 850003924397



While Montreal is in the throes of a string of kidnappings targeting young boys, ten-year-old Félix becomes afraid of nearly everything he observes, until his imaginary demons begin to mirror those in the disturbing, real-life world around him.

**THE DEMONS (AVAILABLE 11/19)**

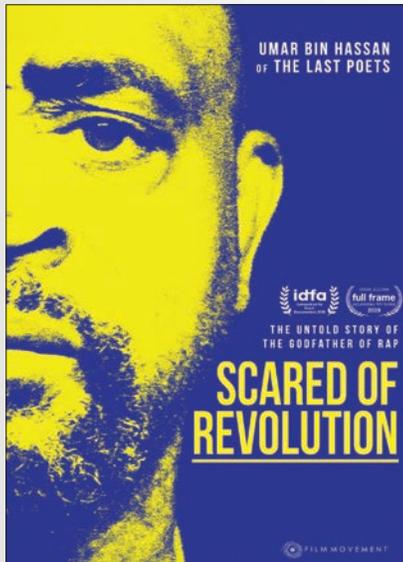
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After a violent event leaves her traumatized and voiceless, 16-year-old Anna is rescued by Basim, a teenage illegal immigrant from the Ivory Coast. Together they embark on a perilous journey through the deserted lands of Sardinia.

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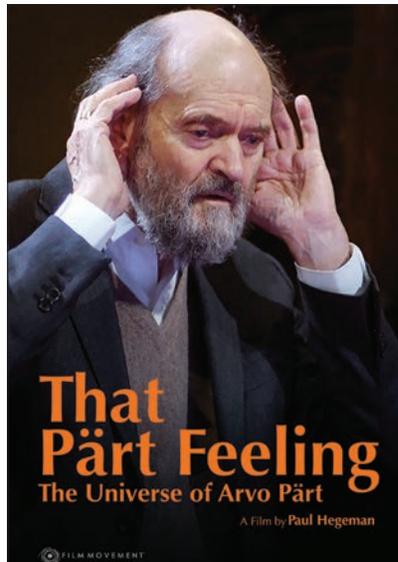
Italian, Coming-of-Age, Drama  
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While battling drug addiction and other demons, Umar Bin Hassan of The Last Poets became a major influence on hip-hop. Now he has committed himself to be the devoted father figure that he was never fortunate enough to know.

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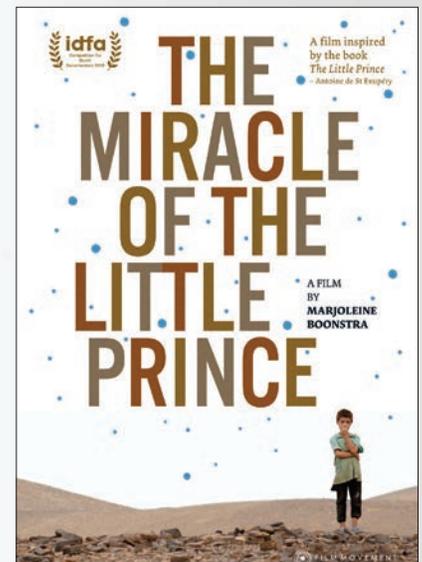
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Documentary, Literature, Anthropology  
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 DRL: \$499 / PPR + DRL: \$599  
 UPC: 850003924427

shedding employees), Lola is on the brink of a major professional success when she is undone by her schizophrenic, suicidal older sister, Conny (Pia Hierzegger). Orphaned at a young age, Lola was raised by Conny, although the latter's mental illness was a big factor in Lola's go-it-alone approach to life. When Conny is admitted to a hospital's psychiatric ward after a suicide attempt, Lola tries to keep the crisis at arm's length, but Conny creates an unwanted distraction for Lola that ruthless colleagues are eager to exploit—including her lover. Writer-director Marie Kreutzer is more interested in character study than in committing to a narrative groove. Lola, for instance, keeps receiving unsettling, vaguely threatening phone calls from Conny in which the latter indicates that she's not in the hospital anymore and is spying on her sister, but Kreutzer ultimately drops this mystery with no explanation, vaguely implying that Lola's anxiety and imagination are running wild. But quibbles about the plot can be brushed aside on the strength of Pachner and Hierzegger's intense performances. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

**Gwen ★★1/2**

RLJ, 84 min., not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Blu-ray: \$28.99



Filmmaker William McGregor's bleak drama about women struggling to survive in the male-dominated, industrializing countryside of 19th-century Wales initially carries suggestions of supernatural evil, but ultimately implies that the real horror lies in man's capacity for cruelty and greed. The titular character (Eleanor Worthington-Cox) is a teen scraping out a living with her mother Elen (Maxine Peake) and younger sister (Jodie Innes) on a desolate plot in the Welsh mountains, where they raise potatoes and keep a flock of sheep. In their isolated stone cabin, Gwen hears strange noises, sees wispy apparitions, and has persistent nightmares, while the wind shrieks constantly under the slate-gray sky. Elen herself is subject to increasingly frequent fits, shutting herself up alone in her room and cutting her arms as a primitive mode of bloodletting. Although Gwen seeks help from a local doctor, he requires payment for medicine, and the situation is made more difficult by the fact that Elen is holding out against the local lord's effort to expand his empire by acquiring her land. When the women's sheep suddenly die and their potatoes spoil, it might be his work—or the doing of some malignant force. The escalating mini-war between the magnate and the family leads to an act of stunning brutality that is implied to be inevitable given the callousness of the time and place. Worthington-Cox gives the helpless heroine a look of haunted desperation, and the film's visuals add a Dickensian feel, but McGregor's dilatory pacing makes

for a film that is strikingly atmospheric but also narratively murky. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

**Hesburgh ★★★**

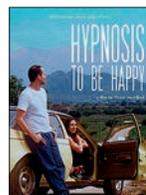
Music Box, 106 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95



After watching Patrick Creadon's documentary about Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC (1917-2015), President of the University of Notre Dame from 1952-87, one might reasonably wonder whether the film is intended as part of the cause for his canonization, especially since it contains few criticisms, apart from occasional nasty remarks by people such as Richard Nixon, George Wallace, and arch-conservative Vatican bureaucrats. Much of it is narrated in Hesburgh's own words—both through excerpts from his memoirs read by Maurice LaMarche and in older interviews—covering the subject's life from childhood up through his retirement, and augmenting these reminiscences with archival footage and stills, as well as comments from admirers, colleagues, friends, relatives, and ex-students. The documentary recounts Hesburgh's meteoric rise and success in taking Notre Dame to high academic standards while also leading American Catholic universities to declare their embrace of academic freedom in the face of potential interference from Rome. Hesburgh's commitment and friendship with students is also emphasized, although these relationships were sorely tested by campus unrest against the Vietnam War, as well as his unstinting support of successors, particularly during times of dissent against their policies. The film also stresses Hesburgh's wider service, especially as a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission appointed by President Eisenhower, where he was able to forge agreement among its disparate membership through dexterous management. Even though it verges on hagiography, *Hesburgh* presents a persuasive portrait of a man who served both his university and his country with vigor and dedication. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Hypnosis to Be Happy ★★★**

IndiePix, 75 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



In this Genesis-in-reverse fable from Mexico, Felipe (Antón Araiza) and Pilar (Erica Ramirez) escape the troubles of their separate lives as well as a rocky new relationship, literally returning to the garden for renewal. On their fourth date, in the film's opening scene, the two roam through an art gallery so pristine, ethereal, and white it suggests the void that God recently filled with light only. Within are jet black, familiar sculptures,

including Michelangelo's "Pietà" and Rodin's "The Thinker," presaging (at least in this odd, suggestively Old Testament space) rough drafts of humanity and woes ahead. We hear Pilar and Felipe's complaining inner thoughts about one another's approaches to love and finding life's meaning. And then at dinner, Felipe incredibly proposes to a stunned Pilar, who rejects him on the grounds that they barely know each other. A series of disturbing events follow that make Felipe look and act like an intimidating control freak—and Pilar is very anxious to get away. But things calm down and the two dive deep into a kind of paradise, where they are stripped of the neurotic agendas, mind games, and desperate impulses that drive so many of our actions. Filmmaker Victor Audiffred reflects on what it means to be a human rewinding to an original state of purity and wonder in this film that isn't overtly Christian, but rather a story based on the touchstones of a creation myth. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

**In the Aisles ★★★1/2**

Music Box, 125 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

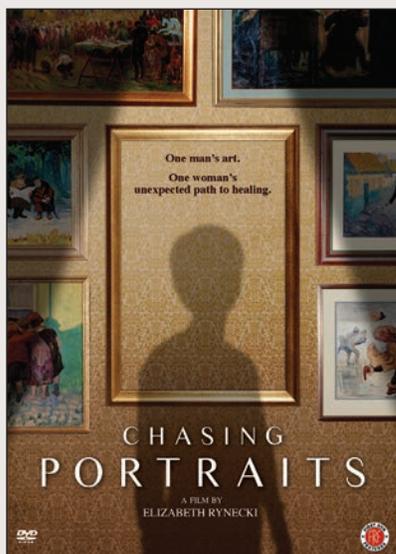


Shopping at Costco will never be the same after watching this surprisingly profound German dramedy. What starts out looking like a rom-com—cleverly set in the long aisles, meat lockers, and employee break room at a big-box store—gradually takes on a more melancholy tone as it goes deeper into existential angst. Franz Rogowski plays Christian, a laconic young man with the air of a troubled past. Hired to start work at a huge retail establishment, he begins as a stacker in the beverages corridor under the supervision of the deeply weary but avuncular Bruno (Peter Kurth). In no time, Christian, peering past bottles on shelves, sees Marion (Sandra Hüller), an appealing co-worker who tends to the sugary sweets aisle. Flirting soon commences, with a distinct erotic edge. Bruno and other colleagues notice the spark, but telegraph that Marion is vulnerable and Christian shouldn't toy with her. And that's not his intention, but as he learns the truth about Marion, he's also faced with hard questions about what he can really do to alter anyone's reality beyond the walls of a work culture. Co-writer and director Thomas Stuber masterfully shepherds this insightful tale from start to finish, all the while making excellent visual use of the film's obvious metaphor (those single-lane aisles) without milking it. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

**Intimacy ★1/2**

IndiePix, 101 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

You might call this "Still Life with Cell Phones." Bin (Xinpeng Zhang), a restless



### Chasing Portraits

78 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917926D  
ON DVD NOVEMBER 26

Moshe Rynecki (1881-1943) was a prolific Warsaw-based artist who painted scenes of the Polish-Jewish community until he was murdered at Majdanek concentration camp. After the Holocaust, Moshe's wife was only able to recover a small fraction of his work, but unbeknownst to the family, many other pieces survived.

For more than a decade his great-granddaughter, Elizabeth Rynecki, has searched for the missing art, with remarkable and unexpected success. Spanning three generations, *Chasing Portraits* is a deeply moving narrative of the richness of one man's art, the devastation of war, and one woman's unexpected path to healing.

*"Part 'Woman in Gold' and part family home movie, with shades of 'Everything Is Illuminated' and Antiques Roadshow, the documentary 'Chasing Portraits' is both funnier and deeper than even its compelling premise suggests."*  
-LA Weekly

*"'Chasing Portraits' is about a search. Yet the most affecting parts of this documentary come with the realization that some things may never be found."*

-New York Times



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-The Gate



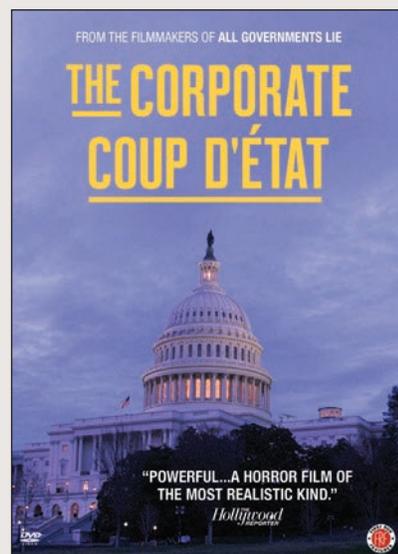
### The Corporate Coup d'État

90 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917919D  
ON DVD NOVEMBER 12

Provocative and revealing, this investigative documentary exposes how corporations and billionaires have taken control of the American political process, and in doing so have brought economic hardship and ruin to vast swaths of the country. The film combines insights from political thinkers and journalists with the experiences of citizens in the "sacrifice zones" of Camden, NJ and Youngstown, OH, where factory closures and outsourcing have created a grim landscape of desolation and human suffering.

*"Powerful. It examines the ways in which corporate interests increasingly control society."*  
-The Hollywood Reporter

*"The explicit message of the film, presented with a necessary blue-in-the-face urgency, is that Donald Trump isn't an aberration, but the continuation and inevitable result of a political system overcome by total corporate capture."*  
-The Georgia Straight



### Octav

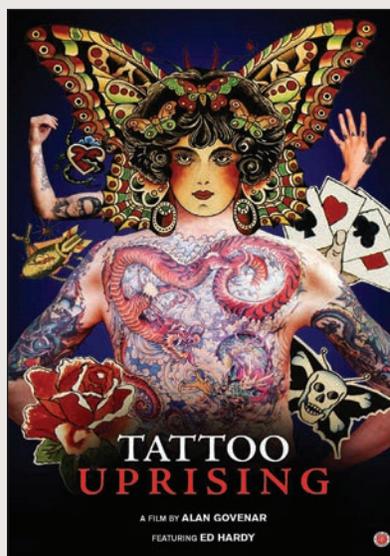
100 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917902D  
AVAILABLE NOW

When a man returns to his childhood villa, a familiar-looking little girl takes him on a wondrous journey back to the innocence of his early years in pre-war Romania.

Starring Marcel Iures (*Interview With A Vampire*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*), this life-affirming film celebrates the purity of childhood, friendship, love and the bitter-sweetness of nostalgia.

*"With a delicate romanticism that often accompanies childhood introspection, Octav is a universal movie about making peace with the past to understand the present."* -RogerEbert.com

104 FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS!



### Tattoo Uprising

75 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917933D  
ON DVD DECEMBER 10

Featuring some of the most extraordinary artists in the tattoo world including Ed Hardy, Stoney St. Clair, Cynthia Witkin and Anne de Hey!, *Tattoo Uprising* reveals the artistic and historical roots of today's tattoo explosion, from thousands of years ago to our modern day, ever-evolving use of the tattoo.

*"This forty-years-in-the-making documentary celebrates the art of inking human bodies."*  
-This Week in New York

*"Wide-ranging and interesting."*  
-The Hollywood Reporter

young man in the Chinese town of Dali, lives with his dispassionate mother and works at her open-air tourist shop. Bin announces one day over dinner that he is going to move to Shanghai, where his world will be broader and opportunities will arise. Qin (Jingxuan Huang) is the spoiled daughter of a wealthy divorced father who doesn't like to rehash painful subjects concerning Qin's mother, leaving the young woman in an emotional void. Qin tries to mitigate the pain by sleeping late, seeing friends, having sex, and generally ignoring her dad's wishes that she would get a job. Bin and Qin have a couple of things in common: both spend a lot of time looking at their phones, and they feel empty and alienated, unable to find a meaningful connection or purpose in life. Inevitably, they find one another, digitally speaking, opening up to each other on their phones. It's an interesting idea and is structured as parallel stories, but filmmaker Yichun Jiang is so intent on demonstrating how time passes slowly when one is lonely that the viewer might reasonably check (more than once) to see if the pause button on the remote was accidentally pushed. *Intimacy* is a drama that feels mannered and calculated, with characters that only become more ghostly through their tangential tie. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)



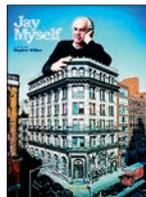
**Is That You? ★1/2**  
*Breaking Glass*, 107 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

A viewer's patience is sorely tested while watching this glacially-paced creepshow about a daddy's girl who assumes her father's fetishistic, monstrous demeanor after he's gone. Lili (Gabriela Ramos) is the teen daughter of Alina (Lynn Cruz) and Eduardo (Osvaldo Doimeadiós). *Is That You?* begins with the grotesque sight of Eduardo sniffing a captive and miserable Alina's feet, one of his less brutal practices with her. Tying her ankles so that she can't get very far, restraining her with ropes, and beating her for unspecified reasons he nevertheless alludes to, Eduardo is a horrifying presence. But he's pleasant with Lili, making it difficult for her to request he go easier on her mother. But then Eduardo disappears, and a visit to a medium leads to Lili becoming more like her father, suddenly imprisoning and beating Alina. Is Lili possessed by Eduardo, or has she been eclipsed by his stronger personality? It's impossible not to think of Hitchcock's *Psycho* and its theme of an eternally dominant parent in the subconscious. But ultimately this funereal Cuban horror flick is submarined by its drunken-snail's pace. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)



**Jay Myself ★★★**  
*Oscilloscope*, 79 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Jay Maisel, an 88-year-old professional photographer whose life and artistic legacy has inspired many other shutterbugs to capture fleeting moments of revelatory composition, color, light, and human experience, is the subject of this jaunty, although ultimately melancholy, documentary. The director, Stephen Wilkes, was a wide-eyed assistant to Maisel back in 1979, absorbing daily lessons in photography from the master, and surviving Maisel's blunt appraisal of Wilkes's own pictures. Decades later, *Jay Myself* came together when word was out that Maisel had sold a 36,000 square foot building he purchased a half-century ago, a former bank in Manhattan's SoHo district. Maisel bought the place with a down payment of \$25,000. No longer able, due to his advanced age, to pay for upkeep on the place, Maisel has let it go for \$55 million. The catch: he has five months to move out, a Herculean challenge given that every inch of the six-floor structure is full of stuff (from nails to bottles to hubcaps) that Maisel has kept. Wilkes tracks the extensive process of boxing and bagging up everything, but he also spends time with his former cantankerous mentor, whose next stage in life prompts reflections on the one currently wrapping up. *Jay Myself* is not just for photography enthusiasts: Maisel's message is that seeing what is in front of us, really looking at the transient miracles that comprise a given moment, will bring "infinite joy." Recommended. (T. Keogh)



**The Lion King ★★★1/2**  
*Disney*, 118 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Why another remake after the original animated feature and Broadway musical adaptation? Simply, because new eye-popping photo-animation makes *The Lion King* look as if it is all live-action. The story begins with King Mufasa (James Earl Jones) and his mate Sarabi (Alfre Woodard) introducing newborn Simba to the savannah—much to the consternation of the king's jealous brother Scar (Chiwetel Ejiofor). A while later, after young Simba warbles "I Just Can't Wait to Be King," conniving Scar lures Simba into a steep ravine where malevolent hyenas launch a wildebeest stampede. After making sure that Mufasa takes a fatal plunge, treacherous Scar slyly convinces Simba that it was all his fault—leaving the latter no choice but to flee. In his travels, now-adult Simba (Donald Glover) acquires two carefree companions—witty meerkat Timon (Billy Eichner) and genial-if-gassy warthog Pumbaa (Seth Rogen)—who teach him their



philosophy: "Hakuna Matata," meaning "no worries." Meanwhile, sneering Scar and his scavenging hyenas turn the fertile Pride Lands into barren desert. Eventually, Simba's best friend/betrothed Nala (Beyoncé) convinces him to return to assume his rightful role as king. Augmenting Hans Zimmer's score with the classic tunes by Elton John and Tim Rice and a new song by Beyoncé (almost sure to be Oscar-nominated), this is highly recommended. (S. Granger)

**Long Day's Journey Into Night ★★1/2**

*Kino Lorber*, 140 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95, Nov. 26

Chinese auteur Bi Gan's sophomore feature is ponderous, self-indulgent, and opaque, but still an engrossing example of cinematic virtuosity. This modern film noir begins with world-weary protagonist Luo Hongwu (Huang Jue) ruminating about his unhappiness as he awakens in a seedy hotel room. Luo bemoans the emptiness of his life since he lost his girlfriend, the beautiful Wan Qiwen (Tang Wei). At his family's restaurant he discovers a photo of Wan in the workings of a broken wall clock, with a telephone number written on the back. And this prompts him to search for her, introducing an hour-long tracking shot that starts in a theatre, moves into a series of tunnels where Luo encounters a boy (presumably a dead childhood friend) who challenges him to a ping-pong game as the price of escape, and continues by motorcycle and cable-car to an outdoor arena where he meets an abrasive young woman also played by Wei. Gan is obviously not interested in telling a conventional story, relying instead on mood and suggestion as he uses the noir template to ponder such themes as the illusory nature of time and the difficulty of discerning between reality, dream, and hallucination—all expressed through a deliberately fractured narrative. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* represents a triumph of style over substance, but even viewers bewildered by the slow-moving story may still find its hypnotic spell to be irresistible. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



**Maiden ★★★**  
*Sony*, 97 min., PG, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$31.99

As Alex Holmes's exciting documentary begins, the camera captures a blustery day on the roiling sea as Tracy Edwards's voiceover warns that the "ocean is always trying to kill you." Back in 1989, when Edwards was in her early 20s, she mortgaged her home to restore an old boat that she re-christened *Maiden*. Edwards then assembled the first all-female

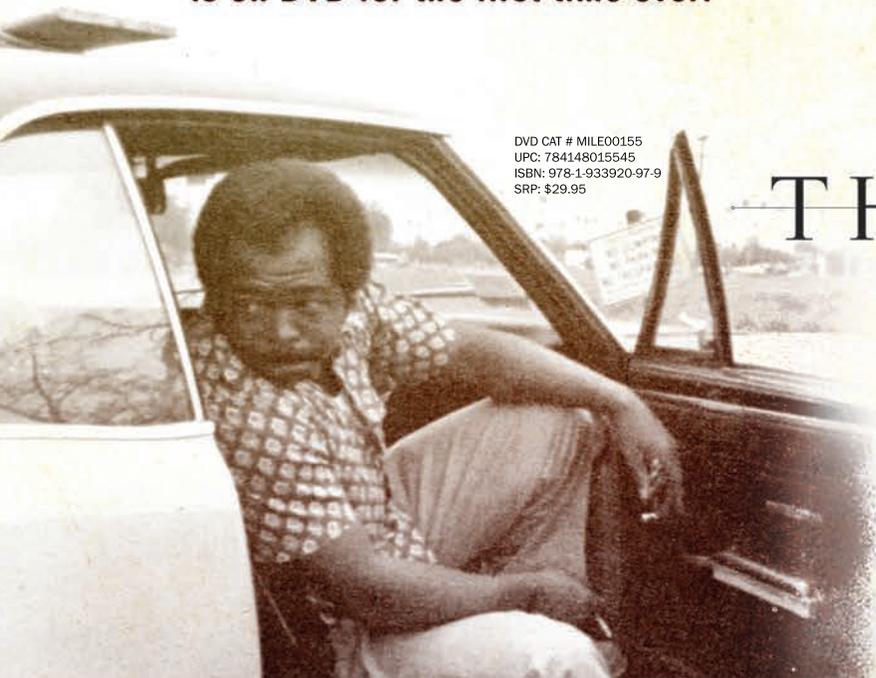


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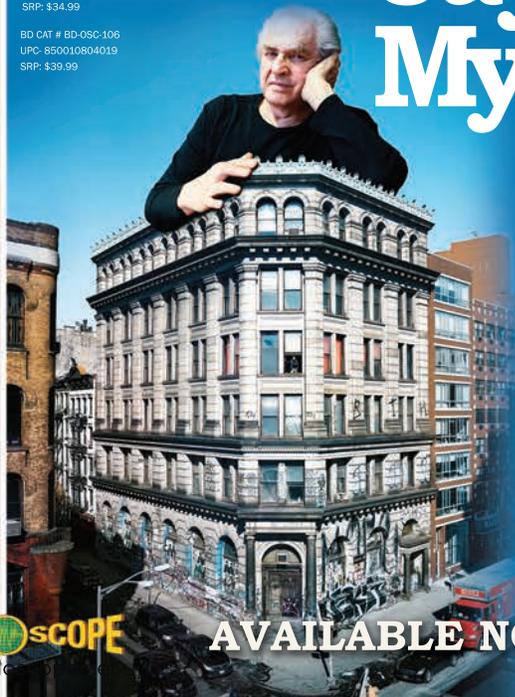
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crew to enter the grueling nine-month open sea Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race (now called the Ocean Race). As a rebellious youngster, Edwards ran away from home in the aftermath of her father's death, settling in a British seaside town. Since girls weren't allowed to crew, she took a job as cook/cleaner on a yacht. Mixing archival footage with insightful interviews and wry social commentary featuring Edwards and her competitive crew members, Holmes delivers an empowering sports tale, filled with surprising suspense. Unfortunately, the only area he doesn't explore is how Edwards accumulated enough seafaring knowledge to catapult directly from cook/cleaner to yachting captain. Holmes and Edwards do make the point that sponsorships were so difficult to acquire that she eventually appealed to King Hussein of Jordan, who she befriended when she was a lowly deckhand. Once committed to the 33,000-nautical mile voyage for 1989-90, Edwards was beset by problems, including mocking misogynistic journalists who referred to the *Maiden* as "a tin full of tarts," the departure of cohort Marie-Claude Heys, and the brutally grueling Uruguay-to-Australia passage in which temperatures dropped down to -20 degrees. A rousing, real-life feminist adventure, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

### Master Z: Ip Man Legacy

★★★1/2

*Well Go USA, 108 min., in Cantonese w/English subtitles and English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99*



A spin-off of the *Ip Man* films, this Hong Kong/China actioner follows the path of Cheung Tin Chi (Max Zhang), a self-described master of Wing Chun who was defeated by Ip Man in *Ip Man 3*. As *Master Z* opens, Chun has turned his back on martial arts to run a grocery store and raise his son in peace in Hong Kong. But in the tradition of such stories, he is drawn back into violence to defend two women from a gang and he ends up battling both the thugs that terrorize the streets and the corrupt police who are in the pocket of the drug dealers. *Master Z* is set in the early 1960s, when the police force was under the jurisdiction of the British colonial government, and it traces the root of corruption to arrogant westerners in Hong Kong. Directed by legendary action choreographer Yuen Wo Ping, the film features superb martial-arts scenes and colorful production design, notably in a dazzling street set that looks like an inner-city Vegas strip lit by neon signs that become props in one of the centerpiece fight scenes. Michelle Yeoh costars as the regal head of the crime family, Thai action star Tony Jaa has a small role as a hired thug, and Dave Bautista is the local restaurateur who runs the drug trade. The script follows a familiar formula but de-

livers on action and spectacle, while Zhang makes a fine hero, and Bautista and Yeoh lend the film a little star power. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### Mercury in Retrograde

★★★1/2

*Emphasis, 105 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$19.99*



In filmmaker Michael Glover Smith's chamber drama, an astronomical optical illusion—in which Mercury appears to reverse its orbit—is presented as a sort of astrological prediction about what will happen to three Chicago couples when they spend a weekend together at a rustic cabin in Michigan. Jack (Jack C. Newell), whose father owns the place, and Golda (Alana Arenas) are middle-aged and married; Richard (Kevin Wehby) and Isabelle (Roxane Mesquida) have been together for awhile, but have not yet tied the knot; and Wyatt (Shane Simmons) and Peggy (Najarra Townsend), having only recently become an item, are still getting to know one another. They discuss their pasts, beliefs, and dreams in extended conversations, both as a group and after they break up into male-female groups, with the guys engaging in a cigar-and-whiskey fueled analysis of a Dashiell Hammett novel while the gals repair to a bar in a nearby town and talk about their hopes and regrets. Fissures are revealed within the two younger couples even as Jack and Golda rekindle their old passion, and the importance of making good choices is emphasized when Jack's widowed dad (Andrew Sensenig) shows up to offer an older perspective on life and love. The acting has a naturalistic feel even when Smith's dialogue and plotting fall into cliché and pretension, but ultimately *Mercury in Retrograde* is more verbose than illuminating. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Midsommar

★★★1/2  
*Lionsgate, 147 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99*



It's impossible to watch Ari Aster's pastoral/pagan horror film without recalling Robin Hardy's 1973 mystery-thriller *The Wicker Man*. In what is almost a remake, the story revolves around traumatized Dani (Florence Pugh), who discovers that her bipolar sister murdered their parents and committed suicide. For years, Dani has been in a rocky relationship with self-absorbed Christian (Jack Reynor). When Christian's Swedish pal Pelle (Vilhelm Blomgren) suggests they all visit the remote commune where he grew up to observe a once-in-a-century midsummer purification festival, they head off with some other grad school anthropologists to the picturesque village of Harga, which is filled with runic symbols

that are stitched into costumes, intricately carved into wood/stone, and play a pivotal role in the feasts' dining-table arrangement. Under the leadership of Siv (Gunnel Fred), the matriarch/officiant, Harga divides life into four 18-year divisions: childhood, pilgrimage, working, and elderhood. Hallucinogens are rampant here, and the unwitting "outsiders" experience gruesome horrors, while Dani is forced to make a dreadful choice. This malevolent melodrama's ghoulish intensity owes a great deal to cinematographer Pawel Pogorzelski and production designer Henrik Svensson. But it is a derivative film, filled with sinister, sadistic rituals. A movie that split critics, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

### Mike Wallace Is Here

★★★

*Magnolia, 91 min., PG-13, DVD: \$26.99*



Filmmaker Avi Belkin's documentary correctly and effectively makes the point that Mike Wallace (1918-2012)—who became famous as the "gotcha" correspondent on *60 Minutes*—represented a new kind of TV journalism, helping to spawn the pugnacious style that is common among cable pundits today. While Wallace's importance in the advent of "ambush" television is addressed here, that is just a part of the mosaic of the newsman's life that Belkin explores in a hectic cascade of frenetically-edited archival footage—with frequent split screens—and observational commentary. *Mike Wallace Is Here* is a full-scale biography, going back to Wallace's hardscrabble youth and his relentless ambition that led to a breathless career as a pitchman, would-be actor, and announcer before he found his niche with hard-hitting late-night TV interviews, which led to his segue into serious journalism at CBS News. Wallace initially irritated some of his CBS colleagues but he eventually earned respect and renown as a distinguished elder statesman in the field. Belkin concentrates on Wallace's infamous in-your-face investigative pieces (including his groundbreaking report on the tobacco industry) and his celebrity profiles, while also looking at his personal life, drawing on excerpts from archival interviews with Wallace and others to cover family crises (such as the tragic death of Wallace's son Peter), and the clinical depression that led Wallace to suicidal thoughts in his later years. Although as imperfect as its subject, this is a compelling portrait of a TV journalist who, despite undeniable flaws, made a difference in both style and substance. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Mock & Roll

★★★  
*MVD Visual, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95*

Mockumentaries about faux rock 'n' roll bands have become almost commonplace

# Edie

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Following the death of her husband, Edie (Sheila Hancock) breaks free from years of his control and rebels against her daughter's wish for her to move into assisted living by embarking on an adventure she and her father had always longed for: a trip to the Scottish Highlands to climb the world famous Mt. Suilven. Along the way, she hires young camping shop owner Jonny (Kevin Guthrie) to be her guide. Despite the generational differences, Jonny encourages Edie to fulfill her dream.

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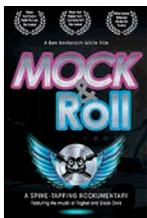
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since Eric Idle and Gary Weis's 1978 *The Rutles: All You Need Is Cash* and Rob Reiner's 1984 *This Is Spinal Tap*. Filmmaker Ben Bacharach-White's *Mock & Roll* is a solid entry in the mini-genre, following the travails of a clueless quartet called Liberty Mean, who somehow landed upon the idea that being a parody band (covering the songs of a far more famous group but changing the latter's lyrics) could be their road to success. Liberty Mean's musicians—Robin (Aditi Molly Bhanja), Rick (Chris Wolfe), Tom (Pakob Jarernpone), and Bun (Andrew Yackel)—decide that their next step is to raise enough money to get to the South by Southwest music festival in Austin. The urge to make a quick score leads them into an art theft circle where guns and craziness are the norm, landing Liberty Mean in jail (more than once). Bacharach-White and his fellow writers and excellent cast carve out a fresh take on the rock mockumentary formula, eschewing subplots involving managers, record companies, roadies, drugs, and so on. The emphasis instead is on four ambitious, well-meaning, racially- and gender-diverse musicians who actually sound very good but are quite naive and gullible. The band's cultural literacy and quick wit brings snap to the dialogue, while also proving that being smart doesn't guarantee an instinct for survival. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Mom + Mom ★★★

Strand, 81 min., in Italian w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Nov. 12

Ali (Maria Roveran) and Karole (Linda Caridi) are a lesbian couple who yearn to have a baby. Karole, a lifelong rebel, dreams that the pair already have one, but that the child is missing. In the dream, a stranger in a car gives Karole a cell phone and the number of the Virgin Mary, who supposedly helps with these problems. And that subconscious reference to a Catholic icon is not random. Ali and Karole live in Italy, where it is legally questionable (and strongly frowned upon) for same-sex couples to have kids. So, the warm, instinctively maternal Ali and the more frayed and confrontational but loving Karole have to fly to Spain repeatedly for fertility treatments—each trip a costly venture requiring creative fundraising. The pair rent out rooms in their apartment, sell possessions, and teach a guy to make pasta. Meanwhile, other people in their lives are also having crises, and there is the constant presence of a straight mascot (Andrea Tagliafferri), a *Seinfeld*-ian Kramer-like figure who Ali regards as a (mooching) sibling surrogate. Hormone treatments, insemination failures, peaking emotions, and the reactions of some



who question the morality of same-sex parents make this journey harder. Yet for Karole, especially, the prospect of creating new life becomes a prompt to reconcile and reconnect with some unfinished business of her own. Co-writer and director Karole Di Tommaso's well-acted, sweetly appealing, autobiographical dramedy is leavened with dollops of magical realism that underscore the primal depths of a couple's desire to make a baby, no matter the physical and social barriers. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### One Bedroom ★★★

Breaking Glass, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Veteran film and TV actor Darien Sills-Evans wrote, directed, and costars in this breakup dramedy about a seemingly mismatched couple who may or may not be calling it quits. Sills-Evans plays Nate, a barber/music instructor/college-party DJ who has acquired a reputation as an immature child-man and serial philanderer. His live-in girlfriend, Melissa (Devin Nelson), is a serious schoolteacher whose frustrations with Nate have boiled over, although she's not entirely been a saint either. On a sunny afternoon, Melissa is moving out; her possessions are being loaded into the back of a truck. That situation becomes the perfect framing device for watching Nate and Melissa argue and reminisce one last time, with more than a little regret, about the past: the good times, the stupid stuff, betrayals, raised hopes, and dashed dreams. The story bounces from moving day, to flashbacks of their early relationship, to Nate's grievances shared with fellow barbers (they both advise and give him grief). *One Bedroom* explores what's holding the lovers back from a real bond in a nuanced manner, even as their individual hang-ups and weaknesses make good fodder for warm comedy. The casting is half the film's success, with the two strong leads receiving fine support from Stephen Hill as Melissa's protective brother, Amber Reauchean Williams as her outspoken best friend, and Jon Laster as Nate's buddy who has a hilariously inflated sense of alpha male authority. Sills-Evans is confident behind the camera; while much of the movie is shot in an apartment, the visuals never become redundant or airless. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Ophelia ★★

Shout! Factory, 107 min., PG-13, DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.99, Nov. 5

In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia goes crazy after her father Polonius is murdered by her lover, the titular Danish prince. Supposedly, she falls into a river while picking flowers, singing as she slowly drowns. Set in 14th-century



Elsinore, Australian director Claire McCarthy's film, adapted from Lisa Klein's titular 2006 YA novel, offers a revisionist perspective. "You may think you know my story," Ophelia (Daisy Ridley) says, adding, "I was always a willful girl." Indeed, at the age of 10, motherless Ophelia snuck into a royal banquet where, overhearing a conversation about Eve's Biblical temptation, she declared: "I think the apple was quite innocent in the matter." Unlike other young women of that era, headstrong Ophelia knows how to read, a skill that appeals to Queen Gertrude (Naomi Watts), who likes Ophelia to read bawdy medieval erotica aloud to her. And that, added to her familiarity with particular herbs, quickly elevates Ophelia to favored lady-in-waiting status, and she makes trip-after-trip into the woods to visit the hermit's hovel belonging to the witch Mechtild (also Watts) to obtain elixirs and potions for the "fickle, frail" Queen. Meanwhile, after his father dies, Prince Hamlet (George MacKay) returns home to take his rightful place on the throne, but his ambitious Uncle Claudius (Clive Owen) has other ideas, romantically pursuing sister-in-law Gertrude, which sparks rumors about the late monarch's demise. While the production design (elegant costumes, lush cinematography) is sumptuous, Steven Price's loud, pretentious score drowns out much of the dialogue in this slick but silly film in which the feminist novelty quickly wears off. Optional. (S. Granger)

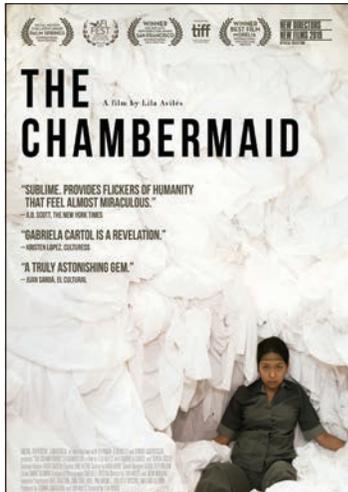
### The Proposal ★★★

Oscilloscope, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

American conceptual artist and writer Jill Magid's first film is ostensibly a celebration of modernist Mexican architect Luis Barragán (1902-1988), who won the Pritzker Prize in 1980. But its real purpose is to penetrate the control over his archives wielded by a woman who limits accessibility. Through interviews with Barragán's friends and colleagues in Mexico, Magid details how the materials were sold to a Swiss businessman whose wife, Federica Zanco, an architectural scholar, took charge of as president of the Barragán Foundation. The organization's supposed purpose is to encourage wider appreciation of Barragán's work, but in practice it has restricted use of the archives by outsiders. Much of the film consists of readings from letters exchanged between Magid and Zanco, the former requesting access to the archives while the latter politely refuses. And then, with permission from Barragán's family, Magid makes a startling proposal to Zanco, offering her a diamond made from the architect's cremated ashes if she returns the archives to Mexico. She even clandestinely films the meeting with Zanco and her husband where she



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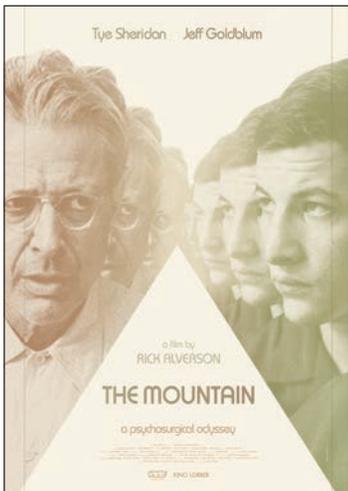
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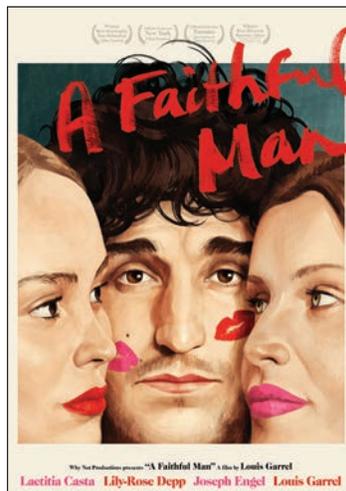
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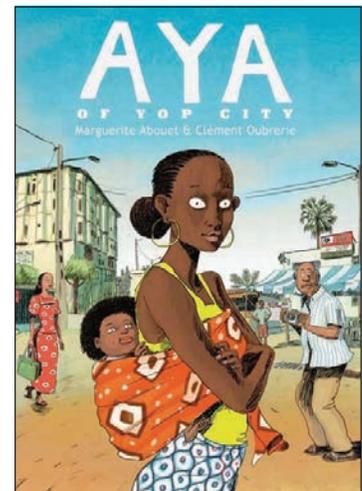
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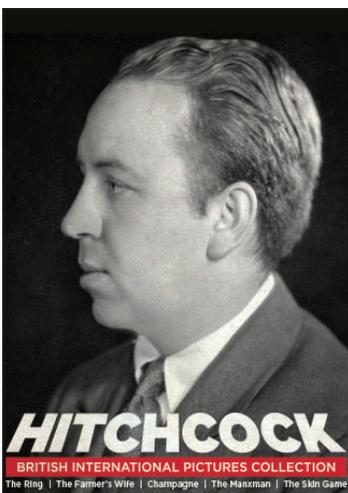
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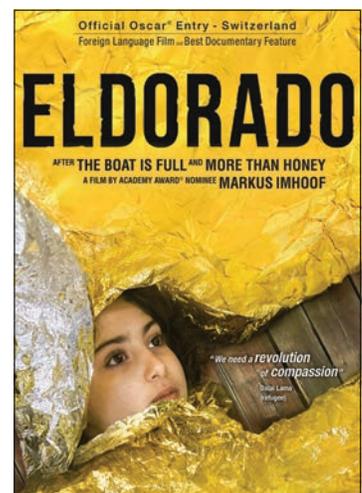
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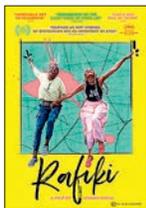
**ELDORADO**  
 STREET DATE: 12/17/19  
 DVD UPC: 738329241902

unveils this idea. *The Proposal* is less a work about Barragán than a piece of performance art in which Magid seeks to break through the wall of secrecy that Zanco's foundation has built around Barragán's archives. As such it represents an intriguing and often amusing example of Magid's idiosyncratic art in practice. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Rafiki ★★★

Film Movement, 83 min., in English & Swahili w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

*Rafiki* drew international attention when it became the first Kenyan feature in an official Cannes Film Festival lineup and at the same moment was banned in Kenya for its sympathetic portrayal of a gay relationship (the African nation's High Court overturned the ban). In reality, this is a fairly chaste story about two teenage girls who fall in love—a socially forbidden and legally perilous situation in Kenya—depicted with low-key delicacy by co-writer and director Wanuri Kahiu. Kena (Samantha Mugatsia) is a grungy skateboarder given to wearing baseball caps backward and hanging out like a kid sister with the boys. Ziki (Sheila Munyiva) appears in an explosion of colors, like a tropical bird, and is both more daring and ambitious than Kena. The pair bond and become lovers, although their visibility as a couple shocks their community—not only on moral grounds but also because their fathers are competing against one another in an upcoming election. Kahiu presents this world as a tiny, thriving pool of crosscurrent energies, a provincial setting where a cheerful town stud, a malevolent gossip, petty jealousies, dashed dreams, festive nights, and underachievement all add up to normalcy. But that everyday-life-vener is cracked in a horrifying manner when a mob mentality aroused by hatred of Ziki and Kena's relationship turns physically and emotionally violent. Mugatsia and Munyiva lead an excellent cast in a heart-breaking tale about trying to hold on in an often senseless world. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Room 37: The Mysterious Death of Johnny Thunders ★★1/2

MVD, 100 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

Most movies that blend horror with rock 'n' roll turn out to be regrettable camp-fests with guitar-playing zombies. In its better moments, this film by sibling directors Fernando Cordero Caballero and Vicente Cordero channel psychological phantasmagorias like *The Shining* and *Barton Fink* in what-if riffing on a real-life tragedy in the music world: the shadowy 1991 death in New Orleans of John



Anthony Genzale, aka Johnny Thunders of the New York Dolls. Battling addiction in a seedy French Quarter hotel in a bid to see his little daughter, the rocker (Leo B. Ramsey) finds his methadone missing—apparently stolen by an old invalid woman in the next room—and he subsequently succumbs to macabre paranoia and visions of a killer redneck pusher and the drowned ghost of Dolls drummer Billy Murcia (another drug casualty). A rational explanation for the weird events may disappoint viewers accustomed to kitschy paranormal activity, but this small-scale feature still casts an effective spell. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

### Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark ★★★

Lionsgate, 108 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Nov. 5

Guillermo del Toro produced this socially conscious, surprisingly grim, "gateway horror" anthology geared toward younger viewers that is based on Alvin Schwartz's titular trilogy (grotesquely illustrated by Stephen Gammell) and revolves around teenagers in 1968. The film opens with aspiring writer Stella (Zoe Colletti) noting: "Stories hurt and stories heal." In the shadow of the Vietnam War, a group of friends, led by Stella, whose mother abandoned her and her father several years ago, investigates a haunted house on Halloween. In the small town of Mill Valley, PA, the Bellows family mansion has cast a spooky shadow for years. It was here that young Sarah Bellows (Kathleen Pollard), now a vengeful ghost, turned her imprisoned life into scary stories about memorable monsters, which Stella and her friends now discover. Stella's buddies include Ramon Morales (Michael Garza), the target of Hispanic racism, Augie (Gabriel Rush), Chuck (Austin Zajur), and Ruth (Natalie Ganzhorn). Directed by Norway's André Øvredal, the ensuing tales interweave lies with truth, encouraging youngsters to face and learn from their fears. In "The Red Spot," a girl pops a pimple on her cheek, releasing hundreds of baby spiders incubating inside her. "The Pale Lady" features a fleshy figure with a smiling, misshapen face relentlessly plodding down a red-lit hallway. "Jangly Man," a figure who disassembles and reassembles, pursues his prey. And the cockroach-oozing scarecrow "Harold" seeks revenge. Recommended. (S. Granger)



### Socrates ★★

Breaking Glass, 71 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Fifteen-year-old Socrates (Christian Malheiros), who lives in the slums of São Paulo, loses his mother and suddenly finds himself trying to navigate an adult world of job interviews, paying rent, and ridiculous bureau-

cracies, all while fending off child welfare officials. Fighting for his independence, Socrates's anxiety grows as he enters into his first relationship—with an enigmatic character (Tales Ordakji) who tries unsuccessfully to keep Socrates out of certain corners of his own sketchy existence. When Socrates's long-lost, abusive father shows up to claim the boy, Socrates runs and hides deeper underground, eating from garbage to stay alive. Everything leads to a predictable moment of despair, but there is no resolution, making this little more than an obvious story about a kid with nothing but the worst possible luck. Which is a shame, since filmmaker Alexandre Moratto and his teenage actors do a fine job of keeping the action moving briskly and knowing how to ratchet up the sometimes explosive energy. Optional. (T. Keogh)



### The Third Wife ★★★1/2

Film Movement, 96 min., in Vietnamese w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.99

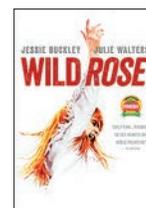
Writer-director Ash Mayfair's debut feature, set in 19th-century Vietnam, focuses on May (Nguyen Phuong Tra My), a 14-year-old whose family has arranged for a marriage between her and a wealthy landowner named Hung (Le Vu Long). The film's title refers to May's status as the polygamist Hung's third wife, following Xuan (Mai Thu Huong Maya) and Ha (Tran Nu Yên-Khê). The young May quickly realizes that her role in the household is to produce another son for Hung, whose only other male child—named Son (Nguyen Thanh Tam)—is being prepared for his own marriage. But Son bitterly rejects the woman chosen for him and May finds herself increasingly attracted to the free-spirited Xuan—who, in turn, is infatuated with Son, the child of Hung and Ha. *The Third Wife* is not lacking in melodrama, but Mayfair mercifully keeps the tale from veering into soapy territory thanks to a mature script and a remarkable ensemble cast. And while the women are front and center, the male characters are not treated as caricatures, but rather figures also trapped in the rigid societal demands enforced by Vietnamese culture. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

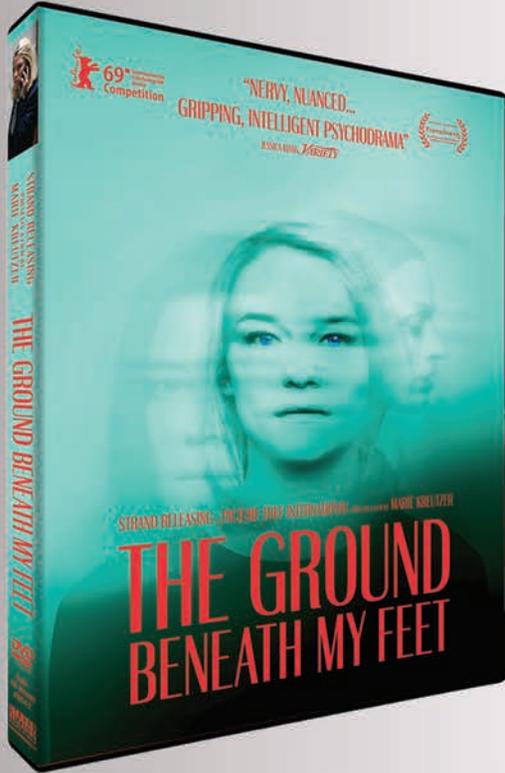


### Wild Rose ★★★

Universal, 86 min., R, DVD: \$22.99

At its root, filmmaker Tom Harper's *Wild Rose* is a formulaic story about a young singer with a dream, but it throws in enough narrative curveballs to avoid becoming a cookie-cutter tale. In a star-making turn, Jessie Buckley plays Rose-Lynn Harlan, a wannabe





# THE GROUND BENEATH MY FEET

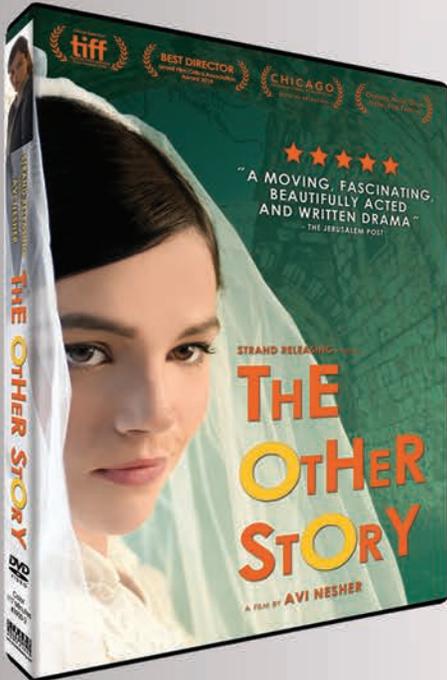
*"[A] gem of a movie... it's as 21st century as portrayals get, and it's a knockout!" - Los Angeles Times*

Lola manages her personal life with the same ruthless efficiency she uses to succeed in the business world. But when she receives the news that her older sister Conny has attempted suicide, Lola's secrets begin to unravel and she finds her own grip on reality slipping away.

Street Date: **December 3, 2019** | SRP: **\$27.99**

DVD # 3903-2 | UPC 7 12267 39042 7

108 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated  
In German with English subtitles



# THE OTHER STORY

*"Filled to the brim with intense emotions... holding onto your seat is strongly recommended!" - Los Angeles Times*

Renowned filmmaker Avi Nesher's latest film tells a suspenseful, poignant, and humorous story through the eyes of two rebellious young women from two troubled families that tangle in the most unexpected ways in Jerusalem.

Street Date: **October 22, 2019** | SRP: **\$27.99**

DVD # 3900-2 | UPC 7 12267 39002 1

112 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated  
In Hebrew with English subtitles

# MOM + MOM

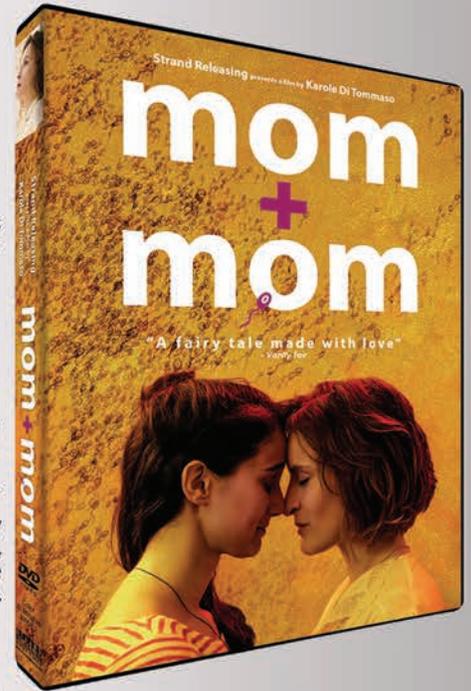
*"A fairy tale made with love" - Vanity Fair*

Karole and Ali love each other and dream of starting a family together. They soon realize it won't be as simple as they'd hoped, and in order to overcome the obstacles, they must believe in the power of their desire and the support of their loved ones.

Street Date: **November 12, 2019** | SRP: **\$27.99**

DVD # 3903-2 | UPC 7 12267 39032 8

81 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated  
In Italian with English subtitles



country-western performer in Scotland. Just released from jail after serving a stint for drug charges, and wearing an ankle bracelet under her high cowgirl boots, Rose-Lynn has sex with her boyfriend and gets into a fight at the Grand Old Opry of Glasgow before showing up at the apartment of her mother (Julie Walters), who has been taking care of her children Wynonna (Daisy Littlefield) and Lyle (Adam Mitchell). She takes a job as a housecleaner to Susannah (Sophie Okonedo), who encourages Rose-Lynn to go to Nashville and try to break into the music business there. Eventually, Rose-Lynn makes her way to Tennessee, even though it means leaving her children behind at a particularly difficult moment. Just when the film appears to be heading for a clichéd *Star Is Born* finale, the story takes a sudden turn that is satisfyingly redemptive. The pleasures of *Wild Rose*—in addition to the standout performances and genial music—lie in its refusal to succumb to the familiar feel-good fantasy ending. Despite a plot that is hardly innovative, the film is refreshingly quirky and unpredictable, an unabashed crowd-pleaser that, like its title character, also frequently breaks the rules. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

## Working Woman

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 93 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Israeli director Michal Aviad's *Working Woman* deals in blunt fashion with the harsh reality of women's lives in the workplace—especially young and ambitious mothers like the protagonist, Orna (Liron Ben-Shlush), who struggles along with her husband to provide for their three kids in an up-and-coming section of Tel Aviv. When Orna lands a high-end real estate job selling a line of fashionable apartments, things seem to be looking up. But viewers know that her imposing, swaggering, unhappily married older boss Benny (Menashe Noy) is nothing but trouble. One day he forcibly kisses Orna, who recoils in shock. But she eventually gets over it, and after a while it seems that Benny has successfully suppressed his inappropriate sexual urges. However, gradually we see a change in Benny, and there's a subtle inevitability in the way he eventually assaults Orna again—this time while on a business trip in Paris. How Orna acts under duress throughout is perfectly believable: it's not heroic, just human as she finds herself caught in a patriarchal vice grip between a controlling, sexually aggressive boss and a husband who is quick to suspect that she didn't do enough to reject her boss's advances. A timely film that makes its powerful points through well-fashioned drama, this is highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

## Classic Films

1984 ★★★

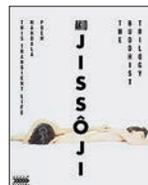
Criterion, 110 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Michael Radford's film adaptation of George Orwell's dystopian classic—the second big screen version of the 1949 novel—was released, appropriately enough, in 1984. John Hurt stars as Winston Smith, a shuffling, almost lifeless proletariat rewriting history to serve the purposes of the totalitarian government ("Big Brother"), but he privately rebels in forbidden activities, such as keeping a secret diary and engaging in a tender affair with Julia (Suzanna Hamilton). Richard Burton (in his final screen role) is brilliant as the government interrogator O'Brien, who uses torture and terror to break Smith and make him betray his lover and his own free will. Faithful to both the story and spirit of the novel—a savage indictment of totalitarianism and Soviet Communism—the film presents a gray, grimy world in which dead-eyed, joyless citizens parrot the party line while enduring a life of propaganda broadcasts and privation. Winston's emaciated frame and hacking cough suggest malnutrition (not helped by the cold damp of his shabby room), while the retro-technology (dial phones and pneumatic tubes) suggests a future of creative stasis. Even if Radford never fully captures the devastating ordeal of mental and physical torture of Orwell's novel, this remains an admirable effort and its portrait of language and propaganda being used to manipulate citizens is as timely now as it was in 1949 and 1984. Presented in a new 4K transfer, extras include new interviews with Radford, cinematographer Roger Deakins, and author David Ryan (*George Orwell on Screen*), as well as behind-the-scenes footage, a choice between two soundtracks (the original orchestral score by Dominic Muldowney and a hybrid featuring electronic music and songs by the Eurythmics), and a booklet with an essay by writer A.L. Kennedy. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Akio Jissoji: The Buddhist Trilogy ★★★

Arrow, 4 discs, 394 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray: \$99.99



Japanese director Akio Jissoji (1937-2006) had a bifurcated career, making highly commercial sci-fi movies and TV programs (including the popular *Ultraman*) while also directing experimental, sexually-explicit dramas for Japan's Art Theatre Guild, as part of the so-called Japanese New Wave of the 1960s and '70s. The best-known are the three collaborations with writer Toshiro Ishido

known as the "Buddhist trilogy," so called because they obliquely reflect on aspects of Buddhist thought. *This Transient Life* (1970) is about siblings involved in an incestuous relationship and a monk who becomes the brother's collaborator to make a statue of Buddha while also having feelings for the sister. *Mandara* (1971), the only film in color, concerns college students who are drawn into a cult that practices extreme sexual activities, including rape. And *Poem* (1972) is about a servant whose spiritual progress is upended when his teacher proposes to sell their serene mountain estate to greedy profiteers. All three films showcase bravura camerawork, mixing long tracking shots with sharp edits and surrealist imagery, and they feature music scores that combine modernist instrumentals with classical excerpts and religious chants. All are presented in excellent transfers (*Poem* in both the theatrical version and a longer director's cut), and each film features enlightening introductions and commentaries by film scholar David Desser. A bonus fourth disc contains Jissoji's *It Was a Faint Dream* (1974), a more conventionally shot drama about a woman who flees libertine court life to become a nun. Also included is a 60-page illustrated book. While the provocative subject matter and abrasive style of these films will hardly be to all tastes, they do represent significant contributions to an important movement in Japanese cinema. Recommended for more adventurous collections. (F. Swietek)

## Alphaville ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 99 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Jean-Luc Godard's 1965 sci-fi drama stirs together elements of *1984* and *Brave New World* into a pulp fiction private-eye thriller. Eddie Constantine, a craggy-faced American actor who found fame as a tough-guy star of French B-movies, reprises his role as Lemmy Caution, a character he played in numerous earlier European films. Here he's an American agent sent to the European metropolis of Alphaville to retrieve a double agent (Akim Tamiroff) and shut down Alpha 60, the mega-computer that rules the totalitarian state where the expression of emotion is considered both illogical and illegal. Anna Karina, Godard's former wife and longtime muse, costars as Natacha, an emotionless sex worker who is also the daughter of the computer's creator (Howard Vernon). Caution is a two-fisted hero in a film noir trenchcoat and fedora in a futuristic culture where those who can't adapt are either pushed to suicide or executed in scenes out of a surreal water ballet. Godard created his future cityscape entirely from existing locations, shooting in and against modernist buildings mostly at night and using simple effects and expressionist lighting

to suggest an automated, austere world. It's a classically Godardian mix of poetry, philosophy, film history, pop culture, politics, and romanticism, a minor sci-fi movie classic, and a major title in Godard's filmography. Presented in a 4K restoration, extras include audio commentary by film historian Tim Lucas, an introduction by film historian Colin McCabe, and an interview with Karina. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Blackmail** ★★½

Kino Lorber, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Alfred Hitchcock made a confident and impressive transition from silent cinema to the sound era with this 1929 thriller. Based on the titular play by Charles Bennett, *Blackmail* stars Czech-born actress Anny Ondra as Alice White, a young woman who kills a man in self-defense. John Longden stars as her fiancé, Frank Webber, a police detective who tries to protect Alice when she's blackmailed by a petty criminal. Begun as a silent film, it was also reworked for the new sound technology, becoming England's first all-talkie feature. The striking dialogue-free opening sequence was shot and edited as a silent film with music and sound effects added later, but Hitchcock

experimented with sound for dramatic effect in other scenes, such as using source music and emphasizing the word "knife" in the dialogue of gossiping neighbors to express the torment of the heroine. The simultaneously produced silent version is a tighter, more fluid, and more dramatically exciting film but the sound version remains a landmark for Hitchcock's creative approach to the then-new medium. Previously only available on poor home video versions, Kino presents remastered editions of the sound version in two different aspect ratios, plus the silent version with a musical score by Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra. Extras include an introduction by film scholar Noël Simsolo, audio commentary by film historian Tim Lucas, Ondra's screen test, and an audio clip from the "Hitchcock/Truffaut" interviews. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Child's Play** ★★★

MVD Visual, 68 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99



No, there are no killer Chucky dolls in filmmaker Margaret Thomson's good-natured, slightly daft 1954 comedy. Instead, we have a pack of young British kids (identified in the credits as "The Holy Terrors")

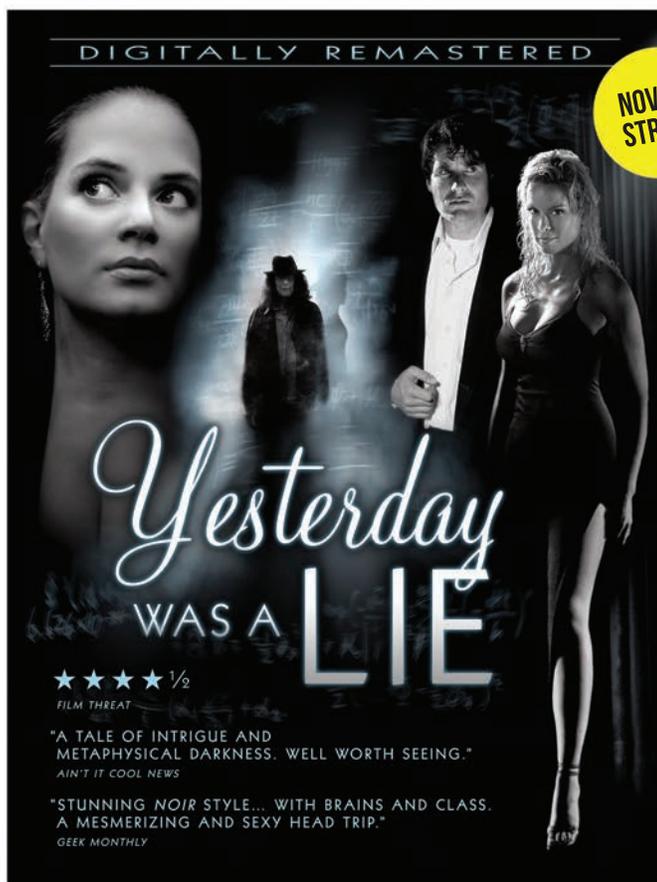
who discover how to split atoms and raise a mushroom cloud using only a few boxes, pipes, twirling gizmos, and (naturally) a rock from the volcanic island of Krakatoa. What do these not-so-terrorizing scamps do with their sudden nuclear ambitions in a small rural village? They channel radioactive energy into making a particularly tasty popcorn they call "bang corn," and then partner with the charming proprietor (Mona Washbourne) of a local sweets shop to sell the delicious snack. The story's villain is an overzealous constable who is determined to give everyone a bad time and catch the children at their explosive new hobby. *Child's Play* could easily be dismissed as an oddball family comedy satirizing (of all things) the Atomic Age less than a decade after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But there is also an instructive element of surreal humor that resonates with such mid-century British comedy juggernauts as *The Goon Show*, *A Hard Day's Night*, and Monty Python. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

**The Cloud-Capped Star** ★★½

Criterion, 127 min., in Bengali w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Set in the aftermath of the 1947 partition of India, which displaced over 10 million people, Ritwik Ghatak's 1960 drama tells the story of a middle-class Bengali family living

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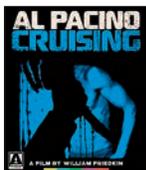
in poverty on the outskirts of Calcutta. The optimistic and generous Neeta (Supriya Choudhury) becomes the primary breadwinner of the family while her father, a retired schoolteacher turned tutor, grows increasingly fragile, and her self-absorbed siblings pursue their own interests. As she sacrifices her happiness to care for a family that takes her for granted, Neeta's health suffers and her spirit is broken. Ghatak was a contemporary of Satyajit Ray and *The Cloud-Capped Star* is closer to Ray's social realist dramas than the popular musicals that dominated India's film culture, but Ghatak has a very different approach. Ghatak takes on poverty, the plight of the displaced (never directly addressed but alluded to), and women in a culture that neglects their aspirations, all within a melodramatic story that is full of expressionist flourishes, from poetic imagery to the sound of lashes on the soundtrack as Neeta sees her dreams crushed. The film opens on sunny images of breathless beauty and introduces Neeta with a beatific smile and idealistic spirit, but as the family exploits and betrays her, the imagery becomes increasingly dark, and Choudhury's brilliant smile and sparkling eyes become shrouded in exhaustion and disillusionment. A powerful, beautiful, neglected classic of world cinema, the film is presented in a new restoration, with extras including a conversation between filmmakers Saeed Akhtar Mirza and Kumar Shahani on the film's legacy, a stills gallery, and an essay by film scholar Ira Bhaskar. Highly recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



### Cruising ★★1/2

Arrow, 102 min., R, Blu-ray: \$39.99

William Friedkin's 1980 thriller set in the gay subculture of New York leather bars and S&M clubs was notorious in its day for brutal violence and an extreme portrait of urban gay life. Al Pacino stars as Steve Burns, a patrolman recruited to go undercover by Capt. Edelson (Paul Sorvino) to try to catch a serial killer targeting gay men. Burns is straight and has a girlfriend (Karen Allen) but fits the victim profile and he commits himself fully to the assignment, creating a new identity and cruising the most extreme underground sex bars for information. Friedkin moves between scenes of murder mystery investigation and the perverse spectacle of the leather trade at its most extreme. The club scenes are shot as if in a dark, shadowy dungeon and a walk through Central Park at night becomes a public meat market of gay hook-ups and anonymous quickies. Pacino's character observes it all with a blank expression that makes his involvement ambiguous: is he fascinated, repulsed, attracted, or indifferent



to the spectacle he sees? And the film leaves that question unanswered. Based on Gerald Walker's 1970 novel, which was inspired by real-life murders, *Cruising* quickly became infamous, sparking protests by the New York gay community over the film's distorted portrait of gay life. Seen with hindsight, this is an interesting if not necessarily satisfying film, part sideshow and part art film dive into a subculture, with hints of suppressed homosexual feelings awakened in the hero. Presented with a new 4K restoration, extras include audio commentary by Friedkin and critic and broadcaster Mark Kermode, an archival commentary by Friedkin, and archival featurettes. A strong optional purchase. (S. *Axmaker*)

### The Fate of Lee Khan

★★★

Film Movement, 106 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

After the financial failure of *A Touch of Zen* (1971), an epic mix of martial-arts action and philosophical drama now considered to be the director's masterpiece, filmmaker King Hu's 1973 action drama *The Fate of Lee Khan* returns to the mode of his earlier hit *Dragon Gate Inn* (1967), with government officials, soldiers, spies, and members of the resistance converging on a remote inn and gambling house in the desert. Tien Feng stars as Lee Khan, the Mongol warlord who arrives at the inn to receive a stolen battle map, and martial-arts movie icon Angela Mao plays one of the savvy serving girls recruited by resistance leader Wan Jen-mi (Chinese film superstar Li Li-Hua). Plenty of action and comedy ensue as one stranger after another enters the inn's dining hall, and the women—who all have criminal pasts—artfully fend off inappropriate advances as they try to sort out the players. Most of the film is set in the vast dining room and Hu keeps it moving forward with clever choreography and dynamic cutting, until the story spills out into the desert plains for the final battle between Khan's forces and the resistance. This is not Hu's greatest film but it is masterfully directed and great fun, with clever action scenes (characters are constantly flying through the air thanks to hidden trampolines and careful editing) and colorful characters whose hidden talents are revealed as they collide. Newly restored, extras include a discussion of the film, and an essay by film scholar Stephen Teo. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



### The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice

★★★

Criterion, 116 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

One of the most sublime films from Yasujiro Ozu, a master of quiet domestic dra-

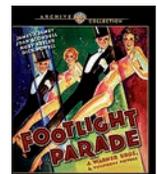
mas and comedies, the 1952 drama *The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice* serves up a portrait of a marriage on the verge of falling apart. Headstrong wife Taeko (Michiyo Kogure) routinely lies to her husband Mokichi (Shin Saburi), an easygoing, unexciting executive, and makes fun of him while out with her friends. When Taeko's 22-year-old niece Setsuko (Keiko Tsumihama) refuses to enter into a marriage arranged by her parents, she points to her aunt's stifled, unhappy situation as evidence for her decision. Ozu has been called the "most Japanese" of Japanese directors for his measured style and observation of distinctly Japanese routines and domestic spaces. This film offers a glimpse of a culture in transition after World War II, with a mix of Japanese and Western conventions (from business suits to baseball games) within a story of a young woman rebelling against tradition. But it also takes a subtle, sublime turn in the final act, an understated scene between Mokichi and Taeko sharing a simple late meal. Criterion presents the film's home video debut in a new 4K restoration, with extras including Ozu's 1937 film *What Did the Lady Forget?*, a video essay by film scholar David Bordwell, the new documentary *Ozu & Noda* on the director's longtime collaboration with screenwriter Kogo Noda, and a booklet with an essay by scholar Junji Yoshida. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



### Footlight Parade ★★1/2

Warner, 103 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99

Generally prized as one of the best movie musicals of the 20th century, filmmaker Lloyd Bacon's *Footlight Parade* (1933) was honored and preserved by the Library of Congress in 1992. But the film remains an awkward marriage of comic charm and garish excess, with a couple of brief racist gags that are hard to overlook. This movie about showbiz is set in the early days of "talking pictures," a technological disruption that has undercut the nominal success of would-be impresario Chester Kent (James Cagney), whose stage musicals can't compete with the new advancements on the Silver Screen. In a flash of inspiration, Chester realizes there's money to be made in producing short stage shows (called "prologues") to precede movies in theaters, and he partners with two rats who chisel him out of profits while his attention is totally focused on conceiving and creating an endless stream of content. Dick Powell is charming as a rising singer who earns Chester's faith, while Ruby Keeler is delightful as a plain-Jane secretary who suddenly blossoms into a great hooper and songbird. Joan Blondell is wonderful as Nan, Chester's long-suffering secretary who guides



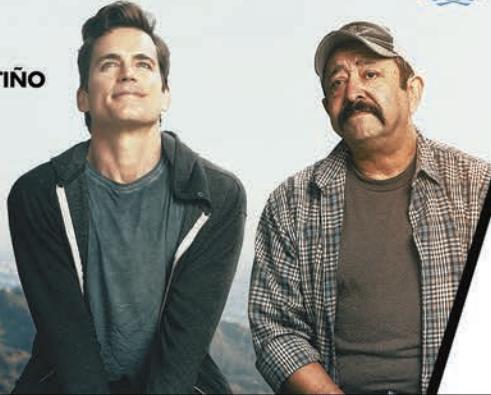
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TRINE DYRHOLM



A FILM BY MAY EL-TOUKHY

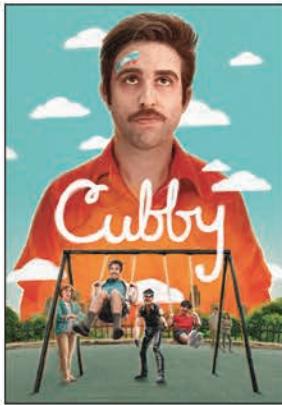
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### GRETA

### COPA 181

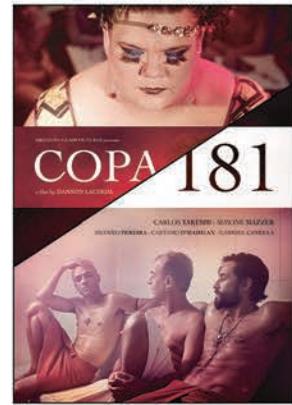
LGBTQ



Portuguese with English subtitles



Portuguese with English subtitles



A gay artist finds self-discipline through his friendship with a 6-year-old boy, and an adult superhero "Leather Man".

While caring for his ailing transgender friend, a nurse goes to great - even criminal - lengths to find her a hospital bed.

A gay sauna, not unlike the legendary Continental Baths, is the meeting place for a ragtag group of strangers.

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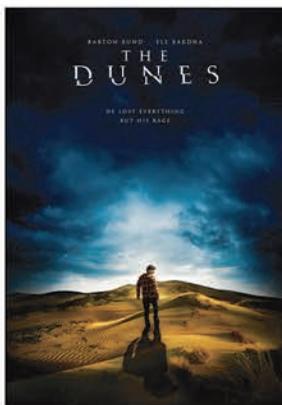
STREET: OCTOBER 29<sup>TH</sup> | SRP: \$24.99 | UPC: 850010363028

### THE DUNES

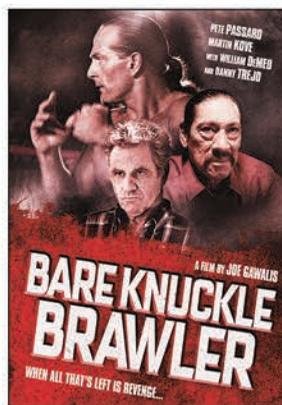
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A directionless 16-year-old skater, his teenage girlfriend, their neighbor, and an aggressive local artist collide in a web of sex, drugs, and violence in their dead end town.

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STREET: NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> | SRP: \$24.99 | UPC: 850010363103

and protects him while waiting for Chester to figure out that they're in love. *Footlight Parade* is most enchanting and funny during several rehearsal scenes (especially a duet featuring Powell and Keeler), but the final third features a ludicrous story development that calls for three over-the-top Busby Berkeley-directed numbers requiring oceans of water. Produced before the imposition of the infamous Hollywood Production Code policing movie morality, the film makes light allusions to prostitution and pre-marital sex, while some of Berkeley's camera angles would make a voyeur blush. And a couple of cringe-worthy quips about blackface, slavery, and white skin versus black skin remind viewers of the era in which *Footlight Parade* was made. Extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and vintage featurettes and cartoons. Cinematically important but also problematic, this is still recommended. (T. Keogh)

**A Foreign Affair** ★★1/2  
Kino Lorber, 116 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Billy Wilder's 1948 film about the American occupation of Berlin after World War II combines romantic comedy with barbed satire. Jean Arthur stars as Phoebe Frost, a prim, professional congresswoman from Iowa and the sole female on an official delegation to inspect the occupying forces in Berlin. As the commanding Colonel (Millard Mitchell) gives them a tour through the bombed-out ruins of the war-ravaged city (the real thing, shot before the city's reconstruction), she sees American servicemen fraternizing with German frauleins and a nightlife culture of illegal nightclubs where soldiers swap cigarettes and stockings for black market alcohol. She enlists Captain John Pringle (John Lund), a war hero and fellow Iowan, to help find the man protecting nightclub singer and former Nazi party member Erika von Schlütow (Marlene Dietrich). Meanwhile, Pringle covers his affair with von Schlütow by romancing Frost. Wilder, co-writing with longtime collaborator Charles Brackett, brings a caustic wit and jaundiced view to the film as the naive congresswoman falls for the scheming Captain. Lund is a little stiff and colorless next to both Arthur, whose driven, crisply proper attitude softens with romance and black market alcohol (she sparks to life singing her Iowa campaign song), and Dietrich, who belts out cabaret tunes for food and favors and engages in a battle of wits with Arthur's smitten congresswoman. Extras include audio commentary by film historian Joseph McBride. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

**Fragment of an Empire** ★★1/2  
Flicker Alley, 110 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

The last silent film helmed by the great

Russian director Fridrikh Ermler, *Fragment of an Empire* (1929) mixes melodrama, psychological thriller, propaganda, and a surprisingly subtle jab at the Soviet system. Young Tsarist Army soldier Filimonov (Fiodor Nikitin) survives a shell explosion during the 1918 Russian Civil War but is afflicted with amnesia, and 10 years pass before his memory is fully restored. Filimonov is determined to seek out the wife he left behind in St. Petersburg. However, the Tsarist regime has given way to the U.S.S.R. and St. Petersburg is now Leningrad, with massive new buildings dominating the city. Filimonov hopes to regain his old job at a factory and is surprised to learn that the workers are the ones running the facility. Filimonov slowly begins to appreciate this new society, but the Soviet system is not a utopia and many old problems remain. The harshest truth that Filimonov discovers is when he finds his wife: she has remarried a minor Communist Party functionary who talks about equality for all but keeps the poor woman in near-servitude. Unavailable for many years, this bold and imaginatively crafted film manages to thread subversive commentary on the failings of Soviet Communism into what appears to be a paean to Marxist ideals. Beautifully restored, the film is presented with a choice between two musical scores: the original piano score by Vladimir Deshevov and a new composition by Stephen Horne and Frank Bockius. Extras include audio commentary by Russian film historian and curator Peter Bagrov and film restorer Robert Byrne, a restoration featurette, a poster gallery, and a booklet. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



**Get Out Your Handkerchiefs** ★★★

Cohen, 108 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

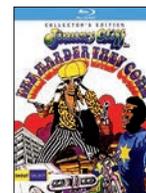


Bertrand Blier made a career of buddy films in which clueless men haplessly and hopelessly try to understand the women around them, a string of social satires that have been described as everything from mischievous to misanthropic. His 1978 romantic comedy *Get Out Your Handkerchiefs*, one of the most unusual ménage à trois sex comedies ever made, stars Gérard Depardieu as Raoul, a doting husband to his depressed, lethargic wife Solange (Carole Laure), who is mopey to the point of being virtually inert. Raoul is so desperate to make her happy that he invites handsome schoolteacher Stéphane (Patrick Dewaere) to become her lover, and when the two men become best friends, the romantic triangle turns into a mad buddy film. What Solange needs is a child, Stéphane insists, so they become counselors at a boys summer

camp, where Solange's maternal instincts are aroused by a precocious, bullied 13-year-old genius who seduces her and gives her back her laugh. Blier has a knack for creating deadpan absurdity and he corkscrews the plot twists into surreal territory by the end—which is hilariously absurd as it upends romantic comedy conventions. For all of its unorthodox and transgressive twists, the film—which was a smash hit in France and an arthouse success in the U.S., where it won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film—remains unexpectedly upbeat and joyous. Newly restored, extras include an introduction by film historian Richard Peña. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**The Harder They Come** ★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 3 discs, 105 min., R, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Jimmy Cliff stars as a young Jamaican who comes to the big city of Kingston with dreams of making it big in this 1972 first homegrown Jamaican feature film. Reggae legend Cliff brings an energy and anger to the role of Ivan Martin, an aspiring singer who, after being ripped off by a music producer, turns to crime and ends up an outlaw hero hunted by the police and celebrated by the population. Directed, produced, and co-written by Perry Henzell, a commercial producer who made the film specifically for Jamaican audiences, *The Harder They Come* is a simple film shot on a shoestring, one that is rough and sometimes ragged but also vital, explosive, and filled with a superb reggae soundtrack. Henzell shoots on the streets and in the slums of Kingston, bringing a documentary authenticity to the culture of poverty, crime, and corruption in which the gangster fantasy plays out. The film was a sensation in Jamaica and a cult hit in the U.S. and around the world, and the soundtrack features classics such as "You Can Get It If You Really Want," "Many Rivers to Cross," and "Sitting in Limbo." A landmark of international independent cinema that helped popularize reggae around the world, *The Harder They Come* is presented here in a three-disc collector's edition, featuring a new restoration of the film. Extras include the home video debut of Henzell's follow-up film *No Place Like Home* (2006), the documentary *Perry Henzell: A Filmmaker's Odyssey* (2015), audio commentary by Cliff biographer David Katz, new and archival interviews and featurettes, and a music video. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Jezebel** ★★★

Warner, 104 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99

William Wyler directed this antebellum drama featuring a title that says a lot about what to expect from its headstrong, central character. Like the Old Testament Jezebel, this 1938 film's Julie (Bette Davis) is full of



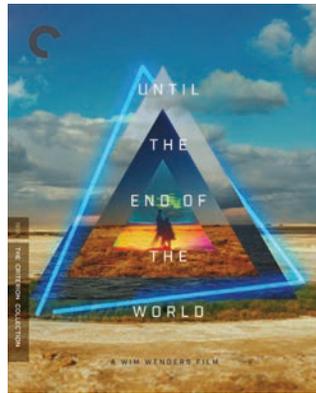
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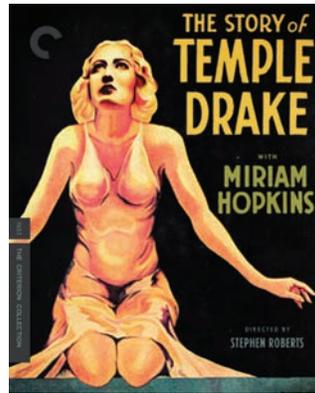
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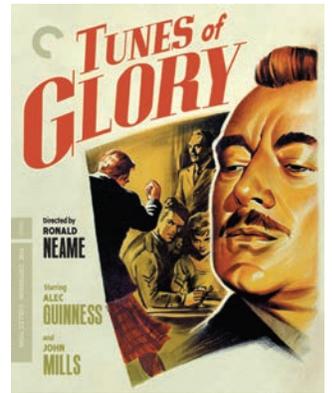
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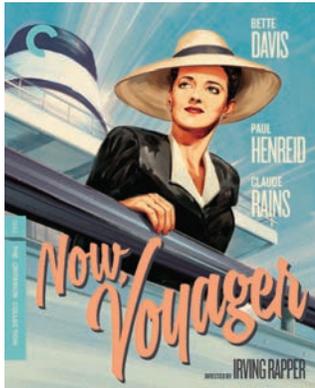
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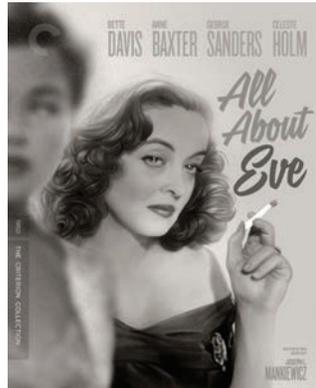
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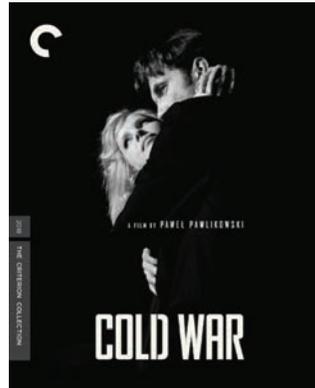
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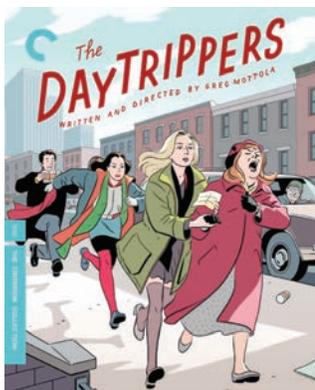
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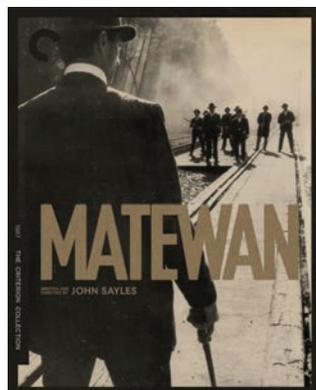
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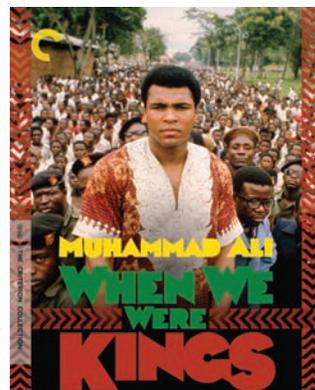
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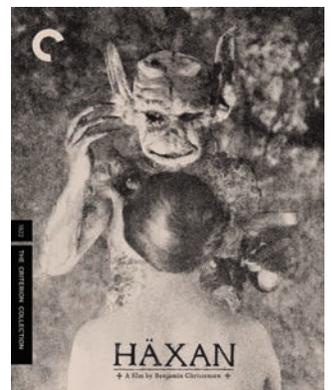
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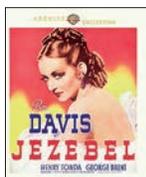
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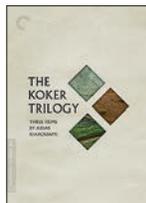
over-the-top, destructive impulses that are released through vindictive whims. Her self-centered behavior as a spoiled belle is often in startling contrast with the tone of chivalry and formal ritual that defines her genteel society. Based on a 1933 play by the Pulitzer Prize-winning Owen Davis, and adapted in part by John Huston, *Jezebel* finds Julie engaged to banker Pres (short for Preston), played by Henry Fonda. Upset that Pres, due to work obligations, can't accompany her to help shop for a dress to wear at the most important ball of the season, Julie defies convention and the warnings of her friends, choosing a scandalous red dress to embarrass Pres at the event. Since single women are typically expected to wear a white gown for the occasion, Julie's choice sends everyone fleeing from the dance floor. Pres stands up to the humiliation that his fiancée has wrought by dancing one dance with her, then ending their engagement. What follows is a prolonged separation as Pres spends a year elsewhere, during which several crises emerge involving an epidemic of yellow fever and still more spiteful actions by Julie. Featuring sumptuous cinematography by Ernest Haller and music by Max Steiner, the film offers a tour de force performance by Davis, who won an Academy Award as Best Actress for her role as catty, careless Julie. Extras include audio commentary by film historian Jeanine Basinger, a retrospective featurette, a vintage musical short, and a classic cartoon. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### The Koker Trilogy

★★★1/2

Criterion, 3 discs, 281 min., in Persian w/English subtitles, G/not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$99.99



The great Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami (1940-2016) made his international reputation with *The Koker Trilogy*, which consists of three films connected by place, theme, and complex references. *Where Is the Friend's House?* (1987), Kiarostami's first fiction feature, follows the simple but resonant adventure of a schoolboy who travels to a nearby village (against the express orders of his mother) to return homework to a friend. Kiarostami shot the film in Koker, which suffered a devastating earthquake in 1990. *And Life Goes On* (1992) follows a filmmaker and his son as they journey to the remote Koker area to find the children who acted in the earlier film, where they witness streams of homeless people hauling food and equipment to makeshift shelters. The earlier film is naturalistic and looks at the adult world from the perspective of a child, while the latter is more of a fictional semi-documentary capturing the strength of the human spirit in

the face of disaster. Even more self-reflexive is *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), a fictionalized drama about the making of *And Life Goes On* that shifts from the making of a film to the odyssey of a lovesick young actor playing the husband of a young woman he has been forbidden to marry. Kiarostami's richly layered style and structure belie the simplicity and immediacy of his films, which explore increasingly complex relationships between actor and character, as well as story and storyteller. It is through these films that viewers see the evolution of Kiarostami's art and storytelling. Extras include Kiarostami's superb 1989 documentary *Homework*, audio commentary by Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa and Jonathan Rosenbaum (co-authors of *Abbas Kiarostami*) on *And Life Goes On*, the 1994 documentary *Abbas Kiarostami: Truth and Dreams*, new and archival interviews, and a booklet with an essay by critic Godfrey Cheshire. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### The Major and the Minor

★★★

Arrow, 100 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$39.99



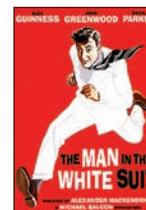
After making a name for himself in Hollywood as a writer of witty and worldly romantic comedies, Austrian-born German émigré Billy Wilder made his directorial debut with this very American farce. Ginger Rogers plays Susan, a New York working girl who poses as a 12-year-old to get a half-fare ticket with the last of her savings in order to return to her Midwest home. When she's caught smoking by a suspicious conductor, she takes refuge with a paternal military officer (Ray Milland) who is inexplicably fooled by her disguise. He takes her to a military academy, where the teenage cadets try to romance her and she meddles with his engagement to a high society woman (Rita Johnson) who schemes to keep him out of World War II. Wilder and writer partner Charles Brackett combine high-spirited farce and risqué humor in a very funny comedy that manages to balance worldly cynicism and sincere affection without tipping over into sexualizing a (pretend) little girl. Rogers is in top comic form and the crush her character develops on the charitable Major is Wilder at his most warm and sincere. Diane Lynn delivers the first of her patented wise-beyond-her-years roles as the teenager who sees through Susan's act and becomes her co-conspirator. It's a minor comedy classic with topnotch performances, terrific chemistry, and witty banter, which was remade in 1955 as *You're Never Too Young* with Jerry Lewis in the Rogers role (a film that was nowhere as effective or funny as the original). Extras include audio commentary by film scholar Adrian Martin, a video appreciation by film critic Neil Sinyard, an archival interview with Milland, a 1943 radio adaptation with Rogers and Milland, and an

image gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### The Man in the White Suit

★★★

Kino Lorber, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



England's Ealing Studios and actor Alec Guinness were linked in such mid-20th century clever and stylish comedies as *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949) *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), and *The Ladykillers* (1955). Another of these classics is *The Man in the White Suit* (1951), in which Guinness is superb as Sidney Stratton, an obsessed boyish chemist who invents a revolutionary fabric that resists wear and stains. The film begins on a comic high note, as Sidney—unable to gain employment in a chemical laboratory other than as a low-paid laborer—uses a succession of menial jobs to smuggle his secret experiments in among official corporate research. Befriending Daphne (Joan Greenwood), the daughter of a fabric company's CEO (Cecil Parker), Sidney and his combustible tests achieve victory at last, drawing corporate attention as his invention promises to be a boon to the world. But there's a problem: where's the planned obsolescence? As fabric titans and labor forces get wind of a consumer product that never needs replacement, the film becomes a dark, funny satire about special interests choosing self-interest over progress, with Guinness as a well-meaning disruptor suddenly on the run from those he thought were natural allies. The screenplay by Roger MacDougall is smart, while director Alexander Mackendrick deftly handles the many ironies and farcical turns in the story. Extras include audio commentary by film historian Dr. Dean Brandum, and interviews with filmmaker Stephen Frears and film critic Ian Christie. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Mirage

★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 108 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.99

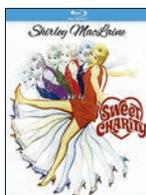


After the lights suddenly go out in a corporate high rise in New York City, the world of cost accountant David Stillwell (Gregory Peck) starts to twist into something like a *Twilight Zone* episode in this 1965 thriller based on the 1952 pseudonymous novel *Fallen Angel* by Howard Fast, and featuring music by Quincy Jones. David follows an enigmatic woman (Diane Baker)—who seems to know him—into a subbasement that doesn't exist, assassins and thugs keep popping up with threats, and he can't remember anything that happened over the last two years. His whole life seems to be a fiction and when he hires a private detective (Walter Matthau) to find out who he really is, the man is killed and David is framed for his murder. What begins as a *Manchurian Candidate*-like thriller

turns into a Hitchcockian psychodrama more like *Spellbound*, with Peck in a similar role as an amnesiac living with a false identity. Screenwriter Peter Stone creates an atmosphere somewhere between conspiratorial mystery and paranoia and veteran director Edward Dmytryk plays up the Hitchcockian elements with the glamorous but ambiguous presentation of Baker's Shela, who alternately assists and betrays David. The direction is efficient and Dmytryk teases out the mystery effectively, although he lacks the flair displayed in similar psychological thrillers. Kevin McCarthy, Jack Weston, and George Kennedy costar as co-conspirators. Extras include audio commentary by film historians Howard S. Berger, Steve Mitchell, and Nathaniel Thompson, an interview with Baker, and an animated image gallery. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### Sweet Charity ★★★

Kino Lorber, 2 discs, 151 min., G, Blu-ray: \$39.99

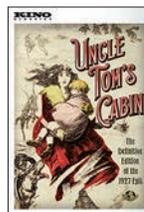


Future Oscar-winning filmmaker Bob Fosse made his feature film directing debut with this big screen version of the Tony-nominated musical that he had developed, directed, and choreographed on Broadway. Shirley MacLaine stars as New York City dance hall hostess Charity Hope Valentine—a romantic in a tawdry business—who never loses her optimism even after her boyfriend steals her money and pushes her into a pond (in the opening scene). John McMartin reprises his Broadway role as a tightly-wound accountant who falls in love with Charity's quirky innocence before discovering her dime-a-dance job (a euphemism for prostitution that goes back to classic Hollywood). The original 1966 stage show was adapted by Neil Simon from Federico Fellini's 1957 film *Nights of Cabiria*, and the songs by Cy Coleman and Dorothy Fields include "If My Friends Could See Me Now," "The Rhythm of Life" (performed by Sammy Davis Jr. as a hipster evangelist), and the dynamic opening number "Big Spender." Chita Rivera and Paula Kelly costar as Charity's roommates and fellow dancers, Ricardo Montalban delivers a low-key comic performance as Italian movie star Vittorio, and Broadway legend Stubby Kaye is the dance hall manager. *Sweet Charity* was a lavish production and expensive flop, but it remains a sweet movie with superb musical numbers and it was nominated for three Academy Awards and a Golden Globe nomination for MacLaine's performance. Bowing on Blu-ray with both the original 151-minute roadshow version of the film and a second disc with a 145-minute version featuring an alternate happy ending, extras include audio commentary by film historian Kat Ellinger, and archival featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Uncle Tom's Cabin

★★★

Kino Lorber, 112 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Filmmaker Harry Pollard's epic 1927 adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's landmark 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was one of the most expensive silent films ever made. James B. Lowe, whose composure, dignity, and gentleness suggest a silent-era Danny Glover, stars as kindly Tom, an enslaved man ripped from his family to pay his master's debt, but the film favors the more sensational melodrama of the married light-skinned couple Eliza and George and their son Harry (all played by white performers), who are split up and sold to the highest bidder. Pollard, a Southerner himself, maintains an uneasy balance between a sentimental portrayal of a happy Dixie with smiling slaves and a land where humans are bought and sold like cattle to wicked, money-grubbing masters. The exaggerated performances and stereotypes have not aged well and Pollard shows a weakness for broad Victorian melodrama, but the film boasts many moving moments and nail-biting sequences, highlighted by Eliza's now-classic harrowing escape across the ice floes as hounds literally nip at her heels. Presented in a new 2K restoration with the original Movietone score by Erno Rapee, the disc also includes the 1958 re-issue edition (introduced and narrated by Raymond Massey), earlier 1910 and 1914 (preserved by the Library of Congress) adaptations of the novel, audio commentary by historian Edward J. Blum, and a booklet. A comprehensive edition of a notable silent classic, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### The Vanishing Shadow

★★1/2

VCI, 242 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Most chapter serials made for theatres during the 1930s and '40s have been long forgotten, including this 1934 Universal effort, which was thought to be lost. Unfortunately, it is not a classic of the genre, but does provide some campy fun courtesy of its primitive special effects, which include a homelier version of the technical tricks James Whale employed in *The Invisible Man* (1933), as well as a hand-held ray gun (reportedly the first to appear in a film), and a particularly unconvincing robot—plus an early electric garage-door opener! The plot, however, is mundane: working together, hero Stanley Stanfield (Onslow Stevens) and scientist Carl Van Dorn (James Durkin) create a belt that makes its wearer invisible—except for his shadow. Stanfield intends to use it to defeat Wade Barnett (Walter Miller), a ruthless businessman who he blames for the

death of his father, a newspaper publisher. Barnett is now employing a gang of thugs to acquire the dead man's stocks and bonds, but what Stanfield doesn't know is that his new girlfriend (Ada Ince) is Barnett's estranged daughter. *The Vanishing Shadow* features typical serial clichés, stilted acting, and rather low production qualities, but the transfer on this 12-episode serial is surprisingly good. Extras include a classic cartoon and newsreels, and a poster/photo gallery. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Wagon Master ★★★1/2

Warner, 86 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



John Ford's 1950 Western presents a classic Ford theme—the creation of a community in the West—through an often lighthearted tale of a pair of wandering horse traders (Ben Johnson and Harry Carey Jr.) who are hired by a worldly Mormon elder (Ward Bond) to lead his wagon train to the promised land of Utah. Along the way, they pick up a caravan of show people stranded in the desert, who are tentatively embraced by the sheltered Mormon folk, and they come across a vicious outlaw gang on the run—a warped family led by Uncle Shiloh Clegg (Charles Kemper), who hides his ruthlessness under a pose of paternal concern. Joanne Dru is tough and sexy as a showgirl warmed by the welcome and attracted to the strong and silent Johnson, Alan Mowbray is the silky but ultimately honorable snake-oil salesman leader of the gypsy caravan, and Ford regulars Jane Darwell, Russell Simpson, James Arness, Hank Worden, and Francis Ford have supporting roles. Shot on location against the distinctive landscapes of Moab, UT, and Monument Valley, AZ, with folk songs performed by Sons of the Pioneers, this low-key tale of outcasts who face their prejudices and learn to work together against threats by genuinely bad folk is as gentle and warm a film as Ford ever made and was one of the director's personal favorites. Extras include archival commentary by Harry Carey Jr. and historian/filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich (with audio clips of Ford). An underrated classic, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online ([www.videolibrarian.com](http://www.videolibrarian.com)) during November and December for DVD/Blu-ray-specific comments added to the video movies reviewed here, as well as new reviews of current and classic films, including: *47 Meters Down*, *Brian Banks*, *Cold War*, *Jirga*, *The Kitchen*, *Luce*, *Them That Follow*, and much more!

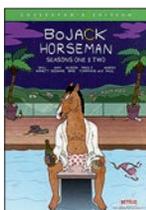
**Arrow: The Complete Seventh Season** ★★1/2  
Warner, 929 min., not rated, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$44.99



The seventh season of this dark action show that launched the CW network's interconnected DC superhero universe begins with Oliver Queen (Stephen Amell), the spoiled rich kid turned vigilante hero Green Arrow, incarcerated in a maximum security prison filled with criminals he sent there. Oliver revealed his secret identity at the end of season six and his wife Felicity (Emily Bett Rickards) and son William (Jack Moore) have gone into hiding for protection from assassins. Not to worry—Oliver is out of prison after a handful of episodes and back in action as a deputized member of the police, along with fellow heroes, as they battle Oliver's vengeful half-sister Emiko (Sea Shimooka) and the terrorist group Ninth Circle. Where previous seasons included flashbacks to Oliver's life before becoming Arrow, this season flashes forward 20 years as the grown children of Oliver and Felicity, and members of Team Arrow, band together to protect Star City with heroes-in-hiding Roy Harper (Colton Haynes), Dinah Drake—aka Black Canary (Juliana Harkavy), and Felicity. Also featured here is the multi-episode epic "Elseworlds" (with crossover episodes on *Supergirl* and *The Flash* included here). *Arrow* is still the darkest of the CW superhero shows, but this season also charts the redemption of the evil Laurel Lance (Katie Cassidy) as she transforms from villain to hero. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2018-19 seventh season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

**BoJack Horseman: Seasons One & Two** ★★

Shout! Factory, 4 discs, 600 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$54.99



Will Arnett voices the lead character in the Netflix animated series *BoJack Horseman*, a show business satire set in a world where anthropomorphic animals coexist with humans. BoJack Horseman (who is, in fact, a horse) was a sitcom star in the 1990s, but now he's a rich has-been living with optimistic human idiot roommate Todd (Aaron Paul) and working with a biographer (Alison Brie) in the hopes of making a career comeback. At once attention-hungry and wracked with self-doubt, BoJack is far more complicated than one might expect from the premise and the show charts the evolution of his character as he confronts his past, questions whether he's a good person, and tries to figure out how to be genuinely happy. But while the series

takes these issues seriously, they are explored in an absurdist animated comedy in which BoJack's feline agent (Amy Sedaris) dates a man who is actually a couple of children in a trenchcoat, character actor Margo Martindale (herself) happily becomes a career criminal, and legendary author J.D. Salinger (Alan Arkin) comes out of retirement to produce a celebrity game show. The jokes come fast and furious and are both clever and goofy, even as the series sneaks in some genuinely painful moments of personal insight and emotional honesty. Compiling all 24 episodes from the 2014-15 first and second seasons, extras include episode commentaries, animatics, and a brief music performance. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**The Flash: The Complete Fifth Season** ★★★

Warner, 931 min., not rated, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$44.99



*The Flash* is both a superhero show grounded in family themes and the most family-friendly of the CW superhero shows. And the fifth season adds a new member to the family: Nora West-Allen (Jessica Parker Kennedy)—daughter of Barry, aka The Flash (Grant Gustin), and Iris (Candice Patton)—who arrives from the future to warn her parents of an impending disaster and stays after her arrival winds up creating a ruthless new villain. Chris Klein costars as the embittered Cicada, who is murdering metahumans (people who acquired superpowers in the same accident that created The Flash) with a powerful weapon. The season also delves into the mystery surrounding Caitlin Snow (Danielle Panabaker) and her father, as well as her relationship to alter ego Killer Frost, a former villain turned team ally. Tom Cavanagh returns as yet another incarnation of Harrison Wells, this one a detective named Sherloque from an alternate Earth, and Cisco (Carlos Valdes) loses his Vibe powers but creates a treatment to cure people of their metahuman powers. And this season features the "Elseworlds" crossover epic story arc in which Barry swaps identities with *Arrow*'s Oliver Queen (crossover episodes from *Arrow* and *Supergirl* are also included), along with a return of the show's original supervillain Eobard Thawne (also Cavanagh). *The Flash* is a busy, colorful series, built around a team of superheroes and humans, that explores the themes of teamwork, family, loyalty, and honesty. Compiling all 24 episodes from the 2018-19 fifth season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**The Good Fight: Season Three** ★★★

Paramount, 3 discs, 545 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

The third season of *The Good Wife* spin-off,

a legal drama set in a firm that specializes in civil rights cases, continues to mine a vein of political satire that pokes fun at both the political and social culture in the era of Trump and the exasperation of the show's liberal characters. The series features a cast of strong women figures, led by Christine Baranski as Diane Lockhart, who pushes her own ethical boundaries to the limit when she joins a radical activist group and brings fellow partner Liz Reddick-Lawrence (Audra McDonald) with her. Cush Jumbo costars as Lucca, who is now a single mother (the baby's father is a congressman in Washington D.C.) juggling career and parenthood. New this season is Michael Sheen as the unprincipled, proudly corrupt lawyer Roland Blum, who gets Maia (Rose Leslie) fired from her own firm and then hires her to work for him, inspiring her to become a shark in his image. The series has a distinctly liberal take as it continues to address issues of race and discrimination as well as sexual misconduct, even as the firm finds itself fighting for its continued existence. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2019 third season, extras include deleted scenes and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



**The Good Place: The Complete Third Season**

★★★1/2  
Shout! Factory, 2 discs, 375 min., TV-PG, DVD: \$20.99



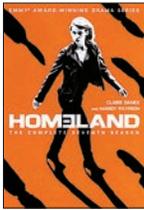
The only American sitcom to effectively build comedy out of lessons in moral philosophy, *The Good Place* gives its characters—a quartet of humans (Kristen Bell, William Jackson Harper, Jameela Jamil, and Manny Jacinto) sent to The Bad Place after their untimely deaths—a second chance to live out their mortal lives. Michael (Ted Danson), a demon who has been transformed by unexpected friendship, puts his own existence on the line to help them along and the series takes an imaginative romp through life, the afterlife, and various dimensional detours as it questions the very foundation of moral judgment. The show's genius lies in the way it addresses personal ethics, responsibility, and redemption with whimsical humor and wild visual gags. Celestial automated assistant Janet (D'Arcy Carden) becomes an even more active and integral part of the group as she also evolves. Serving up a creative mix of slapstick comedy and sophisticated ideas, this Emmy-nominated series has become a cult favorite. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2018-19 third season, extras include extended episodes, a gag reel, and a visual effects reel. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Homeland: The Complete Seventh Season

★★★★1/2

Fox, 3 discs, 648 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Showtime's contemporary espionage series starring Claire Danes and Mandy Patinkin as one-time CIA operative Carrie Mathison and her brilliant mentor Saul Berenson, has maintained a high standard over the course of its run, and this penultimate season upholds it. Based largely in the U.S. rather than abroad this season, the narrative concentrates on machinations surrounding the presidency of Elizabeth Keane (Elizabeth Marvel), who—following last year's assassination attempt against her—reacts with fury against both those she suspects of being complicit (including Saul) and her critics, most notably underground provocateur Brett O'Keefe (Jake Weber) and troublesome Senator Paley (Dylan Baker). Carrie fears that Keane's tactics will lead to increasingly authoritarian measures and, along with allies like FBI agent Dante Allen (Morgan Spector), she takes steps to battle the potential erosion of personal freedoms—although her bipolar condition and struggle to be a proper mother inevitably undermine her efforts. As usual, the writers employ plenty of twists, including—most importantly—a topical shift into the possibility of Russian interference in the American political process. While it can feel overwrought at times, *Homeland* boasts expert performances by Danes, Patinkin, and the supporting cast, who carry the stories over any rough patches. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2018 seventh season, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



## Jamestown: The Complete Season 3

★★★★

PBS, 2 discs, 345 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

The third and final season of this PBS-aired British period soap opera series takes its highly speculative story of the inner workings of the first permanent English settlement in the Americas up to 1622, concluding with the surprise assault on the colony by the Powhatan Indian Confederacy that would lead to strong English reprisals and the expansion of Virginia's territory at the natives' expense. Like the first two seasons, this one shuffles together a spate of interconnected plot threads involving Jamestown residents, including George Yeardley (Jason Flemyng), the colony's governor, who tries brutally to expand his power; Jocelyn Woodbryg (Naomi Battrick)—a widow with ambitions to become a major landowner—and James Read (Matt Stokoe), the blacksmith she fancies; and Silas Sharrow (Stuart Martin), a colonial who has



gone native and finds himself caught between two worlds. Meanwhile, Africans Pedro (Abubakar Salim) and Maria (Abiola Ogunbiyi) struggle with the reality of their condition as slaves, and new characters provide a couple of additional tangents: a recently-arrived boy who might be the son of tavern owner Meredith Rutter (Dean Lennox Kelly) challenges that ne'er-do-well's dissolute lifestyle, while hunchback trader Willmus Crabtree (Ben Batt) proves to be a potential threat to both Yeardley's power and Jocelyn's hopes. *Jamestown* should not be confused with documented history, but it is certainly an amusing guilty pleasure. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2019 third and last season, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

## New Amsterdam: Season One

★★★★1/2

Universal, 6 discs, 945 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

Ryan Eggold stars in this NBC TV medical drama as Dr. Max Goodwin, a maverick administrator who takes over the oldest and largest public hospital in the country and starts transforming the way it deals with patients. "How can I help?" is his mantra, and his unconventional approach collides with the hospital's dean (Ron Rifkin) but inspires his staff to reimagine the way that they practice medicine. Inspired by the 2012 book *Twelve Patients: Life and Death at Bellevue Hospital* by Eric Manheimer, *New Amsterdam* is a surprisingly conventional medical drama (given its premise) that is a mix of soap opera and case-of-the-week diagnostic mystery. Our heroic leader is an idealistic doctor dedicated to helping everyone except himself as he fights his own battle with cancer. Janet Montgomery plays an Emergency Room physician struggling with substance abuse, Freema Agyeman is a celebrity oncologist who has lost touch with patient care, Anupam Kher is a neurological specialist trying to reconnect with an estranged son, and Tyler Labine is an eccentric psychologist. There are the usual battles with the hospital board, which wants to cut costs and increase billing, and Goodwin tries to win back his pregnant wife, who left him because he prioritized his work over his marriage. The cast is likable and the show is well-produced but it's also awfully familiar. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2018-19 debut season, extras include deleted scenes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

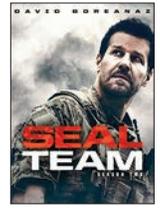


## SEAL Team: Season Two

★★★★1/2  
Paramount, 5 discs, 941 min., not rated, DVD: \$53.99

The second season of the military drama centered on Bravo Team—an elite squad of Navy SEALs—takes a slightly different approach from the first, shifting from stand-alone episodes to longer missions that span

multiple episodes, including an assignment targeting a drug cartel in Mexico and an extended posting in the Philippines. In between missions, the series serves up personal dramas. Newly-widowed team leader Master Chief Jason Hayes (David Boreanaz) struggles with being a single parent and collides with his best friend and second in command Ray (Neil Brown Jr.), and with CIA Officer Mandy Ellis (Jessica Paré). Back at home, Clay (Max Thieriot) struggles with both divorce and physical rehabilitation after sustaining an injury that could end his military career, and Lisa Davis (Toni Trucks) goes to Officer Candidate School. The show also takes on the issue of traumatic brain injury through the story of retired Bravo Team member Brett Swann (Tony Curran), who with the support of Clay battles the Veterans Administration to treat his trauma. While not must-see-TV, *SEAL Team* does offer a respectful and realistic tribute to American servicemen and women (albeit at an elite level). Compiling all 22 episodes from the 2018-19 second season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted and extended scenes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



## Vidago Palace

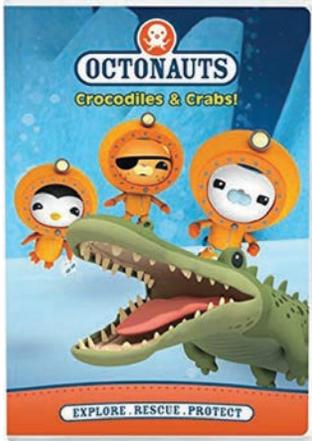
★★★★1/2  
RLJ, 2 discs, 313 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.99

This 2017 Portuguese TV-aired six-part miniseries is set at an iconic luxury hotel during the summer of 1936. A civil war is raging in neighboring Spain and the threat of an even greater war is percolating out of Hitler's Germany. But these conflicts pale in comparison to the melodramatic romantic angst swirling around Carlota (Mikaela Lupu), the lovely daughter of the Count and Countess of Vimiero, and Pedro (David Seijo), a waiter and the son of the hotel's concierge. Carlota's parents are pushing her to marry the filthy rich César da Silva (Pedro Barroso)—who they see as their last hope to recoup their frayed fortunes. But Carlota can only pine for her handsome young waiter and rendezvous with him in secret. Pedro, however, is eager to cross the border and help the Spanish forces fighting against Francisco Franco's fascist army. Added to the mix are foreigners who seem like stock characters occupying the background in a 1940s Warner Bros. melodrama: a German businessman, a Portuguese-Jewish jeweler, a British writer, and an unsubtle police inspector, who all flatfoot their way around the edges of the story. Shown stateside on Acorn TV, *Vidago Palace* is a visually opulent production, but is also somewhat intellectually puerile in its connect-the-dots plotting and broad emoting by the leads. Still, this is a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

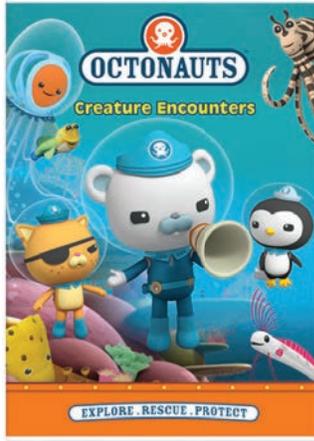


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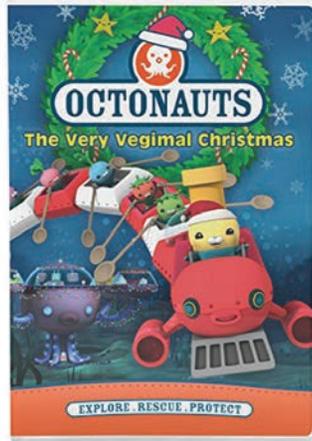
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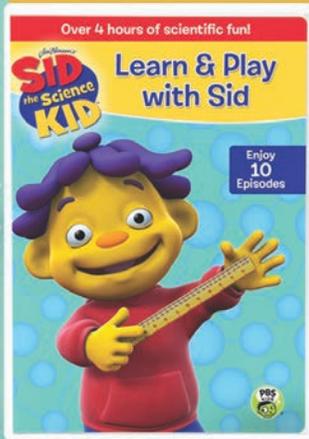


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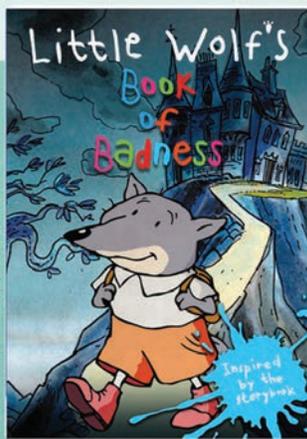
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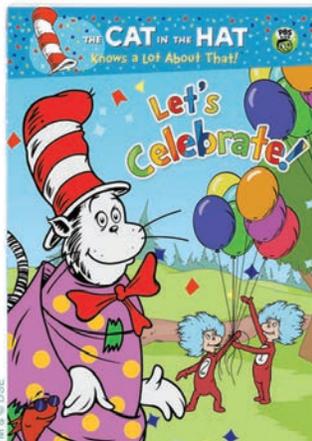
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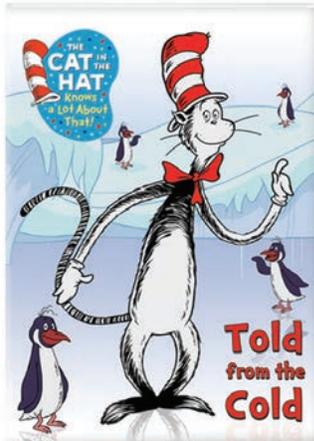
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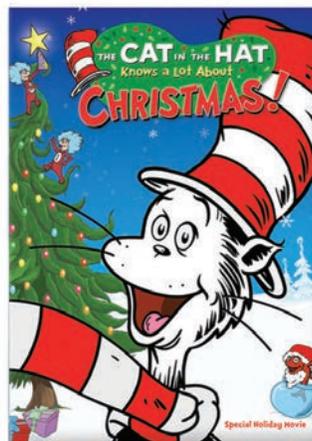
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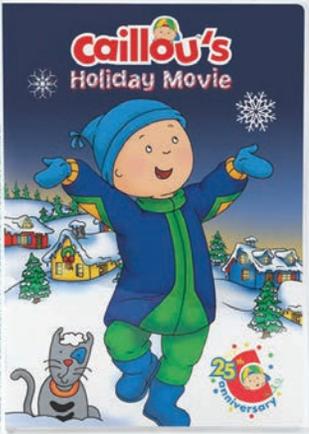


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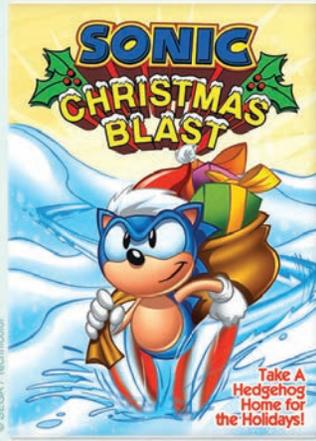


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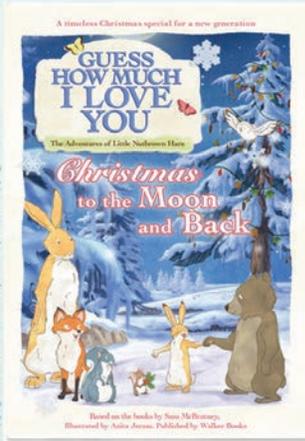
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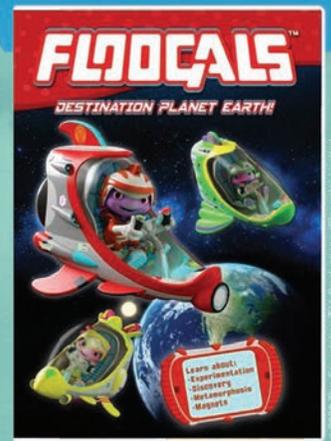
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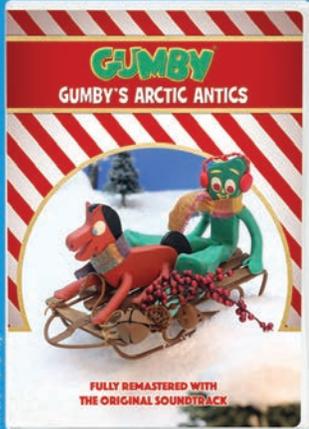


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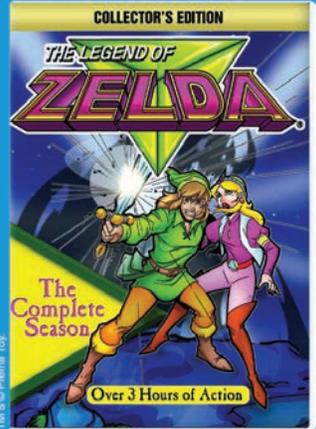
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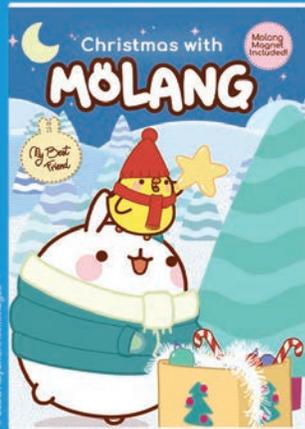


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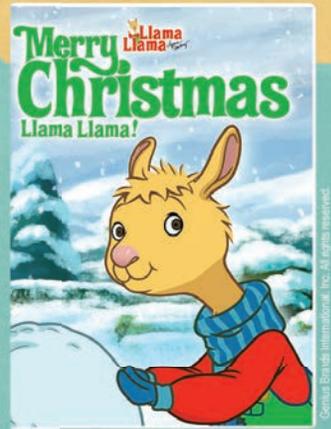
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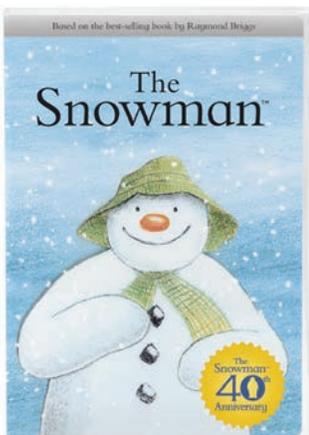


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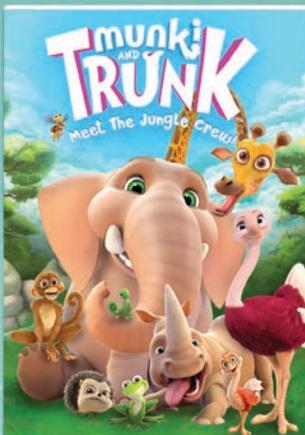
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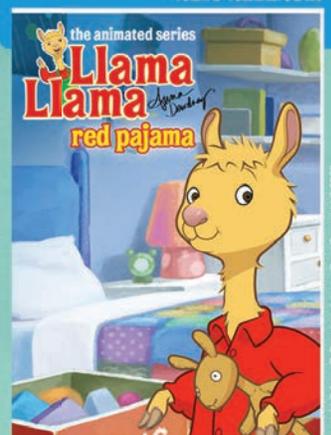
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★★★★ = Excellent

★★★ = Good

★★ = Fair

★ = Poor

PPR = Public Performance Rights

DRA = Digital Rights Available

Aud = Audience

K = Preschool-Kindergarten

E = Elementary (grades 1-3)

I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)

J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)

H = High School (grades 9-12)

C = Colleges & Universities

P = Public Libraries

## CHILDREN'S

### Butterbean's Café ★★1/2

(2018) 93 min. DVD: \$14.98. Paramount Home Entertainment (available from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Aired on Nickelodeon, this American-Irish co-production animated series focuses on upbeat go-getter fairy Butterbean and her fluttering friends who work in the titular dining establishment. "The Grand Opening" has Butterbean convincing pals Poppy and Dazzle along with little sister Cricket that they can fix up a restaurant in Puddlebrook, a town mostly populated by talking chipmunks and rabbits. Standing in their way is Ms. Marmalady (drolly voiced by *Orange Is the New Black*'s Alysia Reiner), who (understandably, one would think) is upset that Butterbean threatens her clientele by opening up right across the street. Marmalady and her monkey minions try some tricks, but with the help of a magic box and an enchanted whisk to finish off every recipe to whimsical perfection, Butterbean comes out on top. Other episodes include "The Sweetest Ride" (in which a delivery truck is converted into a fancy mobile café), "Friendship Pretzels," "Grandma Nana Banana Bread," and "Wedding Cake Switcheroo," the last involving a road trip to bring lunch to Madame President that is interrupted by citizens who need problem-solving help. Featuring solid CGI animation, brief songs, and cooking/prep sequences, this is a harmless saccharine series that will likely

appeal to younger viewers. Compiling seven episodes from the 2018-19 debut season, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### The Case for Loving ★★

(2019) 10 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-33820-050-8.

In 1958 in a small town in Virginia, Richard Loving and Mildred Jeter met, fell in love, and made plans to marry. But Richard was white and Mildred was "what they called colored," and it was against the law in Virginia and 16 other states for interracial couples to marry. This lovely animated adaptation of the 2015 picture book written by Selina Alko and co-illustrated by Alko and Sean Qualls tells the story of Richard and Mildred, who married legally in Washington, D.C., but were arrested and jailed after returning to Virginia. The couple resettled in D.C., but wanted to come back with their children to Virginia, so they sought legal help that led to a case heard by the U. S. Supreme Court in 1967. The unanimous decision favored the Lovings, who "lived happily and legally ever after." Original background music, realistic sound effects, and Bahni Turpin's compassionate narration accompany the digital animation of the paint and collage illustrations. In an author's note narrated by Alko, she explains that she and her husband, Qualls, are an interracial couple who faced none of the hurdles that the Lovings endured. Portraits of Alko and Qualls and selected civil rights photos precede a brief introduction to the book's illustrations. Also including a read-along option, *The Case for Loving* is a good discussion starter about civil rights and the fight for equal rights, aimed at younger viewers. Recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (S. Beauregard)

### Highlights: School Cool! ★★

(2019) 27 min. DVD: \$19.99. Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned. PPR.

*Highlights* has been entertaining and educating youngsters for more than 70 years. *School Cool!* maintains the periodical's "Fun with a Purpose" philosophy through 10 animated stories and eight live-action shorts. Each story begins by announcing the title, author, and illustrator. The selections loosely revolve around a school theme and some—including "Swim to School," "Greenfoot Gus," and "Kittengarten"—feature animal characters. The opening tale is "Bella's First Day," in which a young girl declares that her outfit is a ball gown, her sneakers are dance slippers, and the family car is a pumpkin, before proclaiming, "Today I am Kinderbella." The animated illustrations are mostly color-washed drawings backed by clear narration from various readers. The live-action segments include "Ask *Highlights Kids*," in which an ethnically diverse group of youngsters answers simple questions, such as what to do if a classmate is cheating off your answer sheet or school assignments aren't challenging enough. Other live-action snippets find children telling funny jokes and demonstrating simple projects. The animated stories seem to be geared more towards younger viewers than the live-action features, but a menu allows users to choose age-appropriate chapters. Likely to be popular due to the *Highlights* connection, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (S. Beauregard)

### How Do Dinosaurs Learn to Read? ★★

(2019) 7 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-33853-477-1.

This animated adaptation of author Jane



### Around America to Win the Vote ★★

(2019) 26 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-9749-3815-5.

Women's efforts to secure the right to vote took many years of struggle, determination, and political savvy that ultimately resulted in the adoption of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920. Narrated by Marge Sudheimer, this iconographic-animated adaptation of the true-story-based 2016 picture book *Around America to Win the Vote: Two Suffragists, a Kitten, and 10,000 Miles*, written by Mara Rockliff and illustrated by Hadley Hooper, follows suffragists Nell Richardson and Alice Burke as they leave New York City and drive around the country in a small yellow car named the "Golden Flyer," stopping in towns to give speeches and spread the message of "Votes for Women." Using rudimentary maps and directions, the ladies followed the perimeter states around the country, encountering rough unpaved roads, rain, mud, desert heat, and even a blizzard along the way, before making it safely back to New York City for an exuberant celebration. Lively music and sound effects of the car's motor and boisterous animals help enliven the story, which concludes with the narrator reading historical and source notes from the book that provide a brief history of women's long road to winning the right to vote. With the centennial for the passage of the 19th amendment coming in 2020, this timely and informative film—which includes a read-along option—is recommended. Aud: E, P. (T. Root)

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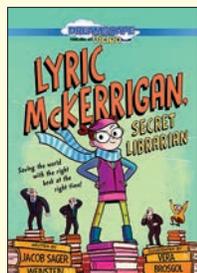
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### Lyric McKerrigan, Secret Librarian ★★★

(2019) 11 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-9749-4642-6.

Wacky and zany perfectly describe this iconographic-animated adaptation of author Jacob Sager Weinstein's 2018 picture book, illustrated by Caldecott-honor winning artist Vera Brosgol. Dr. Glockenspiel has escaped from his cell at the Depository for the Criminally Naughty and he is hiding out in a secret lair in an iceberg. Glockenspiel claims that his army of giant moths will eat the world's books unless he receives a boatload of money. Who loves books so much that

she is willing to risk her life to save them? None other than Lyric McKerrigan, the mod-looking purple-haired librarian, that's who. Narrators Angie Kane, Qarie Marshall, Mark Owen, Erin Yuen, Lesa Lockford, and Pete Cross join forces to create different characters and moods that match the text and colorful illustrations, lending a comic book feel to the short, backed by music ranging from secret agent-type melodies to a sweet lullaby when the moths enjoy story time before eating Glockenspiel's wool clothing. Librarian McKerrigan, who arrives on a parachute that looks like a book, knows which tomes will work in which situations, giving bored security guards books about sewing and embroidery and jailed secret agents a book about picking locks. Kids will embrace this refreshingly exciting, well-produced title and perhaps pick up on the subtle message that books have the power to change and influence lives. Also including a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (S. *Beauregard*)

Yolen's 2018 12th picture book in the popular dinosaur series finds the immense, lovable dinosaurs learning to read. The rhyming text, enthusiastically delivered by Yolen, begins by asking some silly questions regarding how dinosaurs treat books and reading. Do dinosaurs throw books at cats? Use books as shovels? Flip pages without looking at the text? Or read on the potty and make a mess? Dinosaurs, of course, do none of these things and instead are kind to books, read each word carefully, and love to read before bedtime. Mark Teague's delightfully humorous illustrations show various dinosaurs in home settings with furniture and human parents who are much smaller than the titular creatures that drape their bodies on tiny chairs and small beds. Original music—marked by piano, violin, and other instruments—as well as sound effects of flipping book pages add spark. Extras include an "About Reading" segment that introduces basic reading concepts. Also featuring a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (S. *Beauregard*)

### The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!

★★★

(2019) 11 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-33853-209-8.

This animated adaptation of Carmen Agra Deedy's 2017 picture book is narrated by the author with a choice of English or Spanish narration. The village of La Paz is a very noisy place where residents find it hard to hear, sleep, and think because of barking dogs, crooning mothers, humming engines, warbling fountains, and singing residents,

among other loud sounds. New mayor Don Pepe promises peace and quiet and declares a rule of silence (dogs are muzzled and teapots are afraid to whistle), with the town becoming "silent as a tomb." Seven quiet years pass until a rooster arrives, loudly crowing "Kee-kee-ree-KEE!" in a tree beneath the mayor's window. Even when the tree is cut down and the rooster is put in a cage without food, the headstrong fowl continues to sing. The nasty mayor threatens to kill the rooster until the townspeople gather to sing "Kee-kee-ree-KEE!" in unison and say adios to the mayor, allowing the town to once again become noisy and vibrant. Eugene Yelchin's brightly colored mixed-media illustrations—along with some lively ethnic music laced with guitar, drum, and brass overtones—add bounce to this entertaining title that imparts a subtle message about free speech and expression. Also featuring a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (S. *Beauregard*)

### Star Wars Resistance: Complete Season One ★★★

(2019) 4 discs. 462 min. DVD: \$29.99. Buena Vista Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

This animated spin-off of the recent *Star Wars* movies follows the adventures of Kazuda "Kaz" Xiono (voiced by Christopher Sean), a pilot in the New Republic who is recruited by legendary fighter pilot Poe Dameron to spy for the Rebellion on The Platform—a refueling station on an oceanic planet. Kaz can be cocky and headstrong and even a little reckless—he is essentially a teenager tossed into an outpost filled

with mechanics, merchants, hotshot pilots, pirates, criminals, and spies—but he is also loyal to the friends he makes and he risks his own mission to protect them when Storm Troopers begin to take over the station. The series was created for the Disney XD cable channel and often humorously focuses on adventures and friendships, although it becomes more dramatic as the danger escalates. The animation style is simple and clean yet expressive and smooth and the show features a big orchestral score and movie sound effects. Oscar Isaac, who plays Poe in the live-action *Star Wars* movies, reprises his role here as a voice actor in a handful of episodes. The storytelling is ambitious, balancing standalone episodes with a story arc that develops over the course of the entire season and characters and relationships that evolve over time. Given the *Star Wars* connection and high quality of the production, this may interest older viewers as well. Compiling all 21 episodes from the 2018-19 debut season, extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and bonus shorts. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. *Axmaker*)

## PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

### Among the Many ★★★

(2019) 50 min. DVD: \$59.95. Paraclete Press (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-64060-393-6.

Subtitled "Wisdom, Companionship, and Hope for Those Who Have Lost a Loved One to Drug Overdose," *Among the Many* employs excerpts from moving interviews with survivors—particularly parents—to express the devastating sense of loss resulting from the drug overdose death of a loved one, which is made even more difficult by the hint of social stigma that exacerbates the pain. But it also explores coping mechanisms that can help to deal with the resulting grief and guilt, including individual counseling and group therapy. Two experts offer their observations on a phenomenon that has become increasingly common as a result of the opioid epidemic: Franklin Cook, the founder of a phone support service for bereaved individuals and a specialist in suicide prevention efforts, and Sandra Farrell, a therapist concentrating on drug and alcohol recovery. Both offer acute and sensitive insights into the family dynamic that occurs when a son or daughter struggles with addiction—a reality powerfully conveyed in photographs of the deceased accompanying the interviews—while also providing information about the resources available to aid those who are left behind. A sadly timely guidance program that can help those affected by the current opioid epidemic, this is recommended. Aud: P. (F. *Swietek*)

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### Ruth: The Musical ★★★

(2019) 85 min. DVD: \$17.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

Following in the sandal-prints of *Godspell*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, among others, *Ruth* is a new musical about a significant biblical figure. Ruth's husband, and the husbands of her mother-in-law, Naomi, and sister-in-law, Orpah, are all killed. In her grief, Naomi (Lindsey Danvers), decides to return to her home of Bethlehem, and demands that Ruth (Jay Moussa-Mann, who is also the writer-director) and Orpah (Aja Dodd) go back to their families in Moab. But Ruth insists on accompanying Naomi and even embracing the older woman's God as her own. Back in Bethlehem, Ruth works in the sometimes dangerous fields of Boaz (David Aryn), a good man who eventually falls in love with Ruth. The original songs here are nicely melodic and lyrically strong. And while Moussa-Mann doesn't offer a lot of emotional range here as an actor, Aryn and Danvers are very good, backed by a strong supporting cast. *Ruth: The Musical* is not as glossy as similar musicals, but this should be seen as a potential blueprint for things to come, a work in progress that could one day land on Broadway. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### The Torchlighters: The George Müller Story ★★★

(2018) 30 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

This entertaining and inspiring animated entry in the acclaimed series *The Torchlighters* on "heroes of the faith" serves as a graceful introduction to a remarkable figure named George Müller. A Prussian by birth and a Christian evangelist whose long life spanned the 19th century (he died at age 92 in 1898), Müller moved to England where he served as a popular minister in a Bristol church. In the era of British workhouses for the poor, Müller opened his home to a number of orphans who otherwise would have ended up virtually enslaved or living on the streets. When the number of children Müller sheltered became so large that the neighbors complained, he established a massive orphanage on seven acres housing a couple thousand kids. The narrative focuses on a key chapter in the preacher's narrative: the early days of turning the Müller home into a sanctuary, and the many challenges he faced in keeping the swelling population of orphans fed. There's a bit of Dickensian drama concerning villainous workhouse bosses arrayed against Müller, but several key characters are based on real people, and the true events (including the amazing story of a breakfast miracle) are nicely depicted. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

## SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

### Angry White Men ★★★

(2019) 30 min. DVD: \$325. DRA. Grasshopper Film. PPR.

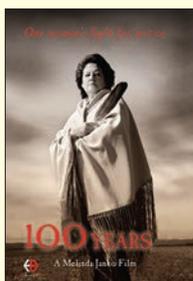
Director Peter Hutchison's film is essentially an extended illustrated lecture by sociologist Michael Kimmel of the State University of New York at Stony Brook that is based on research he conducted for his 2013 book *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. Kimmel seeks to explain the causes behind the country's highly polarized and often volcanic politics—particularly the rage expressed by many white men at what they perceive as their victimization. That attitude, Kimmel argues, is central to the rise of Donald Trump and the hostility to liberals, feminists, and immigrants exhibited by his base. Kimmel's analysis suggests that the fundamental force at work here is downward socioeconomic mobility, which has frustrated white American males' ability to support their families as their fathers did—i.e., as the breadwinners while their wives stay at home and rear the children. According to Kimmel, their failure to realize this antiquated concept of "what it means to be a man" has led many to seek validation in prejudice, men's rights movements, and white supremacy—a trend that Kimmel claims was further encouraged by the election of Barack Obama, which fanned racism among white middle-class men who saw it as yet more proof of the triumph of "the other." The solution, says Kimmel, lies in finding ways to allow these men to find dig-

nity within new standards of masculinity that are suited to the changed contemporary world. Interview clips accompanying Kimmel's presentation lifts *Angry White Men* from the realm of pure abstraction, but it remains more a timely dissection of the problem than a recipe for its solution. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Black Enuf\* ★★★

(2016) 23 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$80: public libraries; \$200: colleges & universities. DRA. Third World Newsreel. PPR. Closed captioned.

Carrie Hawks's award-winning short documentary about the many skewed perceptions of what constitutes real blackness in America offers a hybrid of playful animation, a tone of bemused self-consciousness, and live-action interviews with a bit more edge. A light-skinned African American with an even lighter-skinned father, Hawks—referring to her school days—describes what her skin color meant in a number of social and cultural contexts. She describes being on the lowest-rung of black girls at her high school to be asked to homecoming by a black boy, and the confusing politics of which table to sit at in the school cafeteria. But she also wittily describes her innocent defiance of stereotypes as a gay black woman during other times in her life. Was it okay to like the Beach Boys? Do black people belong in ski lodges? What about "investigating Buddhism" instead of attending a black church? Hawks interviews family and friends, who have stories to tell about living in the crossfire of conflicting perceptions about one's place, value, and identity as a black American. Both funny and biting, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



### 100 Years ★★★1/2

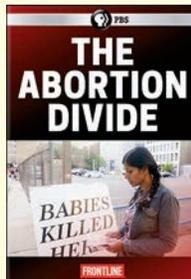
(2017) 75 min. DVD: \$89: high schools & public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Melinda Janko's documentary focuses on the long and shameful history of how the federal government reaped the riches of natural resources on Native American lands without distributing the wealth back to the indigenous peoples. This situation was challenged in court in 1996 by Elouise Cobell, a tribal elder of Montana's Blackfoot Confederacy, who brought forth the largest class-action lawsuit ever filed against the U.S. government. Cobell charged that the Department of the Interior enabled energy companies to take the bounty from native lands without providing accountability for environmental damage or financial transparency on their revenue gains (while also mismanaging the indigenous population's trust funds). The lawsuit dragged on through three presidential administrations until 2010 when Congress approved the funds to enable a \$3.4 billion settlement in favor of 300,000 Native Americans. Janko's documentary chronicles a modern-day David and Goliath struggle, with the behemoth bureaucracy of the federal government working to stall and frustrate Cobell's history-making lawsuit. *100 Years* also notes that many Native Americans living on tribal lands today are without electricity and running water in their homes, even as their reservations are plumbed for oil, timber, and mineral wealth. A compelling portrait of an indefatigable heroine fighting for the disenfranchised, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### The Abortion Divide ★★★

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0998-3.

In the culture wars, no issue sparks more passion and discord than abortion, where there is simply no middle ground or room for compromise. Filmmaker Mark Obenhaus's PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary centers on the Philadelphia Women's Center, which both counsels women and provides abortions. Women from all walks of life are represented here, from professionals to those who feel burdened by too many children or are mired in poverty (including homeless women). Recent decades have witnessed increased security at the facility—the addition of guards and bulletproof glass—as violence is an always present concern. Outside, there are constant anti-abortion protesters, including a committed Christian doctor who attempts to hand out leaflets and speak to the women. For the women who agree to appear on camera, none take their decisions lightly, but not all are harboring feelings of guilt. In some cases, they are accompanied by significant others—some supportive, others conflicted. Abortion procedures are explained, although for many the most difficult moments involve running the gauntlet of outside protesters. Also covered is a "crisis pregnancy center," where anti-abortion activists offer counseling services, parenting classes, and even medication to reverse the effects of "morning after" pills. The activists stress that their support extends beyond preventing abortions, although many viewers will question their claims, such as the Christian doctor's belief that abstinence is the answer to abortions. *The Abortion Divide* refuses to demonize either side (some viewers will be upset by a scene showing the aftermath of an abortion) and few minds will be changed here. But this is a welcome and timely documentary, particularly considering recent attempts to reverse the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



ment in the rampant illnesses). Following the stories of several patients, *Complicit* paints a sad picture of the tragic cost of the sobering statistic that Communist China now produces 90 percent of the world's electronics. Presented in both its full-length version and a 58-minute abridged edition, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Distant Constellation ★★★

(2017) 82 min. DVD: \$375. DRA. Grasshopper Film. PPR.

Turkish-American filmmaker Shevaun Mizrahi presents a remarkable cinema vérité portrait of life in a huge Istanbul old-age home, capturing the day-to-day experiences of residents whose physical abilities and mental faculties are inevitably failing. Viewers meet an infirm photographer who continually toys with his cherished equipment, trying to get it to work although he is virtually blind; a lascivious gent who garbles the narrative of *Lolita*, and then reads from his own salacious memoirs before playing some Chopin on the piano and asking Mizrahi to become his mistress; two bickering men who ride up and down the elevator debating questions such as the existence of extraterrestrial life; and a woman who describes how she and her family of Armenian Christians escaped death by converting to Islam and changing their names (she begs that she not be identified for fear of reprisal, and nods off during the interview, apologizing when she awakens). The interviewees' gaunt faces are even more memorable than their scattered recollections. Mizrahi contrasts life within the institution with construction going on nearby, occasionally turning her camera on workers outside to emphasize plans for the future in comparison to the residents' obsession with the past. She also uses images of falling snow and the building's tall windows overlooking the courtyard to create an otherworldly sense. Emphasizing atmosphere over narrative, this moodily poignant, thought-provoking documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swiitek)

### Faith, Hope, Love ★★★

(2017) 52 min. DVD: \$59.99 (\$299 w/PPR from [edu.passionriver.com](http://edu.passionriver.com)). *Passion River* (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Russian filmmaker Katja Fedulova's home-spun documentary offers a sketch of outspoken women fighting on the frontlines of the never-ending post-Soviet culture wars. Fedulova's first featured subject here is her own grandmother, a WWII heroine who survived the worst of the war. She is a true adherent of the Soviet cause, someone who "always believed in the goodness of socialism." Fedulova next turns her attention to the grim city of Kursk, where the focus is on two women making waves on the local political scene. Viewers meet Olga, who has fashion-model good looks and a fiery activist bent. Olga has

### The Bridge Master's Daughter ★★★

(2018) 81 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$295. DRA. First Run Features. PPR.

Hundreds of years ago, the Incas built many a woven footbridge for walking over gorges in the remote Andean highlands of Peru. In filmmakers Elisa Stone and Matthew Leahy's sometimes-startling documentary *The Bridge Master's Daughter*—a combination of anthropology and unnerving real-life drama—viewers learn that only one of those bridges remains. It needs to be rewoven every year while it hangs in place over a chasm, and that scary-looking task—passed between many generations—is the current responsibility of a middle-aged man named Victoriano Arisapana. Several people from Arisapana's small, mountain community get involved: women make the fibrous strands that reinforce and rebuild the bridge, and men carefully thread them together into thick ropes. All of which is very interesting, but the film is more focused on Arisapana, his family, and various burdens that drive everyone apart and threaten tradition. This is a naturally beautiful setting in which people are literally living on miles and miles of green and jagged slopes, far from amenities and outsiders. Yet cell phones are ubiquitous, and there is a path that leads—temptingly for young people—to the closest city. Arisapana's two sons have no intention of sticking around and assuming the mandate to fix the bridge annually. His teenage daughter, Ruth Laurita, isn't allowed to inherit the sacred chore, and in any case she has a festering grievance that

leads her to disappear. And there's another relevant layer to the story concerning socially accepted violence towards girls and women, inflicted by husbands, fathers, and teachers. A beautifully-filmed and ultimately disturbing documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Complicit ★★★

(2019) 89 min. DVD: \$350. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-948745-18-6.

Filmmakers Heather White and Lynn Zhang focus on the human toll of high-tech sweatshops in modern China. The documentary starts with a rustic rural funeral for a young assembly laborer (who died of cancer just prior to his 26th birthday) who worked in the notorious Foxconn factory that contracts to build Apple devices. Migrant farm boys and peasant girls seem to be grist for the mill of unventilated, toxic factories such as Foxconn (and even more unscrupulous subcontractors used by Samsung). These naive youngsters consider their \$550 per month wages—while working 15-hour shifts practically every day—to be astounding windfalls for their families. But the chemicals used—especially benzene and n-hexane—are banned in most of the civilized world, and lead to nerve damage and leukemia. Grassroots Chinese activist groups are fighting for worker safety and holding the companies accountable, but such NGOs are based off-site in Hong Kong, and have little enforcement power over the mainland's corporate bosses (who can also bribe doctors to find no industrial involve-

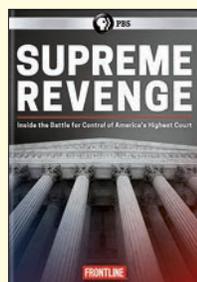
been accused of slander and “extremism” by the powers that be for her role as a journalist for the grassroots quasi-socialist newspaper *The People’s Reporter*, but now she’s running for local political office, and there is a make or break feel to the proceeding as this may be Olga’s last chance to save her political future. Although Fedulova also follows the story of anti-abortion feminist Natalia, it is really Olga’s Sisyphian struggle against her country’s entrenched oligarchic political machine that delivers the most insight into what life in post-Soviet Russia has become (in a nutshell, honesty simply doesn’t pay). As much as *Faith, Hope, Love* tries to manufacture a sense of hope for the future of free thinking in Russia, the reality shown is undeniably bleak. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)

### A Great Ride ★★★

(2018) 33 min. DVD: \$20: individuals & public libraries; \$195: colleges & universities w/PPR. Frameline Distribution. Closed captioned.

Co-directors Deborah Craig and Véronica Dupont-Déliz build their short documentary around lesbian retirees in Northern California living their lives to the fullest. Sally, who resides in Willits, tried her hand at heterosexuality, but “it was just so dull.” She moved from rural Virginia to San Francisco, where she became a gay rights activist,

working closely with the late Harvey Milk. Her desire to live free from the patriarchy led her to buy a plot of land with several other women. Although she was only 44 at the time, she referred to it as “the lesbian old folks home,” envisioning it as a place where women would take care of each other. Sally notes that many similar communities have sprung up from Los Angeles to Vancouver. Brenda, who lives in Vallejo, likes to box, attend church services, and register voters. She describes herself as “an untrainable black lesbian” from Jackson, MI (she has a tattoo of Bast, a mythological Egyptian goddess on her bicep). Prior to Vallejo, Brenda lived in New York and Oakland, where she was president of the East Bay Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club. Craig and Dupont-Déliz also profile five women who live in Oakmont, a retirement community in Santa Rosa: Patty and Sue are RV enthusiasts, Nancy and Marjorie maintain a vegetable garden, and Shirley, who hails from Great Britain, enjoys a round of tennis. The quintet has banded together with other lesbian residents as “The Rainbow Women.” Much like Sally’s group, they look after one another. An inspiring film that touches on issues related to aging, women, and LGBT studies, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



### Supreme Revenge ★★★

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-1061-3.

For much of recent American history, Supreme Court confirmations were relatively orderly affairs, based mostly on the legal qualifications of the nominee. However, Republicans and Democrats eventually realized that these lifetime appointments could have seismic effects, particularly regarding issues relating to the “culture wars.” Filmmaker Michael Kirk’s PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary examines the toxic process of today’s confirmation hearings, which has its roots in the late 1980s, when Reagan nominated Robert Bork, an outspoken, combative conservative. Led by Sen. Edward Kennedy, Senate liberals grilled Bork on his views, which assumed more importance than his obvious legal qualifications. Bork enjoyed the “no holds barred” chance to air his ideas, and further alienated some senators by calling his appointment an “intellectual feast,” as opposed to a chance to seek justice or help people. He was rejected, creating lasting bitterness on the Republican side, particularly with a young senator named Mitch McConnell. The term “borked” (read: screwed) was coined, and McConnell vowed that conservatives would be prepared next time. When legal lion Thurgood Marshall retired, conservative justice Clarence Thomas was sailing smoothly to confirmation until Anita Hill’s allegation of sexual harassment led to dramatic TV hearings. Conservatives swung into action, and Thomas angrily claimed that a “high-tech lynching” was being conducted. Sensational charges were levied on all sides, but in the end Thomas was confirmed. Democrats were outraged when McConnell blocked any consideration of Obama’s nomination of Merrick Garland in the last year of his presidency, holding the nomination open for a possible Republican president. Later, Trump’s nomination of Brett Kavanaugh led to unexpected claims of a decades-old sexual assault on a classmate, spurring fiery clashes on the polarized judicial committee. The documentary also covers the birth of the powerful conservative Federalist Society, which vets court candidates, the court’s influence on abortion cases, and other hot button issues (including their role in deciding the 2000 presidential election). All in all, the film makes clear that the stakes couldn’t be higher in the future. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

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## I Am the Revolution ★★★

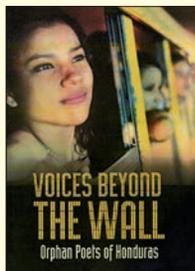
(2018) 72 min. In English, Arabic, Kurdish & Pashto w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$295; community colleges; \$395; colleges & universities. DRA. Women Make Movies. PPR.

The three Middle Eastern women profiled in filmmaker Benedetta Argentieri's documentary are doing their part to bring their countries into the 21st century. Selay Ghaffar, spokesperson for Hambastagi, the Solidarity Party of Afghanistan, is the first woman to hold the position. Once banned by the Afghanistan government, her group is dedicated to advancing secularism, women's rights, and national self-determination free from NATO interference. Ghaffar's father was a freedom fighter, and she grew up as a refugee in Iran and Pakistan. Here, she travels discreetly, sometimes with her face covered, due to security concerns. In addition to attending a protest and a TV appearance in which she gets into a heated argument with Hizb-e-Islami member Abdul Jabbar Sholgari, Ghaffar meets with a variety of women, mostly in small towns. Some of them were married as young as 12, have as many as a dozen children, and haven't been allowed to obtain an education. She also helps a victim of domestic abuse find sanctuary at a women's shelter. Rojda Felat, a Kurdish commander in the Syria Democratic Forces, joined the Women's Protection Unit in 2012, where she led 60,000 SDF members against ISIS. Felat and her troops aim to liberate Rojava (northeastern Syria). Yanar Mohammed is the co-founder and president of the Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), which offers 10 shelters for women fleeing violent situations—including honor killings, human trafficking, and marital rape. Because Argentieri spends so much time with Ghaffar, the other women receive short shrift in comparison, but this is still a worthy look at their efforts to improve the lives of their fellow citizens. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## The Inland Sea ★★★

(1991) 56 min. In English & Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95. The Criterion Collection (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Lucille Carra's 1991 well-regarded but seldom seen short feature—inspired by film scholar and Japanophile Donald Richie's titular 1971 book—serves up a selective tour of seaside communities along the Sea of Japan, far from the Tokyo-megapolis area. *The Inland Sea* becomes a search for the "real" Japan amidst Western influences and modernization. Richie narrates but remains largely off-camera, while the lens finds Shinto shrines (and a monk bemoaning that "big machines" are more likely to tear his temple down and rebuild rather than just fix the ancient roof tiles at issue), a modern leper colony amidst placid Zen peace and beauty,



## Voices Beyond the Wall ★★★

(2019) 90 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

James Franco served as executive producer on filmmaker Brad Coley's haunting documentary about an oasis of safety, love, and education for girls in the middle of the murder capital of the world. Nuestras Pequeñas Rosas (Our Little Roses) in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, is a girls' boarding school that offers a chance at life for young people in a brutal city. For many at Our Little Roses, however, that good fortune comes at a price. The Christian school and residence is full of young women abandoned by their families; in some cases, girls were deceived by their mothers into thinking that they were going to a party or visiting a friend. The emotional and psychological fallout from such inhumane treatment becomes the subject of poetry written by the girls under the tutelage of poet and Episcopal priest Spencer Reece, an American at the school on a Fulbright grant. Studying Emily Dickinson and W. H. Auden, the girls are encouraged via Reece's empathetic but matter-of-fact approach to put their deepest emotions into words and imagery. What comes through, both in their verse and in interviews, is the students' mixed feelings about family, while they also acknowledge that they receive so much love, protection, and a sense of sisterhood at Our Little Roses. In the film's most powerful scene, one of the girls receives permission to visit a former student from Our Little Roses, a young teen who kept running away from the facility and ended up in a miserable orphanage, with rats, flooding, and harsh punishments. Shell-shocked, the virtual prisoner tearfully regrets leaving Our Little Roses. Bullet-riddled cars and other signs of street violence tell viewers what less-lucky children (many orphaned due to rampant drug-related murders) in the city are experiencing. What happens to the girls who graduate from Our Little Roses is an open question, but for a while at least, they get to be kids. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

coffee shops filled with the latest English-language magazine, and a WWII widow who is doggedly persevering by delivering newspapers. Richie, who died in 2013, said that he considered his book a form of epistolary novel rather than a nonfiction travelogue. Extras include interviews/conversations with filmmaker Paul Schrader, cultural critic Ian Buruma, and Carra, remembering Richie (also appearing here in a 1991 interview) as a cultured bisexual eager to escape his stultifying Ohio hometown, who joined the many Westerners harboring a fascination with the Far East. Carra herself says her models for the film were early U.K. documentaries, and she deliberately eschewed fancy editing or extravagant camerawork. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

## Netizens ★★★

(2018) 96 min. DVD: \$95; public libraries; \$395; colleges & universities. DRA. Tugg. PPR.

Cynthia Lowen's troubling, thought-provoking film draws on the stories of three women to document the destructive impact of online sexual harassment and the infuriating difficulty of combating its pernicious effects. Anita Sarkeesian's blogs about sexism in video games initiated a cascade of harangues and threats from enraged male players. Carrie Goldberg turned her own stalking by a past lover into a career as a prominent attorney specializing in cases involving privacy rights, especially with respect to Internet revenge postings. And Tina Reine's life was derailed

by vicious lies sent to friends, family, and prospective employers. As the film makes clear, the battle against the scourge of net attacks on women is hobbled by arguments that such assaults, false or not, are free speech protected by the First Amendment, and courts are inclined to accept this defense. A further obstacle lies in attitudes, as illustrated by an episode following an autobiographical presentation Reine made in a public gathering: a man approaches her afterward to ask whether she was making too much of what, after all, was just a prank. Such downplaying of the cruelty—and impact—of cyberbullying is a major factor in the failure to confront it vigorously. But *Netizens* also adds that the situation seems to be changing overall for the better. Despite some repetitiveness, this is a compelling look at a timely subject. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## A Thousand Girls Like Me ★★★

(2018) 52 min. In Persian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$295; community colleges; \$395; colleges & universities. DRA. Women Make Movies. PPR.

Although sexual abuse is a punishable offense in Afghanistan, few women report it for fear that they will be implicated in "moral crimes." In 2014, Khatera Gulzad spoke out against her father in order to get justice. After her father's arrest for rape, he was sent to jail to await trial. Throughout her life, Gulzad's father was a regular presence at the mosque, so neighbors saw him as a pious

man. For guidance, she spoke to 14 mullahs, but none were able to help until the 15th, who recommended that she take her story to the media. Doing so brought attention to her case, although her legal adviser warns that she will need to prove that she tried to get help beyond simply reporting her father to the authorities. Even her brothers give Gulzad a hard time, because they believe that her televised testimony has brought shame to their family. Although Gulzad wanted to terminate her second pregnancy, she was forced to carry the child to term in order to provide DNA evidence. “Zainab is my daughter,” she says about her first child, “but she is also my sister.” She considers putting the baby Mohammed up for adoption, since she and her mother are barely scraping by. They also live in fear of her uncles, who are protective of her father. Eventually, she is forced to move several times. “Every woman in this country has a hundred owners,” Gulzad laments. “It’s always been like this.” By the end, however, as her father continues to await sentencing, Gulzad has found a way to escape, although she knows that not all women in her situation will have that option. Director Sahra Mani recounts Gulzad’s journey here with sympathy and sensitivity. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## EDUCATION

### 6 Weeks to Mother’s Day ★★★

(2018) 93 min. In Thai w/English subtitles. DVD: \$125; high schools & public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. SDH captioned.

Filmmaker Marvin Blunte’s documentary is a loving tribute to Mother Aew, founder and longtime principal of the Children’s Village School in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, taking viewers behind-the-scenes of the establishment, where underprivileged youngsters (often orphans) are brought up according to a system of alternative, or democratic, education. Under the Summerhill method, named after the school in Suffolk where it was pioneered, children do not study a set curriculum but effectively construct their own program according to their interests and inclinations, proceeding at their own pace (the progressive nature of instruction is indicated by the inclusion of lectures in sex education). Students also participate in the school’s decision-making by voting in a school assembly, which also determines punishments for infractions of the rules. Blunte provides a cheerful portrait of the school’s operation—including its connection with a nearby community of Buddhist monks, and a trip by twin boys to visit their recently-identified birth parents—over the course of the six-week lead-up to a celebration in honor of Aew on the occasion of the 35th anniversary

of the school’s founding. At that concluding event, current students perform sketches to entertain Aew, and alumni testify to the impact the school had on their lives. Those scenes are juxtaposed with excerpts from an interview with Aew, in which she talks about her own childhood, her relationship with her mother, and her commitment to the children who are her students. An engaging portrait of a woman devoted to helping the least fortunate in her society, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Montessori: Let the Child be the Guide

★★★

(2018) 100 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Alexandre Mourot’s documentary offers both an introduction to Maria Montessori’s famed educational philosophy and an opportunity to see it in practice. Mourot first uses home movies to show how his toddler daughter learned by exploring her world, illustrating Montessori’s belief that children are best taught through a loosely structured system that encourages progress by letting kids choose to do what they find interesting. And this occurs in an environment conducive to stoking their natural curiosity while also allowing them to develop independence and self-confidence, as well as a spirit of sociability and cooperation. Employing excerpts from Montessori’s writings, as well as Mourot’s own observations, the film features footage shot over the course of a year (beginning in early

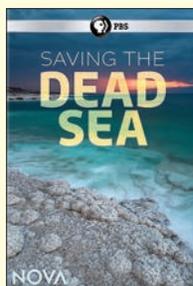
2015) at the Jeanne d’Arc School in Roubaix, the oldest Montessori locale in France. Mourot’s cameras simply observe 28 students, ages 3-6, as they experiment in solo projects and group activities, all under the gentle guidance of teacher Christian Maréchal, who sets out materials for the students in the morning and then offers to help through the day as requested. The children are all charming, of course, although a star does emerge—little Géraud Marion, who concentrates on his own work but also pads about the classroom observing what other children are doing, seeing what he can learn. Mourot even catches the triumphant moment when, with some assistance from Maréchal, Géraud reads for the first time. While obviously designed to promote Montessori education, this film can also be appreciated for being a lovely portrait of children who learn by playing. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

### The Last Animals ★★★

(2017) 91 min. In English, French, Czech, Lingala & Vietnamese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$129; public libraries; \$349; colleges & universities. DRA. Good Docs (avail. from [www.gooddocs.net](http://www.gooddocs.net)). PPR.

American photojournalist Kate Brooks, who has worked in various dangerous war zones, became aware of the trafficking in tusks and horns of endangered species—especially African rhinoceros and elephants—in



### Saving the Dead Sea ★★★

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0915-0.

Although it may sound redundant, the Dead Sea is truly dying. Israel’s largest body of water, lying 1,400 feet below sea level, has lost one-third of its water in recent decades. The Dead Sea is famous for its water composition—which is 10 times more salty than other seas—allowing for such buoyancy that humans can read books and newspapers while floating on its surface. Rich in biblical history, the sea also drew people seeking the water’s mineral healing powers. Filmmaker Terri

Randall’s PBS-aided NOVA documentary examines the changing shoreline, which is pocked with over 6,000 sinkholes—a man-made disaster caused by water diversion and industrial mining and exploitation. The film describes the geological formation of the area, in which water flowed from the Sea of Galilee and Jordan River into the Dead Sea, where it was trapped, having no natural exits. Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Jordan have formed an unlikely alliance with the Red Sea-Dead Sea Project, a first-time effort to link these two seas, and raise the Dead Sea’s water level by driving brine into it, possibly even turning the sea white. Every solution comes with challenges and unknowns: water piped to tourist areas could be disrupted by long overdue earthquakes, while tampering with the Red Sea could harm pristine and unique coral reefs. Some creative experiments have been tried, (including training Muslim women in Jordan to save water by learning about plumbing), although experts are rightly reluctant to seek miracle cures when so many projects have failed. Some even propose doing nothing, turning the Dead Sea into a geologic park. Meanwhile, historic rivals continue talking to each other about their water needs, which is a hopeful sign. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

connection with her attempts to uncover sources of financing behind contemporary conflicts. In her documentary, Brooks traces the links between the lucrative poaching business and its customers throughout the world while also emphasizing the efforts of activists to suppress the practice and save endangered species from extinction. She begins in the markets of Asia, where ivory bracelets and medicines prepared from ground rhino horns sell for high prices. She travels to Garamba National Park in the Congo, where rangers put their lives at risk warding off poachers even as other soldiers are complicit in the trade. She documents attempts to prosecute leaders of the poaching-and-trafficking cartels, and follows the work of Dr. Samuel Wasser of the University of Washington, who uses DNA from recovered elephant tusks to pinpoint where the animals were killed. Brooks also records desperate efforts to breed the few northern white rhinos in captivity—one at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park and two in a Kenyan conservancy—to perpetuate the species, attempts that sadly fail. *The Last Animals* points to celebrities like Prince William and journalists such as Gretchen Peters, who have spoken out against wildlife trafficking, but the emphasis is placed on those who are working on the ground. A powerful documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Show Me Science Advanced: Engineering Solutions to Corrosion ★★★

(2018) 13 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

From the series *Exploring the World of Science for High School & Beyond*, this short science/career guidance program emphasizes the importance of dealing with corrosion and introduces promising careers for students. Humankind has been using metals since the Bronze Age, but it wasn't until the Industrial Revolution that iron and steel were heavily employed to build skyscrapers, railroads, and other infrastructure. Aside from a few stable metals—copper, gold, silver, and platinum—most metals slowly break down over time in an electrochemical process known as corrosion. Not only does corrosion cause safety concerns, it also creates an enormous economic cost to control the damage. Since utilities, bridges, vehicles, ships, and military equipment all use metals, the need for effective mitigation techniques—as well as new stable materials—has risen. Major types of corrosion—including uniform, galvanic, pitting, and filiform—are discussed here, along with protection techniques to thwart corrosion, such as physical barriers (painting the Brooklyn Bridge, for example), galvanizing metal, applying a charge through metals to stabilize electrons (as done in pipelines), and adding extra materials to allow tolerances for corrosion. Research into developing more effective materials and advanced applications

in corrosion control (including robotics) offer new opportunities for jobs in this field. Corrosion engineers, inspectors, technicians, and metallurgists are some of the career options for high school students to pursue as infrastructure ages. A solid addition to career guidance collections, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, C. (T. Root)

## HEALTH & FITNESS

### The Medicine in Marijuana ★★★

(2018) 35 min. DVD: \$275. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-948745-20-8.

Filmmakers Ben Daitz and Ned Judge's short documentary on the state of medical marijuana use and its effectiveness in the U.S. delivers a snapshot of the ways in which some patients are benefiting from CBC, THC, and other chemical compounds found in marijuana, while noting that further research in the field remains hampered by longstanding federal regulations. Interviews with oncologists, neurologists, psychiatrists, and other practitioners and researchers—as well as patients—underscore the often dramatic therapeutic benefits of marijuana for people with epilepsy, chronic pain, nausea from chemotherapy, PTSD, and other conditions. A segment on whether marijuana has any effect on cancer suggests that available evidence is weak. But this observation also relates to frustrations with the chokehold that the federal government places on legitimate research and

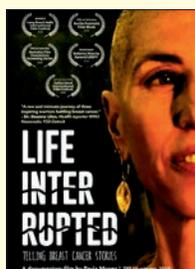
the practice of medicine. One ludicrous result from the way that doctors' hands are tied is that unregulated "bud-tenders"—i.e., people who work in legal pot shops—are often in the best position of advising patients on what to use for a variety of therapies. The anecdotal material here makes a quite powerful argument about how suffering can be alleviated by medicinal marijuana administered in different forms. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Preventing Accidental Drug Overdoses

★★★

(2019) 11 min. DVD: \$149.95 (study guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-116-2.

Host Robbie Jenkins and EMT instructor Shayna Goldberg explain how to prevent accidental drug overdoses in this instructional video that focuses on overdoses due to alcohol consumption and opioid drug use. Citing statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, Goldberg notes that 72,000 people die from drug overdoses and 2,000 die from alcohol poisoning each year. She describes opioids—from heroin to fentanyl—as drugs designed to provide pain relief, listing symptoms that may indicate an accidental overdose (the symptoms for alcohol poisoning are similar). Dramatic re-enactments illustrate what these symptoms might look like. The first step for bystanders who witness any kind of overdose is to call 911. While waiting for emergency medical technicians to arrive, responders are



### Life Interrupted: Telling Breast Cancer Stories ★★★

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$100; public libraries; \$300; colleges & universities. No Excuses Productions. PPR.

Director Paula Mozen, a breast cancer survivor, shares stories of women who have received the same diagnosis, concentrating on two in particular. Mozen, who lives in Montana, was diagnosed at the ages of 49 and 53. As an Ashkenazi Jew, she carries the BRCA gene, which gives her a greater chance of developing breast and ovarian cancer (her mother was diagnosed at 66). Mozen describes breast cancer as an equal rights disease, since no one is immune. Pat Bear, a Gros Ventre tribal member in Montana, was diagnosed at 59. As a teenager, she was shipped off to a boarding school. Unlike many Native American kids, Bear enjoyed the experience, but her home life was wracked by poverty and alcoholism. Debi Wood, who lives in Pennsylvania, was diagnosed at 34 and 48. Wood was an active child, who participated in cheerleading for 15 years, and became a flight attendant. Her diagnosis came as a shock. "I guess in my mind it was an older person's disease," she says. As it turns out, younger women tend to have more aggressive cancers and a lower survival rate. Her tumor was triple negative (which means that the three most common types of receptors known to fuel most breast cancer growth—estrogen, progesterone, and the HER-2/neu gene—are not present in the tumor), which is more common among African American women, and she had to undergo chemotherapy, so she froze her eggs beforehand, so that she and her fiancé would be able to have children (fortunately, she was able to become pregnant without medical intervention). All three women underwent radiation treatment, and Mozen also had two lumpectomies before opting for mastectomy, followed by an arduous nine-surgery reconstruction process. While three women obviously don't represent every breast cancer experience, their stories are informative and illuminating. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

advised to try to keep the afflicted person awake and alert (the dispatcher may also provide instructions). Those who have access to Naloxone or Narcan will want to administer this antidote to the opioid-afflicted person after reading the instructions, which can be a little tricky. Goldberg also outlines steps *not* to take if a person is suffering from alcohol poisoning, such as placing them under a cold shower, which can lead to hypothermia, or providing coffee, which can increase their dehydration level. Although aimed at high school and college-aged viewers, the information provided here would be useful for adults as well, especially given the current crisis of the opioid epidemic. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P (K. Fennessy)

### Water Style for Beginners ★★★

(2019) 154 min. DVD: \$29.95. YMAA Publication Center. ISBN: 978-1-59439-671-7.

Taught by Master Helen Liang, Liu He Ba Fa (or “water style”) is a martial arts style that incorporates 66 movements and draws from tai chi, bagua, and xingyi. Also known as water boxing, this form has both martial arts applications and benefits for strengthening the body and promoting health. Liang explains in detail how water style incorporates elements of the Tao, offering insight into the philosophy and purpose of the movements. Mastering water style means cultivating the mind to be able to blend mind, body, and spirit, using techniques such as advance and retreat that require quick responses. But water style moves can range from fast to slow, high to low, and like water, can be surging or gently flowing. Of the 66 movements, some require strength to go down low and may be easier to learn if viewers have previous experience with martial arts (several leg stances are employed: horse, bow, empty, and cross stance). Liang presents a walkthrough demo, gives instructions split in two parts for all of the movements, and then performs a full 10-minute routine. Liang’s instructions are clear and specific, and she employs repetition, offers different views for positions, and gives background information explaining each of the movements. A fine introduction to a lesser-known martial art/exercise routine, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Root)

## CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

### Foster Care Film Series: Volume 01

★★★

(2017) 39 min. DVD: \$169. DRA. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

This collection of three short films made by Yasmin Mistry present foster care stories that end happily for the most part. In *Feeling Wanted*, Charell Star Charleston, an African American public relations professional, says she was raised primarily by her mother, who

was in and out of rehab, while her father, a drug dealer, served time for murder. Her great grandmother took care of Charell until health issues got in the way. Unfortunately, Charell’s first foster family was abusive, but her great grandmother made sure she felt loved. Charell has also developed a good relationship with her mother, who has now gotten her life in order. Ashley Wolford, the Native American childcare provider in *My Identity*, never knew her father. She ended up in foster care due to her mother’s addiction to drugs and alcohol. She also spent time with her half-brother’s father and a cousin who introduced her to Sufism, a branch of Islam. Since Ashley was separated from her brother at an early age, they took different paths in life and had a strained relationship until recently. Camilla Tecsy, a white teenager in *Family Rewritten*, has cystic fibrosis. She ended up in foster care when her mother lost her job as a translator. Her father, an alcoholic cab driver, was unable to provide for Camilla, so a family friend ended up taking her in and making sure that she receives healthcare and emotional support. A bonus featurette, “Snapshots,” offers additional comments from the subjects about case workers, aging out, and friends. The range of experiences presented here will prove instructive for those who are interested in learning about foster care. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

### Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas ★★★

(2019) 52 min. DVD: \$99; public libraries; \$295 w/ PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Canadian filmmaker Larry Weinstein’s entertaining and informative documentary looks at the ways in which Jewish people have helped shape the annual Christmas holiday. Instead of a Christmas dinner, Weinstein’s family would go out for Chinese food. Actors here recreate the scene as a musical, starting with a maître d’ and waiters who sing and dance while serving food. After that, patrons get in on the action, including Dione Taylor, who sings an elegant version of “The Christmas Song,” and Steven Page from the Barenaked Ladies, who performs an Eastern-tinged “Silver Bells.” Weinstein proceeds to explore the history of Jewish-written Christmas carols, especially during the early 20th century when Jewish songwriters like Irving Berlin (born Israel Beilin) and Harold Arlen (born Hymen Arluck) dominated the field. Singer Steve Marche-Tormé, son of Mel Tormé, speaks on behalf of his father, who wrote “The Christmas Song.” By giving it to Nat King Cole, Tormé was making a statement—i.e., Christmas is for everybody, regardless of race, creed, or religion. A Jewish man, Robert May, also introduced the story of “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” as a

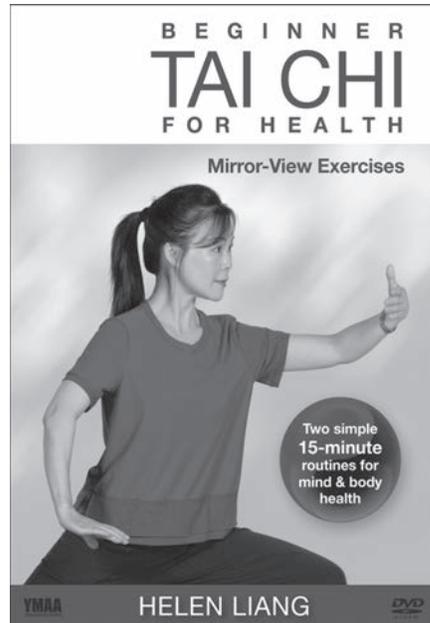
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Montgomery Ward-commissioned coloring book. As music journalist Robert Harris notes, the tale plays out like “the story of a young Jewish boy in America.” May’s brother-in-law, Johnny Marks, who specialized in Christmas material, adapted the story into a song. As Rabbi Joshua Plaut concludes, many Jews consider Christmas to be their favorite holiday, because on Christmas they can express their “Jewish identity more than any other day of the year.” Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## FOOD & SPIRITS

### How We Grow ★★★

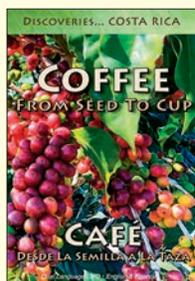
(2018) 64 min. DVD: \$125; public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmakers Haley Thompson and Tomas Zuccareno explore the burgeoning local food movement by looking at several farms in Western Colorado’s One Valley. Located at an elevation of 7,000 feet, the farms are scattered around the Roaring Fork River under the shadow of Mount Sopris. This is an historic farming area in which irrigation ditches compensate for the sparse rainfall. Although the growing season is short, some farmers tend greenhouses year-round. Harper Kaufman of Two Roots Farm describes her work as “essential.” Her colleague, Christian LaBar, says it gives him a “sense of purpose” to grow food for local families. Brook Levan of Sustainable Settings farms because he enjoys the flavor of fresh produce. Whitney Will of Roaring Gardens is following in the footsteps of her mother, who worked as an organic farmer in Snowmass (where she met her husband). Will produces Community Supported Agriculture boxes for local subscribers. She and other growers also sell their products at outdoor markets and to farm-to-table restaurants. In addition to the farmers, the filmmakers profile organizations such as Aspen TREE, which introduces students to the benefits of farming. Since the average age of the American farmer is 58, speakers emphasize a need to encourage the younger generation to see it is a viable vocation. While the filmmakers focus on Colorado, the ideas discussed—including health and environmental benefits—apply nationwide. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Maize in Times of War ★★★

(2016) 87 min. In Tzeltal, Ayuujk, Wixárika & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$250 w/PPR). Study guide included. EPF Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-933724-58-4.

The struggle of indigenous farmers in Mexico who are trying to maintain traditional practices in the face of varied pressures—including the danger posed by



### Discoveries... Costa Rica: Coffee From Seed to Cup

★★★★1/2

(2019) 57 min. DVD: \$24.95. DRA. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-297-6.

Here are some items for the I-Didn’t-Know-That file. One: while Costa Rica is a major supplier of coffee beans to the world, the Central American country largely imports beans for its own coffee drinkers. Two: the only coffee bean plantation owned by Starbucks is in Costa Rica—600 acres of dense, green lushness. In this java-oriented travelogue from filmmakers Jim and Kelly Watt (whose latest *Discoveries* series explored U.S. national parks), viewers meet a number of growers—some are part of an expanding movement of independent family micro-mills, in contrast to the corporate farms—who are passionate about what they do, spending very long days outdoors during harvest season. Labor issues are briefly addressed, especially concerning hourly wages, social security, and schooling for kids (much of the country’s harvesting force is made up of seasonal workers from Panama and Nicaragua). The country’s beautiful Tarrazu area is a high-altitude zone that is favorable to growing rich coffee beans. Viewers will see the factory processes for drying the beans and more in preparation for export, involving huge furnaces and big machines, as well as follow a quality-control expert’s complicated protocols for smelling and tasting numerous brews. A darker note in this armchair adventure is the controversial issue of coffee bean pricing—i.e., fees levied on farmers by big buyers, who in turn sell more profitably to the likes of Starbucks. One independent coffee family here made the hard decision to incorporate processing on a small scale at home, negotiating prices directly with higher rungs on the supply chain ladder. A beautifully-filmed and informative documentary that will appeal to coffee lovers, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

drug cartels, the rapaciousness of ranchers, and encouragement from powerful corporations to use genetically modified seeds—is chronicled in filmmaker Alberto Cortés’s documentary, which follows four families over the course of a year as they clear their fields, plant and harvest crops, and make their food. The families live in different parts of Mexico: two are Tzeltals residing in the Chiapas highlands of the south, a third is Wixáritari (or Huichol) in the west-central state of Jalisco, and the fourth is Ayuuk (or Mixe), living in the southern state of Oaxaca. All, however, practice the traditional agricultural system of milpa: burning off the area to be cultivated, mixing the ashes into the soil, and planting a variety of nutritionally and environmentally complementary crops, including maize (corn). After several seasons, the area is left fallow for years before being planted again. Cortés shows how all of the family members participate in the process, preserving a centuries-old rhythm that exhibits reverence for both the land and the varieties of maize traditionally grown. The farmers’ adherence to the ways of their ancestors explains why Mexico continues to ban the planting of transgenic corn even as other countries have permitted and encouraged the practice. Cortés’s film quietly celebrates the commitment of people who, despite external pressures, insist on living in conformity with the natural agricultural cycle and the traditions in which they were raised. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

### Trump’s Trade War ★★★

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0971-6.

President Trump has made tariffs front and center in his economic plan to make America “great again,” having declared—although the evidence does not bear this out—that tariffs are good and easy to win. Filmmaker Rick Young’s PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary concentrates on the ongoing tariff war between China and America. Trump has long felt that prior administrations were soft on China, allowing for predatory policies, the theft of American technology, cyber-spying, and a lack of protection for American intellectual property rights. Unlike America, China’s Communist government is a state-controlled, supported, and subsidized economy, not needing to answer to citizens in free elections, while in America, conflict exists between globalists and nationalists. Experts quoted here note that Trump is “all in” on tariffs, believing that they play well with his political base. However, diplomats and economists warn of unintended consequences, arguing that trade wars can get out of control very fast. For China’s President Xi, the trade war is viewed as a race for global, economic, military, and political influence, while Trump feels that economic nationalism holds the key to his re-election. China lost respect for America after the Great Recession of

2007-09, growing tired of America's lecturing (particularly on human rights), and perhaps leaders feel it's time for a little payback. While tariffs can hurt both Chinese employment and American consumers, this has shaped up as a comprehensive confrontation with no middle ground. Providing numerous facts, figures, and perspectives, the film warns that tariff wars could be the first shot in a new Cold War. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

## SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

### Ring of Faith ★★★

(2018) 72 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Craig Syracusa finds a fresh approach to the perennial subject of boxing by exploring the religious views of athletes, writers, trainers, and supporters (including, apparently, Pope Francis). How can adherents of ethical belief systems support a contest in which the goal is to inflict physical damage? Vatican representatives and members of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic segments speak (no Buddhists, alas). Alicia Napoleon, a female super-welterweight champion from Long Island, and Stephen Espinoza of Showtime Sports, are especially prominent apologists, repeating that ring opponents should respect and love each other as competitors, not enemies. Clergymen (from NYC, prominently) sing boxing's praises for keeping at-risk youth out of trouble and cite Catholic

parish involvement with the Golden Gloves. Boxing is hailed as a positive route by which religious minorities/ethnicities (Jews, Irish, Muslims—the latter heroically represented by Muhammad Ali) entered America's mainstream. Champ Robert Guerrero credits faith with getting his wife through a high-profile cancer ordeal. Even Scripture itself is scrutinized for clues indicating that the Apostle Paul followed the sport. *Ring of Faith* does not ignore the medical toll taken by boxing, although some viewers may find more rationalizing here than fundamental questions being answered. Still, this is an interesting documentary overall on the intersection of religion and a violent sport. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

## THE ARTS

### The Beatles: Made on Merseyside

★★★★1/2

(2019) 87 min. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors).

Beatles scholarship has excelled in the last decade, as numerous benchmarks in the band's extraordinary history hit their half-century anniversaries. Many major and minor players from the Beatles' lives and careers—going back to the 1940s and '50s in some cases—are either gone or rapidly aging. And that puts pressure on today's biographers as they seek harder-to-find original sources

and eyewitnesses. But this overall excellent documentary demonstrates that a wealth of archived, sometimes decades-old interviews with friends, family, associates, and chroniclers of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr are in generous supply. And there still remain a few key people from the early days, with some appearing here, including pre-Ringo drummer Pete Best; Beatles' assistants Tony Bramwell and Freda Kelly; early members of Lennon's skiffle group, the Quarrymen; and Rod Murray, who roomed for years with Lennon and bassist Stuart Sutcliffe when they were all college students. *The Beatles: Made on Merseyside* pursues a particular biographical angle that has drawn attention in recent years: the formative importance of Liverpool's post-World War II economy and youth culture on the group's members, and the serendipitous alignment of many historical factors that helped move the Beatles toward their destiny. Accordingly, Starr doesn't enter the picture until very late in Alan Byron's documentary, since he didn't join the others until 1962. Pete Best, understandably, dominates the storytelling concerning a huge swath of the band's pre-fame years (now in his late 70s, Best demonstrates no ill will about having been replaced). Also on hand via older interviews are several other, lesser known, figures in the Beatles saga, including Bill Harry (founder of the Liverpool music publication *Mersey Beat*), and Allan Williams, the promoter who negotiated the band's crucial first residency in Hamburg. Certain inaccuracies remain here (such as the old myth that the Beatles auditioned for producer George Martin) that have been overturned by more recent research, but this is by and large a fine documentary about the Fab Four that is likely to have wide appeal. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

## CRAFTS, ARTS & HOBBIES

### Father the Flame ★★★1/2

(2019) 79 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

You wouldn't expect a documentary about pipemaking (i.e., pipes for smoking) to be a profound, circle-of-life statement about almost everything that matters, but *Father the Flame*—which begins in a misanthropic craftsman's shack in Northern Michigan—slowly builds poetic and mystical resonance all the way to the stars above. Veteran cinematographer Chad Terpstra's first feature documentary is the trip of a lifetime (and speaking of trips, neither the subject of nor the word "marijuana" ever comes up here). The starting point is Lee Erck, an aging loner whose distinctive, handmade pipe brand is known to aficionados the world over, with each of his creations costing four figures. Erck learned his trade from his father, a generational theme that runs throughout (spiritual practices involving pipes also loom large). Viewers meet master pipemakers—men and women in Denmark, France, Italy, and Japan who all learned from fathers, grandfathers, and other mentors, yet ultimately experimented with finding their own styles. A fascinating refrain involving everyone is the wood these creators use: hunks of briar that seem to speak to pipemakers in a secret language, yet often disappoint when flaws are revealed only during deep carving. Erck turns out to be an exception that proves the rule of immortality and legacy: with no wife or children, he visibly mourns having no one to carry on his life's purpose. Terpstra brilliantly underscores the many connections between blood and master-apprentice relationships that turn the notion of "identity" into something larger than oneself. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



### The Good Son: A Story From the First World War Told in Miniature ★★★

(2019) 36 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

This iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2019 picture book written by Pierre-Jacques Ober and illustrated by Jules Ober and Felicity Coonan mixes text, narrative, and photographed tableaux of hobby-store models and other miniature materials. The World War I tale centers on a young French soldier named Pierre who briefly deserts his regiment for two days to spend Christmas with his lonely mother. In his naivete, he anticipates that his return to the battle will mitigate any proposed punishment, but instead he is sentenced to death as a deserter. Ober retells the events leading up to this tragedy several times, revealing additional details along the way while always reminding viewers that the war was supposed to last months, not years, and that it was fought by "little soldiers" like Pierre. Narrated by Simon Prebble, *The Good Son* tells a powerful

story that—despite the “toy” soldiers—is not aimed at younger viewers. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Headhunt Revisited: With Brush, Canvas & Camera ★★☆☆1/2

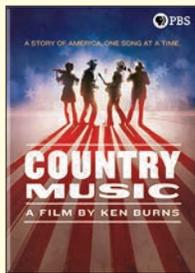
(2017) 76 min. DVD: \$24.95: individuals; \$90: high schools; \$160: public libraries; \$320: colleges & universities. DRA. Documentary Educational Resources. PPR. Closed captioned.

Michele Westmorland’s documentary revisits the long-forgotten career of artist Caroline Mytinger, who created an invaluable study of the peoples of the South Pacific through her paintings and writing. Mytinger and her longtime friend Margaret Warner left the United States in 1926 to explore the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The women returned in 1930 and Mytinger documented her time abroad with 24 oil paintings of the indigenous populations and two books that offered fascinating insights into the Melanesian cultures. While Mytinger’s attitudes and behavior toward the “primitives” of the region might make some cringe today—she compensated the subjects of her portraits with cigarettes and remarked how “one and all thought the paintings were miracles”—her work nonetheless provided important anthropological insights on cultures that were being encroached upon by destructive colonial authorities. *Headhunt Revisited* tracks down the descendants of several people painted by Mytinger, who share rich oral history memories of the American artist’s presence in their villages. Westmorland also appears on-camera to document her efforts to bring Mytinger’s paintings back before the public eye (they have not been widely seen since a flurry of museum exhibitions in the early 1930s). Actress Lauren Hutton reads from Mytinger’s writings on her South Pacific travels. Touching on a wide range of subjects—including art, anthropology, 20th-century women’s history, and Pacific Island culture—this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### John & Yoko: Above Us Only Sky ★★☆☆

(2019) 113 min. DVD: \$15.99, Blu-ray: \$21.99. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Seasoned documentary filmmaker Michael Epstein brings a sense of balance to this portrait of John Lennon during the ex-Beatle’s sometimes rocky 1970s, refusing to deify him as the patron saint of world peace, and instead presenting him as a complex man who fought for his own artistic freedom as much as he did the sociopolitical freedom of others. The dominant storyline in the film is the making of *Imagine*, Lennon’s 1971 album that is anchored by the titular anthem but also contains a number of fan favorites, including “Gimme Some Truth,” “Jealous Guy,” and “How?” Film cameras seem to have been omnipresent for those recording



### Country Music ★★☆☆1/2

(2018) 8 discs. 960 min. DVD: \$99.99 (\$250 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$129.99. PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0979-2 (dvd), 978-1-5317-0980-8 (blu-ray). SDH captioned.

In the 1950s, country music songwriter Harlan Howard defined his genre as “three chords and the truth.” Kris Kristofferson calls it the “white man’s soul music.” American chronicler Ken Burns delivers another epic series in a format virtually identical to his *The Civil War* some 30 years ago, mixing archival photos/footage, talking-head interviews, sonorous narration (here by Peter Coyote) of a sentiment-laden script (here by Dayton Duncan), various sound effects, and loads of music (here, “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?” becomes the overused equivalent of the earlier series’ “Ashokan Farewell”). Can it be soporific at times? Absolutely. In a comparison between the opening episode and Beth Harrington’s *The Winding Stream* (VL-9/16)—both of which trace the rise of country music’s first family, the Carters—the latter wins hands down. But Burns is in it for the long game in this eight-part, 16-hour-plus series, and eventually quibbles over a semi-stagnant approach melt away as the viewer gets caught up in the personal stories (many tragic) of the legends of the genre: the “Singing Brakeman” Jimmie Rodgers, the “hillbilly Shakespeare” Hank Williams, the singing cowboy Gene Autry, the rockabilly sound of Johnny Cash, the bluegrass founder Bill Monroe, the smooth “countryopolitan” Chet Atkins, the outlaws Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, the black superstar Charley Pride, and the legendary women throughout, from Sara Carter and Patsy Cline, to Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton. Burns wraps his story in 1996 with the emergence of crossover mega-superstar Garth Brooks. Along the way, a fascinating history emerges as country music evolves from traditional songs inspired by African American spirituals and European ballads up through the rhythm-and-blues influenced cry-in-your-beer classics of the 1950s and early ‘60s performed on the stage of Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry, and on to the more introspective and social commentary songs of the ‘70s as artists broke away from Nashville’s iron grip on the genre. Viewers will certainly argue over choices and omissions: Glen Campbell is dismissed in a couple sentences, while Jeannie C. Riley’s “Harper Valley PTA” warrants a whole segment. But, overall, this is a meaty series, with input from singers, songwriters, producers, and historians, who make insightful comments (Willie Nelson: “Ray Charles did more for country music than any one artist”) and share interesting stories (one of Johnny Cash’s last hits was a cover of Nine Inch Nails’s “Hurt”). And regardless of where one’s musical tastes lie, you’ve got to give credit to country music for the best song titles. How do you beat “It’s Hard to Kiss the Lips at Night That Chew Your Ass Out All Day Long”? Extras include hours of additional scenes and a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (R. Pitman)

sessions, which mostly took place at Lennon and his second wife Yoko Ono’s home studio at their pastoral UK estate Tittenhurst Park. It’s great fun to watch Lennon collaborating with George Harrison and a cadre of other Beatles loyalists including bassist Klaus Voormann, pianist Nicky Hopkins, and Badfinger guitarist Joey Molland. Lennon is in good spirits, and producer Phil Spector flits around in dark glasses, solving little problems in huddles with the musicians. There are also a lot of visuals of communal meals and other downtime, all of which looks outstanding on restored footage. Besides the focus on *Imagine*, the documentary also addresses warts-and-all topics about the first half of the ‘70s (which were an extended lost weekend for Lennon, who was nevertheless productive). The background on Ono’s entrance into Lennon’s life is reviewed once again, as is her influence on him to break free of Beatledom. The multiple interviewees include people who knew and wrote about Lennon over the decades. While not the most exciting documentary about

Lennon, this archival-footage-rich film will certainly appeal to fans. Extras include an interview with Lennon fan Curt Claudio and bonus songs. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### The Tempest ★★☆☆

(2016) 104 min. DVD: \$24.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

The finale in Phyllida Lloyd’s trilogy of all-female (and multi-ethnic) Shakespeare productions at London’s Donmar Warehouse is this 2016 staging of the play that (despite the later *Henry VIII*) is usually seen as the culmination of the Bard’s creative career. As in the two previous entries in the series (*Julius Caesar* and *Henry IV* [reviewed in VL-9/19]), the premise finds the play being performed by inmates at a women’s prison, and once again Harriet Walter takes the leading role. She—or rather the convict Hannah—plays Prospero, the exiled duke of Milan who employs magic when his enemies are shipwrecked on the island on which he resides with his daughter

Miranda. Prospero uses the power of the sprite Ariel to bring about not only his own restoration but also the marriage of Miranda to Ferdinand, the king's son. The text has been trimmed substantially and altered to allow for contemporary references and sporadic musical numbers, while some rudimentary technological effects have also been added. A more overt political theme also emerges in the characterization of Hannah—here identified as a lifer for her role in a robbery with left-wing overtones—who at the end remains alone in her cell as her fellow inmates are released. Like its predecessors in Lloyd's series, this *Tempest* presents an imaginative variant that can serve as a complement to more traditional productions. Extras include an introduction to the play, a plot synopsis, audio commentary by Lloyd, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a cast gallery. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

### To Die in the Desert ★★★

(2017) 90 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$250 w/PPR) (study guide included). EPF Media. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-933724-59-1.

Spanish filmmaker Marta Ferrer's documentary captures the Canto Cardenche music of northern Mexico. The name comes from a cactus thorn that hurts more when removed than when it first pricks the skin. Cardenche songs aren't designed to comfort listeners, but rather to convey the challenges of a hardscrabble life. Clad mostly in plaid

shirts, cowboy hats, and jeans, the elderly men profiled here—Antonio Valles, Fidel Elizalde, Guadalupe Salazar Vásquez, and Genaro Chavarria—sing songs in living rooms and around campfires. These Cardencheros, who have performed outside of Mexico, spend the rest of their time working in the mines and cotton fields of Saporiz, a dry and dusty town in the state of Durango. For the most part, they sing Cardenche in twos or threes without instrumental accompaniment in a tradition that has worked its way down through the generations, although Saporiz's younger citizens seem more interested in reggaeton than traditional folk music. Many take buses to factories where they add zippers and rivets to denim, work that is not that far removed from that of their ancestors. One Cardenche practitioner explains that singing made the process of cotton-picking more pleasant for his father, who labored for little pay. "That's why they sang Cardenche," he explains. "To rest and pass the time while working." Although a few women sing in the film, they prefer to listen. The title comes from a song that features the lyrics, "I'm going to die in the desert, I know where I'm going." A fine observational documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Walking on Water ★★★

(2019) 100 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

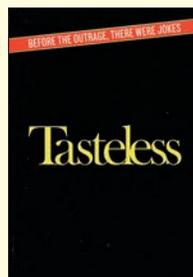
The transient mega-artwork of Christo

Javacheff—made in collaboration with his wife Jeanne-Claude until her death in 2009—is celebrated in Andrey M. Paounov's documentary *Walking on Water*, which follows the creation of one of Christo's recent gigantic populist exhibitions: *The Floating Piers*, a series of walkways installed at Lake Iseo in northern Italy from June 18 to July 3, 2016. The exhibit consisted of chains of interlocking plastic cubes, their tops covered with bright saffron cloth, which stretched from the village of Sulzano to (and around) islands in the lake, and when traversed gave pedestrians the illusion of walking on the water's surface. Except for a postscript showing Christo traveling to Abu Dhabi after the exhibition had been dismantled to scout locations for his next project, Paounov's film closes with images—many aerial—of the walkways as thousands of visitors enjoyed the effect. But before that triumph, the film covers the preliminary work of planning and design, in which Christo and his nephew and aide Vladimir Yavachev discuss the project, often breaking out in volatile arguments. Myriad logistical problems had to be overcome, before actual construction could proceed, and the opening was threatened by the fact that—contrary to promises—officials failed to take necessary measures for crowd control. Throughout, Christo comes across as an engaging figure—a cantankerous but committed octogenarian—and Yavachev is a dedicated servant of his art. While there are other documentaries about Christo—including *The Gates* (VL-9/09)—this is one of the best. Extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Tasteless ★★★

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors).

Back in 1982, a young freelance author named Ashton Applewhite needed money. She took some advice and wrote down all of the crudest, dirtiest, most inappropriate jokes she knew or had invented, slapped a punning pseudonym ("Blanche Knott") on the title page of her manuscript, and sold it to book publisher Ballantine for \$5,000. In time, the paperback of Knott's *Truly Tasteless Jokes* became a commercial success, sitting in grocery checkout racks where curious customers could have a laugh at off-color gags about everything and everybody: ethnic groups, the disabled, sex, marriage, animals, etc. Sequels followed, but Applewhite went on to become a prolific, serious writer and TED speaker. Still, dog-eared old copies of *Truly Tasteless Jokes* have developed an enduring fan base of snarky kids and nascent comedians, the latter studying Applewhite's flawless structures and timing. Many of those people—including comedians such as Frank Castillo, Jim Norton, and Helen Hong—appear here, along with a slightly self-conscious but delightful Applewhite. The ensuing discussions are largely what one would expect: namely, why would anyone find humor about dead babies, legless men, African Americans, WASPs, Jews, Helen Keller, and so on, funny? Well, people do, and the appeal of such meanspirited material is a mystery explored from various directions. But *Tasteless* becomes more interesting when filmmakers Jeff Cerulli and Matt Ritter pivot to difficult conversations about today's rage-fueled public square of social media, where death threats have become common whenever someone says anything—funny or not—on social media that offends someone. (One interviewee likens the way a Twitter user can reply to a post with a terrifying threat—and then immediately move on—with the way Boston mobster Whitey Bulger could murder someone and then take a nap.) A shocking flap in Canada over a joke by comic Mike Ward, resulting in a \$42,000 fine by a human rights commission, is a troubling sign of how extreme political correctness can be when it chooses only to punish a "trigger" but ignore its context. A timely film, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



### What We Left Behind: Looking Back at Star Trek: Deep Space Nine ★★★

(2019) 116 min. DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$22.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* ran for seven seasons (1993-99) yet was considered the "black sheep" of the *Star Trek* TV universe. Set on a run-down space station rather than an elite Starfleet ship, the series put Starfleet officers at the center of cultures in conflict while managing a busy travel hub on the edge of a wormhole that allowed instantaneous travel across the galaxy. *Deep Space Nine* co-creator and showrunner Ira Steven Behr co-directs and hosts this documentary, a passion project that digs deep into the history and legacy of a series that went where no other *Star Trek* show has gone. Funded primarily by an Indiegogo campaign, this ambitious tribute features interviews and discussions with almost every member of the original cast (and most of the major recurring actors), along with the core writing team, producers, and various members of the production crew. Topics include the show's distinctive approach and the social, political, and spiritual issues the series tackled. All in all, it's a solid mix of lively tales

and introspective conversations, backed with a rich collection of remastered clips. And as a gift to fans of the original series, Behr reunites the show's writers to brainstorm the first episode of an imaginary eighth season, which kicks off 20 years after the end of the show (the story, illustrated with rough animation, is woven throughout the documentary). Serving as a fine companion piece to a series that has grown in reputation and respect since its original broadcast, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. *Axmaker*)

## HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

### 25 Texans in the Land of Lincoln ★★

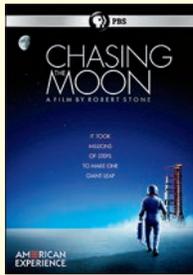
(2019) 33 min. DVD: \$75; high schools & public libraries; \$195; colleges & universities. DRA. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57448-045-0.

In 2016, a group of 25 students from Professor Teresa Van Hoy's Public History class at St. Mary's University in San Antonio—most of them Mexican-American—traveled from the site of the Alamo to the Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield, IL. Their purpose was to view the museum's exhibit of the prosthetic leg of General Antonio López de Santa Anna, who had taken the Alamo and executed its defenders in 1836, and present a request for its return to Mexico. Santa Anna, who served repeatedly as president of Mexico between 1833 and 1855, had his left leg amputated after being injured in battle against the French in 1838, and abandoned the prosthesis during the Mexican-American War in 1847. It was subsequently claimed by an Illinois regiment and toured the U.S. before finding a permanent home in Springfield. Filmmaker Ellen Brodsky's short documentary chronicles the students' 2,000 mile journey to the Illinois capital, which began with a visit to the Alamo and concluded with a viewing of the artifact. Excerpts from classroom discussions preceding the trip on subjects including then-congressman Abraham Lincoln's condemnation of the invasion of Mexico are accompanied by illustrative materials, as well as footage of a public ceremony in Springfield at which the class honored Lincoln for his honest appraisal of U.S. motives behind the seizure of Mexican territory. Brodsky's film is an excellent history lesson that also provides a fine model of how the subject can be taught in a fashion that engages and inspires students. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. *Swietek*)

### The Last Survivors ★★

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-1041-5.

Since the next decade or so will witness the deaths of the last Holocaust survivors, it is critical to ensure that the memories of death



### Chasing the Moon ★★

(2018) 3 discs. 390 min. DVD: \$34.99 (\$64.99 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$39.99 (\$64.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0941-9 (dvd), 978-1-5317-0942-6 (blu-ray).

Coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing, filmmaker Robert Stone's three-part PBS-aired *American Experience* documentary series recreates the epic rivalry and race to engineer a manned mission to the Moon and return the astronauts safely to Earth. The space race began in earnest with the 1957 launch of a beachball-sized satellite named Sputnik, which was met with near hysteria in America, setting off a desperate game of catch up. The documentary looks at the "duck and cover" national security Cold War mentality, the numerous failed unmanned missile firings, the recruitment of ex-Nazi flight scientist Wernher von Braun, and the hasty assembly of test pilots for the Project Mercury program. From the beginning, NASA was media conscious, and the series covers the role of TV and *Life* magazine in promoting the clean-cut, all-American image of the seven Mercury astronauts. The space program played out against a period of growing social unrest, with concerns about the Vietnam War, civil rights, and the ballooning expense of the Moon missions. In 1962, President Kennedy set a goal of landing a man on the Moon before the decade's end, and the atmosphere around Cape Canaveral embraced a heady, go-for-it vibe. Surviving astronauts talk about the rigorous training, the emotional costs on their families, and the daunting knowledge that success wasn't guaranteed. Markers along the way included the first spacewalk in 1965, and the tragic 1967 launch pad fire that killed three astronauts. Astronaut Frank Borman vividly recalls the 1968 Christmas eve orbit around the Moon, while the July 1969 Moon landing—covered in detail here—still conveys the touch-and-go suspense, feelings of awe, and rare and precious moment of world unity, as people all around the Earth followed the first lunar walks. With commentary from the son of Soviet premier Khrushchev, Borman, other astronauts, and NASA officials, *Chasing the Moon* serves up a comprehensive, thrilling, and often poignant look at a high point in both American and world history. Extras include an interview with director Stone, and a behind-the-scenes featurette with the film crew. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: H, C, P. (S. *Rees*)

camp survivors are recorded and preserved, painful though they might be. Filmmaker Arthur Cary's eloquent PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary concerns a handful of survivors who were children during WWII and are now in their late 80s and 90s. For years, they avoided talk of the camps, but now they describe happy childhoods that were uprooted by family separation, constant terror of the unknown, hunger, living with disease and death, and the unspeakable horrors of the life/death selection process, firing squads, and gas chambers. Among these traumatic moments, they also remember fleeting instances of normalcy, kindness, hope, and even humor. All dealt with the loss of siblings, disappearances, and dehumanization, including waking up in the morning and perhaps finding your neighbor or bedmate dead. Years later, they describe various aftermaths—coping with the loss of faith, deciding whether or not to revisit homelands or death camps, embracing forgiveness, dealing with survivor's guilt, and their feelings about modern-day neo-Nazis. All feel that it is essential to bear witness and remember. One speaks during a meeting that includes German chancellor Angela Merkel, while another decides to return to Germany to unveil a plaque honoring a murdered brother. Offering powerful witness to the 20th century's most horrific tragedy, this is

highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. *Rees*)

### Our American Presidents: Their Lives & Legacies, Volume 1 ★★

(2019) 105 min. DVD: \$19.99. Marshall Publishing. PPR.

Presidential history enthusiasts, students, and others will find much to like in this compendium that hopscotches through America's timeline of leadership from George Washington to Ronald Reagan. Between those bookends, *Our American Presidents* offers thumbnail sketches of Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy. Rather than take a strictly chronological approach, this series bounces around, avoiding looking as if it's stuck in the 18th and 19th centuries with few archival materials that will visually pop. Some cute animation helps blow the dust off the most ancient of past administrations, along with perky clips from silent era movies dramatizing subjects such as Roosevelt's Rough Riders and young Lincoln in some kind of brawl. Of course, once actual news footage of 20th-century presidents and the country's contemporaneous challenges (wars, Jim Crow) is available, the visuals add

strong support to the mini-narratives. This is especially true in the televised images of the charismatic Kennedy. *Our American Presidents* steers clear of controversial subjects, such as slave-owner presidents (although there is mention of Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings) and the true extent of federal decimation of indigenous nations (Jackson's role in the Trail of Tears is briefly noted). Helpful bullet-point summaries at the end of chapters underscore highlights of each president's contributions to history. Recommended. Aud: E, I, J, P. (T. Keogh)

## TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

### Châteaux of the Loire: Royal Visit

★★★1/2

(2018) 77 min. DVD: \$24.99. Dreamscape Media (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Starting from the Château de Angers and heading east to the Château de Chambord along the Loire River in France, this fine travel documentary directed by Fannie Leblond showcases many magnificent châteaux, cathedrals, and historic cities. Dating back to the Middle Ages, many of the châteaux—past residences of kings, queens, dukes, and other nobility—were restored in the 16th and 17th centuries. The tour begins in the city of Angers with its famous châteaux, fortress, and cathedral. The Château d'Angers contains one of the oldest known tapestries, made up of six panels telling the story of the Apocalypse. To the east in Tours, remnants of Roman architecture remain; in Loches, the city still boasts ramparts from the Middle Ages and a keep that was impenetrable to invaders. In Amboise, the splendid Château of the Amboise family was a residence for French kings, and Leonardo da Vinci is buried in the nearby chapel. With narrow streets, timber houses and fortifications, Blois is home to the Château de Blois, a favorite for numerous kings and queens. Finally, Orleans, one of the oldest cities, has many statues, art works, and streets named in honor of Joan of Arc, who fought back the British there. Thirteen other wonderful châteaux are shown, each with remarkable features including intricately designed gardens, moats and drawbridges, tall spires, and historic furnishings. With wonderful photography and lovely background music, *Châteaux of the Loire* is a memorable tour of a past splendor and way of life that whets the appetite to learn more about this French region. Highly recommended. Aud: P, C. (T. Root)

### Martin Clunes' Islands of America

★★★

(2018) 196 min. DVD: \$34.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Celebrity-hosted travelogues have become a staple of British TV. In this four-part series,

popular sitcom star Martin Clunes (*Doc Martin*) proves to be an amiable tour guide, visiting various islands surrounding the North American continent. Clunes starts his journey deep in the Pacific, arriving on Hawaii's Big Island, where residents live in the shadow of volcanoes, and then moves on to Kodiak Island off the Alaskan coast, home to wild bears. Passing through the San Juan Islands off the Washington state coast, he proceeds to the Channel Islands near California to observe its herds of seals and sea lions, and then it's on to Louisiana, where he samples the Tabasco sauce manufactured on Avery Island and also visits a site ravaged by a hurricane. Moving eastward, Clunes tries salsa dancing in Puerto Rico and goes to the Sea Islands off Georgia, where the people try to preserve the memory of slave traditions, while on the Outer Banks of North Carolina he explores the mysterious disappearance of the Roanoke Colony. On Chincoteague Island off the Virginia coast he watches a wild pony swimming ceremony before soldiering on to Manhattan, where he goes to the top of the Empire State Building and visits Ellis Island. Clunes also drops in at Martha's Vineyard to see the location where *Jaws* was filmed, and his itinerary closes on Maine's remote islands, where he engages with young students at a tiny school. Throughout, Clunes interacts affably with the locals and gamely accepts whatever challenges are thrown at him. *Islands of America* is overall a pleasant armchair travelogue that includes some sites that will be unfamiliar to most Americans.

Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

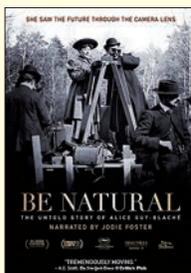
## BIOGRAPHY

### Angel Wagenstein: Art Is a Weapon

★★★1/2

(2019) 84 min. DVD: \$99; public libraries; \$350 w/PPR; colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Few filmmakers are likely to be acquainted with the work of Bulgarian writer-director Angel Wagenstein, who was 94 when filmmaker Andrea Simon made this revealing documentary. Wagenstein is a fascinatingly complex figure whose life and career have been inextricably bound up with the vicissitudes of his country's history. Because of his father's devotion to Marxism the family emigrated to France, and when Wagenstein returned to his homeland he joined in anti-fascist activities that nearly led to his execution in 1944. After the war, he studied filmmaking in Moscow, but once back in Bulgaria he became a leading figure among intellectuals who criticized the country's Stalinist rulers, eventually leading to his expulsion from the party. Wagenstein's films obliquely criticized the regime—such as *Aesop* (1970), coming only two years after the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia, in which the ancient Greek sage Aesop suffered death for opposing an autocratic foreign king's attempt to impose his control on the island of Samos. But Wagenstein also supported the liberalized



### Be Natural: The Untold Story of Alice Guy-Blaché ★★★

(2018) 103 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$399 w/PPR from [www.kinolorberedu.com](http://www.kinolorberedu.com)). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

French-born filmmaker Alice Guy-Blaché is duly credited as cinema's first woman director, but that distinction hardly captures her proper place in film history. One of the first professional filmmakers of any gender (her first credit dates back to 1896), Guy-Blaché made the earliest known film to present a narrative story, was the first head of production for France's Gaumont Studio, and founded and ran an independent studio in Fort Lee, NJ, before the birth of Hollywood. She directed hundreds of films in a career that lasted nearly 30 years, experimented with synchronized sound some decades before the talkies, and was a cinema innovator who incorporated editing, close-ups, and complex compositions before they became part of the lexicon of film language. So why isn't she as well-known as her male contemporaries? Narrated by Jodie Foster, filmmaker Pamela B. Green's documentary—produced in collaboration with film historian Joan Simon and Guy-Blaché biographer Alison McMahan—explores the life, career, and legacy of Guy-Blaché with a wealth of film clips and archival interviews with the filmmaker herself from the 1950s and '60s. But it also explores how and why the director was left out of books on film history (as male colleagues and assistants took credit for her work), illustrates the process of film research necessary to correct the historical record, and argues why it is important. This documentary tackles so much that it sometimes fails to give Guy-Blaché's artistic achievements their full due—she was an artist and one of the first cinema masters—and it does suffer a bit from pointless celebrity soundbite overload (Evan Rachel Wood? Peter Billingsley?). But this is a necessary first step and Green's crisp direction makes this investigative tribute both entertaining and involving. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Axmaker)

Bulgarian Communist government of the 1980s, for which he was condemned after its collapse in 1990. *Art Is a Weapon* has a strong autobiographical component due to the lengthy interview excerpts with Wagenstein, which are combined with archival material, clips from his movies, and commentary by friends, collaborators, and film historians. An engrossing portrait of a significant figure in Eastern European post-war cinema, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Cassandro the Exotico! ★★★

(2019) 73 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

An odd but not unappealing low-tech approach to the subject of *lucha libre*—Mexican professional wrestling—makes for a perfect match of style and subject in filmmaker Marie Losier's loose, vignette-driven documentary, shot in a whatever-works guerrilla fashion. The focus is on Saúl Armendáriz, known as Cassandro, a middle-aged wrestler in Mexico's loony but wildly popular masked wrestler tradition. But Cassandro does not wear a mask. As a gay man with a penchant for drag presentation, he dons heavy makeup and arrives at the ring in a poor man's version of a Liberace coat with a super-long tail. Viewers witness some wrestling, where carefully rehearsed moves emphasize remarkable speed, agility, and strength, and observe that the community of wrestlers that includes Cassandro appears to be a tight one. Cassandro is seen coaching some younger guys in the ring, a warming act of mentorship, free of any bias among the students regarding his sexuality. Cassandro also discusses his rough childhood as a gay misfit, beaten by other kids but able to move past the hurt by watching operatic *lucha libre* on TV. A rough but loving portrait, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Clarence Clemons: Who Do I Think I Am? ★★★

★★★

(2019) 90 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

An example of artistic overreach paired with underwhelming substance, this documentary comes up short in telling viewers who Bruce Springsteen's fabled sideman and saxophonist in the E Street Band really was offstage. Clarence Clemons, who died in 2011 at age 69, is both a past and present figure in this film by Nick Mead, whose original footage of the legendary sax man is interspersed with interviews of many who speak about Clemons after his passing. The documentary began production following Springsteen and the E Street Band's lengthy "Rising Tour" in 2003. Clemons is heard on the soundtrack saying that after eight months on the road, he's "in need of repairs," one of many unfortunately scripted statements by Clemons here

that are vague, enigmatic, and celebrity-style spiritual-seeking vapid. The film's most unexpected section follows Clemons on a trip to an industrial town in Northeast China, where he investigates religious practices, yet even this looks affected. As Springsteen's longtime fans know, Clemons' was the "Big Man" in E Street lore, around whom Springsteen constructed a larger-than-life mythology that audiences adored. Viewers get some clues about his formative years from aunts who helped raise him in Virginia, and a white friend from Clemons's childhood describes how racial segregation made it hard for them to play together. While Springsteen is not interviewed, E Street member Nils Lofgren is here to share recollections. But Mead's infatuation with recording Clemons with curious Chinese crowds—while also leaning heavily on faux-mysterious visual motifs—eclipses the director's ability to tell us more about the actual man inside the Big Man. Optional. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Every Act of Life ★★★1/2

(2019) 93 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$299 w/PPR from [edu.passionriver.com](http://edu.passionriver.com)). Passion River (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Seamlessly blending the artistic and personal for a rounded portrait of four-time Tony Award winning playwright Terrence McNally, filmmaker Jeff Kaufman's PBS-aired *American Masters* documentary is a warm, life-affirming tribute to a titan in the American theatre. Viewers hear from his brother (who describes the horrors for Terrence of growing up gay in South Texas with an abusive, drunken father); his muses (Tyne Daly, Angela Lansbury, Rita Moreno, Christine Baranski); agents of fortune (F. Murray Abraham, Nathan Lane, Joe Mantello, Anthony Heald); and still-living lovers, including his husband, Tom Kirdahy. McNally talks about his long affairs with Edward Albee and several other actors, writers, and directors, although when he speaks of his close relationship with late playwright Wendy Wasserstein, he leaves it to others to acknowledge that he had a romantic attachment. McNally's alcoholism and his lung cancer battle both represent dramatic chapters in his personal life. And then there's McNally's work: an astonishingly prolific output of dramas, comedies, and musicals, all noteworthy for his trademark ability to strip characters to their core of fears, rage, bigotry, and the nagging question in their hearts of whether they matter. Clips are included from performances/films of *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, *Master Class*, *The Stendhal Syndrome*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *The Ritz*, *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, and *Corpus Christi* (which was enormously controversial for its depiction of a gay Jesus). McNally was also one of the few playwrights who addressed life with AIDS during the epidemic's peak years. A fine celebration of a gifted and entertaining legend, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

## Series Update

The following titles are new additions to series previously recommended. Titles are available from most distributors unless otherwise noted.

### JoJo Siwa: Sweet Celebrations (52 min., DVD: \$14.98)

is the latest title from Paramount featuring energetic pop star JoJo Siwa in a compilation that includes "JoJo Dream Birthday Special" celebrating her 16th, and six digital shorts from "The JoJo and BowBow Show Show." See review of *JoJo Siwa: My World* in VL-5/18.

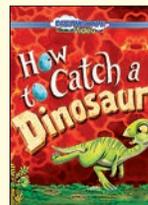


Newly available from Warner Bros. Entertainment is *Scooby-Doo: Return to Zombie Island* (80 min., DVD: \$19.98), an all-new original movie set on the mysterious Moonstar Island Resort, where the Mystery Inc. gang encounters an army of zombies. Extras include bonus episodes from *The New Scooby-Doo Mysteries* and *What's New Scooby-Doo?* series. See review of *Scooby-Doo! And the Gourmet Ghost* in VL-11/18.

Featuring four new songs and music by Andy Grammer, Universal Pictures Home Entertainment's *Curious George: Royal Monkey* (87 min., DVD: \$16.98) finds lovable primate George involved in a *Prince and the Pauper*-style tale as he switches roles with the king's snobby monkey and heads to the castle. See review of *Curious George Swings Into Spring* in VL-5/13.

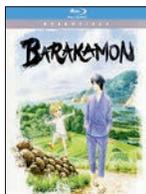
*PAW Patrol: Pups Chase a Mystery* (96 min., DVD: \$10.99) is the newest compilation from Paramount and Nickelodeon's computer-animated series, here following the canine crew on various cases including a rescue of Captain Gordy, a missing phone, and a celebration of Chase's birthday. See review of *PAW Patrol* in VL-7/14.

Dreamscape Video has released the newest addition to author Adam Wallace and illustrator Andy Elkerton's *New York Times* bestselling picture book series, the fun prehistoric tale *How to Catch a Dinosaur* (9 min., DVD: \$38.99). See review of *How to Catch the Tooth Fairy* in VL-7/17.



## Barakamon ★★★

(2014) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$29.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



The art of Japanese calligraphy is a key topic in *Barakamon*, an anime series derived from manga comics. Protagonist Sei Handa, a young, hot-headed calligrapher, assaults a Tokyo art institute chief who disdains his gallery show. To escape disgrace and recover his muse, Handa is sent by his family to a seaside community (the real-life Goto Islands near Nagasaki), where the ascetic artist reluctantly becomes involved in the lives of townsfolk, particularly an outgoing little girl named Naru. The ensuing likeable comedy tilts to the tradition of city-slicker fish-out-of-water cultural comedies. Subplots feature some PG-level sex talk, as the temperamental outsider fascinates ink-minded local females (including one who is a closet “fujoshi,” an otaku fixated on male homosexual relationships, real or imagined). An actual calligrapher receives special onscreen credit, as does the Goto Island’s department of tourism. Incidentally, the prequel/spin-off *Handa-kun* (VL-1/18) borrows the Handa character for a broader anime spoof of high school life. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2014 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, extras include episode commentaries. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Hakyo Hoshin Engi: The Complete Series ★★★

(2018) 3 discs. 575 min. Blu-ray: \$79.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



The *Hakyo Hoshin Engi* fantasy franchise of manga and cartoons has a long, tangled mythology that precedes this 2018 reboot, featuring a plethora of creatures and avengers, many drawn from ancient Sino-Japanese cosmology, with others projected into futuristic environments. In the opening here, young warrior-mystic Taikobo is assigned by a master to eliminate scores of evildoers bedeviling Earth. The task involves hierarchies of heroes, villains, and gods, including many “yokai” (all-purpose Japanese folk-demons), with some switching sides, working out loyalty/identity conflicts, or even trying to negotiate peace. The bulk of the narrative centers on a floating mountain of the good guys that is locked in collision with the Death Star-like Kingo Island, a supposedly impregnable fortress of fiends. Among many novelties: a sadistic “fox spirit” boss villainess who looks like an upbeat pink-haired singing-idol archetype. The tonal flip-flops between whimsy and bloody violence (not to mention philosophy and tragedy) can be dizzying but are also typical in anime. Compiling all 23 episodes from 2018 in a

dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, extras include a bonus OVA episode. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Hinamatsuri: The Complete Series

★★★★1/2

(2018) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Hina appears literally out of nowhere into Yoshifumi Nitta’s high-rise apartment—encased in a metal egg, no less—and that bit of weirdness punctuating a normal setting pretty much captures the tone of this anime series. Mid-level Yakuza member Nitta reluctantly frees and adopts the powerfully psychokinetic girl, enrolling her in school, where she sleeps through every class. Meanwhile, Hina’s less-powerful rival Anzu ends up being taken in by a homeless encampment, where she learns to live by collecting aluminum cans. And classmate Hitomi, accompanying Nitta and Hina to a bar, accidentally gains a part-time job as a high-level bartender. *Hinamatsuri* revels in fish-out-of-water stories of discovery, often progressing several episodes without referring back to Hina’s powers or origins, preferring to explore issues such as Japan’s homeless population or watch as Hitomi’s extreme competence and inability to say no land her several part-time jobs. Although often serious and heartwarming, a deeply weird and loving humor permeates the series, which visually shines and benefits from strong voice-acting. Based on a long-running manga series, this oddball schoolgirl anime offers a little something for everyone. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, this is highly recommended. (L. Martincik)

## Island: The Complete Series ★★★1/2

(2018) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Based on a 2016 visual novel, this fantasy-romance anime centers on Setsuna, an amnesiac young man discovered on the beach of Urashima, an island cut off from the rest of the world. Setsuna takes a job in the Ohara family household, where he meets and is attracted to Rinne, the master’s reclusive daughter. But there are two other significant girls as well: Karen, the mayor’s daughter, who seeks a way to the mainland, and Sara, the temple priestess, who has some peculiar ideas about her own past. The plot revolves around Setsuna’s effort to connect the fragments of memory that he still retains and discover his purpose on Urashima, which he becomes certain involves killing someone. The first half of the series is rather meandering, with the tedium exacerbated by Setsuna’s phlegmatic

character and the unexceptional animation. Things eventually improve, however, and the concluding episodes are intriguing, with scientific elements such as time travel added to the mix, although some of the resulting implications for relationships among the characters might raise a few eyebrows. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

## Mitsuboshi Colors: Complete Collection

★★★

(2018) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$69.99. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Comics inspired this sprightly but mild shojo farce. In a placid community, three little girls have formed a crimefighting/private-detective agency called Colors, dedicated to “keeping the peace” in the neighborhood. But since there is no real crime, the friendly local citizens provide the trio with contrived little mysteries, puzzles, or business to “solve”—everything from disarming a mock bomb to trying to sell batches of overripe bananas to consumers before they go bad, to fighting a “zombie” outbreak (actually a role-playing game). The girls also become distracted by trips to zoos and museums, and in teaching themselves how to survive on wild plants. Frequently the Colors team pesters Saito, a frenemy police officer, with their caseloads. Some dialogue is poop-centric, and one girl has a sanguine attitude (shocking her partners with talk about killing), but overall this is a pretty low-key (not counting the heroines’ fairly constant high decibel levels) and fun series. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Penguin Highway ★★★

(2018) 118 min. DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



Aoyama is a fourth grader who approaches life with a scientist’s curiosity. Smart and self-confident, he questions everything, including his fascination with the breasts of a busy young dental assistant (a storyline treated innocently, although her patience with his crush is unlikely at best). So when penguins start appearing by the score in his small inland town, Aoyama follows the waddling, endearingly awkward creatures to compile data and try to answer the question of their sudden origin. It turns out that the dental assistant, who takes a sisterly interest in Aoyama, is somehow involved, as is a mysterious shimmering orb in the middle of the forest that Aoyama and his friends dub

“the ocean.” Based on Tomihiko Morimi’s bestselling 2010 coming-of-age novel, this 2018 film offers a charmingly innocent mix of fantasy and adolescent adventure. The characters are well-developed and the story winningly explores life through the cosmic mystery of the magical penguins, with filmmaker Hiroyasu Ishida grounding the tale in the details of small-town life. *Penguin Highway* is a rich and inventive delight that unfolds at a more leisurely pace than most American animated features. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, suitable for 12-up, extras include interviews with author Morimi and director Ishida. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Ronja—The Robber’s Daughter: The Complete Series ★★★

(2014) 4 discs. 650 min. Blu-ray: \$49.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



Based on the titular 1981 book by Astrid Lindgren (best known for *Pippi Longstocking*), this anime series from director Goro Miyazaki tells the story of a girl who is lovingly brought up in a robber’s fortress in the middle of a forest. Ronja’s is a happy home, her mother long-suffering and wise, and her father daffy but good-hearted, emotional, and loving. Members of the robber gang fall all over themselves to entertain the child, and she grows up incredibly well-balanced and trusting. So naturally when young Ronja eventually meets the rival bandit king’s son, the pair get along famously and have all kinds of troubles and adventures—causing a great deal of stress for their parents. More than action, *Ronja* is about friendship and family, issues of loyalty, and an appreciation of nature. The series begins with a birth and ends with a death, exploring a wide range of human emotions, and while not shying away from the darker elements, *Ronja* always returns to the themes of love and hope. As expected from Studio Ghibli, the artwork and designs here are clean, beautiful, and expressive, although the CGI animation sits somewhat oddly with the very naturalistic story. But the charming characters ultimately overwhelm any concerns, including the sometimes leisurely pacing. Gillian Anderson serves as narrator on the English dub. Presenting all 26 episodes from 2014 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-Y7, extras include an interview with Miyazaki and a “making-of” featurette. Recommended. (L. Martincik)

### Sagrada Reset: Complete Collection

★★★1/2  
(2017) 3 discs. 600 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$89.99. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).

*Sagrada Reset* is a media-jumping Japanese

fantasy franchise, first in novels, then branching into comics, followed by anime, and even live-action. The characters tend to behave formally and speak (at length) in a flat, affected manner as *Twilight Zone*-type happenings unfold in the town of Sakurada. All of the inhabitants possess unique paranormal powers, from levitation to lie detection, and some godlike talents are able to change reality altogether. But there’s a tenuous check system in place; if people leave Sakurada, they lose those abilities (and memories of same). Young Kei Asai troubleshoots for the mysterious, vaguely threatening “Bureau” overseeing the place. He befriends Misora, who is able to “reset” the clock back two days—with the qualifier that even Misora forgets that it happened, or why she did it. But Kei can remember the alternative realities, so together (while feeling a mutual attraction) they handle cases involving a schoolgirl who gets trapped in reflective surfaces, a would-be villainess who can implant false memories, and a mystery object called the MacGuffin. Simultaneously, an overarching Bureau conspiracy exploits “witches” who can see the future. Logic puzzles and time-paradox labyrinths (thanks to frequent resets) predominate, and when Kei tells a magical confederate that things are too complicated to explain, it feels like a vast understatement. Viewers who manage the entire saga are in for a brainy time, but it does seem to go on interminably. Compiling all 24 episodes from 2017 in a Blu-ray edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



### Space Battleship Tiramisu: Season 1 + OVAs ★★★

(2018) 112 min. Blu-ray: \$34.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).

An adaptation of a comic book, this is a high-speed (two episodes per each 15-minute installment), mock-solemn spoof of space-based Japanese sci-fi cartoonery. Hero Subaru Ichinose is a sinewy, tormented 19-year-old serving unhappily with the crew of the Tiramisu, supposedly defending against Earth renegades in deep space. The overly dramatic Subaru (self-conscious about his nipples, among other things) seeks solace mostly in food—furtively cooking and eating in the cockpit of his giant mecha. Characterizations and situations riff absurdly on such venerable franchises as *Space Battleship Yamamoto* and *Gundam Wing*, although familiarity with these beloved series is not required to appreciate the silly



*MAD* magazine ‘tude as Subaru deals with the machinations of his long-lost brother Isuzu, grapples with manhood issues when he pilots girl-shaped giant-robo armor, adopts a space dog named Chibi (“Cute”) that grows to Godzilla size, and forms a friendship with a pubic hair of his that has somehow developed sentience. Additional raunchy stuff in this likely cult item for otaku includes homoerotic horseplay and a female supporting character with astronomical exposed cleavage. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, extras include three bonus OVA episodes. Recommended. [Note: *Space Battleship Tiramisu: Season 2 + OVAs* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

### Steins;Gate 0: Part One

★★★1/2  
(2018) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



The well-regarded 2011 anime series *Steins;Gate* is a better-than-most adaptation of a video game that has sired assorted spin-offs and OVAs, including this sequel. The original premise—a kind of *X Files* meets *The Big Bang Theory*—loses its lighthearted qualities here (except for some inappropriate fan-service boob and lesbian jokes). While fiddling around in a home lab, science graduate Rintaro Okabe and his motley otaku-type hackers and girl hangers-on developed a small but functional DIY time machine that not only changed reality in their Japanese college-district neighborhood but also plunged them into a secret superpower arms-race to control time travel—leading to apocalypse. Here Rintaro, after trying numerous different “world lines” in search of an alternate chain of events that doesn’t usher in WWIII, has settled in a reality that is superficially close to the one he left behind. But two characters from the dystopian future are here as refugees, with their powered-down time machine, and other cohorts are different or missing—among them Kurisu, Rintaro’s love, who died before his eyes in the calamitous original world line. When a teenage girl genius unveils a revolutionary artificial intelligence called Amadeus, Rintaro is shocked that it seems to have been copied from memories of Kurisu when she was still alive. Does he dare try to change history to retroactively rescue Kurisu? Viewers must be deeply invested in the characterization (and the alt-characterizations) to follow the material, and the slow pacing requires strong attention spans, but this is a popular franchise. Compiling the first 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, extras include episode commentaries. A strong optional purchase. [Note: *Steins;Gate 0: Part Two* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

**Amazing Grace** ★★

(2019) 89 min. DVD: \$22.99. Universal Pictures Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Filmed over two nights in January 1972 at the New Temple Missionary Baptist Church in Watts, Los Angeles, *Amazing Grace* finds “Queen of Soul” Aretha Franklin returning to her gospel roots for a live recording—before a small audience—of what would become the titular 12-song double-album classic. Late filmmaker Sydney Pollack was originally commissioned to make a concert documentary of the event (he is seen occasionally in scenes between songs), but he goes uncredited in this cinematically unimpressive film that is said to be “realized” by producer Alan Elliott (Franklin herself blocked any release of the movie while she was alive). As an archival record (look for Mick Jagger and Charlie Watts standing at the back of the church on the second night) with moments of sheer aural bliss, *Amazing Grace* often sparkles. Although she appears somewhat reserved (or maybe just focused), Franklin can—in the words of Reverend James Cleveland, who serves as host, accompanying pianist, and occasional co-vocalist—“sing anything.” And she does so here, with gusto, if also sometimes over-indulging in stretching single-syllable words into 10-syllable phrases, a stylistic tic that would later influence Mariah Carey, as well as a host of lesser talents. Highlights include the slow-burn “Precious Memories,” Carole King’s “You’ve Got a Friend” (lyrics altered to praise Jesus), the powerhouse “Amazing Grace,” and the fervent “Never Grow Old.” As her father C.L. Franklin notes here, Aretha has “that intangible something that is hard to describe.” We can say hallelujah to that. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1, this is recommended. (R. Pitman)

**Das Wunder der Heliane**

★★★★1/2

(2018) 167 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.99. Naxos (avail. from most distributors).



Although Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) remains best-known as one of Hollywood’s greatest film composers, he was a wunderkind in the musical life of early 20th-century Vienna, writing a series of operas in his late teens and 20s that were remarkable for opulently romantic scores that boasted a creamy mixture of Puccini and Richard Strauss. His last was this erotic fantasy from 1927, imbued with murky psychological and political themes. Like his other works, *Das Wunder der Heliane* was suppressed by the Nazi regime—as were those of other contemporary Jewish composers—and denounced as degenerate,

and it was largely forgotten after Korngold’s departure for the United States in 1934—until a recent revival of Korngold’s long-neglected non-Hollywood output. The libretto is a parable in which a stranger is put on trial for preaching love and happiness in a land of gloom and despair, but Queen Heliane offers herself to him; in the end both die but are resurrected and proceed together to heavenly bliss. Although the plot may be a tad peculiar, the score is a marvel, and is beautifully performed in this 2018 production from the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Christof Loy’s staging is simple and elegant, while Marc Albrecht leads the company orchestra and chorus in a vivid reading of the work. Despite a few signs of strain, the principal singers—soprano Sara Jakubiak (Heliane), tenor Brian Jagde (the Stranger), and bass-baritone Josef Wagner (the King)—cope well with the music’s considerable demands, and the supporting cast is also strong. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include a fascinating 1928 sound recording of the orchestral introduction to Act III of the opera, and a gallery of rare archival photos and artwork. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Didone Abbandonata**

★★★

(2018) 146 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.99. Naxos (avail. from most distributors).



Pietro Metastasio’s libretto based on Virgil’s *Aeneid*—centering on the abandonment of Dido, Queen of Carthage, by her lover Aeneas after his flight from Troy—was set to music by more than 50 composers in the century following its initial use by Domenico Sarro in 1724. This version by Giuseppe Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870), which premiered in 1823, was the last, written when the *opera seria* form was already very old-fashioned. Presented here in a revival from the 2018 Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, *Didone Abbandonata* is a fairly conventional but smoothly composed piece in the style of Rossini, although it lacks that composer’s gifts for memorable melody and, when called for, dramatic power. The plot focuses on the reaction of Dido (soprano Viktorija Miškunaite) to the announcement by Aeneas (mezzo Katrin Wundsam, in a trousers role) that he must leave in response to divine command, and the attempt of Moorish king Jarba (tenor Carlo Vincenzo Allemano) to persuade Dido to become his bride. Musically, the performance is fine: the three soloists are effective, and while there are weaknesses in the supporting roles, the chorus sings heartily and the period-instrument Academia Montis Regalis gives a spirited reading of the score under the baton of Alessandro De Marchi. Sadly, the staging by Jürgen Flimm is unattractive, with sets by Magdalena Gut that include lots

of metal scaffolding and some modern furniture, coupled with unimpressive costumes by Kristina Bell, including French Foreign Legion-style outfits for Jarba’s soldiers. But since competition for this release on Blu-ray seems unlikely, it will certainly be appreciated by anyone interested in exploring the byways of the *bel canto* era. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Die Zauberflöte** ★★

(2018) 144 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$31.99, Blu-ray: \$41.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



Mozart’s fairy-tale German opera has always had great appeal for children, and Lydia Steier’s production for the 2018 Salzburg Festival builds on that fact, recasting the good-vs.-evil tale of Prince Tamino’s attempts to free the lovely Pamina from the control of High Priest Sarastro at the urging of her mother the Queen of the Night—along with the simultaneous efforts of bird-man Papageno to find a wife—as a lesson-filled bedtime story told to three boys by their elderly grandfather, played by veteran actor Klaus Maria Brandauer. This results in a good deal of newly-written dialogue for Brandauer’s granddad, and the insertion of his grandsons (played by members of the Vienna Boys Choir) into the action as the three spirits who help guide Tamino and Papageno—and Pamina as well—to a happy ending. The framing device might remind viewers of *The Princess Bride*, but while it does require some tinkering with Emanuel Schikaneder’s libretto, it also works surprisingly well in this fetching production that features sumptuous sets and costumes—including some with a circus theme. The orchestral work by the Vienna Philharmonic under Constantinos Carydis is vital, while the singing by Matthias Goerne (Sarastro), Mauro Peter (Tamino), Christiane Karg (Pamina), Albina Shagimuratova (Queen of the Night), Adam Plachetka (Papageno), and Michael Porter (Sarastro’s minion Monostatos) is uniformly fine, even if it does not efface memories of past greats in those roles. Presented in DTS 5.0 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is an imaginative version of Mozart’s masterpiece and an intriguing alternative to more traditional productions. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Enrico di Borgogna**

★★★

(2018) 160 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Dynamic (dist. by Naxos of America).



The first opera of Gaetano Donizetti to reach the stage—in Venice, circa 1818, when the

composer was only 21—this is actually a heroic piece in which the title character, whose royal father was killed by his own evil brother, returns to take back his throne from the usurper's equally tyrannical son Guido. And, naturally, there is a romantic subplot involving Elisa, a woman desired by both men. But director Silvia Paoli staged it at the 2018 Donizetti Festival in Bergamo as an opera-within-an-opera farce—a supposed recreation of the first performance, in which the frazzled impresario (in a non-singing role) must enlist a seamstress to assume the part of Enrico at the last minute and try to keep the performance running smoothly, even though an actor dressed in a bear costume insists on intruding in scene after scene. The concept might have turned out disastrously, but instead works nicely, allowing for amusing slapstick while also permitting listeners to appreciate Donizetti's tuneful score, which is clearly patterned after the template of Rossini. Mezzo Anna Bonitatibus is a fine "replacement" Enrico; tenor Levy Sekgapane exhibits exceptional vocal agility as Guido; and mezzo Sonia Ganassi is an agile Elisa, melding sweet vocalism with the comic pretense of the diva playing the part. The supporting singers, especially Luca Tittoto as Guido's jester Gilberto and Francesco Castoro as Pietro (the shepherd who raised Enrico), are also excellent, and the company chorus and period-instrument band *Academia Montis Regalis* perform exuberantly under the baton of Alessandro De Marchi. Featuring colorful sets and costumes, this is a fine 200th-anniversary revival of a *bel canto* rarity. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include brief interviews with De Marchi, Bonitatibus, and Ganassi. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Hedda Gabler ★★★

(2017) 99 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Bel Air Classics (dist. by Naxos of America).



A degree of familiarity with Henrik Ibsen's titular play will definitely help viewers appreciate this piece fashioned for the Norwegian National Ballet by theatrical director Marit Moum Aune in collaboration with Christopher Kettner (assistant ballet director), and dancer-choreographer Kaloyan Boyadjiev, along with the principal dancers, who are credited as co-creators. In adapting Ibsen's classic of 19th-century realism to the ballet stage, Aune hews to its basic plot of how strong-willed Hedda (Grete Sofie Borud Nybakken) manipulates the people around her—her husband Jorgen (Philip Currell), her one-time lover Eilert (Silas Henriksen), her friend Thea (Eugenie Skilnand), and Jorgen's aunt Julie (Samantha Lynch)—to her own neurotic ends, until she finds herself trapped by the equally manipulative Judge Brack (Shane Urton). But Aune toys with the chronology, while also adding a prologue showing Hedda as a girl (Erle Østraat) learning her imperious ways from her army general father (Kristian Alm). She also employs an unusual set by Even Børsum—in which furniture hovers above the stage and stairs allow performers to walk to and from the orchestra pit—a well as some surreal effects (having the ensemble wear fish-head masks at one juncture) to suggest the unsettled psychological world that the characters inhabit. Danced with exceptional skill (particularly by Nybakken) to a score by jazz trumpeter Nils Petter Molvaer (who appears onstage to accompany the scene of Eilert's death), this is a striking interpretation that cannot convey all the nuances of Ibsen's play but does represent a highly imaginative gloss on the drama in another medium. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Il Barbiere di Siviglia

★★★1/2

(2018) 162 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classics (dist. by Naxos of America).



The cavernous Arena di Verona might not seem the most hospitable venue for a modestly-scaled *bel canto* work like Rossini's famous comic opera, but Hugo De Ana's 2018 production was enthusiastically received by the audience of thousands seated in the vast Roman-era amphitheater. To be sure, the tale of how Count Almaviva—with the connivance of cunning barber Figaro—steals the lovely Rosina from her guardian Dr. Bartolo (who had hoped to marry her himself) is treated as raucous, knockabout farce, but that lack of subtlety is largely dictated by the hugeness of the stage, which is transformed into a surrealistic garden, and by the cast, which includes some veterans who might charitably be described as vocally past their prime. It is remarkable that in his mid-70s Leo Nucci can still negotiate Figaro's music at all, but his strenuous efforts are warmly received here (he is even encouraged to reprise the barber's famous "Largo al Factotum"). Less successful is Ferruccio Furlanetto, who offers a labored account of music teacher Basilio's vengeance aria. Among the younger singers, Dmitry Korchak is a good Almaviva, Nino Machaidze is a wobbly Rosina, and Carlo Lepore's Bartolo is outstanding. Daniel Oren conducts in a fashion that shows an understanding of the proper style even as he demonstrates consideration for the vocal limitations of the cast. The performance concludes with a show of fireworks that provides the spectacle expected by the Verona audience, but ultimately this is

just a middle-grade *Barber* that cannot really compete with the finest versions available. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### La Donna Serpente

★★★1/2

(2016) 143 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.99. Naxos (avail. from most distributors).



Italian composer Alfredo Casella (1883-1947) is often associated with the avant-garde (he even flirted briefly with atonality), but this 2016 Torino production of his most successful opera, first performed in 1932, proves not only accessible but delightful. A fairy princess named Miranda is allowed to wed the mortal King Altidòr on condition that she will test his love by committing a heinous act after nine years. If he curses her, she will be transformed into the titular snake woman, condemned to roam the earth for two centuries. When Altidòr is tricked into believing that Miranda has killed their children and denounces her, the curse takes effect—although being a fairy-tale, her transformation is ultimately reversed for a happy ending. Written in the spiky neo-classical style of Stravinsky and Prokofiev, the score is lively and engaging, with several orchestral interludes inserted to allow for exuberant ensemble dances. Gianandrea Noseda leads his company orchestra and chorus in a spirited, well-drilled performance, made all the more vivid by Arturo Cirillo's imaginative physical production, which boasts simple but elegant sets and colorful costumes. As Miranda and Altidòr, soprano Carmela Remigio and tenor Piero Pretti handle Casella's substantial vocal demands with aplomb, and the supporting soloists are excellent across the board, with Sebastian Catana especially imposing as Miranda's father, the king of fairyland, who initiates the plot. A superb revival of Casella's unjustly neglected opera, this will be a revelation to opera lovers. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Madama Butterfly

★★★

(2018) 143 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Few operas are performed more often, or with greater emotional impact, than Puccini's ever-popular 1904 tearjerker about Cio-Cio-San, a beautiful young Japanese woman who is abandoned by her husband—the caddish American naval officer Pinkerton—and hopefully waits with their son for his return.

Annilese Miskimmon's 2018 Glyndebourne production makes some intriguing changes to the staging, updating the tale to the years following World War II and situating the first scene in Goro's brokerage office, where the marriage is contracted. She also introduces newsreel footage of Japanese women married to GIs assimilating to their new role as American housewives. Back in Nagasaki, Butterfly buys into the dream and prepares herself for the day when her husband will come to take her and their boy to the United States, putting aside her Japanese kimono for a fashionable Western suit and learning to smoke cigarettes while her servant Suzuki looks on with apprehension—justifiably, it turns out, as Pinkerton's return with his new wife seals Butterfly's unhappy fate. Miskimmon's conception, aided by convincing sets and costumes, proves surprisingly persuasive, and the musical side is also quite good. Omer Meir Wilber leads the London Philharmonic in a lushly romantic account of the score, and while the singing of Olga Busuioac (Butterfly) and Joshua Guerrero (Pinkerton) is not quite of the highest standard, they bring their characters to dramatic life. Elizabeth DeShong is an extraordinary Suzuki, and Michael Summel endows the American consul Sharpless with imposing power. In all, this take on Puccini's warhorse makes some interesting alterations without devolving into Eurotrash. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include a "making-of" featurette. A fine alternative—or supplement—to more traditional versions, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Manon** ★★★★★1/2  
(2018) 120 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Kenneth MacMillan's 1974 ballet recounts the story of Manon Lescaut, the tragic heroine of Antoine François Pevost's titular 1731 novel (also the basis for Jules Massenet's 1884 opera, as well as an earlier one by Auber, and Puccini's later version). Manon is a naïve young girl being brought to a convent school by her avaricious brother Lescaut, but she entrances both the scholarly Chevalier Des Grieux and a wealthy old man, and those obsessions change her life, leading to disaster for herself, her brother, and Des Grieux. MacMillan choreographed the tale to music by Massenet, but avoided choosing any from the composer's opera, instead cobbling together the score from his many other works, winning instant success for the Royal Ballet, where it has been part of the repertory ever since. This 2018 Covent Garden revival is authoritatively conducted by Martin Yates, who re-orchestrated the score in 2011 and also led the 2015 production from Paris (VL-1/17) that marked star ballerina Aurélie Dupont's retirement from



the Paris Opera Ballet. And the sets and costumes by Nicholas Georgiadis remain ravishing. But most impressive is the team of Sarah Lamb and Vadim Muntagirov, splendid as Manon and Des Grieux, who express the characters' youthful passions better than the more established stars of earlier versions. The dancing of the secondary figures and the corps de ballet is also excellent, with Ryoichi Hirano especially fine as Lescaut. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include an introduction to the ballet, a featurette on the dancers playing the courtesans, and an interview with MacMillan's widow Deborah by Darcy Bussell. Equal to any of the other versions of MacMillan's ballet on disc and superior to most, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Peter, Paul and Mary at Newport 1963-65** ★★★★★

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).



Peter Yarrow and Noel Paul Stookey narrate this look back at folk legends Peter, Paul and Mary's appearances at the Newport Folk Festival from 1963-65, which includes a few performances that were captured in Murray Lerner's 1967 film, *Festival!* In addition to several traditional numbers, the trio play three Bob Dylan covers, including an especially fine "Blowin' in the Wind." "Everybody just loved Mary," Yarrow recalls of his late band mate, who had an especially expressive way of singing: in performance, she shimmies, snaps her fingers, and shakes her head vigorously. Peter and Paul, both playing guitar, seem restrained in comparison. Although most of the 18 songs here feature two or more singers, Peter does a solo rendition of "Puff the Magic Dragon" with accompaniment from the audience who sings the chorus. Unfortunately, director Jim Brown awkwardly inserts voiceover from Peter and Paul at inopportune moments during the song. A cameraman also appears on stage, but that isn't especially distracting, not least since it was harder to remain invisible in the analog '60s. Beyond their performances on the main stage, the band members also appeared in workshops where they collaborated with other singers, like Joan Baez, Almeda Riddle, and Ronnie Gilbert of the Weavers on "Miner's Lifeguard" and "Go Tell Aunt Rhody." The compilation ends with an all-star singalong on "Come and Go With Me to That Land," featuring Peter, Paul and Mary with Baez, Odetta, and Pete Seeger. Presented in Dolby Digital mono, extras include bonus performances and an archival interview with Yarrow. A solid complement to Brown's 2016 documentary *50 Years with Peter, Paul and Mary* (VL-3/17), this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

**Pique Dame** ★★★★★

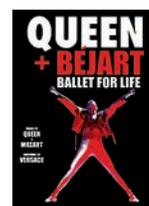
(2018) 183 min. In Russian w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$46.99; Blu-ray: \$41.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



Tchaikovsky's 1890 opera *The Queen of Spades*, based on Pushkin, is performed here at the 2018 Salzburg Festival. Hermann is a Russian army officer who, after winning the hand of the lovely Lisa, tries to learn the secret of success at cards that is supposedly possessed by her grandmother the Countess, who bears the titular nickname due to her expertise at the tables. Sadly, his obsessive quest for answers leads to the deaths of all three principals. Musically, this is a reasonably strong performance, with the most outstanding element being Mariss Jansons's conducting of the Vienna Philharmonic, which delivers an absolutely sumptuous rendition of the score. The onstage elements are more mixed: tenor Brandon Jovanovich is a rather stiff Hermann, although his singing is mostly fine, while soprano Evgenia Muraveva's Lisa and mezzo Hanna Schwarz's Countess are more effective dramatically, although each exhibits some minor vocal deficiencies. The supporting cast is more reliable, with Igor Golovatenko particularly impressive as Prince Yeletsky, Lisa's former husband-to-be, who faces off against Hermann in the final game of cards. The most serious drawback is Hans Neuenfels's staging, which features sets and costumes that at times come across as positively perverse (Catherine the Great, for instance, appears as a huge skeleton). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is recommended, overall. (F. Swietek)

**Queen + Béjart: Ballet for Life** ★★★★★

(2018) 175 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



In the mid-1990s, renowned French choreographer Maurice Béjart asked the remaining members of Queen for permission to use recordings of the band's classic songs in a ballet to honor dancer Jorge Donn. Like the band's lead singer, Freddie Mercury, Donn—a star in Béjart's troupe—had also died of AIDS at the age of 45. The result was *Ballet for Life*, which premiered in 1996, and featured music by Mozart and Queen, as well as costumes by renowned designer Gianni Versace. The centerpiece of this release is the titular 2017 documentary by Lynne Wake about the ballet's creation and enduring popularity, featuring newly-shot interviews and archival footage from two sources included as extras: a complete 1997 performance featuring Gil Roman (now artistic director of the Béjart Ballet)

in a lead role, and a “making-of” featurette. Béjart, who died in 2007, is esteemed by many as a visionary, although also criticized by others as more of a showman. And *Ballet for Life*, which exuberantly encapsulates the passionate vitality of youth but with forebodings of pain and death, is a combination of rock concert, fashion show, and modern dance that can be seen as something of a stunt. But in the wake of the Oscar-nominated movie *Bohemian Rhapsody* it also adds to the Freddie Mercury renaissance. Presented in PCM stereo, the title is packaged in a handsome book-style case illustrated with glossy photos. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

## Rhythm of the Dance

★★★

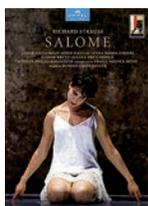
(2018) 95 min. DVD: \$24.99. PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0890-0.



This PBS-aired program produced by the National Dance Company of Ireland begins with Aine McGill singing “Newgrange at Dawn” at the top of her range with accompaniment from musicians on penny whistle, bodhrán, and other traditional instruments. An image of a full moon fills the screen behind the performers as dancers in black-sequined outfits enter the blue-lit stage. Once the singing stops, the step-dancing begins, and the lights come up. Other than their legs, the dancers remain immobile and expression-free, their moves like a cross between tap-dancing, ballet, and percussion, since they create the beat as much as dance to it. The next piece features a brightly-lit stage, a mountain backdrop, and even a few smiles, but after that moment of calm, the blue lights return and a stormy sea replaces the mountain. When the dancers take a break, Patrick McGrandles plays a penny whistle solo; later, Michael Gaffney does a bodhrán solo. Another piece features women in blue and green outfits and ballet slippers rather than tap shoes. Gradually they leave the stage, after which Amy Prior performs on her own and in a duet with Dane McKiernan. The most interesting dance here features one woman and several men using brooms as props while dressed in vests and trousers. Overall, this is a stylized vision of Ireland squarely aimed at those holding the most romantic notions of the country. Presented in stereo, this is likely to be popular with *Riverdance* enthusiasts. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

## Salome ★★1/2

(2018) 112 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$31.99. Blu-ray: \$41.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).

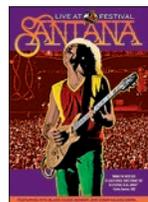


A superb musical performance is undermined by quirky direction in this 2018 Salzburg Festival staging of Richard Strauss's

bombastic but powerful 1905 opera, which is based on the biblical story of the beheading of John the Baptist. In adapting Oscar Wilde's titular play, the young Strauss reveled in the fraught psychological issues involving King Herod, who lusts after his stepdaughter Salome. Her demand for the head of John as the price of her famous dance of the seven veils horrifies the monarch but is encouraged by her mother Herodias. Romeo Castellucci's conception updates the story, apparently to the early 20th century, with the characters' faces partially painted in red or green (Salome, in a slinky white dress, is an exception). John appears in a furry suit resembling the lower half of a bear costume, with feathers in his mottled hair. A motif of stones and stables, both related to the Felsenreitschule (the performance space), regularly intrudes. Salome does not dance at all, but remains bound nearly naked to a huge brick (emblazoned with the word “Saxa”) as a second brick is lowered to crush her. At another point she wears a saddle, and a live horse frolics behind her. Eventually, Salome is presented not with John's head but the horse's while she sits beside the Baptist's headless torso. What all this is meant to convey is anyone's guess, but it obscures a fine performance in which Franz Welser-Möst leads the Vienna Philharmonic in a highly sensual reading of the opulent score. And Asmik Grigorian excels in both vocal and dramatic terms as Salome, while the other singers provide excellent support. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

## Santana: Live at US Festival ★★1/2

(1982) 68 min. DVD: \$16.98. Blu-ray: \$21.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).



Steve “Woz” Wozniak, the co-founder of Apple Inc., collaborated with legendary concert promoter Bill Graham on a novel concept called the “US Festival” (that’s “US” as in the pronoun, not initials for the United States). The idea was to celebrate and further the experience of community-building by combining music with a technology exposition. Wozniak built a new outdoor venue in San Bernardino that could hold several hundred thousand people. Among the artists performing at the inaugural 1982 Labor Day weekend fest (there was one more US festival in 1983) were Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Fleetwood Mac, and the Ramones. Carlos Santana and his band also played a spellbinding set for a massive, sun-baked crowd during US '82, a performance that carried no hint that the group and its ever-changing personnel were beginning a commercially fallow period for album sales, one that would last until 1998. In this 11-track set, it's evident that as a touring band, Santa-

na could still catch fire, and that's true from the first song here, “Searchin'.” The signature Santana sound—a dense weave of percussion (four percussionists!), lively bass, keyboard textures, muscular rhythm guitar, and Carlos Santana's transcendent sting on lead—is absolutely ferocious, lifting the audience to arm-waving ecstasy. Scottish guitarist and singer Alex Ligertwood (who was in and out of Santana between 1979 and 1994) offers a jazzy warmth with a voice that seems to hover over the musicians. And Herbie Hancock shows up on keyboards for a special moment during “Incident at Neshabur.” Interview clips with Santana are interwoven with the songs, with highlights including “Black Magic Woman,” “Hold On,” “Savor,” and “Oye Como Va.” Presented in Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD stereo on Blu-ray, extras include bonus interview clips with Carlos. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

## Vanessa ★★1/2

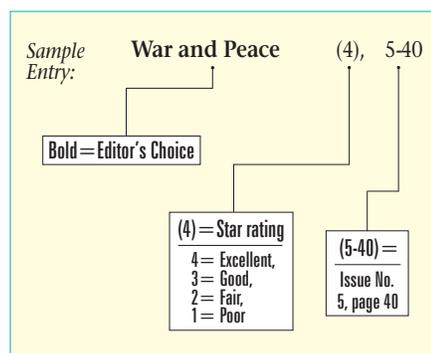
(2018) 130 min. DVD: \$29.99. Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Although Samuel Barber's 1958 opera was generally well-received at its New York premiere, the work's neo-romanticism quickly fell out of favor, and *Vanessa* declined into relative obscurity, even after the composer compressed the original four-act structure to three in a 1964 revision. Over the last two decades, however, *Vanessa* has enjoyed a modest revival, which this superb 2018 production from Glyndebourne should help accelerate. The libretto by Gian Carlo Menotti centers on an obsession. *Vanessa* has lived a reclusive life for 20 years with her mother the Baroness and niece Erika, awaiting the return of her lover Anatol. When Anatol comes back, however, he is actually the man's son, who quickly seduces Erika and, needing money, proposes to her. *Vanessa* and Erika vie over Anatol, and when complications—including pregnancy—are painfully resolved, one of the women is left alone and bereft. Keith Warner's revival of the work, based on the 1964 version, succeeds on virtually all levels. Jakub Hruša elicits lush playing from the London Philharmonic. The singing and acting of soprano Emma Bell (*Vanessa*), mezzo Virginie Verrez (*Erika*), and mezzo Rosalind Plowright (*the Baroness*) are splendid, and tenor Edgaras Montvidas transitions persuasively from gentility to caddishness as Anatol (Donnie Ray Albert is also excellent as the family's reflective doctor). Ashley Martin-Davis has created an evocative set, along with elegant costumes. Perhaps *Vanessa* will never enter the regular repertory, but Warner's lovingly-rendered staging shows that it is definitely worth witnessing. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

## Using the Index

*Video Librarian's* Index is arranged by both title and subject, and covers all of the titles reviewed in Volume 34, Issues 1-6 (calendar year 2019). Each entry in the index includes title, star rating, issue number, and page number. Titles which were deemed to be Editor's Choice titles are highlighted in bold. For example, the entry **War and Peace** (4), 5-40 is interpreted thus: the bold listing signifies an Editor's Choice title which received four stars (4), and was reviewed in Vol. 34, No. 5 on page 40 (5-40). A graphic example is shown below.



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**Our Bodies  
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Nearly 1 in 4 American women have an abortion during their lifetime, yet the doctors who perform this commonplace procedure are rarely talked about or seen. This film follows these quiet heroes behind the scenes and into the procedure room, showing us their strength and compassion for women and pregnant people.

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# Giving Thanks

As *Video Librarian* approaches the end of its 34th year—25th as a full-fledged magazine—and the holidays draw near, I want to take a moment to express my deep thanks for the people and companies who have made this publication possible.

*Video Librarian* has always been a family business, although more of a vocation than an exercise in capitalism (the fact that we have not raised our subscription or ad prices in nearly two decades would surely perplex a business major). It began as a rather ugly daisy-wheel printed newsletter trying to help those building video collections in libraries (including myself) sort out the suddenly appearing VHS deluge, after years of hand-fu-of-titles 16mm collection.

From the start, my partner in life and work has been Anne Williams Pitman, who graciously took on the role of marketing manager when the newsletter was transformed into a magazine in 1995 and worked two jobs until retiring from the Kitsap Regional Library in 2004. Once they reached adulthood our children joined us: first, Jazza Williams-Wood, our sharp-eyed associate editor and ace reviewer, and then Christopher Pitman, our editorial assistant and de facto IT dept.

Our graphic designer and friend of a quarter-century Carol Kaufman is the visionary artist who created the look of the magazine and has shepherded its evolution over the years.

And Dan Gurlitz has been invaluable in helping Anne with ad sales, bringing his considerable expertise in the video industry to the table, while also being a literal supporter and champion of *Video Librarian* during his tenures at Unapix, Wellspring, and Entertainment One.

The beating heart of the magazine is our extraordinary roster of reviewers: our Seattle professional trio—Sean Axmaker, Kathy Fennessy, and Tom Keogh; Texas professor Frank Swietek (resident expert in absolutely disgusting horror films and lorgnette-wearing metropolitan opera); gifted movie maven Susan Granger; independent film champion Phil Hall; always-beat-the-deadline Stephen Rees (who has watched more PBS docs than any of us); anime-reviewing titan and pop culture aficionado Charles Cassidy; cultured connoisseur of foreign film Michael Sandlin; librarian who makes time for anime reviews Lisa Martincik; exercise guru Trudie Root; and most recent addition, *Booklist* colleague and friend Sue-Ellen Beauregard. And I wish I had space to name all of the great reviewers of the past (you know who you are).

*Video Librarian* would not have been possible without the support of our advertisers. I would especially like to thank these companies who have been our partners for years (some for decades): Action! Library Media Service, Baker & Taylor Entertainment, Breaking Glass Pictures, Collective Eye, Criterion, Dreamscape, EPF Media, Film Movement, Films Media Group, First Run Features, Green Planet Films, Icarus Films, IndiePix Films, Kino Lorber Education, Midwest Tape, Music Box Films, National Media Market, NCircle Entertainment, Oscilloscope Pictures, Passion River Films, PBS Video, Strand Releasing, and Vision Video. And thanks to all of the many advertisers who have supported us in the past.

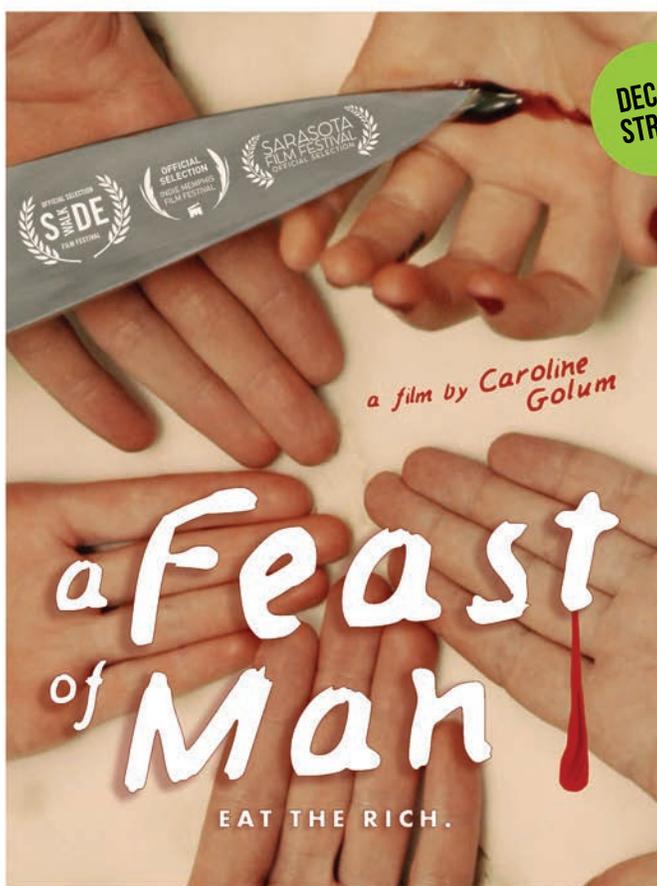
Finally, I want to thank all of the subscribers who have accompanied us on this incredible journey. The video world is huge and constantly changing. We have navigated it together along with filmmakers and distributors, building wonderful video collections that have entertained, educated, and challenged library patrons and students.

So, once again: thanks to everybody for everything. It's been a long, strange, deeply fulfilling trip.

Randy Pitman



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(*Gleason, Finders Keepers*)

OUT OF OMAHA is an intimate portrait of twin brothers Darcell and Darrell Trotter, two young black men coming of age in the racially and economically-divided Midwestern city of Omaha, Nebraska.

Director Clay Tweel (*Gleason, Finders Keepers, The Innocent Man*) met the Trotters when they were 17 and filmed them over a period of eight years. By intimately portraying the twins' hopes and struggles – and the love and help they give and get along the way – the film examines how much it takes to overcome disadvantages rooted in historic injustice.

Documentary | American Studies | Poverty | Political Science | African American Studies  
84 min. | UPC: 602573752845 | SRP: \$24.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Caption



## BEFORE YOU KNOW IT

Featuring A-List Talent Including

**Alec Baldwin** (SNL, 30 Rock) **Mike Colter** (Luke Cage, The Defenders)

**Mandy Patinkin** (The Princess Bride, Homeland) **Judith Light** (Transparent)



"a charming and quirky New York tale"  
**Los Angeles Times**

Stage manager Rachel Gurner (Hannah Pearl Utt) still lives in her childhood apartment above the theater her family owns and operates in New York City. Level-headed Rachel is the only thing standing between her family -- her off-kilter actress sister Jackie (Jen Tullock), her eccentric playwright father Mel (Mandy Patinkin), and her deadpan preteen niece Dodge (Oona Yaffe) -- and utter chaos.

Then, in the wake of a sudden family tragedy, Rachel and Jackie learn their presumed-deceased mother (Judith Light) is not just alive but thriving as a soap-opera star.

Narrative | Comedy | Drama | Family Studies  
98 min. | UPC: 888608668514 | SRP: \$24.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Captioned



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From award-winning filmmaker Dan Habib comes INTELLIGENT LIVES, a catalyst to transform the label of intellectual disability from a life sentence of isolation into a life of possibility for the most systematically segregated people in America.

INTELLIGENT LIVES stars three pioneering young American adults with intellectual disabilities – Micah, Naier, and Naomie – who challenge perceptions of intelligence as they navigate high school, college, and the workforce. Academy Award-winning actor and narrator Chris Cooper contextualizes the lives of these central characters through the emotional personal story of his son Jesse, as the film unpacks the shameful and ongoing track record of intelligence testing in the U.S.

Documentary | Disabilities Studies | American Studies | Education  
70 min. | UPC: 752830010499 | SRP: \$24.95 | PPR: \$250.00 | Closed Captioned



## THE THINGS WE KEEP

A light and profound ode to life, **funny, sincere** and **moving...**  
- ARTE Magazine

"...although the two friends have gone on to lead separate lives, they are together on the same search for a home and identity"

- Ellie Steiner  
Raindance Film Festival

In the age of non-stop news feeds, disposable media, and the constant self-documentation of our lives, we exist in a perpetual flow of impressions of the world. What remains on the retina? What do we decide to record? What do we preserve as memories and what shapes who we are?

THE THINGS WE KEEP is a kaleidoscope of stories and images drawn from 15 years of tapes and hard drives containing personal and journalistic footage. It plunges you into the back of smuggler trucks crossing the Sahara and into all night parties in Berlin. It leads you from a carefree student life in Rome, to the sniper alleys of Aleppo, and into a homeless shelter in Detroit. What begins as charming filmmaking by two friends who meet in the naiveté of their early twenties, quickly evolves into a broader meditation on what it means to go out into the world, and eventually come home.

Documentary | International Studies | Political Science | Journalism  
73 min. | UPC: 602573752906 | SRP: \$59.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Captioned

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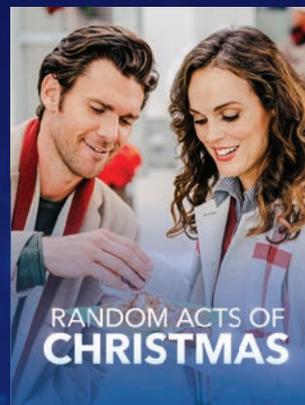
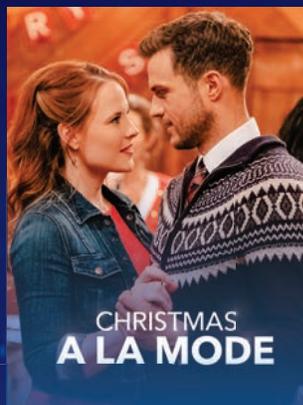
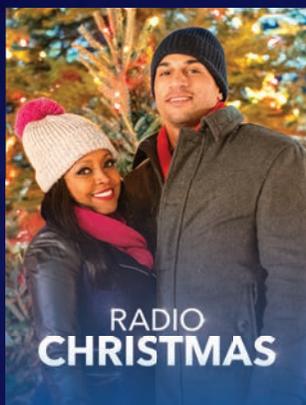
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