

July-August 2019

Video Librarian

VOL. 34 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 4



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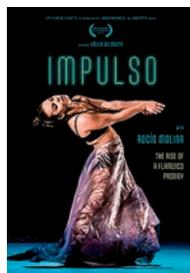
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Impulso ★★☆☆/2
(2017) 87 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$345 w/PPR from www.kimstim.com). *KimStim* (avail. from most distributors).



French filmmaker Emilio Belmonte shines a light on 32-year-old Spanish dancer Rocío Molina, who combines traditional flamenco moves with avant-garde improvisation. *Impulso* follows Molina's process, starting eight months before she is set to perform in Paris. Molina, who shares the impishness and intensity of Björk, describes "impulso" as an urge that originates in the body "before passing through the senses." During the film, she rehearses with her musicians, who sing, play guitar, and clap their hands to the beat. "You work with it like it's bread dough," she says about the rhythm they create. For the final performance, she dances to a harder rock soundtrack. Along the way, Belmonte includes excerpts of performances from Marseille, Barcelona, Málaga, Madrid, Huelva, and Seville. The costumes and settings vary considerably between performances, although Molina usually wears knee and elbow pads. In one, she smokes a cigarillo; in another, she performs in front of video monitors featuring computer-enhanced faces that watch her with curiosity. This isn't the kind of documentary that presents lots of biographical data about its subject or historical information about her art form; instead, it offers a privileged glimpse into her practice, bolstered by cinematogra-

phy from Dorian Blanc and Thomas Brémond that is frequently quite stunning, such as the sparkle of sunlight on a field of wheat or the blood-red design left on a canvas-covered stage by the trail of Molina's paint-coated dress. Mostly, Belmonte indelibly captures Molina's joy and passion, particularly in an emotional, chair-seated, foot-tapping duet with the extremely vital now-72-year-old flamenco legend Antonia Santiago Amador, aka La Chana. An excellent profile of a woman who dances to the beat of her own drum, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

An excellent companion film to *Impulso* is *Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity* (VL-7/15), a film showcasing another creative woman in dance that was a *Video Librarian* Best Documentaries selection for 2016. Filmmaker Catherine Gund serves up an energetic portrait of NYC-based dancer-choreographer Elizabeth Streb, who has steadily pushed the boundaries of modern dance with her "Pop Action" fusion of dance, gymnastics, and machine-assisted kinetic stunts.



Cover Photo: Courtesy of KimStim

Note: *Video Librarian* editor Randy Pitman is on vacation. His "Final Frame" column will return in the next issue.

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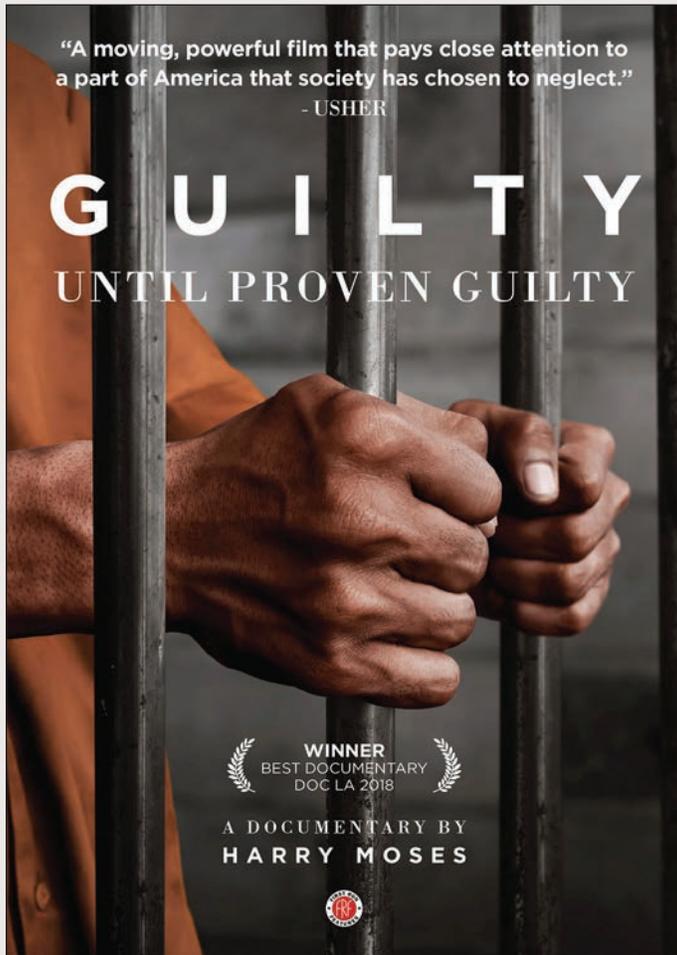
INDEPENDENT



SINCE 1979

“America’s criminal justice system and its inequities go under the microscope in this powerful documentary.”

- THE WRAP



“A moving, powerful film that pays close attention to a part of America that society has chosen to neglect.”

- USHER



“Criminal justice reform has long been an issue in the civil rights movement and ‘Guilty Until Proven Guilty’ shows why...it deserves the widest possible audience.”

- HARRY BELEFONTE



“An extraordinary film that turns the spotlight on the harms perpetrated by the criminal justice system... bearing witness to the personal human consequences of outdated and inhumane policies.”

- JODY LEWEN, Prison University Project

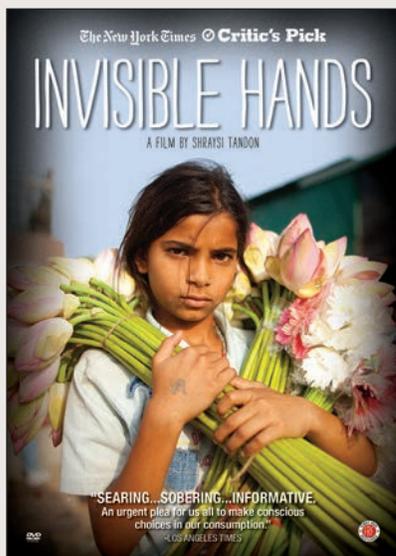
The documentary ‘Guilty Until Proven Guilty’ explores Louisiana’s criminal justice system through the story of Tim Conerly, a young African-American man who was arrested in the wake of an armed robbery in New Orleans and waited 28 months for a trial for a crime he says he did not commit. After more than two years in the Orleans Parish Jail, Conerly must choose between accepting a plea bargain of seven years or risking a sentence of 49½ to 198 years if he is convicted at trial. It’s a choice that no human being should have to make...and one that someone with more resources could almost certainly avoid having to make.



SRP: \$19.95 • Catalog #: FRF 917841D • 53 minutes, color, 2018

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For Non-Theatrical/Institutional PPR, contact Marc Mauceri at 212.243.0600 x20 or edsales@firstrunfeatures.com**



INVISIBLE HANDS

75 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917872D
ON DVD JULY 9

Produced by Oscar-winning filmmaker Charles Ferguson, *Invisible Hands* is the first documentary to expose child labor and trafficking within the supply chains of the world's biggest companies. Filmed in six countries including India, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Ghana, it is a harrowing account of children as young as 6 years old making the products we use every day. Participants in the film include Nobel Peace Prize recipient Kailash Satyarthi, two-time Pulitzer prize winner Nicholas Kristof and many more.



The New York Times **Critic's Pick**

"RICH IN INFORMATION AND DENSE WITH QUIET OUTRAGE."

Los Angeles Times

"Searing...sobering...informative. An urgent plea for us all to make conscious choices in our consumption."



BEFORE STONEWALL

Newly restored for the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots!

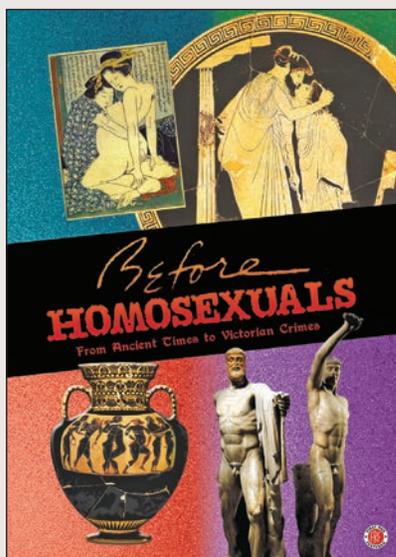
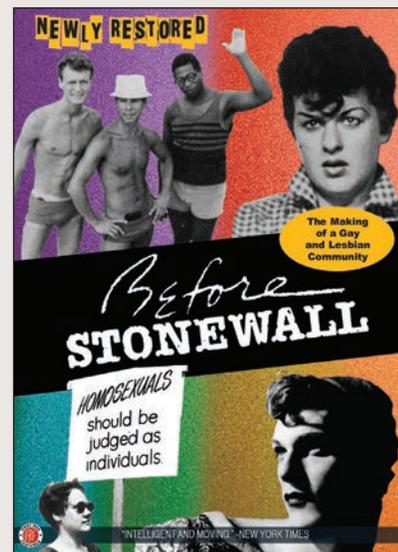
87 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917889D
ON DVD AUGUST 6

In 1969 the police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City's Greenwich Village, leading to three nights of rioting by the city's LGBT community. With this outpouring of courage and unity the gay liberation movement had begun. *Before Stonewall* pries open the closet door, setting free the dramatic story of survival, love, persecution and resistance experienced by LGBT Americans since the early 1900's. Revealing and humorous, this widely acclaimed documentary relives the emotionally-charged sparking of today's gay rights movement, from the events that led to the fevered 1969 riots to many other milestones in the brave fight for acceptance.

"Intelligent and moving." -New York Times

"Entertaining and enlightening." -Los Angeles Times

"Funny, sad, courageous and touching." -Seattle Times



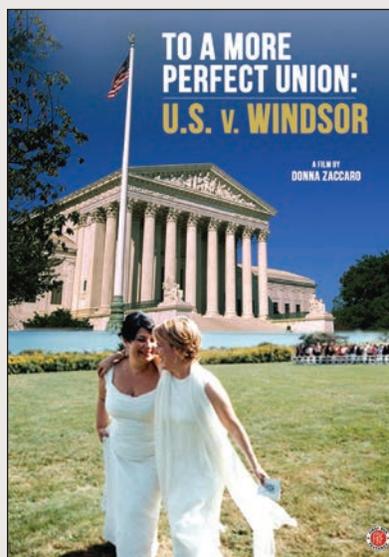
Before Homosexuals

87 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917865D
AVAILABLE NOW

John Scagliotti, executive producer of *Before Stonewall*, here guides us in a wondrous tour of erotic history, poetry and visual art in his new film on same-sex desire - from ancient times to Victorian crimes.

Reveling in lesbian love spells from ancient Rome, censored chapters of the Kamasutra and much more, *Before Homosexuals* unearths the tantalizing garden of same-sex desire.

"Eye-opening! With this being the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots it is the perfect time for us to both acknowledge and celebrate our past as it has helped shaped who we are today." -QueerGuru



To A More Perfect Union: U.S. v. Windsor

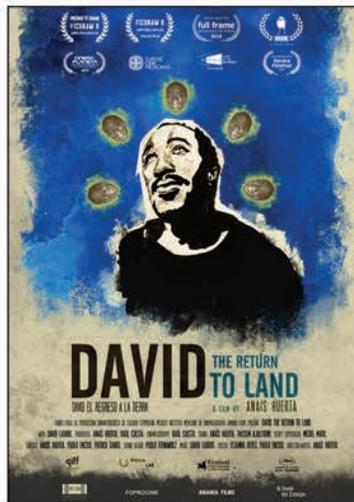
63 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917858D
AVAILABLE NOW

Offended by the government's refusal to recognize her 40+ year relationship with the love of her life because they were the same sex, Edie Windsor decided to sue the United States government - and won. Her landmark case changed the landscape for gay marriage.

"A wonderful film...powerful and incredible touching. It offers an intimate look at Windsor as a gay rights pioneer, and its correlation with the Stonewall Riots, the AIDS crisis, DOMA and other staples of LGBTQ history." -Cleveland Scene

Special Award
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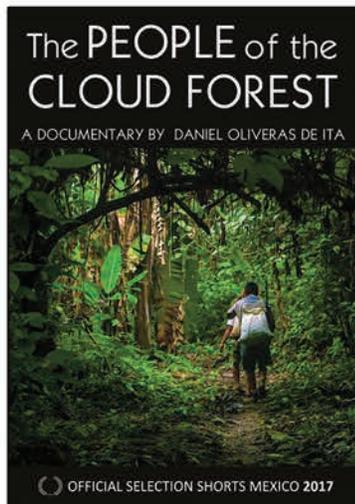


David is a black man adopted by a French Jewish family. He travels to Haiti, his birth country, so he can find his roots. A documentary about identity.

95 mins, DVD \$29.95, PPR \$250
UPC: 6-82086-16020-7

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Mexico, Environment, Indigenous



An intimate look at the indigenous Chinantec people of Mexico and their relationship with the environment.

19 mins, DVD \$19.95; PPR \$150
UPC: 6-82086-16016-0

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"Ferrante Fever" Documentary on Mysterious Author Elena Ferrante Now Available from Greenwich Entertainment

Kino Lorber and Greenwich Entertainment recently released *Ferrante Fever* (DVD: \$29.95). With over 5 million copies of her "Neapolitan Novels" sold and publication rights in over 50 countries, Elena Ferrante has become a global literary sensation. She was named one of *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People in the World" and HBO recently turned the first book in the quartet, *My Brilliant Friend*, into a miniseries hit. The globe-hopping documentary *Ferrante Fever* journeys between New York City's cultural hub and Ferrante's native Italy as it explores how an anonymous author's visceral tales of love and friendship gained such an enthusiastic following. Featuring comments from Hillary Clinton, Roberto Saviano, and Jonathan Franzen, among others, director Giacomo Durzi's captivating peek inside the world of the renowned author includes the bonus featurette "Ferrante Fever in the Words of the Readers."

Shout! Factory's "What We Left Behind" Star Trek: Deep Space Nine Appreciation Doc Slated for August 6

Shout! Factory has announced the upcoming release on August 6 of the acclaimed documentary feature *What We Left Behind—Looking Back at Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$22.99). Offering an in-depth look at the past, present, and future of a series whose dark, edgy take on Gene Roddenberry's vision was often misunderstood when it premiered but has since grown into a beloved mainstay in the *Star Trek* franchise, directors Ira Steven Behr and David Zappone's film features extensive new interviews with the cast and crew of *Deep Space Nine*, as well as newly remastered HD footage from the TV series. The film also focuses on the original writers of the series as they craft a brand-new episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, developing what would be the eighth-season premiere if the show were to return to the air today. Bonus features include deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a segment on the HD restoration process. The special edition Blu-ray also includes an exclusive reunion with composers Dennis McCarthy and Kevin Kiner, as well as a 50-minute roundtable discussion with the crew.

Orwell's "1984," Jane Fonda in "Klute," 30th Anniversary of "Do the Right Thing," and Fassbinder Trilogy All Slated for July from Criterion

Criterion's impressive summer slate kicks off July 9 with Rainer Werner Fassbinder's career-crowning *BRD Trilogy* (Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$99.95), which includes his female-centered commercial successes *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1979), *Veronika Voss* (1982), and *Lola* (1981), featuring powerhouse performances by Hanna Schygulla, Rosel Zech, and Barbara Sukowa, respectively, in the title roles. Also coming July 9 is a 2K restoration of Agnieszka Holland's 1990 German, Russian, and Polish drama *Europa Europa* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), a breathless adventure story set amidst the chaos of World War II that follows a teen (Marco Hofschneider) who reluctantly assumes various ideological identities in order to hide the deadly secret of his Jewishness. Arriving July 16 is Alan J. Pakula's 1971 character study thriller *Klute* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), featuring Jane Fonda in an electrifying Oscar-winning performance as a sex worker in peril who becomes the focal point of a missing-person investigation when a detective (Donald Sutherland) turns up at her door. Also slated for July 16 is a new 4K restoration of Marcel Pagnol's enchanting 1938 comedy *The Baker's Wife* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), featuring the legendary actor Raimu as a sweetly deluded baker in a close-knit village who becomes embroiled in a town scandal. Coming on July 23 is Michael Radford's 1984 adaptation of George Orwell's iconic and prophetic dystopian 1949 novel *1984* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), starring John Hurt and Richard Burton as captives of a rubble-strewn surveillance state where an endless overseas war props up the repressive regime of the all-seeing "Big Brother." Also scheduled for July 23 is the 30th anniversary celebration and 4K restoration of Spike Lee's 1989 contemporary masterpiece *Do the Right Thing* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.95), which follows a day in the life of unforgettable characters in Brooklyn's politically and emotionally charged Bed-Stuy neighborhood.





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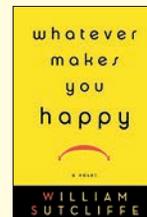
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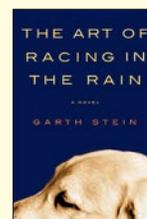
The following films based on books are slated to open during July and August. Movie release dates are subject to change.

Coming in August

Otherhood (Aug. 2) is based on British novelist William Sutcliffe's 2008 book *Whatever Makes You Happy*. Directed by Cindy Chupack, the suburban mom comedy stars Angela Bassett, Patricia Arquette, Felicity Huffman, and Jake Hoffman.



The Art of Racing in the Rain (Aug. 9) is based on Garth Stein's 2008 *New York Times* bestseller. Told from a dog's point of view (voiced by Kevin Costner), director Simon Curtis's adaptation stars Milo Ventimiglia, Amanda Seyfried, and Gary Cole.



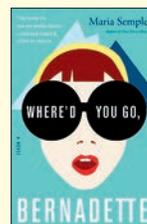
Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark (Aug. 9) is based on author Alvin Schwartz and illustrator Stephen Gammell's children's horror trilogy (1981-91). Directed by André Øvredal, the film stars Zoe Colletti, Austin Abrams, and Gil Bellows.



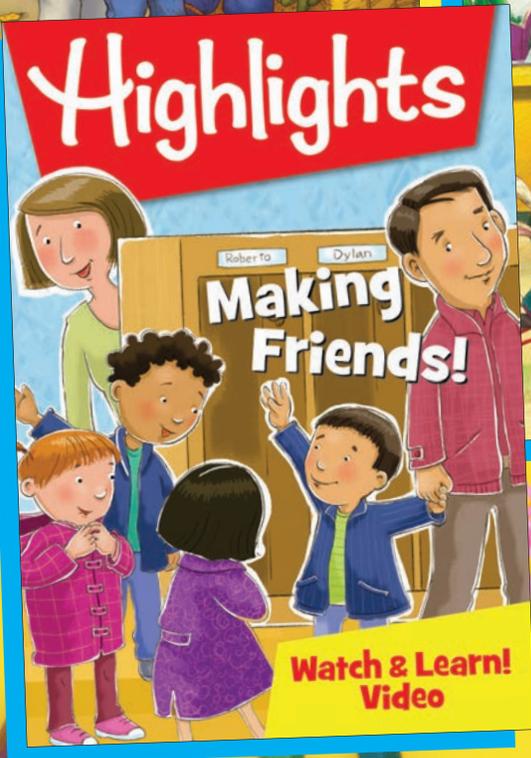
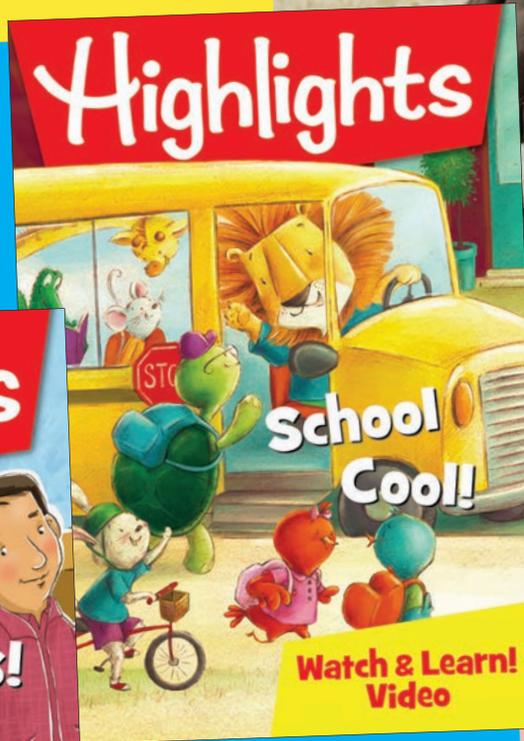
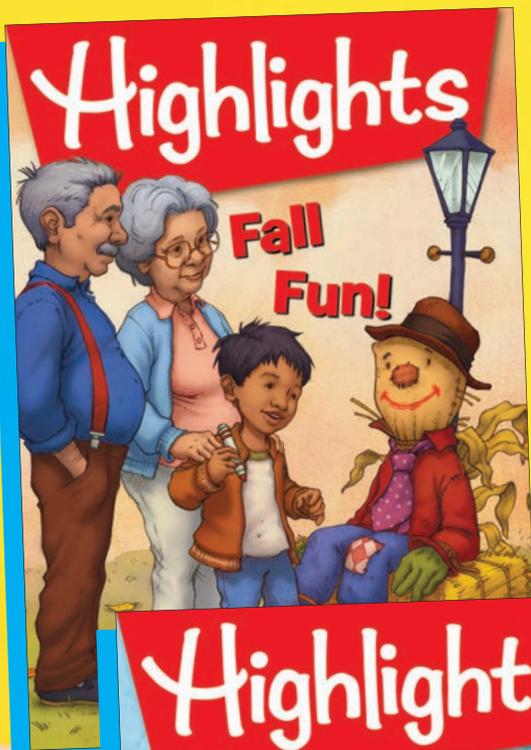
The Informer (Aug. 16), newly re-titled and rescheduled, is based on the 2009 novel *Three Seconds* by Swedish crime-writing team Roslund & Hellström. Directed by Andrea Di Stefano, the drug trade drama stars Ana de Armas, Rosamund Pike, Clive Owen, and Common.



Where'd You Go, Bernadette? (Aug. 16) is director Richard Linklater's often rescheduled adaptation of the 2012 novel by Maria Semple. The dramedy stars Cate Blanchett, Billy Crudup, Kristin Wiig, Judy Greer, and Laurence Fishburne.



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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

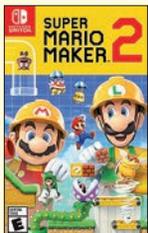
Bloodstained: Ritual of the Night (505 Games, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: T). This gothic horror-action side-scrolling RPG set in 18th-century England puts players in the role of Miriam—an orphan scarred by an alchemist’s curse that slowly crystallizes her body—who must fight her way through a castle.



F1 2019 (THQ Nordic, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). The latest version of this popular racing game features all of the official teams, drivers, and 21 circuits from the 2019 season.

Samurai Shodown (SNK, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). After nearly 10 years out of the spotlight, the popular fighting series *Samurai Shodown* is back, with 13 returning fighters and three new contestants.

Super Mario Maker 2 (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: E). This third-person platformer sequel featuring the iconic plumber lets players create their own Super Mario levels, as well as enjoy levels made by other players from around the world, starting with over 100 built-in courses.



July 7—July 13

Dragon Quest Builders 2 (Square Enix, PS4/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). This third-person RPG with a central block-building element has players gathering the skills required to both become a full-fledged builder and combat the Children of Hargon, a vile cult that worships destruction.

July 14—July 20

Marvel Ultimate Alliance 3: The Black Order (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: T). This popular third-person action-RPG series returns after 10 years, as players assemble the ultimate team of Marvel Super Heroes to prevent galactic devastation at the hands of the mad cosmic tyrant Thanos and his ruthless warmasters, The Black Order.

July 21—July 27

Fire Emblem: Three Houses (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: T). War is coming to the continent of Fódlan, where the player is a professor who must lead students in class and in tactical RPG battles.

Wolfenstein: Youngblood (Bethesda, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: RP). Set in 1980, some 19 years after BJ Blazkowicz ignited the second American Revolution, this latest entry in the popular first-person shooter franchise finds players stepping into the role of one of BJ’s twin daughters—Jess or Soph—to search for their missing father in Nazi-occupied Paris.



July 28—August 3

Madden NFL 20 (EA, PS4/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: EM). The latest release in the most popular football franchise series lets players embark on a full NFL career as well as engage in fantasy team-building.

Mutant Year Zero: Road to Eden (Maximum Games, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this third-person tactical adventure game that combines turn-based combat with real-time exploration, stealth, and strategy, players explore a post-human Earth where humankind has been eradicated by climate change, nuclear war, and pandemics.

August 18—August 24

Yu-Gi-Oh! Legacy of the Duelist Link Evolution (Konami, Switch: \$39.99, Rated: T). Players build their decks from over 9,000 cards and take on the most iconic Duelists from the Yu-Gi-Oh! universe in the latest



entry of this card-battling franchise.

August 25—August 31

Control (505 Games, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). From the creators of *Max Payne* and *Alan Wake*, this third-person action-adventure game puts players in the role of Jesse Faden, who must use her unique abilities in an ever-changing world to take back control from a supernatural enemy.

Dark Pictures: Man of Medan (Bandai Namco, PS4/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: RP). This first game in the *Dark Pictures* anthology is a third-person, narrative-decision-based, supernatural horror game set in the South Pacific as five friends embark on a holiday diving trip looking for a rumored WWII wreck and finding something much more sinister.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

Lost in Space: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). A Netflix reboot of the classic sci-fi series, this 2018 debut season of the family space adventure stars Molly Parker, Toby Stephens, Maxwell Jenkins, Taylor Russell, and Parker Posey.



Orange is the New Black: Season Six (Lionsgate, DVD: 4 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$34.98). Taylor Schilling, Uzo Aduba, and Kate Mulgrew are back in this 2018 sixth season of the Peabody Award-winning racy prison drama.

July 9

Broad City: Season 5 (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$26.98). This 2019 fifth season of the Comedy Central series following NYC best friends stars Abbi Jacobsen, Ilana Glazer, and Hannibal Buress.

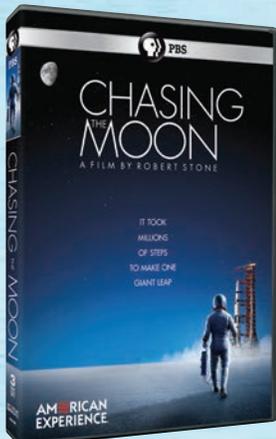


Endeavour: The Complete Sixth Season (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Presented stateside on *Masterpiece Mystery!*, this 2019 sixth season of the *Inspector Morse* prequel starring Shaun Evans and Roger Allam includes the episodes “Pylon,” “Apollo,” “Confection,” and “Degüello.”

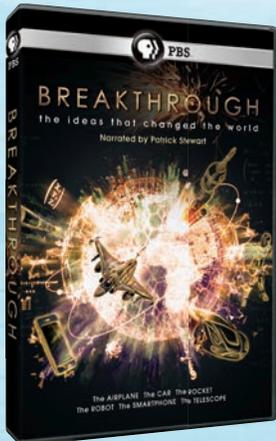
New from PBS



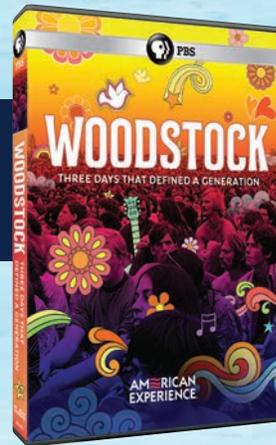
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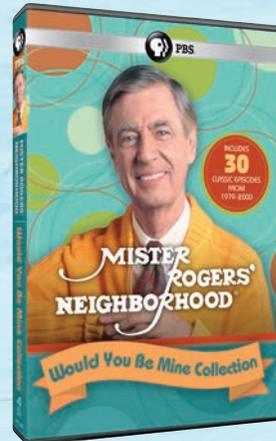
Chasing the Moon reimagines the race to the moon for a new generation, upending much of the mythology surrounding the effort. The series recasts the Space Age as scientific innovation, political calculation, media spectacle, visionary impulses and personal drama. Utilizing overlooked and lost archival material, the film features a cast of characters who played key roles in these historic events.



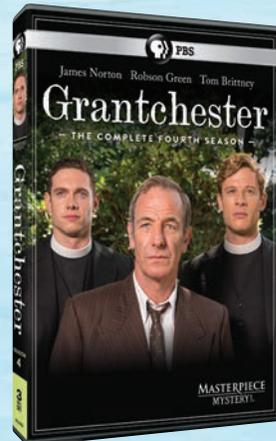
The car. The airplane. The rocket. The smartphone. The robot. The telescope. Take a mind-blowing journey through human history, told through six iconic objects that modern people take for granted, and see how science, invention and technology built on one another to change everything.



Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the concert that became a touchstone for a generation. *Woodstock: Three Days That Defined A Generation* brings the concert to life through the voices of those who were present at what became the defining moment of the counterculture revolution.

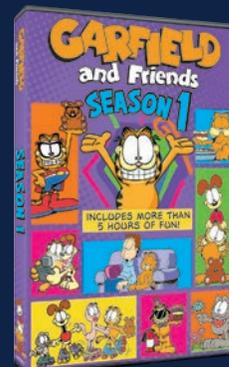
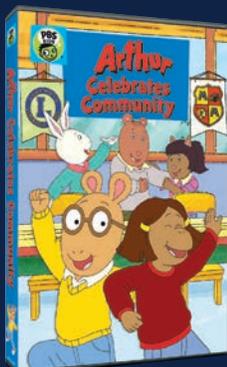


Would you be mine? Could you be mine? Please won't you be my neighbor! Stroll down memory lane with this four-disc set featuring 30 iconic episodes from the beloved children's series *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, hand-selected by Fred Rogers Productions. This set includes visits from incredible guests such as Olympian Suzie McConnell, and also includes a very special and memorable bonus episode!



It's 1956 and Sidney Chambers is feeling adrift—until Violet Todd arrives and fires up his need for social justice. Soon there's a new Vicar of Grantchester, idealistic Will Davenport, who finds himself drawn into Inspector Geordie Keating's world of crime. While Will embraces the future, Geordie is left entirely baffled by it. Navigating a world without Sidney, where does he fit in?

Just for KIDS

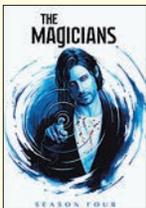


Find these and other educational DVDs at Teacher.Shop.PBS.org!

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Gotham: The Complete Fifth and Final Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$29.98). This 2019 fifth and last season of the Batman prequel series stars Ben McKenzie, Donal Logue, David Mazouz, and Morena Baccarin.

The Magicians: Season Four (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$44.98). Produced by Syfy, this 2019 fourth season of the adaptation of the fantasy novel series by Lev Grossman stars Jason Ralph, Stella Maeve, Hale Appleman, and Arjun Gupta.



July 16

Criminal Minds: Season 14 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$55.98). This 2018-19 14th season of the FBI police procedural series stars Joe Mantegna, Matthew Gray Gubler, A.J. Cook, Aisha Tyler, and Paget Brewster.

Space: 1999—The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 13 discs, \$69.99; Blu-ray: 13 discs, \$109.99). The people of Moonbase Alpha struggle for intergalactic survival in this 1975-77 series (newly available on high-definition Blu-ray) starring Martin Landau and Barbara Bain.

July 23

Manifest: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.99). Starring Melissa Roxburgh, Josh Dallas, and Athena Karkanis, this 2018-19 debut season of the supernatural drama follows the aftermath of passengers on an unstable flight who emerge from the plane into a world that has aged by more than five years.

July 30

The Good Place: The Complete Third Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99). Kristen Bell, Ted Danson, and William Jackson Harper are back in this 2018-19 third season of the afterlife fantasy comedy series that features guest stars Leslie Grossman, Michael McKean, and Stephen Merchant.



Grantchester: The Complete Fourth Season (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). James Norton, Robson Green, and Tom Brittney return in this 2019 fourth season of the ITV detective drama

based on the crime-fiction “Grantchester Mysteries” short stories by James Runcie.

Murdoch Mysteries: Season 12 (Acorn, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$59.99). Based on characters from author Maureen Jennings’s “Detective Murdoch” novels, this 2018-19 12th season of the Canadian period series stars Yannick Bisson as the titular cutting-edge turn-of-the-century detective.



Vidago Palace (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Romance and drama at the titular hotel during the Spanish Civil War are at the heart of this 2017 Portuguese-language series.

August 6

The Good Doctor: Season Two (Sony, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). This 2018-19 sophomore season continues to follow the career of an autistic savant surgical resident played by Freddie Highmore in a Golden Globe-nominated role.

Jamestown: The Complete Season 3 (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Starring Sophie Rundle, Jason Fleming, Naomi Battrick, and Niamh Walsh, this 2019 third season of the Sky One period drama spotlights the conflicts of the iconic 17th-century Virginia settlement.



Strike Back: Cinemax Season Six (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.98). This 2017-18 sixth season of the British-American action series stars Daniel MacPherson, Warren Brown, and Roxanne McKee.

August 13

Public Defender: The Official Second Season (ClassicFlix, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.95). Reed Hadley stars as the titular attorney for the poor in this second compilation from the 1954-55 legal drama that includes guest appearances by Natalie Wood, Charles Bronson, and Dennis Hopper.

August 20

Arrow: The Complete Seventh Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$44.99). Oliver Queen’s (Stephen Amell) prison sentence—after turning

himself in and unveiling his secret Green Arrow alter ego—kicks things off for this 2018-19 seventh season of the DC Comics series.

Blue Bloods: The Ninth Season (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$53.99). Love, career, and future plans come into play for NYPD members of the Reagan family in this 2018-19 ninth season of the police procedural series that features guest appearances by Lou Diamond Phillips, David Zayas, Stacy Keach, and Danny Trejo.



NCIS New Orleans: The Fifth Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$53.99). Mark Harmon, LeVar Burton, and Kate Burton guest star in this 2018-19 fifth season of the Big Easy-based spin-off of the military drama franchise.

The Walking Dead: The Complete Ninth Season (Lionsgate, DVD: 5 discs, \$70.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$80.99). The dead continue to walk in this 2018-19 ninth season of the post-apocalyptic horror series starring Andrew Lincoln, Norman Reedus, and Lauren Cohan.



August 27

The Flash: The Complete Fifth Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$44.99). An adult daughter from the future is the least of the worries for superhuman crime scene investigator The Flash (Grant Gustin) in this 2018-19 fifth season of the DC Comics action series.

Looking Ahead

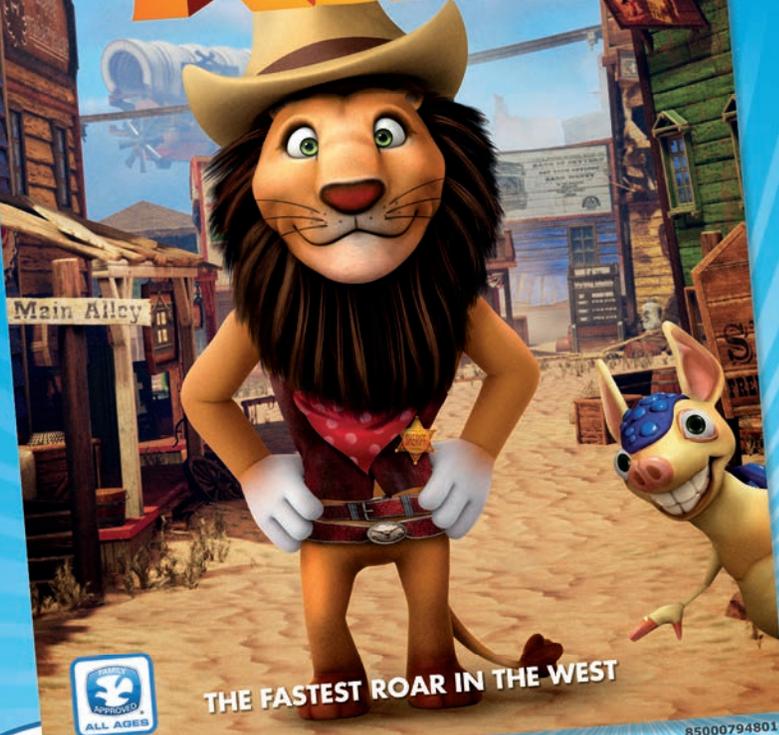
Slated for October is a fourth season collection of *Doctor Who* showcasing Jon Pertwee, as well as the animated series *The Macra Terror*.

Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Hale County This Morning, This Evening (Cinema Guild, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95). Newly available priced for home video, filmmaker RaMell Ross’s Oscar-nominated documentary (VL-3/19 ★★1/2) provides an intimate portrait of African American community life in Hale County, AL.

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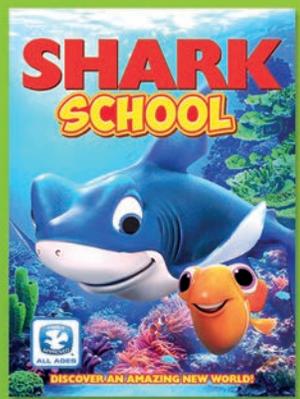
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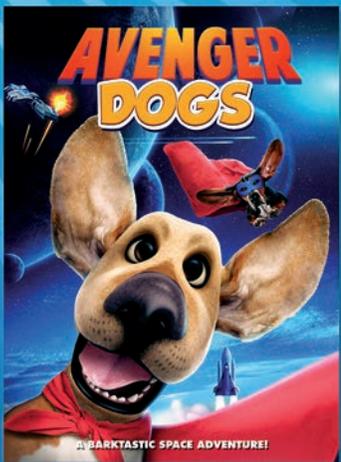


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WHERE TO BUY



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

The Amityville Murders

★
Skyline, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Jay Anson's allegedly nonfiction 1977 book *The Amityville Horror*—about the terrifying experiences that a family endured in a supposedly haunted Long Island house—was made into a movie two years later, and the story has been a cinematic staple ever since. Writer-director Daniel Farrands here serves up a chintzy recreation of Butch DeFeo's slaughter of six family members in 1974. DeFeo told conflicting stories about the killings, at one point confessing to being the perpetrator—although he insisted that supernatural forces inhabiting the house made him do it. What Farrands has concocted from DeFeo's outlandish defense is a familiar mass murder movie with supernatural overtones, in many respects a virtual remake of *Amityville II: The Possession*, the 1982 sequel that added an *Exorcist*-inspired subplot to the mix. That religious angle is jettisoned by Farrands, who simply records how Ronald DeFeo (Paul Ben-Victor), a thuggish man with mob connections, lorded it over his wife and their children so brutally that Butch (John Robinson) often retreated to a room where he, his sister, and their friends conjured up spirits that subsequently compelled Butch to commit the terrible crime. Despite amusing turns from Lainie Kazan and Burt Young as the kids' grandparents, this ultra-cheap movie fails to add anything to a story that was handled far better by others in the past. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



And Then There Was Eve ★★½

Breaking Glass, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Savannah Bloch's directing debut begins with the classic framework of a mystery. Successful photographer Alyssa (Tania No-

lan) wakes up in her apartment and finds that she has been burglarized. And her husband Kevin (Jonathan Flanagan) is missing, along with all of the physical and photographic evidence that they were married. The police seem indifferent to Alyssa's situation, and she faces hostility from her in-laws. Alyssa begins to find emotional support with Eve (Rachel Crowl), a jazz musician who tries to help Alyssa understand why Kevin might have abruptly vanished from her life. The adrift Alyssa connects with Eve and is able to find some comfort in her painful situation. What happens next, however, is anything but connect-the-dots obvious. Johanna Coelho's cinematography and Robert Lydecker's jazz score give the film a distinctive visual and aural style, while the chemistry between Nolan and Crowl takes the drama into remarkably mature territory. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



The Aspern Papers ★★

Cohen, 90 min., R, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99

In this adaptation of the 1888 novella by Henry James, Jonathan Rhys Meyers plays an American editor and biographer who travels to Venice in 1885 in hopes of securing love letters that Romantic poet Jeffrey Aspern (a fictional figure inspired by Lord Byron) wrote to his lover and muse before his early death decades ago. Vanessa Redgrave plays the former muse, now a reclusive dowager in a grand but neglected villa that is empty but for her spinster niece (Joely Richardson, Redgrave's real-life daughter), whose own hopes seem all but smothered. The drama is ostensibly centered on the battle of wills between the American, played by Meyers with a flat inexpressive accent and equally stiff physical presence, and the enigmatic dowager, who Redgrave invests with worldly experience that is suggested in her tart remarks and withering glances. Unfortunately, the human drama never comes to life, as director Julien Landais takes a frustratingly literal approach to the project, filling it out with beautiful shots of Venice life while the almost sexless American rebuffs the interest of the young beauties of Venice society. It's a handsome but lifeless production that is only notable for the fine performances from Redgrave and Richardson. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Axmaker)



The Beach Bum ★

Universal, 95 min., R, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

Let's not mince words: this is the worst picture I've seen in a long, long, LONG time. A total wipeout. Hedonistic Moondog (Matthew McConaughey) is a selfish, mid-

dle-aged stoner/poet who sails around Key West in a boat named *Well Hung*, proclaiming, "I'm a bottom feeder. I go low to get high." Although Moondog is openly promiscuous, he seems somewhat surprised to discover that his wealthy wife, Minnie (Isla Fisher), is shagging their best friend (Snoop Dogg), a musician/drug dealer. When Minnie dies in an automobile accident, Moondog learns that she put his multi-million dollar inheritance in escrow until he finishes writing his next book. Aside from those plot points, the freewheeling narrative consists of disjointed episodes that chronicle Moondog's decadence and debauchery. Jonah Hill plays his literary agent. Zac Efron is a preacher Moondog befriends in rehab. Accompanied by his coke-addicted parrot, Martin Lawrence escorts dolphin-watchers on an ill-fated boat tour. And Stefania LaVie Owen, as Moondog's daughter, notes, "He may be a jerk, but he's a great man." Meanwhile, surrounded by bare-breasted babes, Jimmy Buffett views the hijinks with obvious amusement, perhaps content with the royalties he's banking for the use of his Margaritaville songbook. Provocateur writer/director Harmony Korine (*Kids*) thinks he's created a comedy, but it's not funny, and becomes particularly mean-spirited when Moondog mugs an elderly, wheelchair-bound man for his money. Not recommended. (S. Granger)



Breakthrough ★★

Fox, 116 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99, July 16

Many emotional breakthroughs occur in filmmaker Roxann Dawson's fact- and faith-based film, but the major one is physical—a 2015 accident in which Missouri teen John (Marcel Ruiz), adopted son of deeply religious parents Joyce and Brian Smith (Chrissy Metz and Josh Lucas), falls through the ice on a frozen lake and spends a quarter-hour underwater before being pulled out. Although pronounced dead in the hospital, John revives when Joyce prays over him, begging God to restore her son. Whether the doctors will be able to keep him alive, however, is uncertain, setting the stage for a long wait while he remains in a coma. Other breakthroughs occur while the outcome remains in doubt: Joyce, for example, bonds with the new pastor (Topher Grace) with whom she has previously sparred over his "hipster" methods, learning that humility is an important part of faith. The unbelieving paramedic who rescued the teen begins to wonder whether a divine impulse animated his actions. And later John, who had grown rebellious, realizes during his recovery just how lucky he is to have been adopted by a lov-



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Newly restored! A young boy living with his troublesome family in rural America fantasizes that a neighboring widow is actually a vampire. This stunning first feature by director Philip Ridley stars Lindsay Duncan and Viggo Mortensen.

THE REFLECTING SKIN (AVAILABLE 8/6)

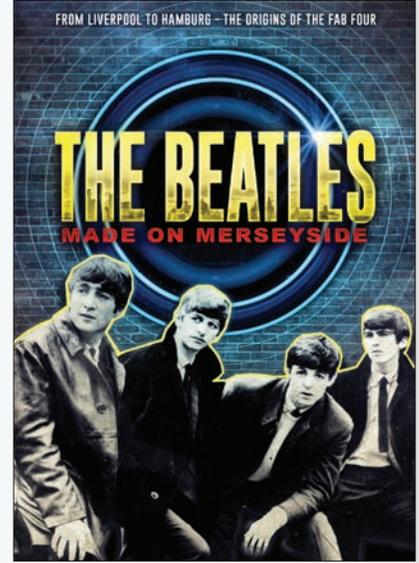
Film studies, English language, Horror

DVD only: \$24.95 / PPR: \$200

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*ALSO AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY™



Featuring revealing interviews that shed light on The Beatles early years, this documentary tells the incredible true story of how a skiffle band from post-war Liverpool went on to create the music and excitement that led to Beatlemania.

THE BEATLES: MADE ON MERSEYSIDE (AVAILABLE 8/20)

Documentary, Music studies

DVD only: \$24.95 / PPR: \$200

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

UPC: 850003924267



Heather Graham, Mia Kirshner and Tom Ellis star in director Eric Styles' romantic comedy about a woman who, determined to have a baby, decides to recruit her reluctant best friend to help her find the right man for the job.

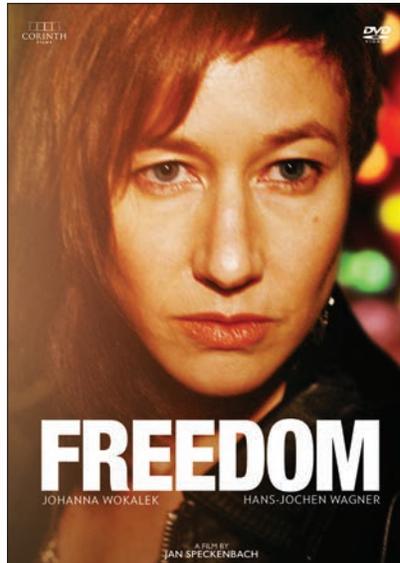
MISS CONCEPTION

English Language, Romance

DVD only: \$24.95 / PPR: \$200

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

UPC: 896137001573



Nora abandons her husband, Philip, and their children without a word of explanation and sets out in search of her freedom. Meanwhile back in Berlin, Philip struggles to manage his family, his job and his own romantic affair.

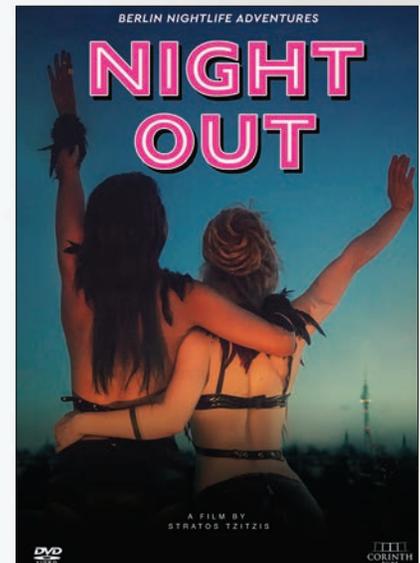
FREEDOM

German, Drama

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Saturday night in Berlin. A colorful mix of hetero and gay singles, couples and polyamorous explore the city. Their journey leads them on a frenetic adventure that offers an array of nightlife temptations where anything goes.

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ing family. Although it adds a small measure of complexity by raising the question of why God saves some but not others, *Breakthrough* fundamentally remains a sermon for believers, and its combination of heavy religious messaging and Hallmark Hall of Fame style will doubtlessly turn off audiences of a more secular bent. Optional. (F. Swietek)

The Brink ★★★

Magnolia, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.99

Alison Klayman's fly-on-the-wall documentary follows far-right political activist (and former Trump aide) Steve Bannon after his departure from the White House in mid-2017 through the fall of 2018 as he works to build a worldwide "populist" movement while helping right-wing candidates in the U.S., such as Alabama's Roy Moore. *The Brink* gives Bannon ample opportunity to express his views—and to deny that they are in any way racist or dangerous—as he travels the globe to plan campaigns and advise political operatives whose ideas mirror his own. Bannon makes every effort to present himself as an ordinary Joe, but it quickly becomes clear that Klayman is not out to humanize her subject, but is rather engaged in a not-so-subtle act of demonization, as in her emphasis on Bannon's visit to Auschwitz, where he opines that Birkenau was more horrifying because unlike Auschwitz it was built from scratch, designed by experts who were unaware of the horrors they were abetting (the implication being that Bannon is also using his abilities to fashion something awful, and the question being whether he realizes it). Clearly, Klayman is appalled by Bannon's views, but Bannon believes that there is no such thing as bad publicity, so while *The Brink* is a solid piece of cinematic reportage that offers an intimate, layered portrait of the man, it also gives him the chance to reach viewers who might become followers—which is undoubtedly why he agreed to give Klayman access in the first place. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Capernaum ★★★1/2

Sony, 123 min., in Arabic w/ English subtitles, R, DVD: \$20.99, Blu-ray: \$31.99

Actress-turned-director Nadine Labaki's film explores the plight of refugees, children, and the impoverished in the slums of contemporary Lebanon. *Capernaum* opens with Zain (real-life Syrian refugee Zain Al Rafeea)—a smart, streetwise child of 12 serving a five-year sentence for assault—in court. His story rolls out in flashback: living in an overcrowded apartment with countless



siblings, spending his days hustling in the streets, and running off after his parents essentially sell off his 11-year-old sister as a child bride for their adult landlord. Zain becomes a doting older brother to the infant son of an Ethiopian immigrant woman who takes him in and he reluctantly returns home after she is arrested, only to learn of a family tragedy. It's a devastating, often brutal film about the exploitation of children, migrants, and refugees seen through the eyes and experiences of a young boy who is doing all he can to survive in a predatory world. Al Rafeea, a non-actor discovered on the streets of Beirut, convincingly communicates affection, anger, outrage, courage, fear, and swagger in a moving performance, and Labaki gives the film a rough, immediate realism by shooting on location. Winner of the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes and an Oscar nominee for Best Foreign Language film, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Carga ★★★

Breaking Glass, 113 min., in English, Russian & Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Brutal and grim, *Carga* tackles the ugly reality of human trafficking and sex slavery. The film begins somewhat awkwardly with a written preface explaining how Viktoriya (Michalina Olszanska), fleeing Eastern Europe for Portugal as an illegal immigrant, meets Antonio (Vitor Norte), a long-haul, cross-border truck driver who regularly smuggles refugees in his cargo container. The opening scene turns out to be one of betrayal: a guilt-ridden Antonio drives to a rendezvous point to meet Viktor (an excellent Dmitry Bogomolov), a trafficker who would make an imposing villain in a James Bond movie (if 007 had to take on a super-pimp). From there, all of the expected horrors happen: kidnapping, rape, and murder, but while Viktoriya bends under all of this violence perpetrated against and around her, she never breaks, waiting instead for her moment. Meanwhile, Antonio feels tormented as he lures new victims to Viktor (the viewer suspects that extortion and threats are pressuring the driver), and Viktor himself is revealed to have grown up with dehumanizing, corrupting influences. In a left-handed way, writer-director Bruno Gascon expresses faith in a kind of original goodness in people, something fundamental that is stolen by others already diminished by the world's wickedness. Gascon doesn't pull any punches in the film's most harrowing moments of violence (including sexual violence), which can make *Carga* very hard to watch, but he also taps into the unexpressed emotions of characters who ultimately are more than simply victims or collaborators in evil. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



The Charmer ★★★1/2

Film Movement, 102 min., in Danish & Persian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Filmmaker Milad Alami's inspired drama gradually peels back mysteries surrounding a young Iranian immigrant in Denmark. An absorbing tale in which things are often not what they seem, *The Charmer* centers on Esmail (Ardalan Esmaili), a handsome, intelligent migrant with an easy smile but muted anxiety in his eyes. Small rituals of Esmail's daily life in Copenhagen—from carefully hand-laundrying the same white dress shirt to chatting up women at the same wine bar every night—accrue until it becomes apparent that Esmail is in fear over his visa expiring. He is seeking a girlfriend who will let him co-habit with her so that he can remain in the country. The clock is ticking, and the desperation is beginning to show, turning Esmail into a bit of a pariah in singles hangouts. A couple of scenes in which Esmail Skypes with his Iranian family suggest that chain migration for his relatives is his ultimate goal. But *The Charmer* is very slow to show all its cards, especially after a young Iranian woman, Sara (Soho Rezaejad) enters the protagonist's life, stirring feelings that he didn't see coming. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

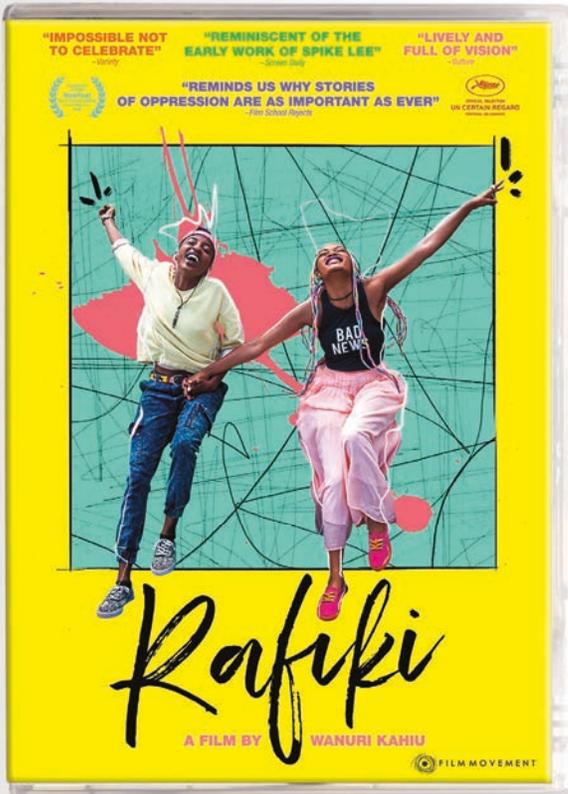


Devil's Path ★★★

Breaking Glass, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

An original thriller with twists and surprises, filmmaker Matthew Montgomery's *Devil's Path* is a satisfying genre piece that plays out in a fairy-tale setting: a deep, dark forest where getting lost is inevitable. Noah (Stephen Twardokus) is a rangy, nervous guy hanging out with his tarot cards and Sony Walkman (the story is set in the 1990s) on the main trail of a wilderness park—an area where gay men hook up for anonymous sex. Angering a couple of burly men when he bumps into them, Noah appears to trigger a potentially violent, homophobic reaction, setting up further tensions to come. But before that cat-and-mouse game ensues, Noah meets Patrick (JD Scalzo), a cynical, asthmatic fellow cruising the park and daring Noah to walk with him along a forbidden trail called the Devil's Path, where several gay men have disappeared. Over the course of the afternoon and evening, Noah and Patrick become hopelessly lost, chased by those homophobes and bickering in escalating distrust of one another. Montgomery keeps viewers guessing about the real motives of both Noah and Patrick, and while the script relies on too many coincidences, overall the intricate structure of *Devil's Path* is compelling. A film that will





“Tells a familiar story with bracing originality... Wanuri Kahiu [is] a talent to watch.”

–Rotten Tomatoes



“Fresh and courageous...deserves to be seen.”

–Sight & Sound

“Reminiscent of the early work of Spike Lee.”

–Screen Daily

Bursting with the colorful street style and music of Nairobi’s vibrant youth culture, **RAFIKI** is a tender love story between two young women in a country that still criminalizes homosexuality. Kena and Ziki have long been told that “good Kenyan girls become good Kenyan wives” – but they yearn for something more. Despite the political rivalry between their families, the girls encourage each other to pursue their dreams in a conservative society.

RAFIKI
(AVAILABLE 8/13)
African studies, Women’s studies, LGBTQ
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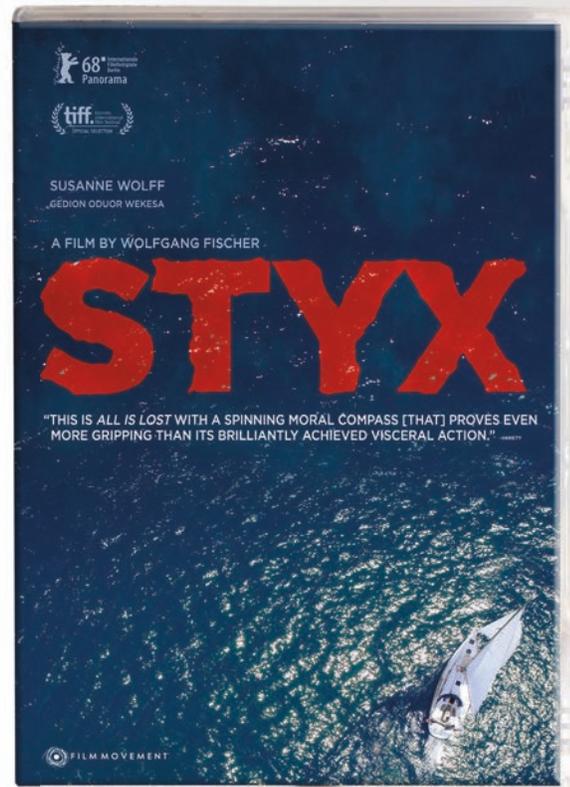
“A commendably bold work of art.”

–The Playlist

ER doctor Rike (German Film Awards Best Actress winner **Susanne Wolff**) embarks on a solo sailing trip to Ascension Island in the Atlantic. When she comes across a sinking ship filled with refugees, Rike is suddenly torn out of her contented world. Pushed to her physical, psychological and moral limits, she is forced to make a momentous decision.



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appeal not only to LGBTQ audiences but also to anyone who loves a good mystery, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

#DigitalLivesMatter

★★★

Gravitas Ventures, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$16.99

A farce with a serious message, *#DigitalLivesMatter* manages to be both stupid-funny (in a good way) and gently thoughtful at the same time. Comic actor DC Young Fly plays some version of himself as Internet sensation DC Young Fly, famous for being famous in that meaningless online-celebrity way. With five million followers tracking his every video antic, his bouts of braggadocio, and (often funny) smack talk toward fans, DC believes he has achieved untouchable success. So it's a shock when he wakes up to find an unseen hacker named Simon has wiped away DC's many posts and devotees, which renders him—essentially—a nobody. Worse, Simon says that if DC wants his notoriety back, he has to run around all day performing acts of generosity and kindness toward his old fans, which is precisely what happens—albeit with a lot of silliness. Flanked by two friends (Emmanuel Hudson, Ernestine Johnson), DC races to be a somebody again, only to warm—slowly—to his buried humanity while doing right by needy strangers. Actress-turned-director Terri J. Vaughn effectively combines social criticism with goofy humor in this madcap film with a bite. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Dumbo ★★★

Disney, 111 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Dumbo (1941) was Walt Disney's fourth animated feature, following *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Pinocchio*, and *Fantasia*. Now, Tim Burton has re-imagined the classic as an endearing live-action film, enhanced with animatronic and digital effects. The story begins in 1919, when baby elephant Dumbo is born into the struggling circus owned by Max Medici (Danny DeVito) and soon separated from his protective mother. Dumbo's care is turned over to former equestrian star Holt Farrier (Colin Farrell), a World War I veteran who lost an arm in battle and his wife to influenza. Farrier's two kids (Nico Parker, Finley Hobbins) quickly realize that the baby pachyderm's oversized ears, which make him look deformed, actually enable him to fly. Dumbo's extraordinary talent soon attracts the attention of nefarious entrepreneur V.A. Vandevere (Michael Keaton), who buys Medici's circus just to acquire Dumbo, pairing him with his French aerialist girlfriend



(Eva Green) in a trapeze act. Vandevere's Dreamland amusement park bears an eerie resemblance to Disney World, and Burton's demented visual sense emerges within its futuristic World of Science, where a cross-dressed couple poses in an ultra-modern kitchen. Based on Helen Aberson and Harold Pearl's 1939 children's book *Dumbo, The Flying Elephant*, the clumsy script doesn't give its colorful characters much depth, but the best parts naturally revolve around the fantasy of a flying elephant with big blue eyes and a remarkably expressive face. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Escape Room ★★

Sony, 100 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

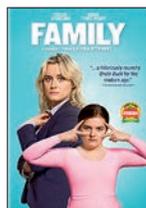
The popularity of escape rooms—amusement venues where players have to decipher clues to leave—spawned this puzzle movie from director Adam Robitel, in which six strangers are lured into a ridiculously elaborate game by promises of big cash prizes. The game, of course, turns deadly, and actually consists of a series of rooms: the first, a lounge, turns into a fiery conflagration, which leads to a rustic cabin surrounded by an icy forest, and then becomes an upside-down honky-tonk. Next stop is a hospital ward, leading to an encounter with an EKG machine that somehow takes the survivors to a surrealistic TV room and finally to a sumptuous library that threatens to implode. Each change requires figuring out some riddle—by preposterously accidental means—and as the players proceed from place to place some will die, until apparently only one is left. A few of the participants, such as shy college student Zoey (Taylor Russell), are sympathetic, while others, like arrogant broker Jason (Jay Ellis), are not, so those who are doomed to perish are telegraphed fairly quickly. There are echoes of sources as varied as Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* and the *Saw* franchise here, with a rote explanation for what the characters have in common, as well as a closing revelation of powerful forces at work that suggests the filmmakers intended this as the first chapter in a franchise. An extravagant but absurd would-be thriller, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



Family ★★

Universal, 86 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, July 16

An uptight person being mellowed by interaction with a child is a cinematic cliché, but filmmaker Laura Steinell tries to make up for the familiarity by adopting a quirkily deadpan style. Taylor Schilling stars as Kate, whose ultra-ambitious work-centered life makes her



a pariah among her office colleagues and a stranger to her family. When her brother asks her to take care of his 11-year-old daughter, Maddie (Bryn Vale), for a night, her initial reaction is to say no, but he guilt trips her into agreeing. Of course, the task stretches to a week, and is complicated by the fact that Maddie is a total misfit, bullied at school, who has secretly jettisoned ballet lessons to learn karate at the local dojo. Maddie finds a rare friend in a goofy clerk at a convenience store who identifies himself as one of the Juggalos, fans of the Insane Clown Posse who paint their faces circus-style to attend the band's raucous concerts, and Maddie joins the group herself. Sandwiched into this ostentatiously wacky tale are plot threads concerning Kate's rivals at work and her running battle with Maddie's obtrusive neighbor (Kate McKinnon). Steinell's emphasis on her characters' eccentric ways cannot disguise the very old-fashioned plot, and the affected style ultimately becomes more irritating than engaging. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Grace and Gravity

★★★

Vision, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99

Actor Bruce Marchiano, a doppelganger for Steve Carell, has played Jesus more than any other screen actor in history. Marchiano delivers a wonderful performance opposite the equally terrific British thespian Richard Brimblecombe in this Christian faith-based dramedy. Essentially a two-hander (with brief support from a couple of others) with a hint of *Waiting for Godot*, the story finds John (Marchiano), an American visiting the U.K., encountering Chris (Brimblecombe) at the very moment the latter is about to jump from a bridge to end his life. Although well-meaning, John intervenes with easy Christian platitudes, only to face cynical pushback from Chris. Soon, both men shed their surfaces to reveal twin souls experiencing true crises in their lives. Calling each other to account, they become brothers staring into the maw of oblivion—or perhaps at another go with life. Co-writer and director Andrew Walkington adroitly handles the pacing while the two leads create palpable chemistry. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



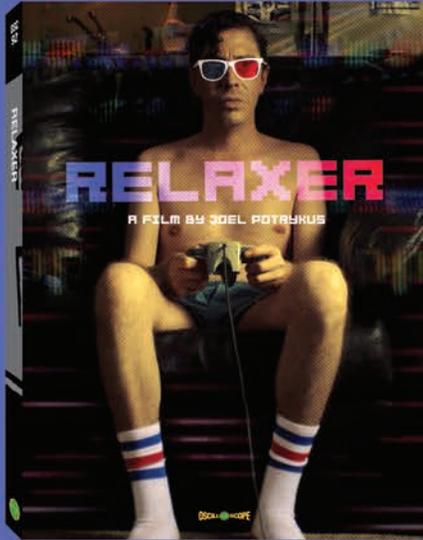
The Great Buster ★★★

Cohen, 101 min., not rated, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99

Filmmaker and film historian Peter Bogdanovich celebrates the life and legacy of silent movie legend Buster Keaton, who never enjoyed the popular success of his contemporary Charlie Chaplin in his time but has since been recognized as one of the great masters of silent film comedy and the most cinematic of



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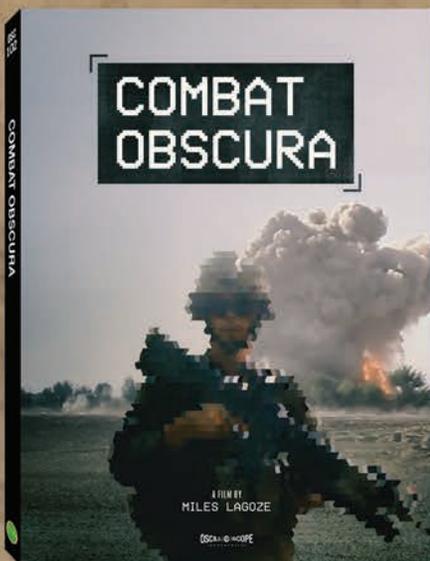
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comedy directors. Bogdanovich takes viewers through Keaton's life and career, beginning as a child star in the vaudeville act The Three Keatons, followed by a movie apprenticeship with Fatty Arbuckle, and on to directing his own short comedies and features through the 1920s, before losing creative control of his work, struggling with alcoholism and gambling in the 1930s, and embarking on recovery and a career comeback (Keaton never stopped working up until his death in 1966). Combining film clips and numerous interviews, *The Great Buster* shines an appreciative spotlight on Keaton's work in film and on TV in comedies and commercials. Bogdanovich saves the last act to explore Keaton's 10 independent silent features in greater depth with extended clips and production stories. Bogdanovich unfairly denigrates *The Camera-man* (1928), Keaton's first MGM feature (and his last masterpiece, I believe), but otherwise this is a fine introduction to the filmmaker and a loving tribute to his work as both a gifted comic actor and an inventive and inspired director. Among those interviewed are Mel Brooks, Bill Irwin, Leonard Maltin, Carl Reiner, Quentin Tarantino, and Dick Van Dyke, who read the eulogy at Keaton's funeral. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Greta ★★★

Universal, 99 min., R, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

In Neil Jordan's outlandish thriller, the title character (Isabelle Huppert) is a strange senior citizen who stalks young and naive Frances McCullen (Chloë Grace Moretz). Frances, a recent college grad working as a waitress in New York City, finds a lost handbag on the subway and decides to return it. The owner is elegant but fluttery Greta Hideg, who thanks her profusely and graciously invites her in for tea. Finding Greta to be endearing, Frances befriends her, but soon the woman's neediness becomes all too apparent: she calls endlessly, and when Frances—who discovers a secret behind that lost purse—becomes frightened of the attention and tries to break off the relationship, Greta turns positively threatening, eventually becoming an even more fearsome version of Bette Davis's Jane Hudson in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, as she resorts to the most extreme methods to assert control over her victim. The pulishly implausible plot increasingly strains one's ability to suspend disbelief, and the last act, protracted almost beyond endurance with the intervention of a detective (Stephen Rea) and a final twist involving Frances's savvy roommate (Maika Monroe), grows more and more ridiculous. But while *Greta* is nothing more than B-movie goofiness, Jordan's go-for-broke approach and Huppert's no-holds-barred performance make it loopy fun. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Hagazussa ★★1/2

Doppelgänger, 102 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$25.99

Short on narrative clarity and dialogue but thick with evocative atmosphere and disturbing imagery, filmmaker Lukas Feigelfeld's debut feature is set in the Austrian Alps during the 15th century, where Martha (Claudia Martini)—shunned by neighbors and a local priest, who all think she's a witch—lives in an isolated cabin with her daughter Albrun (Celina Peter). After Martha dies of a terrible wasting illness, Albrun grows into a young woman (Aleksandra Cwen) with an infant of her own but no husband in sight. She too is ostracized by the community, but a neighbor (Tanja Petrovsky) offers her friendship—only to horribly betray her. The distraught “hagazussa” (an Old German term for “witch”) Albrun—who has heard her dead mother calling her from a distance—descends into madness (or perhaps embraces her predestined role) in two hallucinatory final sequences titled “Blood” and “Fire” that are both unsettling and extremely difficult to watch, although Cwen anchors them with her stunningly compelling performance. *Hagazussa* is not for everyone, but can serve as a complement to Robert Eggers's equally unnerving *The Witch* (even sharing some eerie symbolism involving goats). A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



The Heiresses ★★★

Distrib, 97 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.98, July 2

Marcelo Martinessi's film is an autumnal study of a reclusive Paraguayan woman in her 60s who takes tentative steps to reconnect with the world after the companion who has long overseen her affairs goes off to prison. A restrained, stately character study with a deep emotional core, *The Heiresses* showcases a remarkable performance from Ana Brun as shy, reserved Chela, who has lived in the same Asunción house ever since she was the pampered child of a well-to-do family, sharing it for years with her lover Chiquita (Margarita Irún). Chiquita has taken responsibility for all practical matters, including the sale of many of Chela's prized family belongings to keep them afloat, but when Chiquita goes to jail for fraud—where she makes new friends—Chela must fend for herself. Taking her father's old Mercedes out of the garage to visit Chiquita, Chela is approached by an elderly neighbor for a ride, and soon becomes a professional driver for rich old ladies, learning from them—and a brassy younger woman named Angy (Ana Ivanova)—how to become more self-reliant. By the time Chiquita returns,



she finds that the house is a much changed place. A subtle tale of female liberation with a nuanced central performance, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Hole in the Ground ★★★

Lionsgate, 90 min., R, DVD: \$19.99

A satisfying against-the-current-grain horror film, this moody, color-drained feature debut from writer-director Lee Cronin evokes an unusual mix of psychologically compelling classics, including *The Turn of the Screw*, *Invaders from Mars*, and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Single mother Sarah O' Neill (Seana Kerslake) and her young son, Chris (James Quinn Markey), move from the city into a rustic house deep in the woods of the Irish countryside—so remote that the viewer has no cultural or visual cues that we are even in Ireland. The story specifics are more a matter of suggestion than declaration, so the “why” behind Sarah and Chris's sudden move—which seems not so much a lifestyle change as a flight from something or somebody (bruises on Sarah's arm hint at possible spousal abuse)—remains a mystery. More importantly is what comes next: Sarah and Chris stumble onto an enormous sinkhole in the woods near their house, a surreal monstrosity that soon appears to be linked to strange phenomena, including Sarah's growing perception that Chris does not seem like himself; in fact, he might not be Chris at all. In the end, the film's title is not just about an actual hole in the wilds, but also how the ground beneath our feet can vanish when families fail. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Holiday ★★1/2

Breaking Glass, 93 min., in English & Danish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

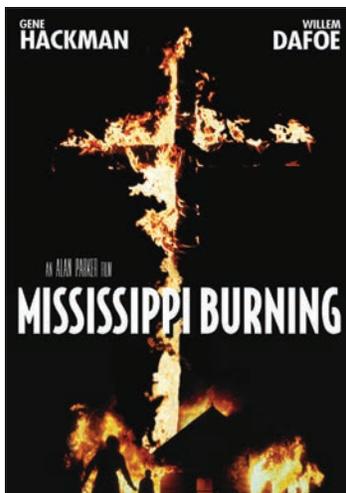
Written and directed by Swedish-born director Isabella Eklöf, *Holiday* instantly gained buzz in 2018 for a shocking, extended rape scene in which at least some penetration is clearly not simulated. The graphic scene, in which the central character, Sascha (Victoria Carmen Sonne), is violated by her drug-lord boyfriend, Michael (Lai Yde), is about power and domination—which is both the point and the tragedy of the story. Golden-haired Sascha, about whom we know nothing, seems to just pop into being in the film's opening shot, a naïf drawn to shiny objects like the sun and jewelry. Without explanation, she is absorbed into a crime family through a simmering romantic attachment to the much older Michael. While the thugs are on holiday in sun and surf, Sascha basks in their atmosphere of money and pampering, with no need to



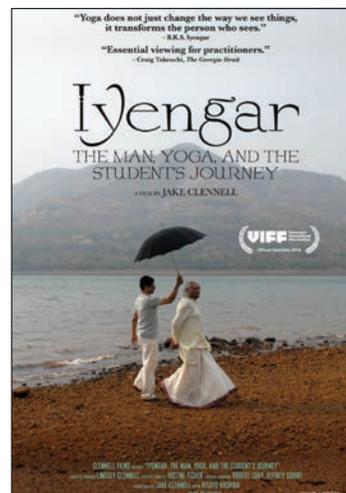
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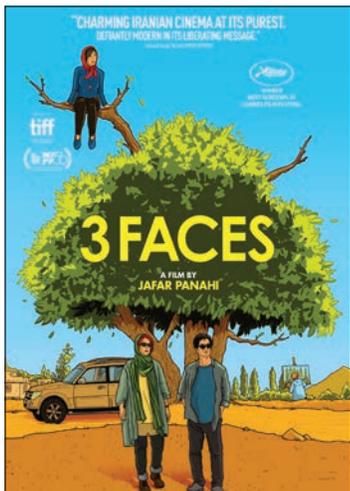
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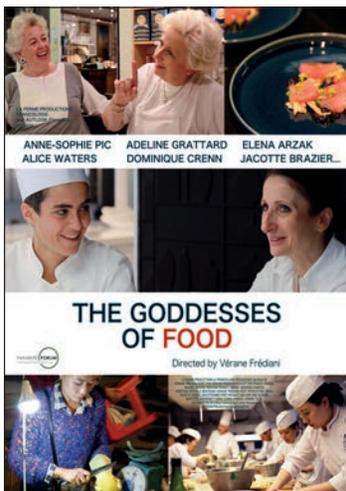
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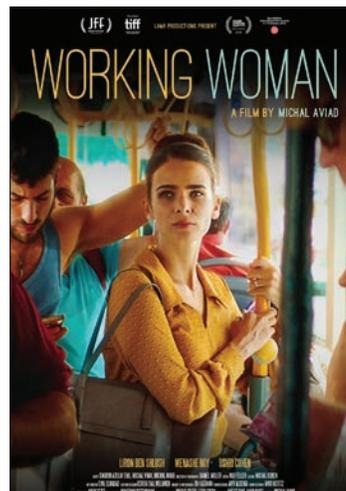
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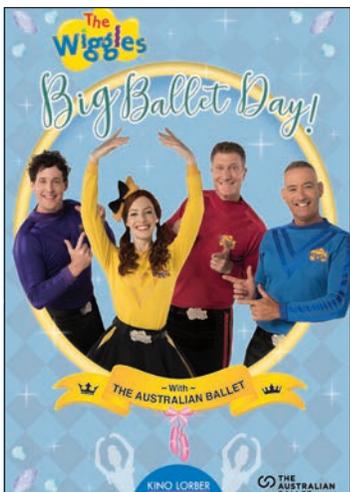
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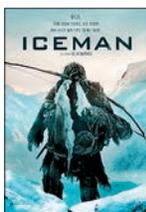
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think about all of the signs that she is only territory for Michael, who zealously guards her from others and tramples on her body and spirit. Eklof nurtures a subtle, reverse psychology angle in the script, in which the more Sascha is objectified, the greater her awareness becomes as to her intrinsic worth and the mess she is caught in, even though she might be powerless to do much about the latter. *Holiday* is an unquestionably striking film in which several key scenes simply erupt with brazen brutality (in one case prompting the wives of the family's menfolk to hurriedly usher their children away from the screams of an assistant being beaten for a mistake). A graphic, controversial film that will certainly divide viewers, this should still be considered a strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Iceman ★★★

Film Movement, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

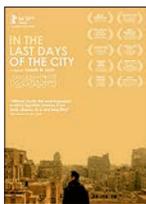
In 1991, the mummified remains of a man encased in the ice of the Ötztal Alps in the Tyrol were discovered. The corpse was initially thought to be a modern hiker, but scientific analysis revealed that it was a man from the Chalcolithic (Copper) Age who lived between 3400 and 3100 B.C. Further investigation of Ötzi—as he was called—revealed evidence of an arrow wound and a blow to the head, suggesting that he suffered a violent death. Felix Randau's film is not a documentary but rather a speculative dramatization of how this ancient man might have died. Here, Ötzi is Kelab (Jürgen Vogel), head of a small Alpine tribe who chases down the marauders who killed his family, destroyed their village, and carried off a small box containing a revered relic while Kelab was hunting. Kelab largely succeeds in his mission of revenge, although—as the historical record demands—also ultimately falls victim to one of his prey. What little dialogue the film contains is spoken in the extinct language of Rhaetian, without subtitles (which are hardly needed since most of the script consists of grunts, shouts, and screams). A powerful score and superb sound design fill the silences, and the spectacular locations are artfully photographed in this odd but compelling prehistoric action movie. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



In the Last Days of the City ★★★

Big World Pictures, 118 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Tamer El Said's slow and meandering but ultimately affecting film has literally been 10 years in the making, with much of it shot in Cairo in 2009, as resistance to the regime of Hosni Mubarak was just beginning to build. Khalid (Khalid



Abdalla) is a documentarian attempting to shoot an impressionistic portrait of the Egyptian capital, who infuriates his editor due to his inability to decide what to include. Khalid commiserates with colleagues from Beirut and Baghdad who love their cities yet also feel estranged because of their radical and violent contemporary transformations. Khalid must also deal with changes occurring in his personal life: his girlfriend has left him and is preparing to leave the country; his mother is in the hospital, perhaps dying; and he must vacate his apartment but vacillates about choosing another while he is driven around the city listening to government broadcasts as the regime is starting to totter and society lurches toward Islamic fundamentalism. Khalid's mood is mirrored in others, including a friend who reminiscences ruefully about her idyllic childhood in Alexandria. The portrait that emerges of a city—and a life—spinning slowly out of control is now inevitably viewed through the prism of what has happened in Egypt over the last decade, deepening the mood of quiet anxiety that pervades this film that is both a melancholy elegy to a particular place and a moving rumination on the inevitability of change. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Kid ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 100 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$21.99

The public's fascination with William Bonney, aka Billy the Kid, seems boundless. The cheeky conceit of actor-turned-director Vincent D'Onofrio's *The Kid* is that the titular character is a fictional youngster named Rio (Jake Schur), who along with his sister Sara (Leila George) falls in with Billy (Dane DeHaan) just before the latter is captured by Sheriff Pat Garrett (Ethan Hawke). Rio's story is folded into the last months of Billy's life, when the outlaw escaped custody, killing a couple of lawmen in the process, only to be tracked down again and ambushed by Garrett. Rio not only watches as the final act of this tragic drama plays out, but also must decide which of the two men to trust when Sara is abducted by their evil uncle (Chris Pratt) and dragged back to meet a horrible fate in a hellish bordello—unless he can somehow manage to rescue her. *The Kid* thus becomes a morality play as well as a coming-of-age story, all wrapped up in the historical context of the Bonney-Garrett showdown—an ambitious load for a movie to carry, and D'Onofrio (who also takes on a supporting role as a sheriff) is not entirely up to the task. The film tends to be sluggish, emphasizing the pretentious writing by allowing for long pauses in dialogue delivery. And while the performances of Hawke and DeHaan are strong, the film never achieves the *Unforgiven*-like profundity it clearly is aiming for. Still, this is an interesting failure



that should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

A Legacy of Whining

★★★

Indie Rights, 73 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.99

Two old college friends who haven't communicated in 30 years have an awkward reunion in actor-writer-director Ross Munro's loopy but stinging Canadian satire about male arrested development. Munro plays Mitch, a feckless 50-year-old nebbish still trying to find his place and passion in the world, and living under the delusion that his school years represented a more glorious version of himself. It's no wonder that he's eager to reunite with long-ago friend Dunc (Robert David Duncan)—despite decades of silence between them—as if reliving their school days will help fill his midlife irrelevancy. For his part, Dunc is also an overgrown kid, divorced and lecherous, but still capable of rebuking Mitch for the latter's eternal search for purpose. The synergy between them creates a number of funny-sad scenes, but the film—which is somewhat hampered by amateurish production issues—is often punctuated by a sly absurdity that pointedly underscores Mitch's haplessness, such as his encounter with a wheelchair-bound prostitute and a glamorous chauffeur. Although a little rough around the edges, Munro's take on male infantilism is spot on. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Little ★★

Universal, 109 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99, July 9

Nerdy teenager Jordan Sanders's (Marsai Martin) self-confidence is shattered when a cheerleader (Eva Carlton) humiliates her at a middle-school talent show. From that moment on, Jordan is determined to become successful, rich, and mean—because “nobody bullies the boss.” True to her word, adult Jordan (Regina Hall) is an Atlanta tech CEO who enjoys making life miserable for her assistant, April Williams (Issa Rae)—and everyone else—until one day a little girl wishes that Jordan were “little,” so she couldn't get away with such obnoxious behavior. When Jordan awakens the next morning, she's an awkward 13-year-old (Martin again), facing the dreaded eighth grade. Gone are her designer clothes, BMW sports car, and the ability to unwind at the end of the day with a glass of wine. Her outrageous flirtation with a horrified teacher (Justin Hartley) is one of the film's most memorable moments. Learning the lesson of humility doesn't come easily to Jordan. Eventually she concludes that: “Everyone thinks you have to grow up to know who





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you are, but kids already know who we are... the world just beats it out of us." Directed by Tina Gordon Chism, this is an intermittently engaging but all-too-formulaic comedy about the long term effects of adolescent bullying. Optional. (S. Granger)

The Man Who Killed Don Quixote ★★1/2

Screen Media, 132 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Terry Gilliam has long been obsessed with adapting Miguel de Cervantes's early 17th-century novel *Don Quixote*. Originally, he cast Johnny Depp as a time-traveler and Jean Rochefort as Quixote (an ill-fated effort chronicled in the 2002 documentary *Lost in La Mancha*). Over the years, Sean Connery, John Cleese, Ewan McGregor, Robert Duvall, Michael Palin, John Hurt, and Jack O'Connell were rumored to star. Inspired by Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Gilliam and co-writer Tony Grisoni finally fashioned this bizarre adventure comedy about Toby (Adam Driver), a cynical director of TV commercials who feels artistically unfulfilled. On location in La Mancha, Spain, he finds a bootleg copy of his old *Quixote* student film and realizes that the village where he shot it is nearby. The shoemaker Javier (Jonathan Pryce), who he cast as Quixote, suffers from delusions that his role as the chivalrous knight was real, and his Dulcinea (Joana Ribeiro) is now a high-class call-girl, abused by a cruel Russian oligarch (Jordi Mollà). Also on hand are Toby's jealous boss (Stellan Skarsgård) and the latter's predatory wife (Olga Kurylenko), plus his ever-attentive agent (Jason Watkins). For Toby, the line between reality and fantasy becomes increasingly blurred as the chaotic, confusing script meanders into ridiculously madcap vignettes of irreverent absurdity. As with all Gilliam films, the opulent visuals here are evocative, recalling the Spanish artist Goya and the 19th-century *Quixote* illustrator Gustave Doré. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

The Man with the Magic Box ★★

Artsploitation, 103 min., in Polish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Although filmmaker Bodo Kox's Polish exercise in futurist pessimism is a triumph of CGI technology, its combination of nostalgia and social entropy at the heart of the narrative strikes a dissonant note that reverberates uncomfortably throughout the film. With obvious nods to everyone from Philip K. Dick to Andrei Tarkovsky, the story is set in mid-21st-century Warsaw, centering on a man named Adam (Piotr Polak), who

wakes up one morning to realize that he's a corporate maintenance worker drone and has no recollection of how this became his vocation of choice—in fact, he has no recollection of anything at all. Adam strikes up a steamy fling with his attitudinal manager Gorja (Olga Boladz), and the pair engage in mechanical sex romps both at the office and in private. But soon Adam comes across a vintage radio from the 1950s that seems to have some rather odd characteristics: namely, serving as a time-traveling portal to his forgotten past. The gray futuristic urban bleakness portrayed here is no shock: it's a predictably inhuman imaginary world in which everything is coldly automated and computerized, including human relationships. But the film's simplistic premise—that nostalgic escapism is the only answer to our future problems—does not make for a compelling cinematic dystopian experience. Optional. (M. Sandlin)

Marilyn ★★1/2

Breaking Glass, 80 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Marcos (Walter Rodriguez), a gay teen in a backwater Argentinian town, is passively yielding to his stressed, newly-widowed mother (Catalina Saavedra) on just about everything as she tries to cope with her husband's sudden death. Marcos's older brother (Ignacio Gimenez) gives his younger sibling a wider berth, but also mocks and humiliates him for not being a typical macho man. When Marcos puts on a dress and wig and dances in public for the first time, he is brutally sexually assaulted by three punks who routinely bully him. At every turn, when someone causes him physical or emotional damage (his angry mother tosses his women's clothing into the fire), the normally taciturn Marcos really shuts down. But something will have to give in this story that sees Marcos briefly come alive only a few times, most rewardingly when he meets another young man who works near the unfinished housing project that Marcos hopes to move into. Although depressing, filmmaker Martin Rodriguez Redondo paints a convincing portrait of an isolated misfit whose solitude and misery are ignored by everyone. And the film's gritty look captures the atmosphere of ruinous economic despair, dust, and destruction that represents a prison for all, but especially for a boy who is different. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Mega Time Squad ★★★

Dark Sky, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.95

A solid candidate for the midnight film festival circuit, this imaginative New Zealand crime comedy finds the dim-witted John (Anton Tennet), a flunky thug for less-than-im-

pressive crime boss Shelton (Jonny Brugh), deciding with his pal Gaz (Arlo Gibson) to steal money from a gang-connected Chinese collectibles shop. John's spark of independence angers Shelton, putting John on the run, but the latter has a secret weapon: a bracelet from the Chinese shop that permits its wearer to roll back time a few seconds. That power helps John elude Shelton, but each instance of time travel results in the creation of another John, until there are four of them. Writer-director Tim van Dammen and his special effects team do a fine job of creating seamless images of multiple Johns in the same frame, walking behind one another and arguing with each other. Droll but surprising and playful, *Mega Time Squad* also benefits from a strong supporting cast, especially Hetty Gaskell-Hahn as John's bomb-making love interest. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Mirai ★★★

Universal, 98 min., PG, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



A surprise Oscar nominee for Best Animated Feature film, this Japanese production tells the sweet, imaginative tale of a 4-year-old boy who grows jealous of his newborn sister Mirai when she becomes the center of attention as his parents grapple with the new strains that the growing family puts on the household. Mother returns to work, architect Dad struggles with childcare while working at home as a freelancer, and neither seem to have time for their son Kun, whose screams and epic—often irrational—tantrums are realistic yet amusingly presented by filmmaker Mamoru Hosoda. The film takes a delightful fantasy turn when Kun receives life lessons from family members who travel through time and space—from his great-grandfather as a young man (who gives him his first motorcycle ride) to teenage Mirai. It's a mix of magical benevolence and a rich imaginary life (such as when Kun chases the human form of his pet dog), but the story, as seen through the eyes of Kun, remains grounded in very human emotions and relationships. Hosoda deftly explores the difficult transitions in growing up, charting the evolution of Kun as he learns to accept his sister. Featuring the voices of Rebecca Hall, John Cho, and Daniel Dae Kim on the English-version soundtrack, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Mustang ★★★

Universal, 96 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

More than 100,000 wild mustangs still roam free in the United States. To regulate the



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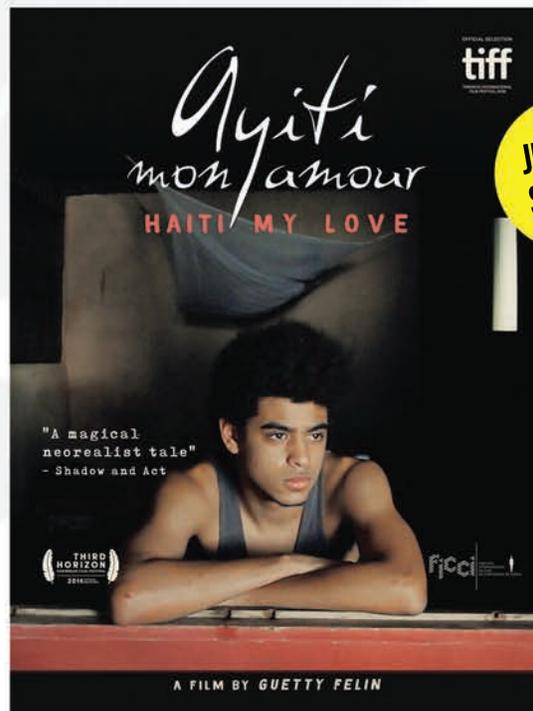


DON'T LOOK AT ME THAT WAY UPC: 845637000012 SRP: \$24.95

Hedi enters a love relationship with her neighbor Iva, but things change when Iva's father appears. Themes of femininity, queer identity, sexuality, and adulthood all courageously collide in this German-Mongolian love drama.

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AYITI MON AMOUR UPC: 845637000074 SRP: \$24.95

Three stories intertwine in this magical neorealist fable set in a coastal village Haiti, five years after a devastating earthquake. AYITI MON AMOUR was Haiti's first official entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards.

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horse population, the Bureau of Land Management captures several hundred, and a few dozen are sent to prisons where they're trained by inmates and then sold at public auction, often to police departments for border patrol. In rural Nevada, inmate Roman Coleman (Belgian actor Matthias Schoenaerts), incarcerated for domestic violence, has just been released from solitary confinement. When interviewed by the prison psychologist (Connie Britton), tight-lipped Coleman reluctantly admits, "I'm not good with people." As part of his state-mandated social rehabilitation, he's assigned to an "outdoor maintenance" program. Spotted by a veteran trainer (Bruce Dern), Coleman is accepted into the selective wild horse section, where he meets a crazed, seemingly unbreakable stallion. Coleman immediately identifies with the horse's ferocity and fury and starts reading equestrian magazines. Left in the dusty ring with the mustang, Coleman takes more than a few tumbles as his frustration erupts into violence. Another inmate (Jason Mitchell) tells him: "If you want to control your horse, first you gotta control yourself." That leads Coleman into an anger-management session in which the inmates confess that acting on impulse is what led to their imprisonment. Meanwhile, Coleman's pregnant daughter (Gideon Adlon)—who he's been estranged from for years—asks him to sign some legal papers. At first, he refuses to talk with her, but gradually they begin to communicate. Directed by French filmmaker Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre and executive produced by Robert Redford, this meditative redemption tale is recommended. (S. Granger)



My Scientology Movie

★★
Magnolia, 99 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Lacking a hardball attitude that could crack the protective armor of a crazy but ubiquitous cult—as Alex Gibney did in his forceful 2015 documentary *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief* (VL-3/16)—filmmaker John Dower's shambling, semi-farcical *My Scientology Movie* is less about the secretive and reportedly brutal organization and more about how British journalist and documentarian Louis Theroux copes with being repeatedly stymied by Scientology enforcers. Theroux pairs up with former member Marty Rathbun, who is now dedicated to exposing Scientology leaders and their monstrous training of subordinates. Working as a mentor for Theroux, Rathbun becomes frustrated by the journalist's persistence in asking repetitious questions while not getting much closer to infiltrating Scientology or blowing the roof off it. And there's



a reason for that: the somewhat hapless Theroux keeps getting intercepted by Scientology security when he does even simple things like park on a public road. Unfortunately, the film devolves into a series of similarly silly scenes, which may underscore the general insanity among the cult's army of protectors, but does not constitute a hard-hitting exposé. Optional. (T. Keogh)

Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase ★★★

Warner, 89 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$28.99

The titular second book about the intrepid girl detective created as a counterpart to the Hardy Boys was written by Mildred Benson but first published under the pseudonym of Carolyn Keene in 1930. Understandably, the story has been radically altered and updated in Katt Shea's modern adaptation, but the action still revolves around a spunky, often reckless girl who will go to great lengths to protect her friends, right wrongs, and solve mysteries—in this case the apparent haunting of an old mansion. Nancy, played by Sophia Lillis, has recently moved to California from Chicago with her dad, Carson (Sam Trammell). Nancy bonds with a couple of her classmates, and gets into trouble for taking vengeance on the campus bully who posted a cruel cartoon of one of them on the Internet. Approached by eccentric spinster Flora (Linda Lavin) to help around the house, Nancy learns that the old lady thinks the place is haunted and Nancy enlists her friends to investigate what might be behind weird noises and apparitions. *Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase* feels like a movie made for a kid-oriented cable channel, but it is energized by Lillis's performance, and will certainly appeal to its target audience of 'tween girls. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Naples in Veils ★★★

Breaking Glass, 112 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

This captivating, psychological, supernatural-noir-ish Italian drama ties its central character's subconscious ills to an audience's slowly dissolving sense of the story's reality. Adriana (Giovanna Mezzogiorno), a reticent, middle-aged coroner, atypically goes home one night with a lusty, younger man named Andrea (Alessandro Borghi)—a stud with the devil in his eyes—for a steamy bout of sex. In the morning, the two lovers make a date to meet later, but Andrea doesn't show, and Adriana learns why when she finds herself examining his mutilated corpse at work. This might sound like a perfect setup for a police procedural/mystery, but the story



really follows Adriana's subsequent plunge into a world of ghosts, lookalikes, antiquities theft, nude photos, murder, and a bizarre visit to a bedridden medium and the latter's dwarf assistant. The weirdness grows while the city's Neapolitan culture and Baroque art become an operatic backdrop for surprising developments. Director Ferzan Özpetek takes his camera through Naples's atmospheric (and spooky in the dark) streets, ancient chapels, and designer apartments, all part of the bubble-world of Adriana and her well-heeled (if warmly compassionate, and possibly imagined) community of family and friends. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Never-Ending Man

★★★
Shout! Factory, 70 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$27.99

On the one hand, this Japanese documentary might seem to exploit the elderly eccentricities of anime genius Hayao Miyazaki (*Spirited Away*, *Princess Mononoke*). But it is also a loving portrait of that rare world-shaping innovator who deserves all of the attention that he obviously craves. Filmmaker Kaku Arakawa catches Miyazaki at a pivotal point in his illustrious career, as he talks of retirement (at least from making feature films). But it turns out that a creative renaissance for Miyazaki lies ahead: through computer art, the great maestro finds a reason to get back to work. Arakawa's patient objectivity helps to build an engrossingly human drama with a complete narrative arc, beginning with Miyazaki as a hopelessly burnt-out case ready for a comfortable retirement to his miraculous rebirth. In the latter half of the film, especially, viewers witness Miyazaki's infectious youthful zeal in attempting to create one last masterpiece before he faces looming mortality. *Never-Ending Man* has the rare quality of immersing the viewer in its subject's mindset, offering a privileged and enlightening glimpse into that often-elusive liminal space between madness and genius. Recommended. (M. Sandlin)

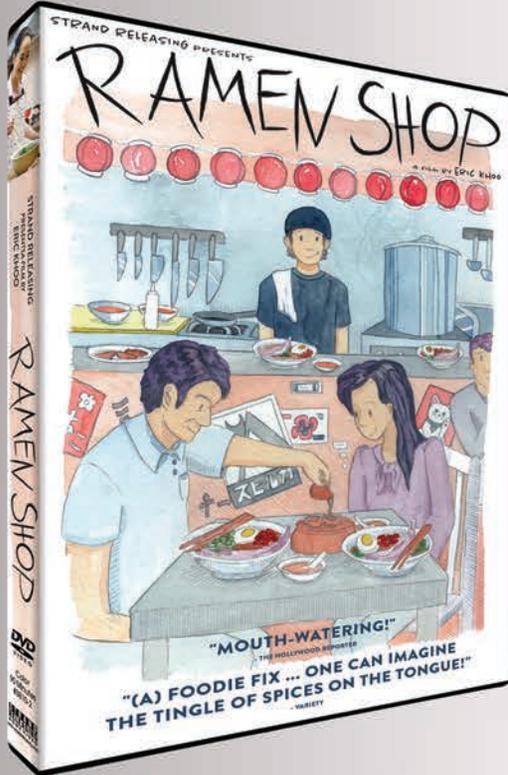


Never Ever ★★

Film Movement, 86 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Combine the worst indulgences of French art-house cinema with the most pretentious postmodern American literary fiction, and you have a tedious snoozer of a film like *Never Ever*. Based on the 2001 novella *The Body Artist* by Don DeLillo, this film by Benoit Jacquot aspires to appeal to self-punishing cineastes who "enjoy" films like *Last Year at Marienbad*. Morbidly serious to its core, *Never*





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90 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
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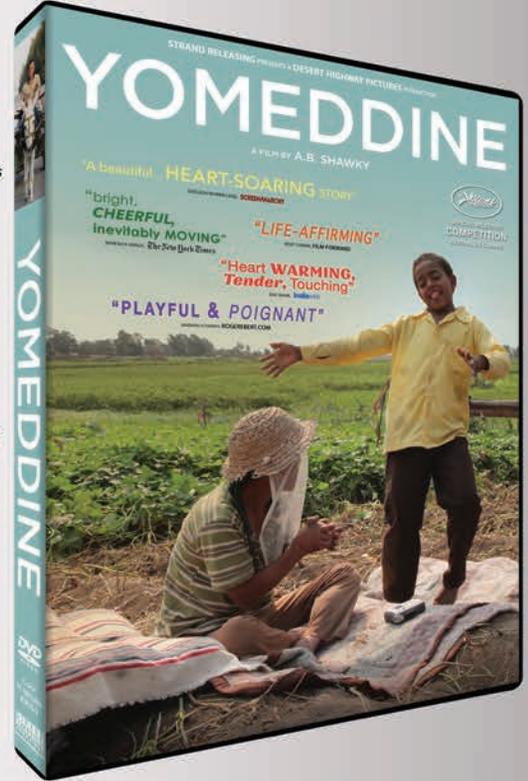
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Street date: **September 24, 2019** | SRP: **\$27.99**

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97 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In Arabic with English Subtitles



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A mature and deeply emotional reflection on love and loss, and youth and aging. This inter-generational romance is a snapshot of courtship and sex, balancing hope for the future with agony over the past in an unforgettable drama about finding love in the moment.

Street Date: **May 21, 2019** | SRP: **\$27.99**

DVD # 3814-2 | UPC 7 12267 38142 5

132 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In French with English subtitles

SAUVAGE / WILD

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"A riotous and sensual ode to freedom... a work of rare vitality"

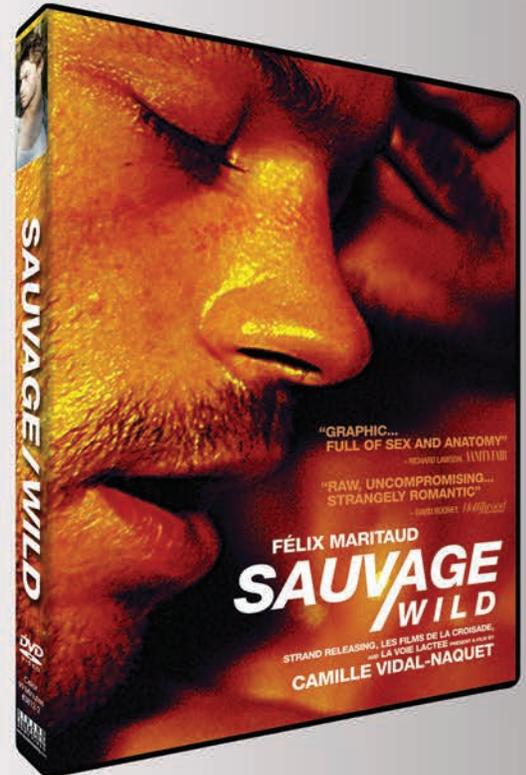
- Sight and Sound

Leo finds himself searching for affection anywhere he can get it. Will Leo choose his freedom and the dangers that come with it, or the comforts of a stable relationship?

Street date: **July 23, 2019** | SRP: **\$27.99**

DVD # 3812-2 | UPC: 7 12267 38122 7

99 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In French with English Subtitles



Ever is ostensibly about an aging French film director named Rey (Matthieu Amalric) who has tried to alleviate his post-mid-life crisis by ditching his longtime leading lady Isabelle (Jeanne Balibar) for young, twentysomething performance artist Laura (Julia Roy). But after Laura moves into Rey's seaside Portuguese manor, everything goes south. Rey begins having second thoughts about his situation and pines for Isabelle, leading to a ridiculous self-willed suicide by motorcycle crash. At that point, *Never Ever* abruptly switches into supernatural haunted house mode, as Laura grapples with hallucinatory visions, none of which seem remotely shocking or, for that matter, believable. A convoluted psycho-thriller, this is not a necessary purchase. (M. Sandlin)

Never Look Away

★★★1/2

Sony, 189 min., in German w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$20.99, Blu-ray: \$31.99



Oscar-winning filmmaker Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (*The Lives of Others*) scores again with this intimate epic covering three tumultuous decades of German history. Loosely based on the life of artist Gerhard Richter, the story begins in the mid-1930s, when little Kurt Barnert is taken by his free-spirited aunt Elisabeth to an exhibit of so-called degenerate art. Elisabeth's increasingly strange behavior leads gynecologist Carl Seeband (Sebastian Koch), an SS man, to order her committed to a mental institution, where she is summarily terminated. After the war, Kurt (Tom Schilling), an art student in East Germany, falls in love with high-spirited classmate Ellie (Paula Beer). When her imperious father learns of their relationship, he uses brutal means to effect a break-up, but fails. That father is Seeband, who—though a Nazi—has won the patronage of a powerful Soviet general. The final act of the film shifts to West Germany in the 1960s, where Kurt and Ellie have fled and Seeband soon follows. After years of struggling, Kurt finds his artistic voice, which paradoxically compels Seeband to realize that his wartime past is finally closing in on him. *Never Look Away* features many themes—including the stifling effect of dogmatism on art and the need to come to terms with history—but it can also be savored simply as an old-fashioned domestic drama set against the rush of uncontrollable events and given piquancy by its semi-biographical allusions to Richter. In any case, the Oscar-nominated *Never Look Away* tells a fascinating story that is at once personal, political, and aesthetic. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Nina

Film Movement, 130 min., in Polish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Filmmaker Olga Chadjas's Polish drama

tells the story of a married couple facing fertility problems who decide to find a woman to act as a handsomely-paid surrogate mother. Nina (Julia Kijowska), a sophisticated teacher, and her husband Wojtek (Andrzej Konopka), a thick-headed mechanic, identify a young barista, Magda (Eliza Rycembel), as a potential carrier of their theoretical baby. Startled by the proposal, Magda runs off from a dinner meeting with the pair. But the awkward encounter proves to be only the beginning of an unexpected affair between Nina and Magda, the former realizing that perhaps she has never understood the truth about her sexuality. A resentful Wojtek makes his feelings known to both women, but beneath the melodramatic surface of this story are complex lines of primal desire, sexual politics, power, and class that make *Nina* far richer and mysterious, turning what might have been a superficial dramedy into a much darker tale. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Pendular

Big World Pictures, 105 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Writer-director Julia Murat's innovative *Pendular* is a psychological drama about a pair of artists and lovers who pay dearly for crossing over into one another's creative privacy. The unnamed central characters—a modern dancer (Raquel Karro) eager to explore her choreography with other dancers in a large space, and a sculptor (Rodrigo Bolzan) working with space-consuming, heavy materials—naïvely decide to divide and share an entire empty floor in a converted warehouse. It seems like a good idea at first, with a little area to the side that they can convert into a bedroom. The fairly graphic sex scenes underscore the passionate, idealistic nature of the pair as they create a life together while at the same time each is driven by the individual imperative to make art. Much of the film simply observes the woman dancing experimentally, while the man silently wrestles with bending metals—but their close proximity to each other exacts a huge toll on their relationship. And the viewer is left wondering if two people can ever achieve clarity about where one stops and the other begins. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Pinsky

Breaking Glass, 73 min., in English & Russian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

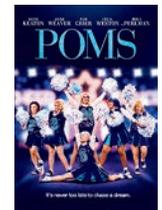
A quirky charmer set in Boston's Russian-Jewish community, *Pinsky* stars Rebecca Karpovsky as Sophia, a twentysomething

lesbian with a hint of Harpo Marx. In a short period of time, she breaks up with her girlfriend and loses her beloved grandfather (who drops dead on a walk). That one-two punch sends Sophia reeling and back to living with her estranged grandmother (Larisa Popova), who is more than happy to see Sophia's return as evidence that the latter was never really gay and is ready to be fixed up with Trevor (Jacob Brandt), who knows perfectly well that Sophia is not interested in men. As overbearing babushkas go, Popova's martyr-despot grandmother character has a chokehold on the free wills of family members, but Sophia tends to make that easy by living with no fire or direction. Co-written and directed by Amanda Lundquist, *Pinsky* is a loose-limbed, breezy film with eccentric edges that include Sophia's impulsive debut as a standup comic. And while it often flirts with absurdity, Karpovsky's appealing performance makes it all worthwhile. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Poms

Universal, 92 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Aug. 6



Apparently based on a true story, this gentle dramedy about making the most of the time you have left is aimed at the AARP demographic. After a terminal cancer diagnosis, Martha (Diane Keaton) quits chemotherapy, sells most of her possessions, and leaves New York City, driving south to spend her remaining months in Sun Springs, a spacious retirement village in Georgia. "I came here to die," Martha crisply informs her sassy southern belle neighbor, Sheryl (Jacki Weaver), a substitute teacher who's hiding her teenage grandson (Charlie Tahan) in the "adults-only" condominium complex. Sheryl retorts: "You were dying yesterday, and you're going to be dying next week. In the meantime, you should be dancing your ass off." Exasperated by Sun Springs' rules and regulations, spunky Martha recalls a youthful dream by starting a cheerleading club, much to the consternation of prissy, power-hungry Vicki (Celia Weston). Joining their gyrating granny ensemble are timid Rhea Perlman, sultry Pam Grier, dancer Patricia French, aerobics-expert Carol Sutton, yoga-enthusiast Ginny MacColl, and baton-twirling Phyllis Somerville. And they are coached by teenaged Chloe (Alisha Boe). An age-defying *Golden Girls* meets *Bring it On* hybrid, director Zara Hayes's *Poms* is blandly bittersweet and so one-dimensional that none of the characters have significant backstories. Optional. (S. Granger)

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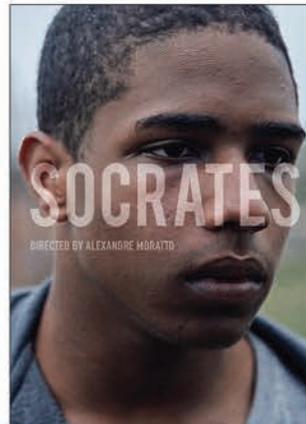


IS THAT YOU?

In the Cuban countryside, thirteen-year-old Lili and her mother are trapped in a modest shack by her domineering father. When he suddenly disappears, Lili decides to carry out a ritual to help bring him back...leading her to uncover a disturbing truth about his disappearance.

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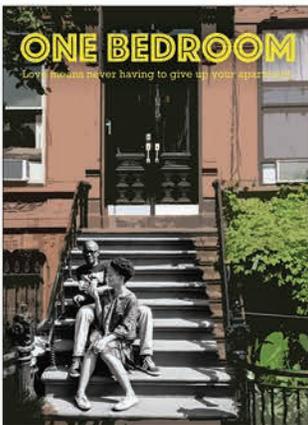


SOCRATES

After his mother's sudden death, Socrates, a 15-year-old living on the margins of São Paulo's coast, must survive on his own. As he faces isolation because of his sexuality, his search for a decent, worthy life reaches a breaking point.

BFI FLARE: LONDON LGBTQ FF
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OUTSHINE FILM FESTIVAL
WINNER - JURY AWARD - BEST NARRATIVE FEATURE



ONE BEDROOM

Set in a gentrifying Brooklyn neighborhood, a young African American couple reflects on their relationship through a whirlwind of vivid flashbacks while they attempt to find out where it all went wrong. Ultimately, they come to realize that Black Love can be broken.

LAS VEGAS BLACK FILM FESTIVAL
WINNER - BEST FEATURE FILM

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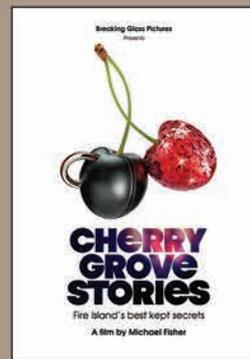
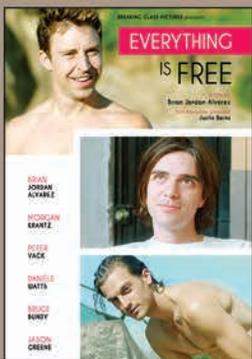
DARK SENSE

Simon, a powerful psychic, hires a troubled ex-SAS soldier to act as his bodyguard in a desperate attempt to stop a serial killer. When the government interferes, and the killer begins closing in, Simon will need to embrace the true extent of his powers to save his own life before it's too late.

BOSTON SCI-FILM FESTIVAL
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SENE FILM FESTIVAL
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The Prodigy ★★1/2

Fox, 92 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

The old *Bad Seed* formula is fused with elements of reincarnation and possession in Nicholas McCarthy's horror movie about a child capable of the most horrible acts. The hybrid begins with a deliberately disjointed juxtaposition of the birth of son Miles to Sarah and John (Taylor Schilling and Peter Mooney) and the shooting of serial killer Edward Scarka (Paul Fauteux) by a SWAT team, after Margaret (Brittany Allen)—his last abductee—escaped and led them to his lair. As he grows up, Miles exhibits advanced skills that indicate he might be a genius. But at the age of eight, Miles (now played by Jackson Robert Scott) begins to show disturbing traits, arranging an accident for his babysitter and mumbling gibberish in his sleep. On occasion, Sarah even thinks that his face changes into that of someone else. After Miles attacks a classmate, Sarah takes him to a researcher who believes that Miles's body houses two souls—the boy's and that of a dead person eventually identified as Scarka. In the wake of still more gruesome events, Sarah desperately tries to save her son from the malignant spirit that threatens to take him over completely—an effort that requires extreme measures, including a tense meeting with Margaret that leads to a cynical and nasty outcome. McCarthy's adept direction and Scott's unsettling performance help make *The Prodigy* a genuinely creepy film, albeit one that is also extraordinarily unpleasant and at times positively repulsive. Still, genre fans are likely to appreciate this, making it a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Ramen Shop ★★★

Strand, 90 min., in Japanese, Mandarin & Cantonese w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99

A sentimental, somewhat melancholy drama, *Ramen Shop* illustrates how food can be a through-line in a family history that is marked by multiple generational tragedies. Masato (Takumi Saito) is a young man working in the ramen restaurant of his emotionally distant Japanese father, Kazuo (Tsuyoshi Ihari). Recalling the glorious days of his childhood, Masato is haunted by the years-ago collapse of his loving world when his Singaporean mother, Mei Lian (Jeanette Aw), died and his father sent him away. After the sudden death of Kazuo, Masato travels to Singapore in search of answers about his parents' relationship, why his grandmother disowned Mei Lian, and (crucially) the secret to an old family recipe for pork rib soup. Along the way, Masato's food-blogger companion in Singapore introduces him to amazing dishes



that director Eric Khoo mouthwateringly films. Although it also touches on the history of Japan's brutal occupation of Singapore during World War II, *Ramen Shop* is mostly a gentle movie about redemption and good cooking. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Savage/Wild ★★★

Strand, 99 min., in French w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, July 23

Film maker Camille Vidal-Naquet presents an unflinching portrait of a gay hustler in his debut feature, which follows 22-year-old Léo (Félix Maritaud) as he prowls the streets of Strasbourg, France, or takes a spot along a lonely road with his colleagues in the trade, hoping to turn tricks. Léo also has regulars: the opening sequence is set in what is ostensibly a doctor's office where he is being examined, but the doctor turns out to be a client who gets off on role-playing. Although Vidal-Naquet does not go to extremes in an effort to shock, he does not romanticize the sex scenes or shy away from dramatizing the more sordid aspects of Léo's work: in one instance, Léo has to endure what amounts to torture as two men insist on trying out a sex toy. But Léo also has a soft side, not only showing some sympathy for older clients, but also carrying a torch for Ahd (Eric Bernard), one of the other hustlers, who might be leaving the city. Perhaps the most notable thing about Léo is his complete disregard for any thought of changing his lifestyle. He dismisses a kindly doctor's offer of help in getting off drugs, and turns down a free cell phone from another hustler who has feelings for Léo, saying that he has no one to call. In short, he prefers the life he leads to the alternatives, whatever discomforts he might suffer. The sexually frank *Savage/Wild* is not an easy film to watch, but its unvarnished vision is certainly effective. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



School of Life ★★★

Icarus, 116 min., in French w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99

A fairy-tale quality imbues filmmaker Nicolas Vanier's period piece about a French orphan whisked off to a new life in the countryside in the years following World War I. Paul (Jean Scandel) is removed from a Paris orphanage—where he was placed after his father's death in combat—by Célestine (Valérie Karsenti), a supposed relative from the Loire Valley who he will stay with for the summer. She is the wife of Borel (Éric Elmosnino), a surly gamekeeper on the estate of the local count (François Berléand) in whose kitchen Celeste also works. But the boy quickly bonds with Totoche (François Cluzet), the scruffy local



poacher who is Borel's long-time nemesis, despite the fact that the count tolerates and even protects Totoche. The count, who has long grieved over a daughter who ran away because he did not approve of the man she loved, gets to know Paul and appreciates the lad's love of the land and wildlife, although a secret about Paul's lineage eventually emerges that could change the destructive plans that the nobleman's son has for the estate after his father's death. *School of Life* boasts a shamelessly feel-good ending, but the cast is so winning and the locations so beautiful that only the worst sort of curmudgeon could respond to it with anything but a smile. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Second Time Around

★★1/2

First Run, 107 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Stuart Margolin, who is probably best known for playing "Angel" Martin—the squirrely former cellmate of Jim Rockford (James Garner) on *The Rockford Files*—is the best reason to watch Leon Marr's sweet but formulaic story of a romance that blossoms unexpectedly in a senior facility. Margolin plays Isaac Shapiro, a cranky widower who has a sharp tongue for everyone and everything, but he bonds with Katherine Mitchell (Linda Thorson), an elegant widow who checks into the home to convalesce while recovering from a hip injury that she suffered while at the opera. Although apparently polar opposites, the two are attracted, with Katherine coming to appreciate the soft heart that beats beneath Isaac's crusty exterior, and Isaac recovering the joy in life that he lost when his wife died. The pair grow so close that they even plan to fulfill a dream that Katherine has long cherished—to travel to La Scala in Milan—and while a predictable obstacle arises, their mutual affection remains undimmed. Other characters surround the leads—Katherine's workaholic daughter, a spunky granddaughter, and the array of lovable seniors at the facility—but it is Margolin and Thorson who give *The Second Time Around* (a song that Margolin sings after the closing credits) its charm—despite the story's patent calculation. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Shazam! ★★1/2

Warner, 135 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99, July 16

Orphaned 14-year-old Billy Batson (Asher Angel) is always searching for the single mother from whom he was separated at a Philadelphia winter carnival. Billy has a pure-ish heart, which seemingly qualifies him to inherit the powers of the Wizard Shazam (Dj-



mon Hounsou), who protects the world from the Seven Deadly Sins. Utilizing the iconic archetype of a childhood dream—saying a magic word and suddenly transforming into a superhero—Billy becomes a costumed and caped muscle-bound man (Zachary Levi). Billy's newfound power arouses the envy of evil Dr. Thaddeus Sivana (Mark Strong), who was always disparaged by his dad (John Glover) and subsequently rejected by the Wizard. Meanwhile, lonely Billy is remanded to the home of compassionate foster parents (Marta Milans, Cooper Andrews), where he's befriended by disabled Freddy (Jack Dylan Grazer), who is eager to help Billy test his extraordinary abilities, keeping them secret from his other foster siblings. Unfortunately, director David F. Sandberg never bothers to coordinate movements and gestures that young Billy might share with his older counterpart, so the two actors don't seem to be playing the same character. An uneven but often fun superhero flick, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Sorry Angel ★★★

Strand, 133 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99

Christophe Honoré's gay period romance deals with a somber subject but manages a tone that is infused with lightness as well as

darkness. Set in 1993, *Sorry Angel* focuses on Jacques (Pierre Deladonchamps), a sophisticated Parisian writer who finds much more than he expected when he travels to Rennes for a performance of one of his plays. Dropping into a cinema, he meets Arthur (Vincent Lacoste), a college student wrestling with his sexual identity. Arthur is immediately smitten with Jacques, but the older man is cautious: Jacques has AIDS, and an ex-lover now in the final stage of the disease comes to spend his last days with him. Jacques also has a young son, who he dearly loves and is understandably depressed at the thought of leaving. When Arthur abruptly moves to Paris, Jacques tries to keep him at arm's length, but the attraction between the pair proves irresistible, even as Jacques's health deteriorates. While it might sound as if *Sorry Angel* is an absolute downer, Honoré's script features considerable wit along with the pathos, and his direction exhibits some of the spirit of the French New Wave. Deladonchamps and Lacoste have genuine chemistry, and the supporting cast members skillfully create rounded characters in a few brief strokes. Although the film is overlong and sometimes tends to meander, it treats its

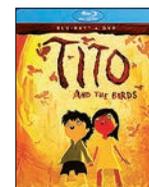


potentially weepy story with admirable grace and style. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Tito and the Birds

★★★

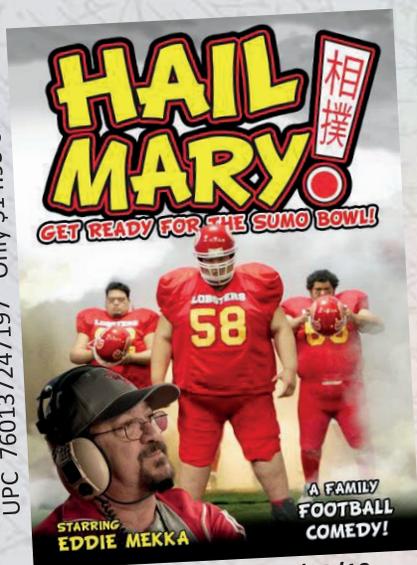
Shout! Factory, 73 min., in Portuguese & English w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$27.99



The destructive power of fear and those who aim to harness it in pursuit of their ambitions are the themes of this striking animated film from Brazil by directors Gustavo Steinberg, Gabriel Bitar, and André Catoto. The pint-sized protagonist is Tito (voiced by Pedro Henrique), whose inventor father was exiled from the house years ago by his wife after the machine he was working on—a device to allow humans to communicate with birds—malfunctioned and injured the boy. Now, Tito—with the help of his pals Sarah and Buiú—is attempting to finish his father's project, eventually enlisting the help of his young inventor rival Teo, son of TV provocateur Souza, a man who stokes his audience's paranoia about crime to sell units in his high-security luxury housing development. Souza also uses his frenzied harangues to exacerbate fright over a plague that is sweeping the city—a disease that literally turns its victims into lumbering zombies and

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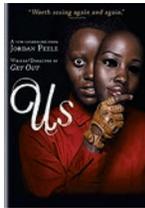
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finally inert rocks. The children believe that completing their machine will allow them to recover the ancient wisdom possessed by despised street pigeons, which will provide the key to a cure. The moral of *Tito and the Birds* might well fly over the heads of its young target audience, but lovers of unusual animation will certainly be enthralled by its style, which is reminiscent of oil painting (complete with brushstrokes) that is brought to life and made bolder by added digital effects. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Us ★★★

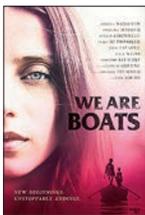
Universal, 116 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98



Following his debut success with *Get Out* (2017), writer-director-producer Jordan Peele has created an insidious, unsettling, nightmarish horror thriller. In 1986 at California's Santa Cruz beachside amusement park, young Adelaide (Madison Curry) has a terrifying experience after wandering into an eerie mirror funhouse. It's so traumatic that she's never discussed it—with anyone. Cut to the present, when vacationing Adelaide Wilson (Lupita Nyong'o), her husband Gabe (Winston Duke), teenage daughter (Shahadi Wright Joseph) and young son (Evan Alex) wind up at the same beachside amusement park. Back home that same evening, a menacing family of four, clad in red jumpsuits and carrying huge scissors, suddenly appears in their driveway, trapping the Wilsons inside—and it turns out that they are the Wilsons' zombie-like, tethered doppelgangers. Adelaide's covetous twin has lived a life of surreal misery, so she and the others have come to un-tether themselves. Fleeing to the home of friends/neighbors (Elisabeth Moss, Tim Heidecker) only causes more brutal carnage, and the twists and turns continue. Inspired by the "Mirror Image" episode on TV's *Twilight Zone*, *Us* delivers plenty of chills and thrills. Recommended. (S. Granger)

We Are Boats ★★★

Breaking Glass, 109 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



After prostitute and single mom Francesca (Angela Sarafyan) is shot to death by a client, she finds herself in the afterlife, where there is a lot of waiting around to get an appointment with mid-level management to talk about her future and her strong wish to see the daughter she left behind. In order to earn the latter, Francesca must return to Earth as a sort-of angel, tasked with helping people to get ready to die, or absorb the death of loved ones. James Bird's *We Are Boats* is potentially a nifty little melodrama and Sarafyan is a strong actor who can play part saint, part

siren. Which begs the question why Bird would even consider pointing his camera away from her, especially after building his entire first act around Francesca. But he does, plunging the movie into an ensemble soap opera co-starring Graham Greene (who rises above the script), Luke Hemsworth, Gaia Weiss, Amanda Plummer, and others. When connections between these characters begin emerging in the film's final stretch, they are more conducive to eye-rolling than insights. Optional. (T. Keogh)

Wonder Park ★★★

Paramount, 85 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



Visually ambitious but burdened with a storyline that is a weird jumble of irritating characters and odd messages, this Nickelodeon Network feature is just another mediocre computer-animated children's movie. The petite protagonist is Cameron "June Bug" Bailey (voiced by Sofia Mali), who has been encouraged by her parents to use her imagination. That message certainly took, since the youngster has constructed a magical amusement park out of her dreams, a collection of "splendiferous" rides and attractions that she adds to by communicating ideas to its creative director, a chimp named Peanut, who runs the place along with a practical-minded wild boar named Greta, her porcupine buddy Steve, a pair of goofy beavers, and a wacky blue bear with a habit of falling into hibernation mode. When June's mother (Jennifer Garner) falls ill, however, the girl abandons her imaginative pursuits, only to discover that Wonder Park has fallen on evil days due to her neglect, and has been taken over by hordes of monkey zombies. Naturally, June must rediscover a sense of purpose to join with her animal friends, restore it to its former glory, and get home—where good news, needless to say, awaits. Encouraging children to follow their dreams is a fine message, but *Wonder Park* advances it too hard, making June more pushy than spunky. Worse, the place she creates is not that interesting, nor are the animals particularly engaging, which perhaps explains why after original director Dylan Brown was fired (for inappropriate conduct), none of the other animators would take credit as director. Optional, at best. (F. Swietek)

Zizou and the Arab Spring ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 101 min., in French & Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Trying to combine a comedic tale with the Arab Spring uprising of 2011 across the Middle East doesn't sound like a particularly plau-

sible cinematic undertaking. But somehow director Férid Boughedir imaginatively brings these seemingly oil and water elements together to make a successful comedy that is also a thought-provoking socio-historical look at the driving forces behind the Arab Spring from a Tunisian perspective. The story follows Zizou (Zied Ayadi), a jobless young drifter who migrates from a bleak windswept town to the big city of Tunis to try to secure some sort of economically viable future for himself. His attempts at gaining employment eventually lead him to a job installing satellite dishes. And through this line of work he finds himself in more than a few offbeat situations. But his life really changes when he manages to obtain a girlfriend. Little does Zizou know, however, that this relationship will lead him to a front-row seat at the soon-to-be fiery uprisings taking place in Tunis and all across the Arab world. Through the oddball meandering character of Zizou, Boughedir effectively shows how social upheaval can sweep up everything in its path, even the most reluctant, apathetic, or apolitical people, charting one man's microcosmic political awakening within the macrocosm of an entire region dealing with the growing pains of nascent democratic change. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

Classic Films

Blood Hunger: The Films of Jose Larraz ★1/2

Arrow, 3 discs, 265 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$99.95



Spanish-born director José Larraz is best known for his British horror film *Vampyres* (1974), one of the more interesting slices of 1970s vampire Eurotica, which is included in this three-film set. Larraz rewrites Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 novella *Carmilla* to make his bloodsucking lovelies the restless ghosts of lesbian lovers (played by Marianne Morris and Anulka) who are murdered while making love in their shadowy castle. Larraz adds a few poetic flourishes—blood dripping down pale faces, clouds crawling past a castle—but more importantly he gives the living-dead girls a genuinely passionate relationship and a zest for nightlife even while piling on the exploitative nude scenes. *Vampyres* is a minor classic with a dreamy sense of horror and a delicious conclusion and is easily the most famous of the films compiled here. The other two entries are both centered on artists and models and erotic triangles. *Whirlpool* (1970) is a plodding exploitation movie that takes frequent breaks for nude photo shoots and seduction scenes but fails to make anything of its central mystery and lacks the style of *Vampyres*. *The Coming of Sin* (1978) is more hallucinatory—starring non-actors who were

apparently cast more for their looks—and is filled with dreams, premonitions, and mind games, and it also features more softcore porn. Cult movie fans may appreciate the loving attention given to these erotic thrillers but they are hardly landmarks of foreign cinema. The extensive extras include audio commentaries, new and archival cast and crew interviews, behind-the-scenes featurettes, a bonus short film, image galleries, and a booklet. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Der Hund von Baskerville

★★★★

Flicker Alley, 66 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



Produced in Germany in 1929 with an international cast and a rich expressionist visual style, *Der Hund von Baskerville* is the last silent Sherlock Holmes film ever made and the first to bring out the defining friendship between Holmes and Watson. American actor Carlyle Blackwell plays Holmes as a serious but good-natured genius and George Seroff is his affable friend and loyal ally, Dr. Watson. The duo attempt to protect Henry Baskerville (Livio Pavanelli), whose family members are dying

off amidst rumors of a demon dog. The great German character actor Fritz Rasp plays Jack Stapleton—possessive guardian of young Beryl (Betty Bird)—an eccentric figure who grows even more jealous when Henry begins courting Beryl. While the adaptation directed by Richard Oswald takes liberties with Arthur Conan Doyle's original story (there are hidden panels, secret tunnels, and diabolical booby traps), it is more faithful than earlier productions and Blackwell is a fine Holmes, seen here in his trademark deerstalker cap and displaying brotherly affection for Watson. The film was a hit in Europe but was never released in the U.S. and was long thought lost until being discovered and now restored (missing and damaged footage was supplied from 9.5mm reduction where possible and bridged with an inventive and effective mix of stills and text where necessary). It's a landmark film for Sherlock Holmes buffs and will be welcomed by silent movie fans. Extras include an earlier 1914 German production of *Der Hund von Baskerville* (with disguises, spy gadgets, and crazy plot twists that have nothing to do with the original tale), featurettes on Doyle and the restoration process, and a booklet with an essay by film historian Russell Merritt. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Detour ★★★1/2

Criterion, 69 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Edgar G. Ulmer's existential and almost surreal 1945 thriller may be the darkest waking nightmare movie from the film noir period. Shot on a tiny budget for PRC—Hollywood's cheapest studio—on their backlot and surrounding desolate desert highways, *Detour* stars flat B-movie leading man Tom Neal as Al Roberts, a gloomy New York pianist who hitchhikes to Los Angeles and takes a ride in the wrong car. When his traveling companion suddenly dies, Al drags the body off the road, takes the dead man's vehicle and identity, and ends up being blackmailed by feral femme fatale Vera (played by the aptly named Ann Savage, who creates the hardest, most bitter femme in Hollywood's rogue's gallery). Under Ulmer's direction, however, Al is less a victim of bad luck and poor choices than he is a passive puppet whose strings are pulled by a sadistic deity, and Ulmer fuses his Poverty Row minimalism with the out-of-control desperation of the bleakest of noir thrillers. Bland sets and generic locations morph into an austere, unreal world and the limited performances from Hollywood washouts are transformed into minimalist characters in an



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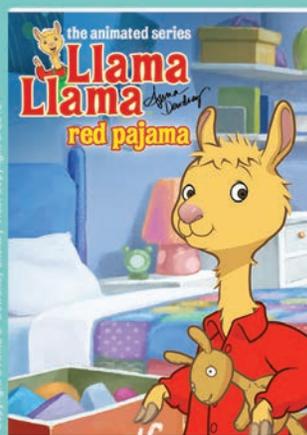
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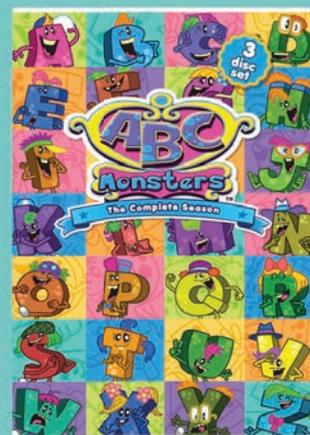
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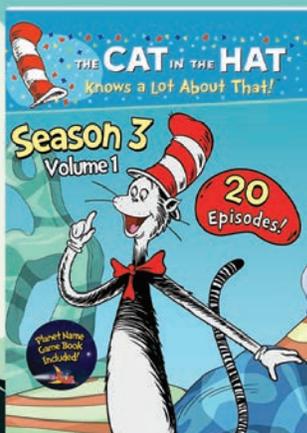
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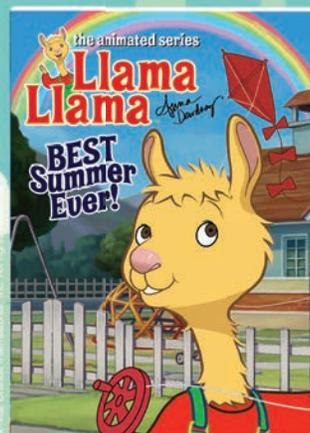
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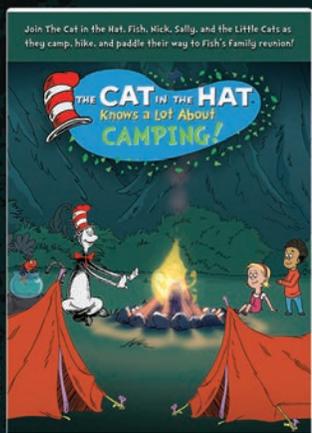
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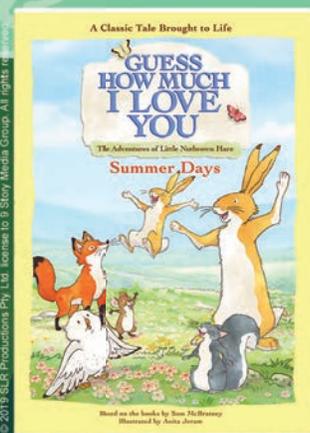
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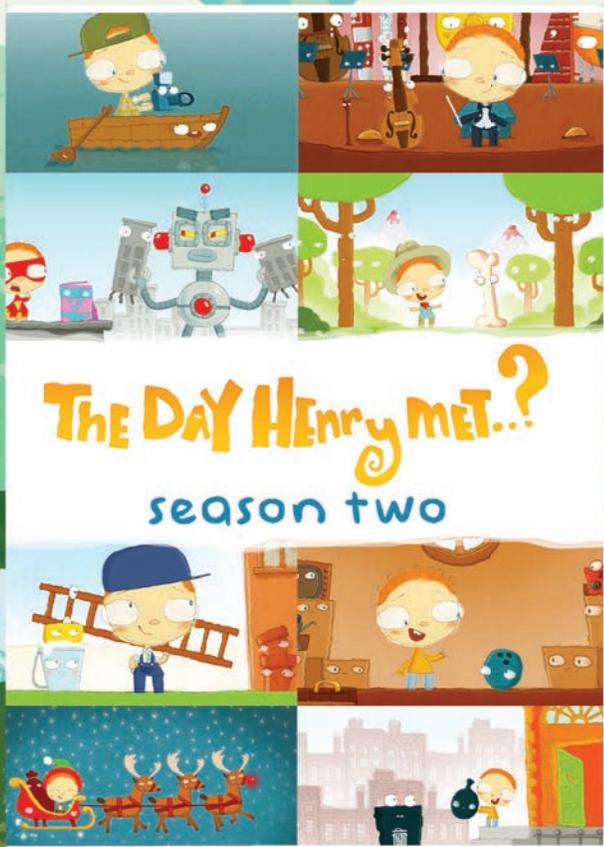
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existential universe. *Detour* has achieved cult film status over the years and is considered a minor classic of film noir, but has only previously been available in substandard home video releases. Restored in 2018 by the Academy Film Archive and the Film Foundation, it is here presented in a gorgeous 4K restoration, with extras including the 2004 documentary "Edgar G. Ulmer: The Man Off-Screen," an interview with Ulmer scholar Noah Isenberg, a featurette on the restoration, and a booklet with an essay by critic Robert Polito. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Diamonds of the Night

★★★

Criterion, 67 min., in Czech w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



This 1964 debut feature from Czechoslovakian filmmaker Jan Nemeč is a nearly wordless odyssey of two teenage Jewish Czech boys (Ladislav Jánky and Antonín Kumbera) who escape from a train transporting them to a concentration camp in Germany and are hunted through the forest by the old men of a local village. Based on the 1958 novel *Darkness Casts No Shadow* by Arnošt Lustig, who drew from his own Holocaust experiences for the story, *Diamonds of the Night* captures the terror and alienation of the teens' ordeal. Starving and parched, they open their mouths to the sky to catch falling raindrops, and while begging for food from a farmer's wife, one of the boys imagines assaulting the woman. Nemeč's handheld camerawork puts the viewer in the midst of their hellish odyssey, running with the boys during their breathless escape while viewers only hear the gunshots of pursuers. It's one of the most primal films of the Czech New Wave, an era that also saw early works by Milos Forman, Ivan Passer, Jirí Menzel, Jan Kadar, and Vera Chytilová that pushed against Soviet censorship with daring political commentary and social satire. Nemeč is less well known but this Criterion release should bring attention to this accomplished and harrowing film. Presented with a new 4K restoration, extras include an archival interview with Nemeč, a new interview with film programmer Irena Kovarova, a new video essay by scholar James Quandt, two bonus films by Nemeč, and a booklet with an essay by film critic Michael Atkinson. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Glass Bottom Boat

★★★ Warner, 110 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99

The late Doris Day is her cute-as-a-button self in this 1966 comic spy caper directed by Frank Tashlin. Day stars as Jennifer Nelson, part-time mermaid for her father's (Arthur Godfrey) Catalina Island area glass-bottomed boat tourist ride and the new hire for an aeronautics research lab headed up by Bruce Templeton (Rod Taylor). After a bumpy

initial encounter—while fishing where he shouldn't be, Bruce accidentally snags Jennifer's mermaid tail—the suave Bruce discovers that Jennifer is an employee and sets in motion Project Venus to win her over, while she thinks that she is simply taking notes. But when a security guard (Paul Lynde) overhears Jennifer calling "Vladimir" on the phone (her dog—she routinely lets it ring to drive him nuts and get some exercise), everyone except Bruce—the company, the military, and the CIA—becomes suspicious that Jennifer is a Russian spy trying to steal Bruce's hush-hush "GISMO" anti-gravity formula. Will Jennifer be able to turn the tables on these men who seem more than willing to seduce as well as spy-bust their suspect? The strong supporting cast includes Dom DeLuise, Dick Martin, and John McGiver, although the scene-stealer here is Bruce's aggressive Roomba-style robot vacuum in his bizarre designer kitchen of tomorrow. Buoyed by the eminently hummable (if also overlong) title song, *The Glass Bottom Boat* is still a seaworthy rom-com that will appeal to fans of Day and classic comedies. Extras include vintage featurettes and the Oscar-winning 1965 cartoon short "The Dot and the Line." Recommended. (R. Pitman)



I Wanna Hold Your Hand

★★★

Criterion, 99 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

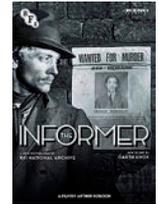


This 1978 feature debut by Oscar-winning director Robert Zemeckis (*Forrest Gump*) follows the high-spirited antics of six teenagers from New Jersey who travel to New York to see the Beatles make their American debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1964—despite the fact that none have tickets. There's a budding journalist (Theresa Saldana) who wants a scoop, her resistant boyfriend (Marc McClure) who is pressured into providing the ride (a hearse from his father's business), a folkie (Susan Kendall Newman) who wants to protest the Fab Four, a bride-to-be (Nancy Allen) on a last fling, a tough guy (Bobby Di Cicco) following the girls, and a crazed Beatlemaniac (Wendie Jo Sperber) driving them all on. It's youth rebellion as pop culture comedy, with the kids defying and outsmarting the adults at every turn. The cleverly-engineered plot by Zemeckis and writing/producing partner Bob Gale sends the kids careening around the city and Zemeckis ingeniously keeps the Beatles at the center of the film (at the performance, carefully-placed cameras and screaming fans hide the Beatles' faces while the monitors play the actual 1964 show). It's raucous, colorful, rapidly paced, and very funny, showcasing the energy and off-kilter sense of humor that would later define the filmmaker's *Used*

Cars, the *Back to the Future* movies, and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Presented with a new 4K restoration, extras include a new conversation with director Zemeckis, co-writer Gale, and executive producer Steven Spielberg, audio commentary by Zemeckis and Gale, new interviews with costars Allen and McClure, and two short student films by Zemeckis. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Informer

★★★ Kino Lorber, 99 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Six years before John Ford adapted Liam O'Flaherty's 1925 Irish novel *The Informer* into an Oscar-winning 1935 drama starring Victor McLaglen, Arthur Robison directed this fine silent adaptation in Britain that features an international pedigree. Swedish-born actor Lars Hanson plays Gypo, an IRA soldier in Ireland who betrays his best friend (Carl Harbord) to the police in a fit of jealousy over the woman they both love (Hungarian actress Lya De Putti), and then flees his gang and his guilt. American-born director Robison made his career in Germany and brings an evocative expressionist approach to the film with strong imagery, evocative camerawork, dynamic lighting, and striking sets that recreate 1920s Dublin as an almost dreamlike city of crowded cobblestone streets and dark rooms enveloped in a constant night. Hanson, who came to England from a brief but successful career as a Hollywood leading man, cuts a handsome figure as the streetwise Gypo, whose jealousy overcomes his loyalty in an act that even he ultimately cannot forgive. Released in 1929 on the cusp of sound cinema, the film was produced in both silent and sound versions and the superior silent version was unavailable until the appearance of the excellent BFI National Archive restoration in 2017. An example of silent movie storytelling at the height of its artistry, *The Informer* features a superb score from musician and composer Garth Knox, along with extras including the sound version of the film, and a featurette on the restoration. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Kid Brother

★★★ Criterion, 82 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95



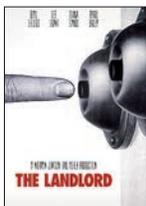
Harold Lloyd became one of the superstars of silent movie comedy playing ambitious wise guys who were eager for success (and ready to bluff and scheme to achieve it) in adventures that tended to play out in the modern city. *The Kid Brother* (1927) drops him in rural America for a different kind of underdog comedy. Wearing his trademark glasses, Lloyd is Harold Hickory, son of a burly sheriff and

sibling of two strapping older brothers—a kind of small-town male Cinderella playing domestic servant while the “men” go to town on business. He’s more earnest here than in his more famous comedies *The Freshman* and *Safety Last!* but no less clever, whether he’s masterminding ingenious housework shortcuts or outsmarting his brothers while romancing Mary (Jobyna Ralston), an orphan who loses everything when her medicine show caravan burns to the ground. When his father is disgraced after the town’s savings are stolen from under his nose, scrawny Harold uses his wits to take on real criminals in a fast-paced, gag-filled battle aboard an abandoned ship. *The Kid Brother* is one of Lloyd’s funniest and sweetest films, a comedy driven by devotion to family and romantic affection and directed by regular Lloyd collaborator Ted Wilde with an eye for the pastoral beauty of the setting. This Criterion edition made from a new 4K restoration features a 1989 orchestral score composed by Carl Davis and an earlier organ score by Gaylord Carter, as well as extras including audio commentary (by filmmaker Richard Correll, author Annette D’Agostino Lloyd, and Lloyd’s granddaughter Suzanne Lloyd), new video essays by critic David Cairns and author John Bengstrom, new and archival interviews, a behind-the-scenes stills gallery, two restored early shorts starring Lloyd, and a booklet with an essay by film critic Carrie Rickey. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Landlord ★★★

Kino Lorber, 110 min., PG, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Hal Ashby’s 1970 directorial debut stars Beau Bridges as Elgar Winthrop Julius Enders, who at 29 still lives at home with his well-off, servant-attended, establishment family in upstate New York. When Elgar buys a ghetto tenement in New York City—with plans to eventually evict the black tenants and renovate—the proverbial wheels are set in motion for this caustic social satire. After a shaky start (Elgar is chased by a group of black men hanging out on his stoop and he loses some hubcaps off his car), the naïve new landlord discovers that he enjoys hanging out with black folk, falling for a go-go dancer named Lanie (Marki Bey) and sleeping with (after a drunken party) Fanny (Diana Sands), “Miss Sepia 1957,” who is married to the somewhat unhinged Copee (Louis Gossett, Jr.). Everyone is behind on their rent, but Elgar doesn’t press too hard and even does considerable repair work in the apartments before moving in himself. None of Elgar’s current activities sit well with his racist parents (Walter Brooke, Lee Grant). Based on the titular 1966 novel by Kristin Hunter and adapted by Bill Gunn, *The Landlord* has plenty of fun and funny



moments—including a great sequence in which Grant (who was nominated for Best Supporting Actress) stiffly visits with tenant Marge (Pearl Bailey) but winds up having a wonderful time (no small thanks to copious amounts of inhibition-freeing alcohol). Very much a product of its time, the film does include racial slurs, but it also hits hard with uncomfortable racial truths, as when one character notes: “You whites screaming about miscegenation and you done watered down every race you ever hated.” A still relevant satire with decided bite, *The Landlord* bows on Blu-ray with extras including interviews with Bridges, Grant, and producer Norman Jewison. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

The Last Warning ★★1/2

Flicker Alley, 78 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Rarely seen since its 1929 premiere, the final feature film by German-born director Paul Leni (*Waxworks*, *The Cat and the Canary*, *The Man Who Laughs*) transplants the old haunted house genre into a Broadway theater setting, where the premeditated murder of a leading actor occurs during a performance. Even more unsettling is the abrupt disappearance of the body while the police are investigating



the actor’s death. The theater is shut down for five years, but reopens when a mysterious producer reassembles the cast and crew of the ill-fated performance to re-enact the circumstances that culminated in the on-stage homicide. Originally released as a silent film, *The Last Warning* features some effective camera effects and sophisticated editing, but is somewhat bogged down with connect-the-dots storytelling and too many cases of the jittery cast emoting broad displays of terror and apprehension. Vivacious leading lady Laura La Plante is top-billed, but she is mostly lost in a throwaway role that failed to capitalize on her charisma. Still, fans of silent film may overlook the hokum and want to see one of the most elusive of Leni’s titles. Extras include a video essay by film historian John Soister, a stills gallery, and a booklet with essays by Soister and film composer Arthur Barrow. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Mélo ★★★

Arrow, 110 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.95

Alain Resnais, once the most avant-garde director of the French New Wave, turned his attentions to playing with the conventions of theater through cinema in the 1980s. This 1986 drama, based on a 1929 play by Henri

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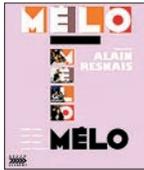
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Bernstein, opens with a curtain rising on an intimate dinner with old friends and colleagues Pierre (Pierre Ardit) and Marcel (André Dussollier), both concert violinists, and Pierre's vivacious young wife Romaine (Resnais's longtime partner and muse Sabine Azéma). It's like a filmed stage performance on an artificial set (complete with painted backdrop) and Resnais shoots the initial sequence in long takes with slow camerawork, drawing the audience into the performances. Resnais continues in this manner through subsequent scenes, as Marcel and Romaine begin an affair. The theatrical style both foregrounds the artifice—not just the sets and settings but also the dramatic structure and literary dialogue—while also drawing the viewer in with the intensity of the performances (both Azéma and Ardit won César Awards). Fanny Ardant costars as Romaine's cousin, who arrives to care for Pierre when he falls ill and Romaine runs off. As the title suggests, this is a grand melodrama that can only end in tragedy, but it plays out as an intimate work focused on the complex relationships between the characters as they struggle with their feelings and loyalties. Extras include a video essay by critic Jonathan Romney, and brief archival interviews with the cast and crew. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Penny Points to Paradise

★★
MVD Visual, 77 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

The 1950s radio show *The Goon Show* is only known to devoted fans of British comedy in the U.S. but in England it is a classic that influenced *A Hard Day's Night*, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, and many other comedy classics. *Penny Points to Paradise* would be an otherwise forgettable 1951 British comedy if it were not for the fact that it's the first film featuring all three stars of *The Goon Show*: Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan, and Harry Secombe. Secombe takes top billing and the leading role as Harry Flakers, winner of a sports lottery who moves back into his old boarding house with his roommate (Milligan), where they are targeted by a gold-digging blonde (Paddie O'Neil), a military veteran (Sellers) with dubious investment schemes, and a pair of counterfeiters who plan to swap their fake currency for Harry's suitcase full of bills. It's basically just a setting on which to hang a series of otherwise unconnected skits that play like acts in a variety show. Secombe performs a pantomime as a nervous surgeon, O'Neil does impressions of Bette Davis and Gloria Swanson, Sellers appears in a second role as a fast-talking salesman, and they all end up running around a wax museum in and out of costumes. Sellers

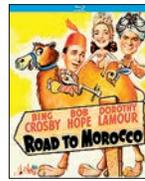


gives the standout performance while the rest of the cast mugs through tired comedy bits typical of low-rent music hall burlesque. Extras include the bonus short film "Let's Go Crazy" (1951), featuring Sellers and Milligan. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

Road to Morocco ★★★

Kino Lorber, 82 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$24.95

This third *Road* movie comedy starring Bing Crosby and Bob Hope is arguably their best, a nonsensical farce that spoofs Hollywood's exotic Arabian adventures and desert epics. While their names change from film to film, Hope and Crosby essentially play the same characters, ostensibly buddies and traveling companions who stumble into crazy adventures and constantly double cross one another. In *Road to Morocco* (1942), Crosby sells Hope into slavery and then returns to rescue him, only to find that he is betrothed to a beautiful princess (series costar Dorothy Lamour). The threadbare plot involves a prophecy, a desert warlord (Anthony Quinn), and Crosby's attempts to romance the princess between songs (including "Moonlight Becomes You") and gags. The portrait of 1940s Morocco is an exaggerated cartoon drawn from biblical epics and Rudolph Valentino films and Hope and Crosby constantly comment on the fact that it's all just a movie (a running gag in all the *Road* films). While there's not even a hint of cultural respect, the two Americans are far worse than any of the Arabian stereotypes: a pair of petty, self-centered, backstabbing fellows who constantly sell out one another. Debuting on Blu-ray, extras include audio commentary by film historian Jack Theakston, a 1945 "Command Performance" comedy short with Hope, and a behind-the-scenes featurette. Sure to appeal to Crosby and Hope fans, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Sea Hawk ★★★1/2

Warner, 127 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99

Five years after *Captain Blood* made him a swash-buckling star, Errol Flynn returned to the high seas, playing privateer Captain Thorpe in *The Sea Hawk* (1940). Flynn's dashing gentleman pirate is a dedicated patriot, looting Spanish ships to fill English coffers with the private blessing of Queen Elizabeth I (Flora Robson). The film opens with a rousing sea battle: broadside cannon fire sends masts falling and splinters flying before Flynn's army scrambles aboard like a swarm of hornets, filling the screen with flashing cutlasses, clashing bodies on deck, and a sky full of pirates swinging into battle on ropes. The fearless Thorpe becomes a stumbling schoolboy when he falls for the Spanish Ambassador's niece, Doña

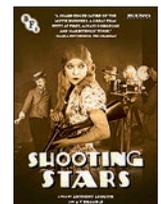


Maria (Brenda Marshall), but is back in his element when he sails to the New World for treasure and lands in the middle of a deadly conspiracy. Big-eyed beauty Marshall stands in for Flynn's usual love interest, Olivia de Havilland, and the film misses the latter's sass and spirit, but it's a minor shortcoming. Claude Rains plays his usual smoothly conniving villain, while hearty Alan Hale Sr.—who played Little John to Flynn's Robin Hood—returns as the loyal sidekick. Michael Curtiz proves once again why he was Warner Brothers' top director in this handsome, action-packed film that mixes intrigue and suspense with grand set pieces, concluding with a rousing series of escapes, chases, and a runaway swordfight. Extras include the archival featurette "The Sea Hawk: Flynn in Action" and the "Warner Night at the Movies 1940" program (with a newsreel, short, and cartoon). Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Shooting Stars ★★★

Kino Lorber, 101 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Set backstage at a movie studio in London, *Shooting Stars* (1928) is a savvy show business satire that takes a turn into romantic drama and crime thriller. Annette Benson and Brian Aherne star as Mae Feather and Julian Gordon, a married couple who play movie sweethearts on screen and are portrayed in the press the same way off screen. But the temperamental Mae is having an affair with Andy Wilkes (Donald Calthrop), a baggy-pantsed, bristle-mustached clown who has been offered a Hollywood contract. Mae wants to leave Julian and follow Andy but the scandal would ruin their careers so she plots a deadly scheme. The direction is credited to A.V. Bramble but Anthony Asquith made his debut here as the uncredited co-director and the strong images and dramatic storytelling style suggests that Asquith was the dominant filmmaking partner. Restored in 2016 by the BFI National Archive, this silent film features a lively score composed by John Altman, and includes a gallery of stills and documents from the BFI special collections. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

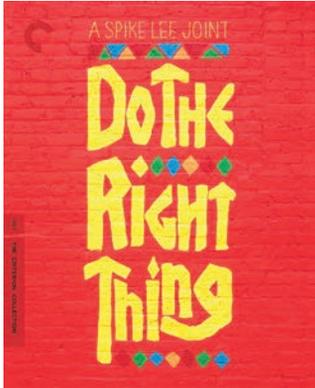


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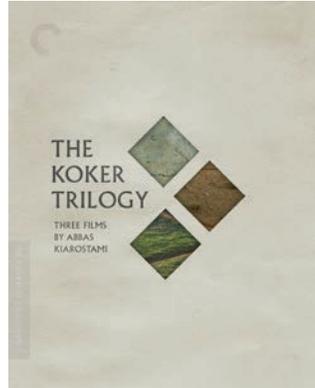
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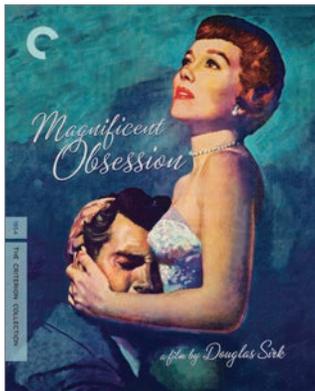
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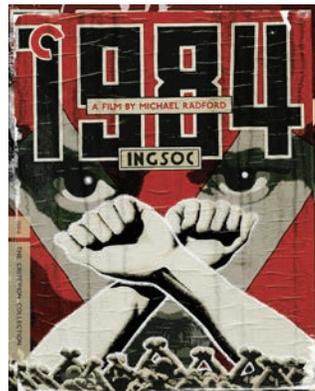
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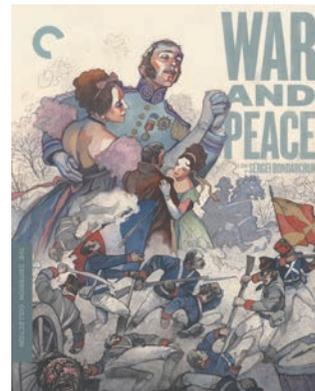
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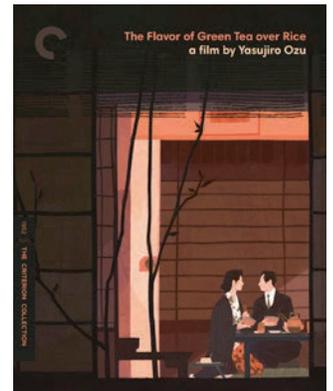
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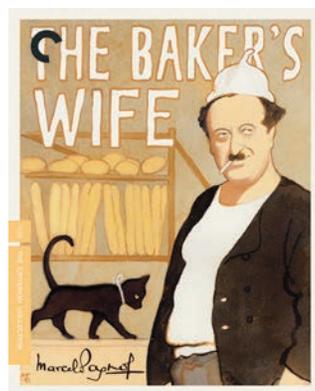
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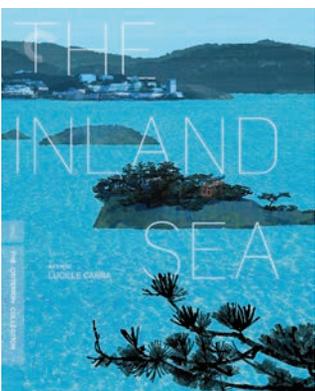
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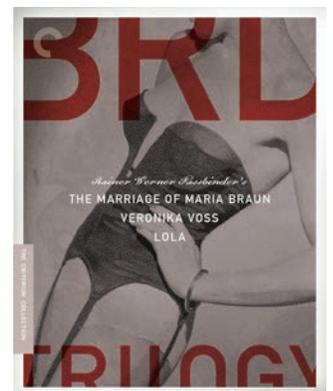
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13 Reasons Why: Season 2 ★★1/2

Paramount, 4 discs, 747 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



The controversial Netflix series inspired by Jay Asher's 2007 YA novel returns for a second season of traumas and tragedies at Liberty High, which was rocked in the first season by the suicide of student Hannah Baker (Katherine Langford) and the investigation by classmate Clay Jensen (Dylan Minnette) into accusations about her tormentors that she left behind on audio-cassettes. The sophomore season is structured around a negligence suit that Hannah's parents have brought against the school for not addressing the violence she suffered—not only bullying but also rape—at the hands of a clique of privileged campus jocks. That narrative thread is combined with another involving Polaroids rather than tapes, which disclose that the sexual violence was not limited to Hannah—compelling Clay, who is being haunted by Hannah's ghost, to resume his investigations. One subplot revolves around a student recovering from his own suicide attempt, while another deals with the mistreatment of another teen who testifies against the perpetrators. *13 Reasons Why* may be completely sincere in trying to grapple with issues that confront today's teens, but it also stuffs so many crises into the storyline that it becomes rather crudely melodramatic (as well as increasingly cynical). Still, one has to appreciate the commitment of the strong young cast. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2018, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Archer—Danger Island: The Complete Season
Nine ★★1/2

Fox, 179 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



If viewers recall, the seventh season of this hit FX animated series ended on a *Sunset Boulevard*-style cliffhanger with the image of an apparently dead Sterling Archer (voiced by H. Jon Benjamin) floating face-down in a swimming pool. The shorter eighth season found Archer bed-bound in a coma, dreaming of being a private eye in 1940s Los Angeles. And in the equally abbreviated ninth season it appears that Archer is still in la-la land—although not literally. Here, the setting is the fictional South Pacific island of Mitimotu, circa 1938, a rather dangerous locale full of vicious lizards, cannibals, quicksand, and Nazis. The pre-WWII *Indiana Jones*-style narrative has everyone searching for a mysterious hidden idol. As in the eighth season, all of the characters have been repurposed: Archer's mother (Jessica Walter) now runs a small hotel/bar and an airways company; Pam (Amber Nash) is Archer's plane-flying sidekick; Lana

(Aisha Tyler) is a literal princess; Cheryl's (Judy Greer) new husband left the island in a huff after she slept with Archer; Ray (series creator Adam Reed) is a French gendarme, Krieger (Lucky Yates) is the mouthy macaw Crackers, and Cyril (Chris Parnell) is a mysterious German named Fuchs (pronounced, of course, "Fucks"). The sad truth is that this beloved cult favorite is no longer as funny (although Archer yelling "eat a dick, cannibals" felt comically apropos) and it is scheduled to end after the next season. Presenting all eight episodes from 2018, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and an animated short with Crackers. A strong optional purchase. (R. Pitman)

Escape at Dannemora

★★★★1/2

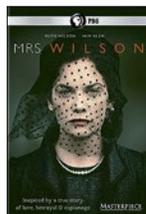
Paramount, 3 discs, 443 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



The true story of the 2015 escape of Richard Matt and David Sweat—two inmates at Clinton Correctional Facility in upstate New York—with the help of Joyce "Tilly" Mitchell, a prison worker who ran the sewing shop, is dramatized in this Showtime miniseries. Benicio del Toro plays Matt, who is serving a life sentence for murder and essentially runs the underground prison economy with the help of a guard (David Morse) who smuggles in contraband. Paul Dano is Sweat, a younger man desperate to get transferred to a warmer prison. The most nuanced performance, however, comes from Patricia Arquette as Tilly Mitchell, who has sexual affairs with both men and whose fantasies of escape from a dull marriage are manipulated by Matt. Directed by Ben Stiller, *Escape at Dannemora* takes its time to explore both the physical demands of the six-month tunneling process and the complex relationship between the two inmates and Tilly, becoming more psychological drama than escape thriller. The story drags a bit in the middle episodes, but the excellent performances sustain the series until the energy picks up with the escape and flight through the snowy wilderness. One of 2018's best shows, this powerful miniseries also indicts the prison culture of the facility that failed in its oversight every step of the way. Presenting all seven episodes from 2018, extras include episode commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Mrs. Wilson ★★★

PBS, 170 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Ruth Wilson plays her real-life grandmother, Alison Wilson, in this three-part 2018 BBC drama based on a true story from her family's past. *Mrs. Wilson* opens in

1963 with the death of Alison's husband, Alexander, a British spy and novelist and father of Alison's two grown sons. As she struggles with grief, she is visited by a woman who claims to be Alexander's wife and demands that she release her husband's body for burial. As Alison searches for the truth, her life with Alexander (Iain Glen) is seen in flashbacks, from their romance while working for British Intelligence during World War II (she transcribes his reports) through their marriage, and the trying times of poverty when he disappears for missions. And at one point, Alexander goes to prison as part of his cover. Or was it? Every time she thinks she has finally found the truth about his complicated life, Alison is confronted with another revelation, and at times she juggles conflicting information from his former handler (Fiona Shaw), who tries to discourage further inquiries, and a former colleague (Anupam Kher). Wilson the actress invests the role with great emotion, a woman desperate to confirm what she believes is true and having her faith shaken with each new discovery. She's alternately manic, depressed, driven, and furious, as her wall of denial is slowly chipped away. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Simple Heist: Series

1 ★★★★★

RLJ, 2 discs, 276 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.99



Two *Golden Girls*, both faced with money problems, rob a bank and run into all sorts of complications in this Swedish miniseries, a comedy-drama in which the humor is mostly dry and the more serious moments are deliberately clichéd. Jenny (Lotta Tejle) and Cecilia (Sissela Kyle) are best friends, but each faces a financial crisis: Jenny's husband has discovered her affair with a fellow teacher and is divorcing her without a cent, while Cecilia has lost the money she and her husband planned to use to buy a new house, by playing the Chinese stock market. Luckily—or not—a dying patient at the gastroenterology clinic where Cecilia works is a criminal who informs her of a bank job that he was planning, a heist that she and Jenny decide to take on themselves. Incredibly, they pull it off, but the difficulties in extracting the cash from the bank's explosive storage canisters force them to seek help from a gang of thieving bikers, leading to complications. Meanwhile, Cecilia tries to keep her befuddled husband from learning that their savings have disappeared, and Jenny must deal with her daughter, who wants to live with her more easygoing dad. The writing in *The Simple Heist* fails to rise much beyond adequate, but the cast is so good—particularly Tejle and Kyle—that the series is a modest pleasure. Presenting all six episodes from the 2017 first season, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Ordering information for the titles reviewed in this section can be found in the "Distributor Addresses" listings at the back of the magazine.

★★★★ = 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

The Best of the New Scooby-Doo Movies: The Lost Episodes ★★1/2

(2019) 2 discs. 337 min. DVD: \$29.99. Warner Bros. Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

This compilation of eight never-before-released episodes from the 1972-73 incarnation of the seemingly never-ending animated series follows goofy Great Dane Scooby and his human friends at Mystery Inc. as they solve capers (frequently being chased by ghosts, often ogling food, and eventually unmasking some villain). I do think that the newer titles are jumping the shark (see my review of the head-scratching *Scooby-Doo! and KISS: Rock and Roll Mystery Original Movie* in VL-9/15), but these episodes are old school. "Sandy Duncan's Jekyll and Hyde" takes a trip to a film studio and finds the actress shooting a movie in which she and her stand-in look just like Scooby's friend Daphne in their wigs. The studio stages provide wacky settings and costumes to add to the corny drama ("That's no waiter...that's a mummy!" says Shaggy; to which Scoob replies "Not mine!"). Other Hanna-Barbera characters show up, such as in "The Haunted Showboat," with Josie and the Pussycats and *I Dream of...* spin-off stars Jeannie and her genie pupil Babu. I was most starstruck with "The Secret of Shark Island," watching Sonny and Cher bicker (he makes jibes her about her nose and calls her "Pocahontas") and "The Spirited Spooked Sport Show"

with the late Tim Conway, who hilariously tells Scooby-Doo to be "Quiet! Dogs can't talk," and makes a joke about kicking the bucket. Bottom line: this is still pretty dated, although it will likely appeal to hardcore fans. A strong optional purchase. [Note: the episodes here are also featured in the more comprehensive and also newly available *The New Scooby-Doo Movies: The (Almost) Complete Collection*.] Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Craig of the Creek: Itch to Explore

★★★

(2019) 143 min. DVD: \$19.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

This 13-episode first set from the 2018-19 debut season of the Cartoon Network-aired series follows the spirited escapades of 9-year-old protagonist Craig and his loyal sidekicks JP (a comic relief dim-bulb) and Kelsey (a power-hungry gal who wields a fake sword). The primary creek setting offers various exciting opportunities for adventure, and Craig's hobby of creating detailed maps and plans comes in handy in the title episode, where a journey to the mysterious center of a grove of poison ivy is booby trapped but leads to some cool surprises. "You're It" introduces some of the other kids who play down by the creek, including a girl who runs a sort of barter commissary, and nerdy teen "elders." Many of the episodes here touch on Craig's generally happy home life, including taking his little sis along when "Jessica Goes to the Creek," his parents hoping for stronger communication in the Annie Award-nominated "Escape from Family Dinner," and a trip to visit the grandfolks in "Monster in the Garden." A smart, funny (in "Dog Decider," an owner exclaims "How many times do I have to tell you kids to stop worshipping our dog?"), and imaginative series featuring

wacky characters, this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Lots & Lots of Really Big Steam Trains: Smokin' Down the Tracks! ★★★

(2019) 70 min. DVD: \$14.95. Marshall Publishing. PPR.

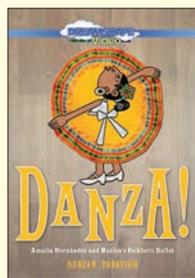
Climate change has perhaps taken some of the romance out of America's long love affair with coal-fueled trains. Except for children and the most ardent train enthusiasts, it's likely that the first thing viewers of this slapped-together video scrapbook will see—in countless shots of moving locomotives—is the fury with which black smoke churns from engine cars, leaving long clouds of particles floating upward. Still, trains remain a grand sight to see coming round the bend, and this compilation of found footage, stock footage, and likely some original shots of trains chugging along day and night in all sorts of rural or edge-of-town environments serves up a visual smorgasbord backed by sing-along train songs that remind viewers of how ubiquitous this mode of transportation and shipping has been since the 19th century. Also featuring the bonus segment "Nothing But Steam Trains," this addition to the popular *Lots & Lots* series is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Out of Wonder: Poems Celebrating Poets

★★★

(2018) 77 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-9749-0161-6.

Winner of the 2018 Coretta Scott King Illustrator award for stunning mixed-media collage images created by Ekua Holmes, this iconographic-animated adaptation of Kwame Alexander's 2017 picture book—co-authored by poets Chris Colderly and Marjory Wentworth—is an eye-catching way to introduce poetry to young viewers. Divided into three



Danza! Amalia Hernández and Mexico's Folkloric Ballet

★★★

(2017) 22 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5200-8114-4.

Narrator Adriana Sananes's slight Spanish accent adds authenticity to this festive iconographic-animated adaptation of author and illustrator Duncan Tonatiuh's 2017 picture book biography of dancer and choreographer Amalia Hernández (1917-2000), who founded the Ballet Folklórico de México in 1952. Born in Mexico City, Amalia became fascinated with dancing after watching dancers performing in the town square. Her mother encouraged an interest in the arts and hired dance teachers, which resulted in Amalia becoming a proficient ballet dancer who also began studying and learning other types of dance, including folk and modern. *Danza!* charts the career and influence of the famed dancer whose troupe performed internationally, capturing numerous awards and mesmerizing audiences with innovative choreographed moves that reflected both contemporary and traditional Mexican culture. Tonatiuh's colorful digitized drawings flow across the screen, enlivened by Mexican folk music featuring string and brass instruments. Hernández's legacy lives on as the troupe she formed more than 60 years ago remains a popular attraction around the world. Featuring an author's note, glossary, and read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (S. Beauregard)

The Highway Rat ★★★★★

(2017) 25 min. DVD: \$6.99. Public Media Distribution (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-5317-0924-2.

Based on the 2011 picture book written by Julia Donaldson and colorfully illustrated by Axel Scheffler, this delightful CGI-animated short featuring plasticine figures is loads of fun. The wickedly endearing titular character, voiced by David Tennant, travels atop his trusty horse (Rob Brydon) and steals food from every animal he meets. Life is “one long feast” for the Highway Rat until he meets clever Duck (Nina Sosanya), who lures the thieving rodent into a dark cave with promises of biscuits and buns aplenty. Of course there is no food in the dark cave and eventually Highway Rat throws away his costumed cape, hat, and eye mask, and escapes to the other side of the cave where he discovers a European-inspired town, gives up his robbing ways, and finds work sweeping floors in a bakery filled with sweets. An original score performed by classical musicians nicely complements the story, which is brought to vibrant life by the talented British narrators and imaginatively animated critters that inhabit Highway Rat’s world. Extras include an informative behind-the-scenes segment with interviews of the book’s author and publisher as well as members of the London-based production team, a “Live Performance” with Donaldson reading her book to a rapt grade-school audience while costumed adults silently act out the narrative, and an artwork gallery. Highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.** Aud: E, P. (S. Beauregard)



parts and featuring narration by Ron Butler, Erin Bennet, and MacLeod Andrews, *Out of Wonder* celebrates 20 poets (including Robert Frost, Nikki Giovanni, Billy Collins, Chief Dan George, Maya Angelou, Basho, Emily Dickinson, and Langston Hughes) through original poems written by the co-authors. Background music—ranging from serene to jazzy—is both reflective of the profiled poets’ style and era and nicely matches Holmes’s vibrantly colorful artwork. Following the main presentation is an alphabetically arranged “About the Poets” segment that introduces each poet with comprehensive background information on their lives and poetic styles. For example, viewers learn that Emily Dickinson is remembered for her wit and precision and that none of her nearly 2,000 poems were titled. While it might have been valuable to include some examples of the poets’ works, this is still a fine introduction to a group of multicultural poets as well as an inspiring celebration of the art of poetry. Also featuring a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (S. Beauregard)

The Stuff of Stars ★★★★★

(2019) 10 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-9749-3458-4.

Reflecting wonder and awe in her well-modulated voice, Amy McFadden narrates this iconographic-animated adaptation of Marion Dane Bauer’s 2018 picture book, which received the 2019 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award for Ekuia Holmes’s hand-marbled paper and collage artwork. The lyrical text describes how the universe was born, the stars caught fire, and the dying stars were turned into planets until finally “you burst into the world.” Lovely piano and violin accompaniment backs up the artwork

that swirls across the screen, beginning with deep dark colors before transforming into brightly hued yellows, oranges, reds, and greens covering all spectrums of the rainbow. The collage images display the planets and stars as well as galloping horses, dinosaurs, woolly mammoths, humans, and plant life, and the sounds of an explosion underscore the big bang theory of the origin of the universe. While the free verse text reminding viewers that everyone is the stuff of stars may not be completely comprehensible to some youngsters, they will nevertheless likely be mesmerized by this imaginative short that introduces the formation of the “fragile blue ball we call Earth.” Also featuring a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: E, P. (S. Beauregard)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Risking Light ★★★★★

(2018) 87 min. DVD: \$50.99 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. Closed captioned.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are the overriding themes of Dawn Mikkelson’s documentary, which follows the emotional journeys of three individuals whose lives were shattered by tragedies of very different kinds. In 1993, Minneapolis mother Mary Johnson’s son was killed by Oshea Israel, who was convicted of the crime and sent to prison. After years of anger she asked to meet with him and a bond developed, which was further cemented after his release when they joined together to speak to community groups about their experience, offering a model for others suffering similar losses. Debra Hocking, a Tasmanian woman who was taken from her

parents as part of Australia’s policy of placing indigenous children in foster homes during the 1960s, suffered years of abuse before escaping the system. Hocking became a leader in the “Stolen Generation” movement that eventually secured an apology from the government, and her restored relationship with her family is a major part of her story. The third profile follows Kilong Ung, who survived the Cambodian “killing fields” of the Khmer Rouge and returned to his native land with his Cambodian-American family to not only revisit the places where he and his parents were brutalized, but also come to terms with the perpetrators. In life, grievances often seem to be more nursed than let go, but these uplifting stories offer proof of an alternative approach that benefits both parties, as well as society as a whole. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Alaska Missionaries ★★★★★

(2019) 168 min. DVD: \$19.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

This six-episode reality series directed by Thomas Tapp follows a group of hardy individuals who set up and run the Suicide Prevention Summer Camp at Camp Nahshii, located on the Upper Yukon River in Central Alaska. A rugged, breathtakingly expansive forest area, the Upper Yukon River presents its challenges as camp founders Ron and Yolanda Pratt—aka Papa and Mama Bear—lead a team of fellow Christians in creating a supportive environment for at-risk kids. The initial episode, which largely introduces the Pratts and the camp’s concept, focuses on many of the logistics of the operation, from building a chapel to navigating up and down the river on a raft with an engine that quits a lot. A big part of the show is about the cancer challenges faced by both Pratts just prior to their late-summer camp season, and how they worked through those struggles. Lively and spirited—in every sense—*Alaskan Missionaries* is about love, faith, and service where it is needed. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Who Will Bury the Dead? The Death of Christianity in Lakota Country ★★★★★1/2

(2016) 83 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Mark St. Pierre’s shocking documentary centers on the forced conversion of Lakota and Dakota Native Americans to “white man’s Christianity,” only to see their Christian parishes and supports vanish from reservations a few generations later. Under President Ulysses S. Grant, these tribes were imprisoned, brutalized, and murdered, with families broken up, and children sent to boarding schools where they were forbidden

to speak their original language. In subsequent years, spiritual traditions (e.g., ghost dances) were banned, and Native Americans were made to convert to the Episcopal faith or perish. This long history is recounted here by descendants—Native American clergy and secular people alike—of those generations who earlier lost everything but adapted to white ways in order to survive. But it is a series of revelations late in the film that prove most astonishing. After inflicting so much pain on the Lakota and Dakota to turn them into Christians, their churches, priests, and pastors have disappeared. What was the point of all that cultural genocide, some of the interviewees ask, if the church was ultimately going to abandon the people? A deeply disturbing documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

62 Days ★★★

(2017) 29 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$195; community colleges; \$295; colleges & universities. *Women Make Movies*. PPR.

Filmmaker Rebecca Haimowitz's documentary recounts the struggle of a grieving husband to do right by his wife. Marlise and Erick Muñoz, a paramedic and a firefighter, respectively, fell in love, got married, and had a child. Marlise then suffered a pulmonary embolism while pregnant with their second child, after which doctors pronounced her brain dead. Dr. Karen Smith of John Peter Smith Hospital, where Marlise was treated, says that Marlise would never be able to regain brain function. Nonetheless, a Texas law requires that pregnant patients be resuscitated, regardless as to the family's wishes or the viability of the pregnancy (Marlise was only 14 weeks along). Erick says that Marlise wouldn't have wanted to remain on life support, and Marlise's parents—Lynne and Ernest Machado—agree. She even had a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) sticker on the back of her paramedic's badge. Erick remembers that her physical decline was swift. She was confined to a rotating bed to prevent infection, her eyelids were taped shut to prevent fluttering, and her hands grew stiff. To him, she was "like a mannequin." To protesters who didn't fully understand the situation, the family were "monsters" for wanting to end Marlise's life, even though she had no real life to live. At that point, Erick sued to have her taken off life support. After the judge issued his verdict, Erick and the Machados met with the ACLU to see about overturning the law. But for the time being, it remains in effect, and 32 other states have similar pregnancy exclusion clauses. Haimowitz shines a clear light on a little known policy that could have devastating effects

on unsuspecting families. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Alaska: People of the North ★★★1/2

(2018) 57 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$168.75 w/PPR). *Vision Maker Media*. Closed captioned.

This entry in the *Growing Native* series about the intersection of tradition and modernity for Native American peoples across the U.S. centers on Alaska, which is home to over 200 individual Native American nations. Directed by Charles "Boots" Kennedy, the film features the always engaging Cheyenne-Arapaho host Chris Eyre, who explores ongoing efforts to keep the ways and wisdom of the past alive in today's tribal cultures. Toward that end, Eyre partly draws upon a vibrant program of Native American studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where historical performance and visual arts, as well as traditional crafts, are encouraged and celebrated. Eyre also pays a visit to a totem pole park in Hydaburg, where memories of the U.S. government's shameful 30-year ban on pole-making (from the 1930s to the 1960s) are countered with a magnificent display of old and new poles. Viewers also watch a wood carver at work in Ketchikan, sit in on rehearsals at a Shakespeare theater for Native American actors in Fairbanks, and—perhaps most rewarding—witness young and old together hunting and gathering for community meals. Shooting seals (to eat), fishing for salmon (and tanning

their skins), and plucking edible-medicinal plants in grassy fields are all reminders that tribal culture has not been forgotten. An engaging film, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Beekeeper and his Son ★★★

(2016) 85 min. In Chinese w/English subtitles, DVD: \$375. *DRA*. *Grasshopper Film*. PPR.

Filmmaker Diedie Weng's *cinema verité*-style scrutiny of life on a traditional honey farm in northern China plays like a mix of anthropology film and sitcom (albeit a rather painful sitcom). Old Lao Yu has been keeping bees, among other animals, all his life in the countryside. His eldest son Maofu, returning from college after a year of failing to find employment in modern industrialized China, dutifully does chores around the hives and rustic homestead, but—as Lao loudly complains—the young man's heart isn't in it all (the son, indeed, would rather try sales and marketing). Then again, Lao loudly complains about almost everything, including his wife, his woebegone 96-year-old mother, bee parasites, and the ravages of old age on his own mind and body (at times he even berates the unseen film team). Meanwhile, an ornery goose, like the beekeeper's id, wanders through the proceedings at will, bullying and scene-stealing as though it owns the place. Behind the loose narrative lies the familiar themes of generational differences, East/West values, and changing times (old Lao's room is dominated by a Mao poster), made



Documenting Hate: Charlottesville & New American Nazis

★★★

(2018) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). *PBS Video*. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0597-8.

One of the most alarming developments in today's America is the increasing rise of white supremacist hate groups, spewing venom on the Internet, and often gathering to clash in "happy rage" near college campuses, including the infamous 2017 riot in Charlottesville, VA. Filmmaker Richard Rowley's PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary on hate groups in America notes that hate often centers on immigration and the feeling that the white race is being "replaced" by "the others"—black and brown people, Jews, gays, and just about anyone else who does not conform to these groups' rigid beliefs. They relish street fighting, often tangling with their "Antifa" (anti-fascist) opponents. And thanks to social media, their messages are easily spread to the disaffected, informing them of upcoming actions (despite a stated claim that the Charlottesville protest was about the removal of Confederate statues, people from 35 states converged on the college town, chanting hateful slogans that had nothing to do with statues). Due to increasing FBI surveillance and infiltration, hate groups now advocate for "leaderless resistance," encouraging lone wolf attacks like the 2018 Pittsburgh synagogue shootings. One of the most disturbing aspects covered here is extremist penetration within the military by individuals who seek to gain expertise in the use of weapons and paramilitary training. By far the most dangerous outfit profiled here is the Atomwaffen neo-Nazi group, whose spokesman James Mason coyly denies any responsibility for violence while at the same time praising the terrorism of Oklahoma City and the mayhem in Charlottesville. Believing that anything could be possible in the Trump era, hate groups obviously feel that their time has come. Sure to fan discussion, this timely documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

fresh by the setting (and the goose). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Creepy Line ★★1/2

(2018) 82 min. DVD: \$18.99. Janson Media (avail. from most distributors).

The first half of filmmaker M.A. Taylor's alarmist documentary *The Creepy Line* outlines now-familiar charges regarding the commercial agendas and vulnerabilities of tech giants Facebook and Google. At this point, who doesn't know that both companies have been monetizing the personal information users give them through searches and posts? Who doesn't understand that Facebook tweaks algorithms so that users only see posts and news that reinforce what they have already told the social media giant they believe? Or that Facebook thus traps users in echo chambers where ideas are never challenged, and adversaries such as Russia can potentially sway votes? Is there a Google searcher who hasn't figured out by now that the order of search results is easily manipulated? These are well-known issues (along with Facebook's and Google's infamous capacity for false news and propaganda), but the rest of the film crosses over into speculative scenarios about authoritarianism and the toppling of democracies. The word "if" starts to come up a lot, as in "if Facebook wanted to elect a particular nominee," or "if Google wanted to insert a fake scandal into search results about a politician." Granted, it is important to understand that big tech has the terrible power to destroy institutions if it were so inclined, and to acknowledge that the world has to decide how to put up firewalls to prevent that. But this film is less about advocacy for ethical and pro-democratic solutions to a possible time bomb, and more about further demonizing platforms that have already screwed up mightily. Still, widespread interest in social media issues makes this a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Exiled ★★★

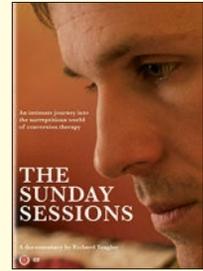
(2018) 30 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$99: high schools & public libraries; \$249: colleges & universities. DRA. Good Docs (avail. from www.gooddocs.net). PPR. Closed captioned.

Mauricio Hernandez-Mata and Hector Barajas-Varela, the Mexican-born subjects of filmmaker Mike Seely's documentary, fought for America in Afghanistan, but now live in Tijuana after being deported. Both men had green cards. Mauricio lives with his wife and child, but Hector had to leave his family behind. When the Army recruiter signed Hector up, his parents were told that he would become a citizen as a result of his service. Both men came to the U.S. when they were seven years old. "America is my home," Mauricio states, but he was deported due to possession of a firearm and a controlled substance, even though he served his time.

The Sunday Sessions ★★★1/2

(2018) 89 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmed over a two-year period, Richard Yeagley's documentary follows a man in a controversial gay-conversion psychological program that allegedly transforms homosexuals into heterosexuals. Viewers expecting outright bigotry and fierce, fundamentalist Bible-pounding may be surprised, as the treatment here is more subtle talking-head stuff, breathing-meditation, role-playing, and subtle manipulation through many self-help courses. Observant Catholic Nathan, who has never had a relationship with a woman (and only two with men), agonizes over reconciling his faith with his urges and he practices rehearsed date-dialogue with a female, undergoes assertiveness training, rages against his mother (the you-really-wanted-a-girl syndrome), and even learns how to handle a gun, in what some will consider caricatures of machismo under the cult-like supervision of Chris Doyle, a "sexual identity affirming" Christian therapist. Even Nathan's gay hairdresser pal—soon to be excised from Nathan's life, at Doyle's insistence—tells him to weather the treatment if it makes him truly happy. Absent any larger cultural/historical context or guest opinions, Yeagley's film is an intimate emotional experience (reminiscent of early *cinéma vérité* probings by Canada's Allan King), that finds in Nathan an especially lucid soul who is in pain without any easy, simple solutions. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



Mauricio suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, and hasn't been able to receive proper care. Hector, who was a paratrooper, was deported after serving two years for possession (and one in detention). He manages the Deported Veterans Support House, where he works on securing healthcare from the Veteran's Administration for his clients and helping to enact legislation that will allow them to return home. During the course of the documentary, Mauricio joins forces with Hector. "Currently," Hector says, "the only way we can return to our country is in a box." In other words, he can't visit America, but he can be buried there. Hector proceeds to meet with members of the ACLU and the U.S. House of Representatives and even presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, but they are powerless in the face of current U.S. immigration policy. Although Seely's film focuses on only two men, it's clear that they represent hundreds of others in the same predicament. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Most Dangerous Year ★★★

(2018) 89 min. DVD: \$125: public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Seattle-based filmmaker Vlada Knowlton offers a personal take on the struggles of transgender people fighting for equal protection under the law. She and her husband have three children, including a transgender girl. When her daughter was a toddler, Knowlton turned for guidance to Aidan Key, a trans educator. After the battle for gay marriage had been won, Key predicted that opponents would switch their focus to trans people, which is exactly what happened: in 2016, bathroom bills proliferated. The members of Knowlton's gender diversity support group express surprise that this could happen in

liberal Washington state. Proponents of SB 6443 argue that sexual predators will take advantage of trans-friendly bathrooms to give in to their worst impulses. After a public hearing, the bill heads to the state senate. Knowlton speaks with Lt. Governor Cyrus Habib, Republican State Senator Joe Fain, and others who confirm that transgender people are historically more likely to be victims of abuse. Worse, they tend to avoid public restrooms—even at the risk of physical distress—for fear of harassment. Although the bill doesn't pass, the vote is close (a similar bill, HB2, passes in North Carolina), and shortly after that Washington's Family Policy Institute creates the "Just Want Privacy" campaign to put another bathroom bill initiative on the ballot, while the Washington Won't Discriminate coalition comes together to counteract their efforts. An instructive and heartfelt account of the challenges trans individuals face and the ways that they and their allies can fight back, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Oklahoma: Red People ★★★1/2

(2018) 57 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$168.75 w/PPR). Vision Maker Media. Closed captioned.

Part of the *Growing Native* documentary series focusing on past and present Native American culture, directed by Charles "Boots" Kennedy, this entry centers on Oklahoma, where Oglala-Lakota host Moses Brings Plenty recounts the shocking facts of Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830. Tribes from the Southeastern U.S. were forced at gunpoint to relocate from ancestral homelands to so-called Indian territory in Oklahoma and elsewhere along what became known as the "Trail of Tears." Thousands died during the journey, while survivors were subjected to families being

torn apart, children made to attend boarding schools, and bans on traditional practices and original languages. The consequences of this monstrous era are still felt today, but *Oklahoma: Red People* offers evidence of tribal renaissance, including efforts by Cheyenne and Arapaho in Concho, OK, to bring back herds of buffalo from near-extinction. A key figure here is Kiowa artist Vanessa Jennings, granddaughter of legendary artist Stephen Mopope (1898-1974), a man whose prolific paintings of Indian life from bygone times resemble primordial petroglyphs. Jennings shows viewers a fantastic array of beadwork, buckskin dresses, carvings, and much more created by her and others, all part of an effort to keep Kiowa traditions alive. An inspiring documentary about resurgent Native American culture, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Patrimonio ★★ ★ 1/2

(2018) 83 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Shot between 2015-18, filmmakers Lisa F. Jackson and Sarah Teale's documentary *Patrimonio* follows the protracted and agonizing but always courageous fight by the fishermen of Todos Santos—a small community in Baja California Sur, Mexico—to retain their

inherited beachfront in the face of a massive resort and housing development. The latter, a project by a deep-pocketed U.S. firm in partnership with an alleged Mexican crime family, lawlessly encroaches on the fishing families' land and refuses to provide legal documents to these hardscrabble workers and their brave volunteer attorney, John Moreno. As the conflict drags on, and the development continues to steal beachfront and puts a stranglehold on scarce community resources (particularly fresh water), the fishing town forms blockades to stop construction until their demands for legal transparency are met. The developers, in turn, use bribery of officials, costly legal lawsuits, threats and intimidation, and gamesmanship intended to wear down Moreno and fishing leaders to try to make the resistance go away. A suspenseful and compelling David vs. Goliath story, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Presence of Their Absence ★★ ★

(2019) 85 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$250 w/PPR). LOGTV (www.logtv.com).

Fred Zaidman's parents were Holocaust survivors who settled in America. His mother Renate spoke in a general way of her painful memories, but his father Wolf held everything in, and Zaidman always refrained from asking more about their experiences. After

both died, however, Zaidman felt a deep need to investigate his family's history. Beginning with genealogical research through available channels, Zaidman traveled to Poland and later Israel to seek out relatives, search local records, and visit neighborhoods where his parents and grandparents had lived, as well as cemeteries where his ancestors might be buried, and the death camps where members of his family had been killed. His particular goal was to locate photographs of his grandparents and establish a firm family tree. Filmmaker Donna Kanter followed Zaidman on his quest, capturing both his bouts of enthusiasm as he met distant relatives for the first time and uncovered scraps of new information, and his occasional bursts of irritation as leads proved useless (many addresses, for example, took him to modern buildings) and even anger, as when he found tombstones defaced with Nazi symbols. Zaidman's search eventually brought him to Atlanta and Steven D. Reece, a Baptist minister who leads the Matzevah Foundation, which is dedicated to restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland. Zaidman returned to Poland with Reece and made a gratifying discovery. Telling the story of one man's emotional odyssey to come to terms with the horrors that his family suffered during the Holocaust, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

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With only 60 years of farmable soil left on Earth, this film offers an intimate look into the hearts of activists and innovators in the food movement.

LETTER FROM MASANJIA
OSCAR NOMINATED
This unbelievable tale of human spirit starts when a mom of two finds an SOS note in a box of decorations "Made in China" in an Oregon Kmart.

Railway Sleepers ★★★

(2017) 102 min. DVD: \$375. DRA. Grasshopper Film. PPR.

Filmmaker Sompot Chidgasornpongse's documentary was shot over an eight-year period on Thailand's cross-country trains. Rail travel was introduced to the kingdom in 1893—the film opens with a scrolling text of the royal decree by King Rama VII inaugurating this mode of transportation—and viewers see a few historic photos of the old steam-driven locomotives that initially carried passengers and freight. However, *Railway Sleepers* is primarily focused on quietly observing passengers, and while the trains afford spectacular views of Thailand's beautiful countryside, not everyone is looking out the window. Instead, the cameras capture schoolchildren doing their homework under the gaze of frazzled teachers, exhausted passengers falling asleep while sitting up, a seemingly endless stream of vendors (hawking bottled water, snacks, and souvenirs to indifferent travelers), bored soldiers with nothing to do but wander back and forth, and foreign tourists enjoying the finer accommodations in the first class section while everyone else is crammed into economy seating. While the film may be too leisurely paced for some viewers, it will appeal to those with a passion for Asian travel—not to mention admiration for Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul, who is the executive producer. An offbeat travelogue, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Shape of Now ★★★

(2018) 72 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors).

The violence that roiled Colombia for well over half a century—fueled by the drug trade as well as political conflict, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people—has understandably left deep scars on the population, which was further reflected in the unexpected failure of a referendum to ratify a peace agreement between the government and FARC (people's army guerrillas) in 2016. Filmmaker Manuel Correa's documentary look at Colombia's attempts to overcome the legacy of war, focusing on efforts to effect reconciliation by treating all those who have been touched by the violence—both victims and perpetrators—as survivors deserving of a degree of sympathy as well as medical treatment. Much of the film is devoted to specialists in various fields, including historians, who argue against an absolutist reading of the past, which—they assert—would not accurately reflect the varying perspectives of different people. Ex-soldiers, for example, say they were mere pawns in the control of corrupt politicians, so not really responsible for the horrors, while victims and family members visit prisons to offer forgiveness to inmates, and psychologists offer treatment for PTSD to both. Correa does not endorse

these relativistic methods of trying to restore a semblance of national unity in Colombia; rather, his film seems designed to prompt debate about whether justice is being sacrificed to a dream of sociopolitical harmony. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Time for Ilhan ★★★

(2018) 89 min. DVD: \$129; high schools & public libraries; \$349; colleges & universities. DRA. Good Docs (avail. from www.gooddocs.net). PPR. Closed captioned.

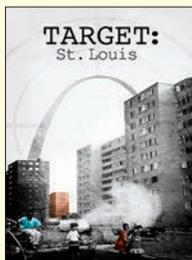
When Muslim, Mogadishu-born Representative Ilhan Omar came to the United States at the age of 12—after four years in a Kenyan refugee camp—"hello" and "go away" represented the entirety of her English vocabulary. But she learned quickly. Filmmaker Norah Shapiro, a former public defender, tracks Omar's rise from being a community organizer in Minnesota's Cedar-Riverside neighborhood to becoming America's first Somali-American legislator. When she decides to run for office in 2015, Omar's husband, Ahmed Hirsi, puts his career on hold to care for their children (the couple met in 1999 at a basketball game). Her father, who lost his wife when Omar was two, proves equally supportive. Shapiro also interviews her rivals: Phyllis Kahn, a progressive candidate who served the state for 43 years, and Mohamud Noor, a Somali-American who lost to Khan in the previous election. In the face of stiff competition, Omar garners the key endorsements and caucus votes that she needs to move forward. Although she wins the Democratic primary, Fox News accuses her of immigration fraud. Even though the charge is false, it still puts a crimp in her campaign (and she asks Shapiro to stop filming until the U.S. district attorney clears her). During his own presidential campaign, Donald Trump travels to Minnesota to speak out against Somali immigrants, a clear attack on Omar, which doesn't prevent her from

winning her race and clearing the way for her congressional win two years later. Shapiro clearly and compassionately presents her subject—an admittedly controversial figure in the news—as a born leader whose grassroots campaign spoke to a state's under-served communities. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

What Is Democracy? ★★1/2

(2018) 107 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

As she demonstrated in her earlier documentaries *Zizek!* (VL-7/06) and *Examined Life* (VL Online 3/10), filmmaker Astra Taylor is not afraid to tackle large issues, but like those films, this one is also rather diffuse and opaque. *What Is Democracy?* begins with Marxist scholar Silvia Federici discoursing on Ambrogio Lorenzetti's 14th-century triptych of frescos *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government* before moving on to clips of conversations with other scholars, including Berkeley political theorist Wendy Brown and Princeton philosopher/activist Cornel West, who talk about the praise and criticism directed at democratic rule since the time of Plato and Aristotle. Philologist Efimia Karakantza of Patras University describes how ancient democracy actually worked, noting the contrast between the random selection of officials by lot that prevailed in Athens and the election of representatives in modern quasi-democratic states—where the will of voters can be blithely ignored, as Greek politicians did during the recent debt crisis. Taylor also includes observations by ordinary people—an ex-con barber, park-bench sitters, activists at neighborhood organizational meetings—who give their views on how the system of representative democracy operates in America (virtually all find it unsatisfactory). Taylor, who was



Target: St. Louis ★★★1/2

(2018) 67 min. DVD: \$24.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors).

In the years following nuclear bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Cold War weapons testing involving the dissemination of radiation through clouds of aerosol was conducted by the U.S. government on American soil. Repeatedly exposed to radiation was a predominantly low-income, African American community mostly living in a housing project in St. Louis. As viewers learn in this shocking documentary, the reason that particular locale was chosen was because of its resemblance to downtown Moscow. *Target: St. Louis* uncovers both the history of the testing (which was administered through the U.S. Department of Public Health, the same federal agency that subjected unknowing black military pilots to the infamous Tuskegee syphilis project) and draws on the recollections of St. Louis residents who were doused by the spray and spent years seeking answers. Director Sean Slater leans heavily on an extensive interview with sociology professor Dr. Lisa Martino-Taylor, who has written a book on the subject, using her thorough research to provide a structure for the film's narrative, but he also interviews several other experts as well as numerous innocents who were treated like lab rats by their own government. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P (T. Keogh)

active in the Occupy! Movement, clearly gravitates toward the conclusion that the problem with modern democracy is that it basically serves as a smokescreen for control by a global economic elite rather than rule by the people in any true sense. Extras include deleted scenes, an interview with the director, and a film screening Q&A. A thought-provoking film that offers no clear recipe for improvement, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

TEEN ISSUES

Everything You Need to Know About Substance Abuse in 22 Minutes ★★★

(2018) 22 min. DVD: \$149.95 (study guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-100-1.

Young adult narrators speak directly here to teenagers about the facts of substance abuse, presenting current information to counter myths and hearsay. A wide range of substances are covered, including alcohol, e-cigarettes/vaping, marijuana, opioid prescription drugs, heroin, and inhalants. The film points out that substance abuse can affect a teenager's developing brain, as well as hamper relationships, academic progress,

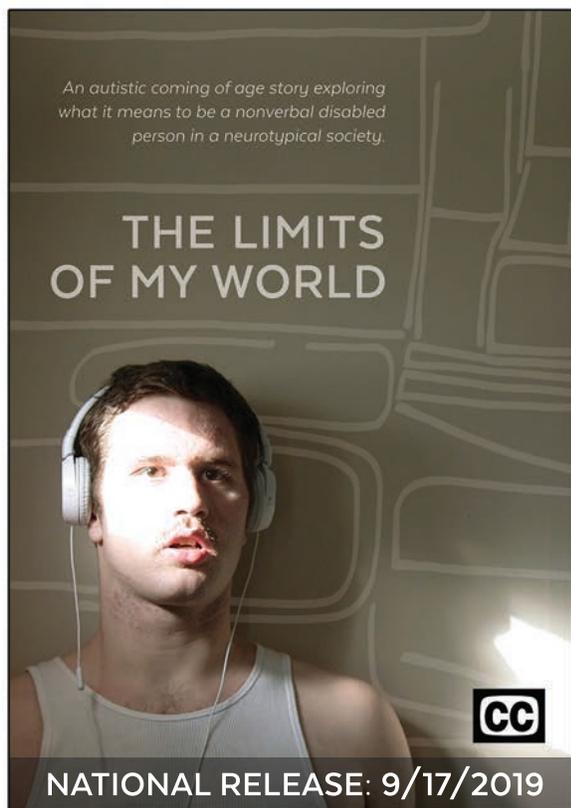
and prospects for future success. Alcohol is the most commonly abused substance and can impair coordination and lead to other risky behaviors, while blackouts can erase memory, and binge drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning. Teenagers may think that vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes, but nicotine found in the juice of e-cigarettes is addictive. Today's marijuana is also more potent than the marijuana in the 1960s and contains many of the chemicals found in cigarettes. Prescription drug abuse can lead to addiction and heroin use (drugs laced with Fentanyl are particularly dangerous). Lastly, inhaling common household products can be fatal or damage major organs. For a final point, the narrators remind viewers that while a certain percentage of teens use drugs, many others do not. Also including an excellent resource guide, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (T. Root)

Real Life Teens—Blowing Smoke... Vaping Teens ★★★

(2016) 20 min. DVD: \$64.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

According to the Center for Disease Control, 3.5 million middle and high school students reportedly engaged in vaping in 2018, representing a significant rise in usage over past years. Aimed at middle and

high school students, this video promotes the message that vaping is unhealthy and can lead to addiction and a transition to traditional cigarettes. Young men and women speak out about the common practice of vaping in their schools, noting that young adults think that e-cigarettes are cool because they make use of technology, have various flavors, and feature designer patterns—plus students tend to believe that e-cigarettes are harmless. With media ads endorsing e-cigarettes, young adult narrators and health professionals here work to counter these messages with factual information about the devices and accompanying chemicals. A vaping device consists of a battery and the cartomizer; the latter has a cartridge and an atomizer that vaporizes the liquid, which may consist of water, propylene glycol (to deliver the nicotine), and sometimes flavorings such as strawberry, grape, or cherry. Other drugs such as liquid cocaine and THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) found in marijuana can technically also be placed in the devices. While research is still new, reports of breathing irritation have been reported and the Food and Drug Administration is now working on prevention and cessation strategies. Offering an informed look at the dangers of vaping, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (T. Root)



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It's Criminal: A Tale of Prison and Privilege ★★★

(2017) 78 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries & high schools; \$295; colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Convicts and college students come together in filmmaker Signe Taylor's moving documentary. The students in Dartmouth College's "Prison and Performance" program know that their collaboration with the inmates of the Sullivan County Department of Corrections won't compare with other Women and Gender Studies classes, but Professor Ivy Schweitzer promises they'll get more out of it. Co-coordinator Pati Hernández, who grew up in Chile, believes that "putting privileged and underprivileged together, and the willingness to collaborate together—that's the beauty." On the first day, the two groups introduce themselves and toss around writing ideas. From the outside, it looks fairly harmonious, although Malika, an inmate with two kids, admits that she initially hated Georgia, a sophomore who appears to live a charmed life. Georgia is beautiful, blonde, lives in the suburbs, and votes Republican. Malika, the daughter of a civil rights activist, is serving a year for possession with intent to sell (she regrets that she had to plead guilty because she couldn't afford to go to trial). Nikki hasn't even received a sentence, but can't afford bail, so she has to remain behind bars until her day in court. As the rehearsals continue, frictions ebb and flow, but the women do learn from each other—especially about privilege, since the students have so much of it—and the film culminates in a fine theatrical performance. Seven years in the making, *It's Criminal* honors all participants while also strongly suggesting that society could benefit from more of this kind of rehabilitative program. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Apollo's Daring Mission ★★★

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0885-6.

In 1962, President Kennedy issued both a challenge and a promise that before decade's end, America would land men on the Moon and return them safely to Earth. The goal was to beat the Soviets, a Cold War aim dating back to the Russian launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957. Filmmaker Kirk Wolfinger's PBS-aired NOVA documentary looks at the Apollo 8 mission, which was overshadowed by the Moon landing less than a year later. Originally intended to be a routine Earth orbit, everything was uprooted in January

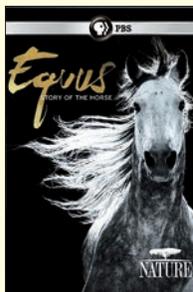
1967, when a deadly launch-pad space capsule fire killed three astronauts. The fire was determined to be the result of faulty electrical wiring in a vessel filled with flammable materials, pure oxygen, and featuring an escape hatch that opened inward rather than out. NASA had to quickly redesign the capsule, test new technologies—particularly new computer capabilities—and improve the booster rocket. This high risk mission, headed by former test pilots Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders was tasked with making the December 1968 half-million mile trip to the Moon, circle it 10 times, and then return to Earth. It was a "leap into the unknown," with a good chance that the astronauts could be stranded. NASA officials and the former astronauts recall their first sight of the Moon's surface, the dangers of flying blind with LOS (loss of signal, cut off from radio contact while behind the Moon), and the navigation skills required to use computers to track and hit a moving target at 17,000 mph. Most memorable is the moment on Christmas Eve when the astronauts read a biblical passage from Genesis, combined with the stunning color views of an earthrise photographed from outer space. With terse "right stuff" comments from all involved, this is an inspiring look at one of America's most important space missions. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

My Family and the Galapagos: Like Nowhere Else on Earth ★★★1/2

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$39.95. DRA. Film Ideas. PPR.

This engaging three-part series introduces marine biologist/conservationist

Monty Halls, his wife, and their two young daughters, who journey from the U.K. to the Galapagos Islands where Halls has rented a home for three months on the island of Santa Cruz. The opening episode, *Like Nowhere Else on Earth*, introduces the family and shows them settling in. Captioned maps identify the location of the chain of volcanic Ecuadorian islands while Zoë Wanamaker's voiceover narration complements the beautiful footage, serving up information about these enchanted islands where animals (many found nowhere else in the world) are government protected, including giant tortoises, pelicans, penguins, and sea lions, among other exotic species. Laws state that people must stay six feet away from the creatures, although sea lions roaming freely in town do not always respect this rule. Five-year-old Isla and 3-year-old Molly are showstoppers, accompanying their parents while also offering precocious perspectives on local sites, animals, and plants. Isla enjoys scuba diving with her dad in environmentally protected waters, while in another segment, wife Tamsyn accompanies a biologist to study beach pollution (one beach is pristine but another is filled with plastic that adversely affects animals). Monty's research takes him on a boat along with other scientists to collect DNA samples from ocean sunfish, the largest bony fish on Earth. Stunning landscapes accentuate this entertaining and informative series that introduces the splendor of the Galapagos while also conveying a message about the importance of preserving life's delicate natural balance. The other titles in the series are *A Delicate Ecosystem* and *A Time for Reflection*. Highly recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (S. Beauregard)



Equus: Story of the Horse ★★★1/2

(2018) 110 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0939-6.

Horses have been described as the "aristocrat of animals," honored for their speed, strength, agility, and partnership with humans. Writer-director Niobe Thompson also hosts this PBS-aired two-part *Nature* documentary on the enduring connection between horses and humankind. Millions of years ago, the "dawn horse" was a small creature of the forest, seeking cover from early predators in the dense foliage. As it evolved in a cooling world, the horse developed a social mind, forming a community among others in the species. Horses also gained the legs of a runner, limbs serving as "big pistons," while breathing in a way that allowed for sustained running and using very little oxygen. At first, humans used horses as a food source, but eventually realized that horses could be a mode of transportation, expanding the range for hunting. In time, horses learned how to judge human emotions, establishing trust, and ultimately achieving safety. Along the way, Thompson shows how horses were celebrated in cave art, initially domesticated in central Asia, evolved into 400 breeds, were used in chariot warfare and agriculture, and are capable of surviving extreme environments—shedding heat in the desert and enduring the bitter cold of Siberia. Horses are able to return to the wild, but if properly fed, housed, cared for, and treated with kindness and consideration, horses are content to remain in partnership with humans while also living in their own hierarchical community. Combining abundant information with diverse visuals—ranging from horse racing tracks to island and wilderness environments—this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Stroop ★★1/2

(2017) 116 min. DVD: \$125; public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Every eight hours a rare rhinoceros dies at the hands (and axes) of organized poachers, pushing this majestic species inexorably towards extinction. Filmmaker Susan Scott partners with model-turned-journalist Bonné de Bod—both South Africans, and obviously invested in the cause of saving rhinos—for this powerful documentary. Above and beyond the heartrending visits to animal sanctuaries where bleating orphaned baby rhinos are painstakingly hand-raised without their cruelly butchered mothers, the filmmakers also examine the nefarious workings of the globalized market for the creatures' horns (as well as elephant ivory), embarking on perilous hidden-camera excursions to Indochina. Vietnamese and Chinese customers—now plagued with cancer, air pollution, and other disorders related to rapid capitalist expansion—covet the horns (at about \$94 dollars per gram) as folk cure-alls, beauty aids, and luck talismans. *Stroop* also fairly portrays the situation of the murderous poachers, noting that they are hired stooges drafted from poverty and ignorance that has been created by generations of apartheid, and used by Asians to do the dirty work (in one of the few optimistic moments, a popular Zulu queen champions a rescued rhino infant). Featuring interviewees including the legendary Jane Goodall, *Stroop* is presented in both its full-length version and an abridged 58-minute edition. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Symbiotic Earth ★★1/2

(2018) 147 min. DVD: \$24.98 (\$395 w/PPR from www.bullfrogfilms.com). Bullfrog Films (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-948745-00-3.

The innovative ideas of American biologist Lynn Margulis (1938-2011) are explored and celebrated in filmmaker John Feldman's epic-length documentary that serves as a curious rejoinder to his own 2010 film *EVO: Ten Questions Everyone Should Ask About Evolution* (VL-7/11), which defended Darwinist (and Neo-Darwinist) thought against proponents of so-called intelligent design. When Feldman sent a copy of *EVO* to Margulis, she responded with a critique of its embrace of the biological "party line"—what she would call the contemporary "thought collective" that upholds the doctrine of genetic evolution by random mutation that is encapsulated in the notion of the survival of the fittest in the competitive struggle among members of a species. Margulis concluded that the true evolutionary process is based on symbiotic cooperation and sharing from the bacterial level up through the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Again dividing his film into 10 parts, Feldman combines archival footage of

Margulis (in the classroom, at conferences, and in direct conversation), interview clips featuring supportive colleagues and former students, and illustrative graphs and scientific films to explain Margulis's theory. She freely acknowledges predecessors whose work she depended upon, while dismissing the prevailing doctrine of Neo-Darwinism, characterizing it as a natural adjunct of a capitalist mentality. Symbiotic evolution is the primary focus of the documentary, but Feldman also considers its extension to the broader Gaia theory that Margulis formulated with James Lovelock, about how living organisms interact with inorganic elements to maintain a habitable environment on Earth. A fine portrait of a visionary thinker, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Wildland ★★1/2

(2019) 78 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from most distributors).

The worsening of wildfire seasons in the U.S. and the almost unimaginable destruction wrought by massive fires in recent years are at the center of the powerful documentary *Wildland*, although the focal point here is not so much on the rampaging flames and superheat from fires melting entire towns, but rather on the people who test their resilience and courage in fighting wildfires. Far from being career professional firefighters, the profiled subjects have checkered pasts, including prison time and drug addiction. Looking for a second chance, they join a program to learn the difficult fundamentals of containing a wildfire over time, while not dying in the process. Filmmakers Alex Jablonski and Kahlil Hudson, who reportedly had to undergo the same training (off camera) in order to shoot their film in dangerous circumstances, present the stories of some of these men—the paths they took and mistakes they made. The trainees undergo dirty, exhausting, humbling work, while footage of their confrontation with an actual blaze is startling (and reveals what that looks like from the inside). Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Bagua for Beginners: Eight Palms Baguazhang ★★★

(2019) 75 min. DVD: \$29.95. YMAA Publication Center (www.ymaa.com). ISBN: 978-1-59439-670-0.

Baguazhang is an internal martial arts style that originated on Mount Emei in China. Bagua is unique as it emphasizes several low leg stances, circular movements, walking, and positioning of the palms in precise ways throughout the form. Both an offensive and defensive martial arts style with its turning and spinning movements,

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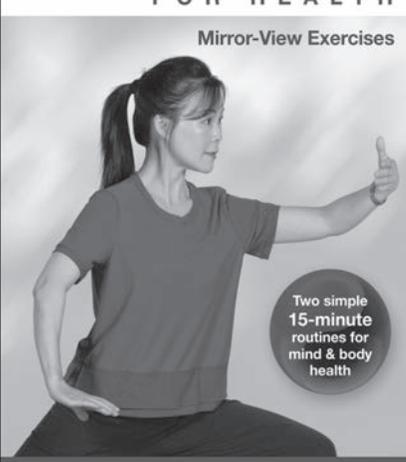
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bagua can be used to deflect or engage opponents. Practicing bagua may also yield health benefits as this type of movement can employ joints and muscles not always exercised, stimulate acupuncture areas, and kindle the flow of chi (or energy) through the body. With repetition, bagua may help improve coordination, agility, flexibility, balance, and strength. Master Chenhan Yang, an expert trainer and practitioner in several martial arts areas, demonstrates baguazhang by breaking the style down into the various hand, arm, and leg movements. Yang shows the eight positions for the open palms, teaches four leg stances, and then illustrates the basic stepping moves—which include “walk like a dragon,” “retrieve and spin like an ape,” “change momentum like an eagle,” and “fierce like a tiger.” After the instruction concludes, Yang performs the entire eight palms sequence in a natural setting with pleasing music. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Root)

Nutritional Science: Health & Well Being in the 21st Century ★★★

(2018) 18 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

Part of the *Show Me Science—Advanced* series, this program looks at the applicability of nutritional science in today’s world, exploring what foods people eat, how nutrients are utilized in the body, and the ways that nutrition impacts health. The film begins with a brief history of nutritional science, starting in the 1700s when scientists learned that vitamin C prevented sailors from getting scurvy and discovered some of the chemical properties of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. In the 1930s, scientists found the last of the common amino acids and determined which were essential for health. After the 1950s, researchers determined that vitamins and minerals play a vital role in health; in 1968, Linus Pauling held that life could be lengthened with the right nutrients or molecules (although his

thinking on taking massive doses of vitamin C has been widely discredited). Beginning in 1990, labels with nutritional facts were required for all consumer foods so that individuals could make healthy choices. Students pursuing a degree in nutritional science will study the essential nutrients: carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, water, and minerals. Purdue University, Rutgers University, and Boston University are named as notable choices for nutritional science programs, as each offers several areas of study: nutrition, dietetics, food service administration, public health, and community health. Undergraduate degrees will prepare students to become registered dietitians or pursue further study in dietetics, medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, and pharmacy, as well as careers in public health, public relations, and health fitness. A solid overview with helpful career guidance information, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (T. Root)

To the Edge of the Sky ★★★

(2017) 120 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

The four mothers in Jedd and Todd Wider’s inspiring documentary are doing everything they can for their pre-teen and teenaged children with Duchenne’s muscular dystrophy. Charley’s mother, Tracy Seckler, suspected that her son might have the progressive disease when she noticed minor but troubling mobility issues. She took him to the best neurologists on the East Coast, concluding, “There’s no treatment, there’s no cure, there’s nothing you can do.” His father, Benjy, provides the film’s title when he says, “I will go to the edge of the sky to keep him alive.” In their case, the couple founded a charitable foundation. Single mother Jenn McNary has two sons with Duchenne’s. Austin uses a wheelchair and younger brother Max doesn’t. The difference: Max has been participating in a clinical trial through Sarepta Therapeutics, a

small biotech company. Tracy and Benjy hope to put Charley on the same drug. Otherwise, they will be lucky if he makes it to age 28. Austin didn’t qualify for the initial trial, which only accepted ambulatory subjects. Now Jenn is working to get the drug fast-tracked for approval before it claims another generation of young men (the disease only affects men). She’s been aided in her efforts by Christine McSherry, whose son Jett isn’t part of the trial. The fourth subject, Mindy Leffler, has a son named Aidan who took part in a Prosenza trial in Canada that didn’t go well, in large part because they gave him a placebo. Over the course of the film, the mothers meet with politicians, lobbyists, and members of the FDA, and by the end their efforts have helped to expand the trial pool, although the fight for drug approval continues. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Bigger Like Me ★1/2

(2019) 102 min. DVD: \$24.99. Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

While personal essays are a legitimate form of documentary filmmaking, obnoxious works that cross a line into self-obsession can be hard to take. Comedian Greg Bergman’s nonsensical *Bigger Like Me*—about his quest to make his penis bigger and/or wider—is a case in point. An extended cut of his 2014 documentary *Big Like Me*, Bergman’s off-the-wall, priapic preoccupation causes stress in his marriage and brings a strain of weirdness to his relationship with his younger brother. Trying to find a clinic that can do more for him after pills, pumps, and injections have failed, Bergman travels to Tijuana, Mexico, for controversial surgery. In the film’s worst scene (selected from a smorgasbord of cringe-worthy moments), viewers witness a naked Bergman undergoing a tortuous process on his genitals. It looks like Dr. Mengele’s idea of male enhancement, but does it work? And does Bergman finally get what he wanted? Frankly, there’s not much reason to care. Extras include bonus footage. Not recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Break the Silence: Reproductive & Sexual Health Stories ★★★

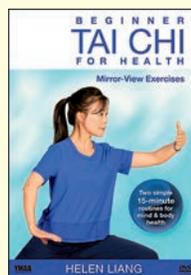
(2018) 59 min. DVD: \$125: high schools & public libraries; \$299: colleges & universities. DRA. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57448-043-6.

The 18 candid women featured in filmmaker Willow O’Feral’s documentary are cisgender and transgender, varying in age and race, who talk about their sexual histories. Although their names appear in the opening credits, O’Feral doesn’t connect them with their faces, so they remain anonymous in a

Beginner Tai Chi for Health ★★★

(2019) 92 min. DVD: \$29.95. YMAA Publication Center (www.ymaa.com). ISBN: 978-1-59439-669-4.

Beginner Tai Chi for Health features Master Helen Liang, an expert tai chi practitioner and trainer who teaches the relatively new 16-move tai chi form. Tai chi is referred to here as “moving meditation,” and is an ancient form of exercise that is generally regarded as appropriate for supporting health, fitness, and relaxation. Designed for beginners interested in health benefits, this workout begins with an introduction and warm up (featuring qi gong exercises), after which Liang presents the entire 16-move tai chi form in mirror-view fashion in a lovely inside setting with wood floors and Chinese art in the background. Liang then explains the steps for each form by illustrating foot, body, arm, and hand placement in a relaxed, orderly manner. The 16-form includes “parting the horse’s mane,” “white crane spreads its wings,” “repulse the monkey,” “needle at sea bottom,” and “grasping the peacock’s tail” (exercises are also shown from the back view as Liang repeats the movements). The workout ends with a meditative routine. Not only is Liang very graceful, she is also a precise practitioner. Highly recommended. Editor’s Choice. Aud: P. (T. Root)



sense. The subjects recount every kind of story, from the loss of virginity to transitioning from male to female while trying to conceive with a spouse. They also talk about their first orgasms, and the pluses and minuses of contraceptive options. One 39-year-old mother plainly states, "Condoms suck!" Several talk about experiences with abortion, including one woman who ended up at a crisis pregnancy center and another who took the morning after pill. One woman had three abortions, two before she had her present kids and one afterward. She didn't experience any complications, but another older woman here remembers a classmate who died after an illegal abortion, which sent a chill among her and her friends. Another woman talks about the consequences of an open marriage. While she was pregnant, her husband had an affair and gave her syphilis (she found out because he left the test results in their car). Although she was allergic to antibiotics, she took them anyway and while she worried that her baby could have birth defects, he was fortunately born healthy. The women in O'Feral's film are all forthright and engaging, although a little more post-production work would've been ideal, since traffic and voices can be heard in the background of some interviews. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

A Film Called Blacks Can't Swim ★★

(2019) 30 min. DVD: \$99; public libraries; \$150; colleges & universities. Ed Accura (avail. from <https://afilmcalledblackscantswim.bandzoogle.com>). PPR.

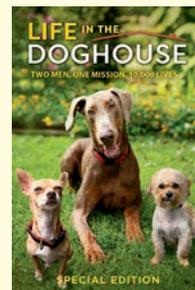
This semi-documentary, directed and edited by the pseudonymous Mysterex, is essentially a hortatory piece encouraging blacks to learn to swim—something that in Africa (and apparently Britain, where the film was made) is considered culturally unnecessary, and even dangerous. Much of this short film is devoted to interview clips with people who, despite their fears, have learned to swim and now enjoy swimming in pools for fun and exercise; unfortunately, the sound recording in these segments is mediocre, far too resonant for clarity's sake. Animated inserts separate the interview montages from brief scenes telling an odd fictional tale about Frank (played, rather hysterically, by British hip-hop artist Ed Accura), who is terrified by news reports of floods and hurricanes, and keeps hearing the voice of a screeching woman in his mind telling him that learning to swim is impossible. To protect himself from drowning, Frank decides to wear a life jacket all the time, even when he sleeps—although that voice keeps haunting his dreams, so he often awakens screaming. But his wife and young daughter prod him to take ionswimming lessons, and by the

PETS

Life in the Doghouse ★★½

(2018) 84 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from most distributors).

It would be hard to imagine anyone not being moved by the blend of cuteness and pathos in Ron Davis's feature documentary, which goes behind the scenes of a unique dog shelter and adoption center operated by horse trainers/equestrians Danny Robertshaw and Ron Danta out of their home in Camden, SC. Running up six-figure expenses, the pair board 71 dogs at a time inside the house (rather than in impersonal exterior kennels) in a friendly, communal environment. Many of the canines are true rehabs, carefully selected from overcrowded animal shelters just prior to execution dates (a large number also came from waterlogged New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina). The two men—whose backstory as a committed gay couple in the American South adds additional interest—have successfully placed more than 10,000 pets in loving homes. Yet, the heartbreaking point is also made (via a melancholy overhead-drone sequence of a conventional shelter's post-euthanasia disposal routine) that millions of domestic animals annually go to their deaths, and the heroic efforts of these animal lovers are an exception, not the rule, in a nation overrun with strays, cast-offs, and the results of horrendous puppy mills. The closing theme song, "I Love My Dog" by Cat Stevens, says it all. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



end Frank is shown taking off the jacket and jumping into a pool. A photograph of a smiling Simone Manuel, a multiple medal winner at the 2016 Olympics, confirms that blacks can indeed swim, and very well. Well-intended but not well-made, this is not recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Team Khan ★★★

(2019) 82 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Co-directors Blair Macdonald and Oliver Clark train their lens on Amir Khan, a 28-year-old British WBA world light-welterweight boxer. The handsome, sharp-dressed athlete relies on a team that includes his father, uncle, and brother, all of whom accompany him to Las Vegas for his 2014 bout against Devon Alexander. After his win, Oscar De La Hoya proclaims Khan to be among the top three boxers in the world. Khan also triumphs against Chris Algieri, but afterward wonders if it isn't time to start planning for retirement. In the wake of the 2004 Olympics, Khan felt like his childhood got fast-tracked. "I missed it all," he says, "because I was in the public eye." When he isn't competing, Khan lives in Bolton with his Brooklyn-born wife and daughter. During the film, he also travels to Pakistan to visit his home village and to offer support after a deadly Taliban attack (here, Khan is treated like a rock star). Although he hopes to fight Floyd Mayweather, the latter retires before Khan gets the chance. Instead, he faces Mexico's Canelo Álvarez in a match that does not go as planned. Before the fight, Khan quips that it could be the last for the two of them "if Donald Trump becomes President." In a very real sense, Khan's team

includes Muslims across the globe eager to see him reclaim his world champion status. The Álvarez fight would not turn out to be Khan's last fight, but the filmmakers make it clear that he's risking his health and possibly even his marriage if he continues. An interesting sports profile with larger sociopolitical overtones, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Wrestle ★★★

(2018) 96 min. DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Oscilloscope (avail. from most distributors).

In the tradition of youth sports-competition documentaries, filmmakers Suzannah Herbert and Lauren Belfer's *Wrestle* features the usual drama, triumphs, failures, conflicts, and varying levels of frustration among student athletes and adult coaches. While racism is often a demeaning hurdle for student jocks trying to leverage success on the court, or field, or in the ring, the town of Huntington, AL, seems determined to take down African American kids on Jim Crow principle. The young men hassled in *Wrestle* are several members of the wrestling team at Huntington's J. O. Johnson High School. But that's not the only problem keeping coach Chris Scribner (white, mid-to-late 30s, near-military haircut) awake at night. Scribner's long-range task is to prepare as many of his team as possible to qualify for Alabama's state championship, a job he takes seriously. But there's a lot on his plate: one powerful-looking teen is so distracted by imminent fatherhood that he can't focus; another with attention-deficit disorder refuses to take his meds and impulsively makes up doomed wrestling holds; and a boy undergoing a growth spurt is gaining pounds

along with height and mass, forcing him to sweat off water weight to stay in his division. Scribner is seen doing all of the cajoling, berating, and inspiring one would expect from a coach trying to motivate, but he's also forever putting out brush fires, including driving to his students' homes when they don't show up for practice, and negotiating with cops. Not surprisingly, the outcome here is not a fairy-tale ending, but rather qualified success: real life, in other words. Extras include deleted scenes and an interview with the filmmakers. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

THE ARTS

The Artist in Society: Talking with Hershell West ★★★1/2

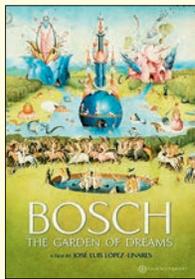
(2017) 50 min. DVD: \$15: individuals; \$80: public libraries; \$170: colleges & universities. Palomino Productions. PPR.

An artist and advocate who has served on the official arts commissions of California cities Richmond and Oakland (as president of each), Hershell West proves to be a fount of wisdom in this compelling documentary by Eve A. Ma. West discusses his work as a muralist, making beautiful and often evocative public works in the medium (including brief histories of communities, as represented by playful images). He also discusses his life as a painter on canvas, and how his visual sensibility began with describing the world to his blind grandmother and selling his work to schoolmates. Besides his stints with arts commissions, West has also taught art to at-risk kids, recalling a heartbreaking story about a talented boy who refused to take his excellent artwork home because it would be taken from him. Viewers also see West deeply involved in another cause as one of the founders of TAOLB (The Art of Living Black) at the Richmond Art Center, an annual group exhibition of contemporary works by African American artists. While he might not be a household name, West is certainly a heroic community figure who will inspire others. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

At the Drive-In ★★★

(2019) 79 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Alexander Monelli's documentary focuses on the Mahoning Drive-In, a struggling venue in rural Lehighton, PA. Owner Jeff Mattox lacks the funds needed to replace the still-functioning 1949 35mm film projectors with digital projection, and with Hollywood studios ceasing to use film for theatrical exhibition, Mattox is at a crossroads. A pair of Temple University film students named Matt and Virgil cheerfully work with Mattox to keep his operation alive, even if it means forgoing a salary. Reaching out to locate vintage 35mm prints—a copy of



Bosch: The Garden of Dreams ★★★1/2

(2019) 90 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

One of the world's most famous artworks, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* triptych by the 16th-century Dutch master Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516), is celebrated in José Luis López-Linares's documentary, which coincided with the 500th anniversary of the painter's death. *Bosch* outlines the scant information available on the artist's life, but its major emphasis is an analysis of the *Garden* itself, photographed lovingly in its home at the Prado in Madrid—the museum where many of Bosch's works are to be found as a result of King Philip II of Spain's assiduous collection efforts. Experts use modern x-ray devices to reveal the process of creation, while scholars discuss the painting's place in art history and the meaning of the iconographic symbols that are employed in such wild profusion. They also ruminate on the work's overall impact, both on 16th-century viewers and contemporary audiences, discussing its visionary representations of Earth, Heaven, and Hell, with all of their allegorical implications. Non-specialists, ranging from musicians as disparate as pop singer Sílvia Pérez Cruz and classical conductor William Christie to novelist Salman Rushdie, also weigh in to explain their enthusiasm for the work. Although the documentary is fairly conventional in its approach, it affords a superb introduction to a painting that has proven to be an inexhaustible source of interest to art lovers for five centuries, as well as an inspiration to painters from Brueghel to the surrealists. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Kevin Smith's *Clerks* is provided from Quentin Tarantino's personal collection—and tapping into social media to rouse awareness among the region's die-hard movie lovers, the trio labor to keep the Mahoning Drive-In thriving in the face of incredible commercial and cultural odds. There is an abundance of can-do spirit and film nerd charm to be found here, along with a bit of unexpectedly snippy in-fighting between some longtime members of Mattox's staff and the two cinephile newcomers who arrive with grand plans. Extras include cast and crew audio commentaries, deleted scenes, and a screening Q&A. A celebration of old-school movie viewing that is both warm and fun, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Banjos, Bluegrass & Squirrel Barkers

★★★

(2017) 49 min. DVD: \$11.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Palm trees are not the first image that comes to mind when listening to bluegrass music. But this interesting, insider-ish account of the rich bluegrass and folk music scene that developed in California (mostly Southern California) beginning in the 1950s—and is still carrying on today—serves up fascinating lore that often intersects with pop and rock history. Starting with the wildly popular Kingston Trio, which formed in Honolulu and San Francisco, and whose 1958 hit single "Tom Dooley" helped launch the hootenanny years in American music, the bluegrass movement was an offshoot of folk music. The San Diego area alone saw the rise of countless bands, towered over by the local Scottsville Squirrel Barkers, whose members included Chris Hillman (who would later moonlight as co-founder of the Byrds), Ber-

nie Leadon (the Flying Burrito Brothers and The Eagles), and Mason Williams ("Classical Gas"), the latter serving in the U.S. Navy by day and playing clubs at night. Director Rick Bowman traces the decades-long lineage of successive bluegrass groups who learned from prior generations in SoCal, among them the famous contemporary Nickel Creek, which features mandolin and public radio star Chris Thile. Quite a few folks from the historic ensembles were still alive and well during the shooting of this 2017 documentary, and they have lots of reflections and memories to share. Sure to appeal to bluegrass fans, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Bauhaus Spirit: 100 Years of Bauhaus

★★★

(2018) 90 min. In English, French, German & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$26.98 (\$398 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The history and influence of the German art school Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar in 1919 (but later moved to Dessau and then Berlin—until being closed as a result of Nazi pressure in 1933), are chronicled in filmmakers Niels Bolbrinker and Thomas Tielsch's expansive but rather meandering documentary. *Bauhaus Spirit* describes the mixture of imagination and utility that animated Gropius's vision of a place where art, architecture, design, painting, and sculpture could be combined into a multi-disciplinary whole. The purpose was not merely theoretical: the school aimed to foster a progressive movement in which form and function would complement one another in the task of fashioning a better world—one that was both more livable and more emotionally engaging

(the development of modernist style in general was strongly influenced by the Bauhaus movement). The filmmakers point out that many artists, architects, and social planners have been inspired by Bauhaus, including planners of contemporary school campuses and designers of affordable housing initiatives around the globe. Although the directors' enthusiasm sometimes threatens to overwhelm the structure, this will likely appeal to those already acquainted with (and appreciative of) the Bauhaus spirit. A generally worthy centennial celebration of the widespread impact that Bauhaus has had on art, culture, and society, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Coriolanus ★★ ★

(2017) 164 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Shakespeare's last Roman tragedy (written around 1605) receives uneven but compelling treatment in Angus Jackson's 2017 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company. The protagonist is Caius Marcius (Sope Dirisu), a patrician general who wins acclaim—and the titular nickname—both for his victory over the Volscian city of Corioli and his prowess in individual combat with enemy leader Tullus Aufidius (James Corrigan). But Marcius's contempt toward

the plebeians leads to his banishment, and in his anger he offers his services to Aufidius, taking command of the Volscian forces for an assault on Rome. Only the intervention of his mother Volumnia (Haydn Gwynne) and wife Virgilia (Hannah Morrish) persuades him to break off the attack, although he is killed for his treachery when he returns to the Volscians. Like Ralph Fiennes's film of the play (*VL-5/12*), Jackson's production is in modern dress, and while it cannot replicate the contemporary weaponry and bloody battles that Fiennes favored, it compensates with extraordinarily bruising (and homoerotic) hand-to-hand combat between Marcius and Aufidius. The outstanding performances here are by Gwynne, who brings passion to her pleas, and Paul Jesson as Menenius, the senator who counsels Marcius to be more moderate. In the title role, Dirisu casts an imposing figure, but lacks the full measure of patrician arrogance, while Corrigan takes Aufidius's lust for Marcius so far that it becomes almost humorous. With spare sets and an unobtrusive music score, this *Coriolanus* may not be the final word on the play, but it offers a good—albeit flawed—take. Extras include an audio commentary by Jackson, cast interviews, and a cast gallery. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Life After Flash ★★ ★

(2018) 94 min. DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Actor Sam Jones produced this affectionate look at the 1980 film *Flash Gordon* (in which he starred in the title role), which was not the megahit that mogul Dino De Laurentiis desired but won cult status for its Fellini-esque designs, color, sublimely non-ironic camp attitude, and Queen's music. Unsurprisingly, the framing device is Jones's bio recast as the devoutly Christian's path of redemption. Jones succumbed to Hollywood excess, after which his fame dissipated, and he re-invented himself (drawing on Marine Corps training) as a bodyguard/security specialist, committing anew to faith and family after reading Rick Warren's 2002 religious bestseller *The Purpose Driven Life*. The good news for fans (besides the Good News) is that director Lisa Downs nicely interweaves conversations and on-set tales with a stellar *Flash* reunion of talent and admirers, including costars Melody Anderson, Brian Blessed, and Topol, filmmaker/fan Robert Rodriguez, Martha De Laurentiis (Dino's widow), and Queen's Brian May—a virtual Comic-Con panel, right down to comics artist Alex Ross and *Film Threat* editor/author Chris Gore. Jones's positivity in hitting the nostalgia-expo trail is contagious

UPC# 780392097702 SRP: \$24.95
Run time: 62:36
National Release Date: August 27, 2019

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A WOMAN'S JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF DRUMMING

Produced, Directed by Three-Time Emmy Award-winner, David L. Brown.

Keeper of the Beat is a documentary on the life and music of Barbara Borden, acclaimed drummer, composer, teacher and peacemaker. The film tells the story, in eloquent words and toe-tapping music, of a woman whose love of drumming has given her courage and inspiration. We watch the unfolding of Borden's identity as she grows from a little girl in love with drumming to a pioneering woman drummer to a world-class percussionist practicing "drumbeat diplomacy." Filmed on four continents.

"A wonderful film, the inspiring story of one talented woman's crusade to spread the joy and transformative power of drumming." — Bonnie Raitt

"This uplifting and entertaining movie does a wonderful job of capturing Barbara's warmth, talent and contagious spirit."

— Anna Halprin, Pioneering Dancer, Choreographer

"Good documentaries often introduce audiences to someone they'd love to meet for a nice long conversation in the three-dimensional world. Filmmaker David L. Brown's *Keeper of the Beat* is all about one such subject: Barbara Borden, a terrific musician and a joyful, indomitable individual. RECOMMENDED." — Video Librarian

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as he begins to enjoy a career revival. Extras include a generous swag-bag-full of extended and deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Longings of Maya Gordon ★★★

(2019) 54 min. DVD: \$99; public libraries; \$249 w/PPR; colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Amsterdam artist Maya Gordon makes art that reminds her of home (“that longing for something you don’t even know what it is”). One piece, a giant cupboard, represents something that loomed over her as a 6-year-old living in Poland (she and her family emigrated to Israel in 1957). Her work can reflect the food that she ate under Communist rule, her process for preparing herring, her changing face (particularly after a thyroid condition altered her eyes), and her propensity for picking up men. Spending time in Israel, Poland, and Holland, co-directors Yair Lev and Ety Wieseltier follow Gordon around as she prepares for exhibits, socializes with friends, and chats with people she meets along the way, such as a philosophical fishmonger who notes that “just as there are no fish without bones, there are no people without troubles.” Gordon is a curious, open-hearted person who says exactly what’s on her mind. To Nahum, a former soldier she meets in her old neighborhood, she describes herself as “Victoria Maya,” explaining that, “my mother felt the need to produce Jews” after the May victory

over Hitler. She also recalls her relationship with Hezy Leskly, an Israeli artist and poet who led her to Holland. Leskly later returned to Israel, where he died, but left Gordon everything, securing her financial future. In many ways, this observational documentary prioritizes Gordon’s life over her art, and it’s stronger for it, offering a vivid portrait of a single 72-year-old woman living her life to the fullest. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Master of Dark Shadows ★★★

(2019) 87 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. MPI Media Group (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Offering a surprisingly fun look back at *Dark Shadows*, the groundbreaking soap opera that caught fire with teens as well as bored housewives between 1966-71, filmmaker David Gregory’s documentary is graced by the presence of many of the show’s principal creators. Chief among these is Dan Curtis, a forceful, iron-willed producer who oversaw the show’s transition from lurid drama about a wealthy Maine family to a supernatural tale about a reluctant vampire. Curtis discusses the huge ratings jump once the bloodsucking character of Barnabas Collins (Jonathan Frid) was introduced into the weekday afternoon serial, with much of that audience increase coming from school kids who rushed home to catch the 4 p.m. broadcast. Surviving cast and crew members recall a tight daily pro-

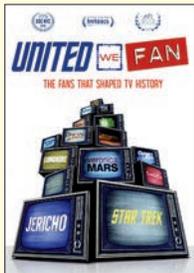
duction schedule, beginning with a morning table read, followed by a couple hours of preparation, then a rehearsal before filming. The speed sometimes resulted in missed cues, garbled dialogue, and other mistakes, which are highlighted here in good humor. Curtis never worried about bloopers (one of the best found Frid, in costume and makeup as Barnabas, walking into the camera’s gaze while carrying his own street shoes), maintaining that episodes were only going to be seen once, so why care about glaring errors (little did he know about the many lives on home video to come for this cult hit). Other tidbits include Frid’s daily habit of downing several vodkas after every taping, and discussion about Curtis’s decision in 1971 to pull the plug on the show. Other talking heads in this enjoyable survey of all things *Dark Shadows* include superfan Whoopi Goldberg, who talks about how sexy a vampire’s bite can be. The bountiful extras include footage of a 1969 Halloween party appearance by “Barnabas” at the Nixon White House, a 1968 audio interview with Frid on *The Dick Cavett Show*, the 1954 episode “The House” (which would become the inspiration for *Dark Shadows*) from the CBS anthology series *The Web*, a tour of the studio where the series was shot, and more. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

World’s Tiniest Masterpieces: The Wonderful World of Willard Wigan

★★★1/2

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$225. DRA. Film Ideas. PPR.

Aired on Channel 4 in the U.K., filmmaker Kenny Scott’s delightful documentary focuses on the astounding achievements of British painter-sculptor Willard Wigan. Born to working-class Jamaican-descended parents in Wolverhampton, Wigan was a struggling, dyslexic student with no formal art education but was also a veritable prodigy at carving miniatures using only rudimentary tools (he started by making little houses for the backyard ants). Wigan is now recognized as the world’s great “micro-artist” (a category in which he is not alone), painstakingly hand-making tiny paintings and sculptures that fit in the eye of a needle. In the course of this documentary, Wigan embarks on a highly personal project, a carved, infinitesimal piece of carpet fiber that is a tribute to his late mother, who supported and inspired his efforts. If completed, it will break records as the smallest human carving ever—actually at the cellular level—and the blend of art and science (as well as undertones of multiculturalism and tolerance) is sublime. High-tech digital cinematography enlivens the already transfixing presentation, using special f/x to render the charismatic Wigan as either a giant or an incredible shrinking man. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



United We Fan ★★★

(2018) 97 min. DVD: \$29.99 (\$250 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Some people mourn when their favorite shows are canceled, but then move on to other series. Others leap into action to convince networks to reverse their decisions. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t. Filmmaker Michael Sparaga’s entertaining documentary concentrates on the success stories. Bjo and Jon Trimble pioneered this form of direct action through their letter-writing campaign on behalf of *Star Trek*. Nichelle Nichols, who played Lt. Uhura, and creator Gene Roddenberry’s son,

Rod, credit the couple for their efforts. Dorothy Swanson also went to her typewriter when it looked like CBS was going to cancel *Cagney & Lacey*, writing over 500 letters to the editor and suggesting that friends do the same. She admits now that it was “over the top,” but it worked. CBS repeated a season over the summer, ratings spiked, and production resumed. Swanson would go on to co-found the organization Viewers for Quality Television (VQT). The difference between the old campaigns and the new ones is, of course, the Internet, as campaigners use e-mail, message boards, and social media. TV critics and show creators, like Jason Katims (*Roswell*) and Rob Thomas (*Veronica Mars*), cite Twitter as a way to see how fans are reacting to a show in real time. Sadly, the rise of the web also contributed to the death of VQT, although producer Barney Rosenzweig (*The Trials of Rosie O’Neill*) accuses them of disloyalty, since they didn’t back his every show. Other speakers include Scott Bakula (*Quantum Leap*), Zachary Levi (*Chuck*), and Skeet Ulrich (*Jericho*). In more recent years, campaigns have brought renewed interest to *Person of Interest*, *Longmire*, and *The 4400*. Fan campaigns might not always work, but it’s hard to imagine they’ll ever disappear. Extras include extended and deleted scenes, and a segment on a new fan campaign for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* spin-off *Angel*. An interesting cultural documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

In the Intense Now ★★★

(2017) 127 min. In Portuguese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.98 (\$398 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

The year 1968 was marked by political unrest not only in the United States, where rage over the Vietnam War was boiling over, but also in other nations. Brazilian filmmaker João Moreira Salles here draws on amateur films—combined with news footage—to document the disorder in three countries. His major focus is on France, where student demonstrations threatened the Fourth Republic of Charles de Gaulle. Salles concentrates on one of the student leaders, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, but also points out how Cohn-Bendit and the movement he helped found were to some extent co-opted by advertising agencies that not only built campaigns based on the students' program but even created some of their supposedly grassroots slogans. Salles contrasts this material with happy home movies taken in France by his own mother when the family lived there. Salles also shows underground footage from Czechoslovakia, where the progressive "Prague Spring" was quashed by Soviet military intervention, and from his own homeland, where a military junta suppressed dissent. In addition, the filmmaker considers the repression associated with the Maoist cultural revolution in China, which he once again compares with footage shot by his mother during a visit to the country—scenes

that seem oblivious to the cruel reality of the period. Somberly narrated by Salles, *In the Intense Now* not only offers a glimpse into the hopes and failures reflected in the popular dissent of the late '60s, but also captures the blithe disregard of many who witnessed it. Extras include six short films (including one by late writer/artist Chris Marker). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Nazi Junkies ★★1/2

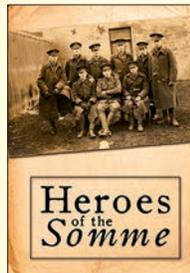
(2019) 112 min. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Journalist Norman Ohler's 2016 book *Blitzed: Drugs in the Third Reich* serves as the inspiration for filmmaker Christian Huleu's two-part documentary that covers—in rather sensationalistic style, like many films about Hitler's Germany made for cable networks—the use of pharmaceuticals in the Nazi regime. The first episode, "Hitler the Junkie," concentrates on the Führer and his personal physician Theodor Morell, a "Dr. Feelgood" who began treating Hitler in 1936 with a solution of multivitamins laced with methamphetamines, and then added injections of Eukodol, a trade form of oxycodone, to the mix. Morell became a prominent member of Hitler's staff, and his meticulous catalogue of treatments allowed Ohler to gauge the increase in dosage over the years. In the latter stages of the war, another doctor began giving Hitler cocaine, which only fueled his fanatical belief in German invincibility despite military setbacks (the possibility that Hitler suffered from Parkinson's disease is also investigated). The second episode, "Nazi Junkies," focuses on the widespread use of the methamphetamine Pervitin

Heroes of the Somme ★★★1/2

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Edward Hart's biographical documentary centers on seven men in the British army who won the Victoria Cross—the nation's most prized military medal—for bravery during the Battle of the Somme in World War I. Four of the men profiled here were Irish: William McFadzean, who threw himself on detonated hand grenades to save his comrades, and Robert Quigg, who retrieved wounded from "no man's land" while under fire, both hailed from Northern Ireland and supported British rule over Ireland, while John Holland and Thomas Hughes, who captured enemy soldiers, were from the southern counties and stayed in Ireland after it gained independence. John Vaughan Campbell came from a distinguished military family and used a hunting horn to rouse troops into battle, while Fred McNess, a soldier in the Scots Guards, was badly disfigured while capturing an enemy trench. The seventh man, British-born New Zealander Bernard Freyberg, traveled from the far side of the world to be part of the effort to re-take the French town of Beaucourt. *Heroes of the Somme* combines newsreel footage and rare photographs with interviews of family members to tell the heroes' respective stories, two of which end in harrowing tragedy: Hughes was shunned by his Irish countrymen and died in poverty, while McNess underwent reconstructive surgery but later committed suicide. While the men are justly celebrated, viewers can't help but question British military competence during the Somme campaign, where the leadership seemed to be unconcerned about abnormally high casualty rates. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



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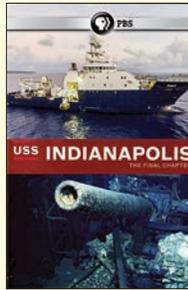
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USS Indianapolis: The Final Chapter ★★★1/2

(2018) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0891-7.



In the closing days of WWII, the USS *Indianapolis*, which was steaming back to the Philippines after delivering atomic bomb components to the island of Tinian, was torpedoed twice by Japanese submarines, going down in 12 minutes, coming to rest on the ocean floor over three miles below. For over 70 years, the ship's actual location has remained a mystery. Directed by Kirk Wolfinger, this PBS-aired documentary maintains a dual focus, following the search for the lost battleship, while also telling the story of the terrible, heroic ordeal of the almost 900 sailors who went into the water. Most of the men were green newcomers, inexperienced in battle. Many were badly injured, and suffered from ingesting saltwater and oil. It was blazing hot during the day and cold at night, with little food or drinkable water. After a few days, lifejackets became waterlogged, weighing the men down. And, of course, as anyone who has seen *Jaws* knows, there were tiger sharks that picked off survivors at random, a horror that many of the aging veterans here still find too awful to describe. One of the survivors was the well-respected ship's commander, Charles McVay, who did not employ a zigzag route while sailing toward port (Navy brass thought the enemy threat was minimal). In the confusion of the war's final days, the *Indianapolis* was not initially missed when it failed to berth on schedule, and almost by chance a U.S. plane spotted the bobbing survivors, with 316 men ultimately rescued after five days in the water. Intertwined with the historical story is a look at the modern-day effort to locate the ship's remains—a high risk operation conducted over a vast territory at crushing depths. Incredibly, the ship is found lying on its side in two major pieces, with some guns intact and artifacts scattered about. The story is brought full circle with the efforts of aging military buffs to rescue McVay's reputation (he was court martialed and eventually committed suicide in 1968). Combining archival material, dramatic re-creations, and interviews, this comprehensive exploration of a tragic chapter in WWII history is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

among the German population—especially the military—during the war to enhance physical performance and help soldiers stay awake and alert during operations like the Blitzkrieg. As is so often the case in historical arguments, by singling out a single factor—here, drug use in the leadership and the rank-and-file—*Nazi Junkies* tends to overemphasize its role in the complex trajectory of the war, but it was clearly one of the elements that might explain Hitler's early successes and late failures. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Swamp ★★★1/2

(2019) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0625-8.

In the words of journalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas (1890-1998), the Everglades is a "river of grass," flowing gently from Lake Okechobee through central and south Florida until it meets the sea. But when the first white men arrived, they saw the Everglades as a wasteland, a swamp full of loathsome reptiles that was only suitable for drainage and development for industry and agriculture. Filmmaker Randall MacLowry's PBS-aired *American Experience* documentary depicts the checkered history of the Everglades, primarily from its late-19th-century boom days, up through

the era of "land suckers" who bought land only to find it under water, and on to the massive drainage projects and alternating periods of drought and deadly floods. A common theme here is human greed, arrogance, and ignorance—running roughshod over nature, animals, and the rights of the Seminoles, who fled south for safety when uprooted from their southern tribal lands. Early boosters such as Governor Napoleon S. Broward promoted the area as an "Eden of America," and "America's new heartland," while naturalist John Muir and other visionaries appreciated its vastness, biodiversity, and solitude. An east-west highway through the Everglades, coupled with dam projects and soil depletion excavation efforts, eventually led to worsened droughts, wildfires, and disastrous floods, killing thousands during hurricanes in the 1920s. But FDR later saw the potential for a national park—a tough sell for a landscape mostly lacking in landmarks—and a park was created in 1947 (although greatly reduced in acreage). Historian Douglas Brinkley and others discuss the legacy of journalist Douglas's writing on the Everglades, the challenge of balancing competing regional interests, and the moral test of meeting the needs of people while also preserving wilderness. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Victoria & Albert: The Wedding ★★★1/2

(2018) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0940-2.

Queen Victoria was still a teenager when she ascended to England's throne in 1837, a time when the English monarchy was increasingly unpopular. Prime Minister Lord Melbourne, who was half in love with Victoria, realized that a suitable marriage and children were necessary to project an image of domesticity and stability to assure the monarchy's future. Filmmaker Ian Denyer's PBS/BBC documentary, hosted by Dr. Lucy Worsley, presents a dramatic re-creation of Victoria and Albert's 1840 wedding, with historic commentary describing the "birth of a brand." Short and shapely, Victoria was besieged with suitors, but Melbourne had his eye on Victoria's German cousin Albert. At first glance, Victoria found him "plump" and less than thrilling (and she wasn't really eager to get married and start producing babies). However, on Albert's second visit a couple of years later, the slimmed-down suitor left young Victoria struck with "pure, beautiful, gobsmacking love." Worsley ably illustrates that nothing in the wedding plans was left to chance: the pure white of the bride and bridesmaid dresses contrasted with the dreary grime of London, lace would be bought in Devon to both buy British and boost employment, an idealized wedding portrait would be commissioned (complete with fabricated medals and military uniform for Albert), and wedding oaths and music would present an ideal portrait of love and fidelity. Victoria had a temper, held grudges, and disliked her controlling mother, but all of that would be obscured in the ceremony and wedding breakfast. Worsley takes viewers behind-the-scenes to show the business of lace and dressmaking, the menus (heavy on sugar and lard), and the delicate seating arrangements, which were often dictated by politics. Victoria and Albert's marriage, sadly cut short by Albert's death some 20 years later, was mostly a happy one. Sure to appeal to history buffs and fans of the ongoing PBS series *Victoria*, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

BIOGRAPHY

Chain of Life: The Rick Boyle Story

★★★1/2

(2019) 63 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

Watching this painfully personal documentary feels like being dropped into the middle of someone's monologue with no idea as to who that individual is or why he or she is sharing intimate confidences. Instead of telling viewers upfront what makes its subject,

a 60-ish man named Rick Boyle, an inspiring figure with a story worth knowing, filmmakers David and Kathi Peters's *Chain of Life* buries its lead, only revealing in the final minutes how Boyle lifted himself out of a life of misery and self-destruction to help others. Capturing Boyle as he sits and quietly lays out the grim details of his childhood (little love, a profound learning disability, a global feeling of worthlessness), his suicidal tendencies, and his remoteness and controlling ways as a father and husband, the film juxtaposes much of his commentary against footage of a bicycle tour of Ireland that he took with his son and a friend. The answer to what Boyle's sad background has to do with his vacation eventually becomes obvious, but only after the viewer strains to put things into long-delayed context. Despite these structural problems, *Chain of Life* does offer a genuine payoff as Boyle's victory over soul-crushing odds and his focus on service emerge. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Kevin Roche: The Quiet Architect ★★★
(2017) 81 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$249 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The almost unbelievably prolific—and highly influential—Irish-American architect Kevin Roche (1922-2019) is profiled in filmmaker Mark Noonan's documentary, which offers an excellent biographical sketch of the Pritzker Prize winner, combining archival materials with penetrating excerpts from interviews with Roche, his

wife, and many admiring colleagues. The film also features extensive, lovingly photographed footage of both the exteriors and interiors of many of his buildings, from the early Oakland Museum (1966) and Ford Foundation (1968) up through the extraordinary Dublin Convention Center (2010). *The Quiet Architect* emphasizes Roche's powerful work ethic and incredible productivity, as well as his innovative ideas about maintaining a strong connection between a building and its environment, and ensuring that the finished structure would be user-friendly. Towards those ends, Roche added interior gardens and pedestrian walkways in some instances, positioned buildings to minimize ecological disruption, and—particularly in the case of corporate headquarters—made office areas not only functional but also inviting. While they do not eschew practicality, Roche's buildings are still especially prized for their remarkable beauty and variety. Fellow architects readily testify to the enormous impact that his approach has had on the field, but also note his modesty and openness, qualities evident in the genial interviews with Roche included here. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Long Goodbye: The Kara Tippetts Story ★★★
(2019) 87 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Thirtysomething Kara Tippetts was a pastor's wife living in Colorado with four

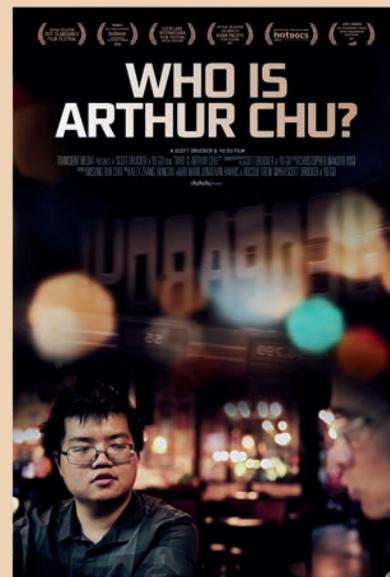
Surviving Birkenau: The Dr. Susan Spatz Story ★★★1/2
(2018) 71 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

At the age of 96, the remarkably youthful and lucid Susan Spatz recounts her own horrifying experiences during the Holocaust, along with the compelling tale of her postwar return to normal life, which turned out to be as confusing, disappointing, and often unhappy as "normalcy" can be. Born in Vienna in 1922, Spatz lived a privileged existence until the Third Reich made life hell for her and fellow European Jews in Berlin, Vienna, and Prague. Eventually imprisoned in the Terezin concentration camp in Czechoslovakia, Spatz endured tremendous suffering, although she also displayed a knack for learning how to lessen the chances of death by being in the right places at the right times (such as working in storage rooms to get out of the cold). Transported to the Auschwitz death camp, Spatz was among the few there who were not murdered by the Nazis. In filmmaker Ron Small's *Surviving Auschwitz*, Spatz describes how the Germans knew full well that they had lost the war and that camps were being liberated as Allied troops advanced, yet they ramped up efforts to kill Jews anyway, for no other reason than to carry on the genocide until being forced to stop. Spatz's recollections of serendipitous moments that saved her are amazing; sometimes, it was literally a matter of turning left instead of right that kept her alive. A failed marriage after the war was disillusioning, but her subsequent emigration to America and enrollment in college at the age of 40 makes for some entertaining memories, especially about how her daughter—who was already attending the same university—worried about ending up at the same student parties as her mom. A powerful portrait of a lively Holocaust survivor, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



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children when she discovered a lump in her breast that turned out to be a sign of a stage 4 cancer that quickly spread to her lymph nodes, and then her brain and bones. Filmmaker Jay Lyons's documentary describes Kara's valiant fight to "live love large" by sharing her suffering with others. Turning her parenting blog into a chronicle of her cancer journey, Kara says that "suffering isn't a mistake." She recounts her struggle to remain physically intimate with her husband, the futility of being angry with God, and her decision to end treatment and enter hospice care. Sometimes her counsel is unwelcome, and her attempt to reach out to a woman with a terminal brain tumor who is contemplating suicide is rebuffed. The film follows her plateaus, bursts of energy, inevitable hair loss, slow physical decline, saying goodbyes, and dealing with her greatest regret—knowing that her children must grow up without her. She takes time to write a book, and is supported by friends, her church congregation, and allies she met on the Internet, notably author Ann Voskamp and TV's *Fixer Upper* star Joanna Gaines. In interviews here, Kara, who died in 2015, admits that enduring pain isn't easy, but that faith, an appreciation for simple things, and living each day fully can help turn illness into a blessing. Extras include additional interviews with Voskamp, Gaines, and quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Moynihan ★★★

(2018) 104 min. DVD: \$24.95. *First Run Features* (avail. from most distributors).

Ambassador to India and the United Nations, author, and U.S. senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1927-2003) was a man for all seasons. Patrician in speech and appearance, the Irish Moynihan was actually a product of New York City's Hell's Kitchen. Co-directed by Toby Perl Freilich and Joseph Dorman, this documentary describes a man who inhabited two worlds, bridging academic thought and government. Moynihan's recurrent theme was the culture of poverty and racism, and the critical need for jobs in urban America. Raised during the Depression, Moynihan was drawn to the idea of government activism after JFK was elected in 1960. Moynihan was always an idea man, but not an ideologue, and in a moment of rare bipartisanship, President Nixon asked him to be his domestic advisor (Nixon actually liked Moynihan, sharing the same hardscrabble upbringing). Alarmed by the rise of the black militant movement in the wake of the 1960s inner city riots, Moynihan courted controversy by urging "benign neglect" of some civil rights issues, but he later became disenchanted with Nixon's "southern strategy" for re-election (which included fanning white grievances), and resigned. Moynihan

again became a polarizing figure when he defended Israel in the United Nations, scorning claims of alleged racist brutality against Palestinians. Always a gadfly, Moynihan sought to raise big questions, using his education and caustic wit. As a senator he was ahead of his time on a wide range of issues, including global warming, international debt, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the rise of ethnic violence. A deal maker, Moynihan tried to work across the aisle, noting that contempt for government would only result in contemptible government. With mostly admiring commentary from George Will, Henry Kissinger, and Chuck Schumer, among others, this thoughtful tribute to a sadly missed public servant is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

The Unimaginable Journey of Peter Ertel

★★★★1/2

(2017) 104 min. DVD: \$95. DRA. *Victory Films* (avail. from www.peterertelfilm.com). PPR.

The subject of Joseph Cahn's documentary is Peter Ertel, who was 96 years old when this film was shot. Ertel's life odyssey is nothing short of astonishing: born in Germany, he was conscripted into Hitler's army despite being a self-proclaimed pacifist and a sarcastic critic of the Nazi philosophy. He survived the military battles on the Russian front, rising to the role of platoon leader. Returning to Germany, Ertel sought to escape the war by surrendering himself to American forces. He was transferred as a prisoner of war to the U.S. and sent to a camp in Alabama where he learned English. After the war, Ertel was recruited by the State Department and returned to Germany to work with the occupying forces in rebuilding the country. He came back to the U.S. with his wife in 1953 and settled in Cleveland, where he took a job with a company owned by Orthodox Jews. Cahn weaves a compelling tapestry of historical footage and personal photographs to trace Ertel's biography, but the key is having Ertel as the on-camera narrator—Ertel is an excellent raconteur who tells a provocative and emotionally enriching life story. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

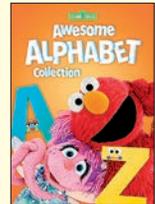
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Series Update

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

Shout! Factory has released **Sesame Street: Awesome Alphabet Collection** (130 min., DVD: \$14.98), starring Elmo, Abby Cadabby, and other Sesame Street pals in an alphabet-themed compilation covering all 26 letters that features celebrity appearances by Norah Jones, Pharrell Williams, Maya Angelou, Sheryl Crow, and Ricky Gervais. See review of *Sesame Street: Be a Good Sport* in VL-5/14.



PBS Home Video has released **The Berenstain Bears: It's Time for School!** (80 min., DVD: \$6.99), featuring characters from Stan and Jan Berenstain's lovable Bear family series as they learn about school. See review of *The Berenstain Bears Christmas Tree* in VL-11/08.

The PAW Patrol explores new territory in **PAW Patrol: Jungle Rescues** (96 min., DVD: \$14.99), the newest title from Paramount and Nickelodeon's computer-animated series following puppy patrollers Marshall, Chase, Zuma, Skye, Rubble, and Rocky. See review of *PAW Patrol* in VL-7/14.

Newly available from S'more Entertainment is **The Dick Cavett Show—Baseball's Greatest Hits: Pitchers** (390 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95), in which the legendary host converses with Major League Baseball pitchers including Whitey Ford, Dizzy Dean, and Satchel Paige, as well as guests such as Mickey Mantle, Paul Simon, and Salvador Dali. See review of *Dick Cavett's Vietnam* in VL-11/15.

Hosted by Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., **Finding Your Roots: Season 5** (600 min., DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99), the 2019 fifth season of PBS's genealogical series, explores the family trees of notables including Christiane Amanpour, Lisa Ling, George R.R. Martin, Kehinde Wiley, and Kal Penn. See review of *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* in VL Online-11/12.



Cardcaptor Sakura: Clear Card, Part 1 ★★☆☆/2

(2018) 2 discs. 275 min. Blu-ray: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



A year has passed since the end of *Cardcaptor Sakura*, and Sakura Kinomoto and her friends are entering middle school. Her beau Syaoran has returned from Hong Kong and Sakura's biggest challenge lies in choosing a club (cheerleading)—until a robed stranger appears in strange dreams. Her captured Clow magic cards are now safely blank, but new threats appear in the form of Clear cards and a magic that is detectable only by Sakura. Luckily, best pal Tomoyo is still on hand to provide new costumes, as Sakura resumes her *Cardcaptor* activities. Also still around are the Japanese voice actors from the original series (20 years ago!). Still guided by the creative collective CLAMP, *Clear Card* provides plenty of nostalgia, with the same clean character designs, episode formula—a new card appears every week—and even some of the same music. The emphasis on relationships between the characters also remains, although some—like Eriol—have moved across the sea and play a smaller role, and a new exchange student joins Sakura's class. The color palette is a little lighter, the animation is sharper, and the characters enjoy some modern technology. And despite the continuity, new viewers will have no difficulty entering the kind, sweet world of Sakura. Presenting the first 11 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-PG, extras include a prologue OVA bridging the two series. Highly recommended. [Note: *Cardcaptor Sakura: Clear Card, Part 2* is also newly available.] (L. Martincik)

Doreiku—The Animation: Complete Collection ★★

(2018) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



A strange device serves as a catalyst in this anime series adapted from a series of novels by Shinichi Okada. The SCM, or Slave Control Method, is a lipguard that two people challenging one another in any sort of game can agree—voluntarily—to place in their mouths. The effect is that the loser will automatically become the winner's slave, subject to whatever services the victor might whimsically demand until the master chooses to release his captive. Over the course of the series, a large number of people fall victim to the SCM, and some are subjected to fairly horrific mistreatment as a result. The focus, however, falls on two figures. One is Eia, a girl clever enough to avoid becoming a slave and strong enough to help others who have unwisely chosen to engage in the competition. The other is Ryuuo, a young boy who

initially appears to be a ruthless villain but is ultimately revealed to be collecting slaves in order to win freedom for his mother from her creditors. The underlying premise of *Doreiku* is interesting, but the series suffers from too many barely-sketched characters, extremely abrupt plot twists, and a tone that many will consider morbid if not downright ugly. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-MA, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Hakata Tonkotsu Ramens ★★

(2018) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This anime series based on light novels by Chiaki Kizaki focuses on Zenji Banba, owner of a detective agency in a high-crime district. Lin Xianming, a Chinese cross-dresser and expert knife fighter, is hired to kill Zenji, but somehow winds up working for the agency and is even recruited to play on Zenji's baseball team. Zenji's business incorporates input from a ragtag bunch of violent misfits, ranging from a ramen stall owner who moonlights as a hitman, to a professional torturer from the Dominican Republic, as well as a hacker and a masked samurai. The series tries to strike a balance between goofball comedy and Peckinpah-worthy volleys of artistic violence, but strains too hard to be cute while also going severely overboard in the blood and gore department. To its credit, the character of Lin is quite interesting, and it's a shame that so much time is wasted on stock characters before an abrupt midway detour that offers details on how Lin wound up in the professional and personal situations that define his life. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, this is an optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Hina Logic—From Luck & Logic: The Complete Series ★★

(2017) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



The Japanese card-game-based anime series *Luck & Logic* (VL-9/17) proved to be popular (or at least profitable) enough to inspire this so-so spinoff. The setting is a Japan where intruding aliens called "foreigners" have launched hostile attacks, but benevolent foreigners have conferred monster-battling powers on select humans, who are called "Logicalists." Here, even though principal fighting is over, the special ALCA state school continues to accept girls as fresh would-be Logicalists—just in case. Lioness is an actual princess from a mythical realm, happy to step away from her clingy

royal family (led by a musclemanking patriarch with a slightly pervy attitude toward nubile girls) and hopefully bond with a foreigner of her own. Her relationship with seasoned Logicalist Nina results in much shojo-oriented comedy of earnest young heroines-in-training, who inevitably display impressive cleavage in fan-service swimsuit episodes and indulge in girl-on-girl cuddly stuff after enchanted Valentine's chocolates make them fall for each other. Ho hum. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is strictly an optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Just Because! Complete Collection ★★

(2017) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$69.99. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



The anime wing of Universal Pictures is behind the release of this low-key, realistic Japanese classroom drama boasting the extremely rare sight (by anime standards) of Japanese high schoolers in cartoon form actually studying. A loose plot arc concerns a group of third-year students faced with approaching maturity and dilemmas related to college, exams, employment, and confessing feelings for each other. Long-absent classmate Eita moves back to town to finish as a transfer student, stirring up close-knit friendships among kids who have been together since middle school. His athlete-cohort Haruto yearns for steady dating with longtime crush Hazuki, but that shy girl can think of nothing except rejecting him. Into the little circle intrudes Ena, an ambitious sophomore trying hard to revive the school's dying photo club with her voyeuristic picture-taking. While some viewers might find the narrative slow and mundane, much of it carries the bittersweet ring of truth (think of the films of Yasujiro Ozu), and it is refreshing to behold chalkboard situations unfolding without anime's customary infusions of robots, aliens, vampires, "magical girls," or harem-comedy bathing scenes. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

KanColle—Fleet Girls Collection: The Complete Series ★★

(2015) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$29.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



A strong fan base seems to be attached to the *Kantai* series of properties based on a hit video game that appears to ask the question, what if the girls of *Sailor Moon* really were sailors? In *KanColle* (short for "Kantai Collection"), Earth's oceans are taken over by "Abyssals"—a mystery aquatic

race that dominates the oceans with bad-girl troops and biomechanical warcraft (bearing strong resemblance to *Pinocchio's* Monstro the Whale). Japan's solution: outfit sailor-suited schoolgirls with wearable battleship bits and cannons and then send them skimming over the waves to fight as "cruisers," "destroyers," etc. The story arc follows new recruit Fubuki as she enlists and learns bravery under battle, endures the loss of comrades, and tries on swimsuits (one "Fleet Girl" is also a lingerie model). Meanwhile, members of the admiralty exhibit bosoms large enough to be flotation devices. Some have criticized the series as revisionist glorification of Japan's WWII militarism, but really it's the dork factor that goes off the deep end—unless the whole thing is a subversive spoof of war propaganda or a metaphor for the Japanese can-do spirit, in which case I am badly misinterpreting. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2015 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, extras include promo videos. Optional. (C. Cassidy)

Katana Maidens: Toji No Miko, Part One ★★1/2

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



This fantasy anime series, based on Sakae Saito's manga series, introduces the young heroines of the title—sword-wielding girls, or Toji, who attend special schools while using their skills to battle fearsome creatures called "aradama" that threaten humanity. The Toji also participate in annual tournaments in which teams from each campus face off. In the latest contest, Kanami Eto of Minoseki Academy is pitted against Hiyori Jujo of Heijou Institute for the championship, but instead of fighting her opponent, Hiyori attempts to kill Yukari Origami, who is head of the law enforcement agency tied to the Toji. Kanami impulsively saves Hiyori from Yukari's bodyguards, believing her rival when she says that Yukari is actually an aradama in disguise—which proves to be the case. The remainder of the narrative arc follows the struggle of Kanami, Hiyori, and their friends against Yukari and her followers, and the gradual revelation of Yukari's ultimate purpose, one that turns out to be related to a terrible disaster in which Yukari fought the aradama decades earlier. *Katana Maidens* features some exciting action sequences, and the animation—a mixture of styles that is particularly impressive in the swordfight sequences and creature attacks—is for the most part effective, but the characters are seriously lacking in depth. Compiling the first 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. [Note: *Katana Maidens: Toji No Miko, Part Two* is also newly available.] (F. Swietek)

Kino's Journey: The Beautiful World—The Animated Series: The Complete Series ★★★

(2017) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



A quest-oriented book franchise by pseudonymous light-novel writer "Keiichi Sigsawa" (his surname a tribute to the gun manufacturer SIG Sauer) was adapted for this anime series that blends lyricism, bloody violence, and a fable-like episodic narrative. Kino is a girl, disguised throughout as a boy, who ventures into an unspecified land via "motorrad"—a talking motorcycle called Hermes (which is taken in stride by everyone and never clearly defined either as a computer or a magical artifact). The pair are "travelers" who visit different settled communities ("countries") in each episode, weighing whether to remain or continue onwards. Some countries are outright dystopias; others seem idyllic but conceal strange or twisted cultures. Kino finds one that is a giant, nomadic cylinder (shades of *Howl's Moving Castle*), where public mayhem is falsely blamed on mind-control radio waves; another in which childhood is surgically removed at age 12; and more than one seemingly friendly locale where the folkways permit murder. Kino's own backstory is not exactly what it seems and is threaded throughout in flashbacks. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, extras include an interview with Sigsawa. A thoughtful series, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Kokkoku: Moment by Moment, Complete Collection ★★

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



Based on a manga by Seita Horio, this horror anime series starts with an intriguing premise. When spunky heroine Juri Yukawa returns from another unsuccessful job interview, she discovers that her brother Tsubasa and nephew Makoto have been kidnapped and a hefty ransom has been demanded. Her grandfather reveals that he has a mysterious stone with a supernatural ability—the power to stop time and move through a world that is otherwise motionless in a state called Stasis. Ostensibly, they can use the stone to find the culprits and rescue the captives. But the kidnappers are part of a cult called the Genuine Love Society led by Junji Sagawa, who seeks to exploit the secrets of the Stasis for his own purposes and proves to be a formidable foe. The danger is exacerbated by the fact that the Yukawa family is highly dysfunctional, with Tsubasa an unreliable layabout and Juri's father Takafumi an oafish sort who has just lost his job. The series follows

the clan as its various members discover the extent—and limits—of their powers (which they are prone to misuse). Also introduced are Specters (which enable people to move in the Stasis) and Handlers (which can intervene to stop those who try to use the Stasis to inflict harm on others), and it closes with a curious reversal involving Juri and Sagawa. While the ideas behind *Kokkoku* are interesting, the characters are mostly unlikable and the narrative often seems confused. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-MA, this is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Legend of the Galactic Heroes—Die Neue These: Season 1 ★★★

(2018) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This anime adaptation of sci-fi novels by Yoshiaki Tanaka takes place in a chaotic outer space future where the monarchic Galactic Empire and the democratic Free Planets Alliance have been fighting a never-ending war. Each has a handsome and brilliant young military mind leading its forces—Reinhard von Lohengramm of the Galactic Empire and Yang Wen-li of Free Planets Alliance—and the storyline follows both warriors as they plan complex strategies. The narrative also pinballs into extended flashbacks regarding the people and events that shaped Reinhard and Yang's respective lives. With its mix of in-depth military planning and the evolution of two deeply complex central characters, the series goes beyond the usual action-heavy approach of many outer space anime adventures. An entertaining and handsomely animated reboot of an anime classic that aired from 1988-97, this collection compiles all 12 episodes from the 2018 debut season in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14. Recommended. (P. Hall)

My Girlfriend is Shobitch: Complete Collection ★★

(2017) 2 discs. 275 min. Blu-ray: \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



It's rather hard to be outraged when the material here (derived from comics) is so upfront about being raunchy, smutty humor that is akin to the *American Pie* franchise (even the scene transitions feature schoolgirl skirts hiking up). High-school sophomore Haruka admires accomplished classmate Akiho and asks her to be his girlfriend. She accepts—and begins reciting sexual positions with reference numbers. Although a virgin, perfectionist Akiho is an aspiring sex adept, studying erotic fetishes and sensual gratification from early childhood (encouraged by her lookalike mom) in

order to be an ideal bed partner. Repetitious situations find polite Haruka constantly misunderstood about his intentions; meanwhile, the school itself is a hothouse environment of oversexed/curious females (and lascivious faculty, especially the nurse), where everything from curing hiccups to gripping a baseball bat gets misinterpreted as dirty mischief. Even when the series turns genuinely sweet and emotional—as in the penultimate declaration-of-love segment—it's followed by stuff like the leads trapped in an "excitement hotel" where robots will not release them until they have intercourse (with robots, if not each other). Among the extras is a gag episode redub in which the English-language cast dispenses with the original script and just spouts double-entendres nonstop. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2017 (along with an OVA) in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-MA, this is an optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Rampo Kitan: Game of Laplace ★★1/2

(2015) 2 discs. 275 min. Blu-ray: \$29.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This anime series celebrates the work of one of the pioneers of Japanese mystery writing, Taro Hirai (1894-1965)—better known by his pen name Edogawa Rampo—on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his death. Directed by Seiji Kishi, the series stitches together elements from Rampo's stories about genius teen detective Kogoro Akechi and his group of boy assistants. The first helper, Kobayashi Yoshio, is introduced at the start, awakening in his school homeroom to find his teacher brutally slashed to death, and the murder weapon in Kobayashi's hand. After he is proved innocent, Kobayashi and his ultra-loyal best friend Soji Hashiba aim to attach themselves to the initially dismissive Akechi, who insists they must prove their worth by identifying the killer. Thrilled by the challenge, Kobayashi discovers that the dead teacher was a murderer too, and that becomes the thread tying together the remaining cases, all of which involve criminals who have escaped punishment but are now being killed—or executed—by a vigilante, or, more accurately, a succession of vigilantes, that operate under the name Twenty Faces. The plot is frankly preposterous and much of the action is quite gruesome, while Kobayashi's childish enthusiasm eventually grows rather unsettling (as does the rising popularity of Twenty Faces). Nevertheless, this intriguing mystery anime does bring the work of a significant Japanese author to a wider audience. Compiling all 11 episodes from 2015 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-MA, extras include an episode commentary and a promo video. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

A Silent Voice ★★1/2

(2016) 130 min. DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



Adapted from a popular manga serial, filmmaker Naoko Yamada's remarkable animated feature takes on the issue of school bullying through the story of Shoya, a fun-loving rascal who feeds off the attention he gets when he starts making fun of Shoko, a deaf girl who joins his grade school class. When Shoya pushes the ridicule into cruel and destructive acts, Shoko transfers and Shoya is shunned by his classmates, who take the blame for their own complicity in his bullying. Years later, high school student Shoya (still an outcast) attempts to make amends by reaching out to Shoko—even learning sign language. The story itself is much more complex than this summary—it opens with Shoya planning suicide and follows his later struggles with guilt—and it features a nuanced cast of characters. While Shoya makes a sincere effort to be a better person, classmates who encouraged and even joined in the bullying are also forced to confront their own actions (or inactions) when he brings Shoko back into their lives. *A Silent Voice* delivers a powerful and important message about kindness and responsibility while also exploring issues related to self-esteem, forgiveness, and the confusing emotions of adolescence. Presented in a dual-language edition in separate DVD and Blu-ray/DVD Combo releases, suitable for 13-up, extras include promo videos and a music video. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Space Runaway Ideon: Complete Series + Movies ★★★

(1980) 6 discs. 1,158 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$34.99. Maiden Japan (avail. from most distributors).



Bowing on Blu-ray, *Gundam* creator Yoshiyuki Tomino's classic mecha 1980-81 anime centers on a space struggle between earthlings and an alien race called the Buff Clan over a piece of ancient technology. Discovered by an archaeological team from Earth on the planet Solo, Ideon is a gigantic robot that assembles itself from three trucks. Accidentally reactivated when the Buff Clan attacks, it accompanies the outmanned earthlings as they escape on an ancient spacecraft with the enemy in close pursuit. Among the passengers is Karala, the daughter of the Buff Clan commander, who tells the earthlings of her people's search for the Ide—the force that drives both the robot and the ship. As the chase continues from planet to planet, many perish during skirmishes, and the Ideon's power grows to world-annihilating levels and is ultimately used to literally remake humankind (*Ideon's*

final message is that humans must learn to use technology for beneficial rather than destructive ends). Presented in a boxy 4:3 aspect ratio, the animation is the flat, comic-book standard of the early '80s, and the overall tone of the series is quite harsh—the Ideon is no friendly Optimus Prime, but a dangerous piece of equipment. While *Ideon* might be more important for its influence on mecha anime than its intrinsic quality, this well-engineered set does the series proud. Compiling all 39 episodes plus two 1982 feature films—*A Contact* and *Be Invoked*—in a Blu-ray edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-MA, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Star Blazers 2202: Part One ★★1/2

(2017) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



In Japan, the long-running fan favorite *Space Battleship Yamato* comics/TV cartoon/theatrical feature franchise (launched in 1974) has been getting super-deluxe remakes. In this installment, the catastrophic 22nd-century war between Earth and the imperialistic, blue-skinned Gamilans has ended with a peace treaty and uneasy alliance between the two races. But a fresh threat emerges from another marauder: the green Atlanteans, a ruthless race of test-tube militarists who proclaim their superiority due to an absence of emotion and they covet the powers of an ancient culture that literally transcended physical being to evolve into a goddess-like entity. Answering the latter's divine distress call is Earth's main defender, the hero starship *Yamato* and its young new captain, Kodai. The crew of the *Yamato* defy their bureaucratic superior's political ambitions and intrigues to set forth into deep space, where massive attacks and cruel dilemmas constantly challenge Kodai's resolve to save lives and resist using the *Yamato's* ultimate weapon, the "wave-motion gun." The animation is high quality, with CGI assists for the formidable warships. Presenting the first 13 episodes from 2017-18 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include an English-dub cast episode commentary and interviews with voice actors. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Anime Essentials

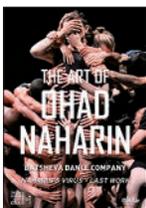
Funimation has added new Blu-ray editions of previously reviewed titles to its anime "Essentials" line, including *Castle Town Dandelion: The Complete Series* (VL-5/17 ★1/2), *Chaos Dragon: The Complete Series* (VL-7/17 ★★★), and *Sky Wizards Academy: The Complete Series* (VL-5/17 ★★1/2), all priced at \$29.99 each.



The Art of Ohad Naharin

★★★

(2018) 129 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Bel Air Classics (dist. by Naxos of America).



Ohad Naharin, the artistic director of Israel's Bat-sheva Dance Company from 1990 to 2018, is called "Mr. Gaga" for the idiosyncratic "movement language" that he devised for the troupe (see review of *Mr. Gaga* in VL-1/18). *The Art of Ohad Naharin* compiles two of his cutting-edge ballets. *Naharin's Virus* (2002) finds the company dancers writhing—individually and in various groups—to Arab folk music in front of a wall they scribble on until the word "plastelina" appears (an obviously distorted reference to Palestine). Meanwhile, a suited figure atop the wall declaims insults from Peter Handke's absurdist play *Offending the Audience*, and the piece ends in frenzied movement as the dancers attempt to scale the wall, followed by a return to sedateness. In *Last Work* (2015), set to a score by Grischa Lichtenberger, the dancers engage in brief solos and duets that often take unusual forms—one face-covered man waves a large white flag and another cleans his rifle in an almost lustful way—while a young woman in a blue dress runs on a treadmill in the background. Towards the end, a sleazy emcee appears and begins wrapping everything—his microphone, the dancers, the running woman—in packing tape. What the meaning of either piece might be, or whether any specific meaning is even intended, is left to the judgment of the individual viewer, but both works—filmed at the Théâtre National de Chaillot in Paris (in 2014 and 2017 respectively)—carry a powerful visceral impact. Presented in PCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Foreigner: Live at the Rainbow '78 ★★★

(1978) 75 min. DVD: \$15.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



After their eponymous 1977 debut album crested the Top 20 in the *Billboard* charts for a year, Foreigner played London's Rainbow Theatre in April 1978, serving up a blistering 12-song set. The classic lineup featured Lou Gramm (vocals), Mick Jones (lead guitar), Ian McDonald (guitars, flute), Al Greenwood (keyboards), Ed Gagliardi (bass), and Dennis Elliott (drums). Today, the blues-based rock band's lyrics come across as silly ("And I guess it's just the woman in you/That brings out the man in me") and even borderline offensive ("Are you old enough?"), but along with Journey, Bad Company, and Styx, Foreigner was able to command a solid arena-rock fan base thanks to a number of catchy songs. Although their

megahits "Juke Box Hero" and "I Wanna Know What Love Is" were still in the future, the band in '78 still had some fine material to draw from, including the singles "Feels Like the First Time" and "Cold As Ice," the driving "Long, Long Way from Home," the power ballads "Woman Oh Woman" and "Fool for You Anyway," and the prog-rock-y "Starrider." A special treat is hearing a song from their then-upcoming release *Double Vision* that went on to become a big hit: "Hot-Blooded." Although the image is presented in a boxy aspect ratio, the remastered visuals are clear and the sound is excellent. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LCPM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (R. Pitman)

Il Giasone ★★★1/2

(2017) 182 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$39.99. Alpha Classics (dist. by Naxos of America).



Francesco Cavalli's 1649 opera receives a delightfully eccentric interpretation in this 2017 production from Switzerland's Grand Théâtre de Geneve. A retelling of the Greek myth chronicling Jason's pursuit of the Golden Fleece, the staging places more emphasis on romantic entanglements than Harryhausen-worthy adventure, with Jason and Queen Medea deepening their emotional bond—much to the consternation of King Aegus, husband of Medea, and Hypsipyle, Jason's jettisoned lover and mother of their children. Jason's procrastination in his mission also raises the ire of Hercules, brawniest of the Argonauts, and their arguments are the most entertaining aspect of this mounting, with scrawny countertenor Valer Sabadus as Jason in an intellectual duel with bass Alexander Milev (fitted into a musclebound costume decorated with tattoos) as Hercules. Stage director Serena Sinigaglia keeps the action moving at a solid pace on an abstract stone setting featuring a somewhat phallic pillar. Costume designer Ezio Toffolutti steals the show with playful creations: the Argonauts are presented as steampunk ruffians, Hypsipyle's ladies in waiting wear the finest 1920s travel clothing, and Mary Femeinar's Cupid is encased in a fat suit with delightfully shabby wings. Performed by the Cappella Mediterranea under the baton of Leonardo García Alarcón, this is a handsomely framed presentation for contemporary audiences of Cavalli's rarely-performed masterwork. Presented in 5.1 surround sound, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Joe Louis Walker: Viva Las Vegas Live

★★★

(2018) 85 min. DVD: \$19.95 (audio CD included). Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Prolific recording artist and guitar legend

Joe Louis Walker, aged 69, has a fascinating history as a former teen prodigy who played with the likes of John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, and Jimi Hendrix before walking away from his chosen music, the blues, to pursue gospel for several years. Eventually returning to the blues format, Walker made a name for himself as a virtuoso player, composer, producer, and collaborator (Bonnie Raitt, James Cotton). In this 2018 concert filmed at Las Vegas's Boulder Station, the still-youthful Walker plays a lively 10-song set backed by a spare crew of bass, drums, and keyboards. Mining every opportunity to turn a solo into a lengthy expression of emotional nuance, Walker hits the ground running with the highly-charged manifesto "I'm Not Messin' Around," followed by songs of lament, yearning, and passion. The excitement ramps up when Walker switches guitars and starts playing with a grittier, crunchier sound and different tuning, turning powerful tracks such as "Soldier for Jesus" and "You Don't Love Me Girl" into taut rockers. Also featuring "Sugar Mama," "Young Girls Blues," and "Too Drunk to Drive Drunk," this is an engaging concert with solid camerawork that captures Walker's fingers crawling with spidery finesse over his strings. Presented in stereo and packaged with a bonus audio CD, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)



Journey: Live in Japan

2017 ★★★

(2017) 131 min. DVD: \$29.99 (audio CDs included), Blu-ray: \$32.99 (audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Hard to say exactly who is the audience for this 2017 concert filmed at Japan's legendary Budokan arena in Tokyo featuring decades-old rock band Journey. General rock 'n' roll fans would likely welcome an oldies road show with a large helping of the band's considerable catalog of hits, but instead the group performs 1981's *Escape* and 1983's *Frontiers* in their entirety (or near-entirety—"Troubled Child" from the latter album is absent). So while it's easy to enjoy "Don't Stop Believin'," "Who's Crying Now," "Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)," and "Faithfully," non-hardcore Journey fans will likely (and quite justifiably) be unfamiliar with such mundane tunes as "Lay It Down," "Dead or Alive," and "Chain Reaction." On the other hand, serious fans who cherish the original albums may not be overly excited since lead singer Steve Perry is long gone, replaced by admittedly uncanny sing-alike Arnel Pineda (although for some reason, three of the songs are sung by "additional musician" and extra keyboardist Travis Thibodaux). Anyone who notices where the camera lingers will be quite aware that this is The Neal Schon Show, the

talented founding member lead guitarist who along with keyboardist Jonathan Cain forms the musical backbone of Journey, joined by Ross Valory on bass and Steve Smith on drums. In addition to the songs, Schon, Cain, and Smith all have solos (which seems especially superfluous in Schon's case). And for an encore, the band performs "La Raza del Sol" (a cut that didn't make *Frontiers* and features a lot of Schon noodling) and their megahit "Lovin', Touchin', Squeezin'." Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include two audio CDs of the concert. Optional. (R. Pitman)

Le Nozze di Figaro

★★★★

(2015) 188 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$39.99. Accentus Music (avail. from most distributors).



The presence of superstar conductor Gustavo Dudamel is likely the main selling point for this 2015 production of Mozart's masterpiece from Berlin's Staatsoper Unter den Linden. Dudamel conducts the Staatskapelle Berlin in a smooth, somewhat romantic version of the score that is very sensitive to the singers, who are generally excellent, with Ildebrando D'Arcangelo's lustful Count Almaviva and Marianne Crebassa's page Cherubino especially impressive, while Dorothea Röschmann's sorrowful Countess and Anna Prohaska's Susanna (the maid the count lusts after) are not far behind. The only principal who fails fully to impress is Lauri Vasar, whose Figaro—the count's valet and Susanna's betrothed—is too lightweight in every sense. What holds this production back from the front rank, however, is the physical staging. Jürgen Flimm sets the opera at a summer house during the 1920s, using a walkway in front of the pit for entirely too much of the action and having characters lurk in the background of scenes to eavesdrop on conversations—a tiresome cliché. Moreover, Ursula Kudrna's costumes are often peculiar, with the countess's pantaloons being the most obvious offender. Flimm (or perhaps Dudamel) also indulges in an arbitrary transposition of musical numbers in Act III, a jarring change for viewers familiar with the original order. But even though it falls short in some respects, this is still appealing, especially for devotees of Dudamel. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Léonore, ou L'Amour conjugal ★★★

(2017) 82 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.99. Naxos (avail. from most distributors).

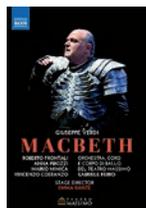
Leonore, Beethoven's original version of his much-revised opera *Fidelio*, has been occasionally performed and recorded, but this

release marks something even rarer: a 2017 production of an earlier 1798 opera—composed by Pierre Gaveaux with a libretto by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly—that served as Beethoven's inspiration. It is a much slighter piece than Beethoven's—mixing music with spoken dialogue—telling the tale of a wrongfully imprisoned man who is threatened by a brutal captor but saved by his faithful wife (which can be understood as a critique of Robespierre's then-recent Reign of Terror). *Leonore* is performed in an intimate, small-scale 2017 production at John Jay College in New York, and is presented by Opera Lafayette, a group based in Washington, D.C., that specializes in little-known works of the French baroque and classical periods. Oriol Tomas's staging is spare, and under the energetic direction of Ryan Brown the original-instrument orchestra is scrappy. The singers—headed up by tenor Jean-Michel Richter as the imprisoned Florestan and Kimy McLaren as the faithful Léonore—hardly offer world-class vocalism, but they manage the fairly undemanding score reasonably well. To be clear, Gaveaux's work is not a forgotten masterpiece, but while fated to remain a footnote in the literature about *Fidelio*, this competent resurrection by Brown offers opera-lovers a rare opportunity to see a work that inspired a greater one. Presented in PCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



Macbeth ★★1/2

(2017) 156 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.99. Naxos (avail. from most distributors).



Emma Dante's 2017 staging of Verdi's first opera based on Shakespeare at the Teatro Massimo de Palermo exhibits a few imaginative touches—Macbeth, for example, arrives on a skeleton of a horse that carries intimations of death from the very start; huge grill-like crowns allude to how he is imprisoned by his lust for kingship; and a ladder-like throne suggests his tottering power base. For the most part, however, the physical staging is pretty threadbare, with minimalist sets and costumes (the frequently used device of having chorus members gyrate under swirls of cloth gets old fast), while many of the effects, such as beds moving about the stage during Lady Macbeth's mad scene or the well-tended shrubs that represent Birnam Wood toward the close, are almost comical. Even the dressing of King Duncan's body for burial, mimicking a crucifixion, comes across as precious rather than powerful. Musically, the best element here is Anna Pirozzi's ferocious Lady Macbeth, beside which veteran Roberto Frontali's Macbeth comes across as merely adequate. Gabriele Ferro conducts

with a keen ear and the orchestra and chorus respond enthusiastically. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

May It Last: A Portrait of the Avett Brothers

★★★

(2019) 104 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Oscilloscope (avail. from most distributors).



Hollywood producer-director Judd Apatow co-directed (along with Michael Bonfiglio) this music documentary about Seth and Scott Avett, two North Carolina siblings who pooled their talents in the 1990s and formed an enduring singer-songwriter duo called the Avett Brothers. *May It Last* focuses on the musical origins and family ties involved in the Avett Brothers' co-songwriting ethic, and their Americana-genre sound (a mashup of bluegrass, punk rock, pop jangle, and rustic folk—with some feverish fiddling and plenty of foot-stomping). Viewers see the Avetts in musical footage from their younger years, including club dates, when they were virtual—if passionate—unknowns, and later in guest spots on the David Letterman and Jimmy Kimmel talk shows (these days the Avetts sell out Madison Square Garden). Both appear to be very likeable and seemingly mature husbands and fathers, and they spend much of the film here working on their 2016 studio album *True Sadness*, presided over by superstar producer Rick Rubin (Johnny Cash, the Beastie Boys). The accessible yet always slightly enigmatic Rubin says that the Avetts' real appeal is that they sound like family, which is a very old Americana virtue indeed. Presented in 5.1 surround sound and stereo, extras include deleted scenes, a recording of "Satan Pulls the Strings," a live performance of "I Wish I Was," and a music video for "Morning Song." Recommended. (T. Keogh)

The Nutcracker ★★1/2

(2018) 97 min. DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



Any new release of Tchaikovsky's perennial Christmas ballet faces stiff competition from productions by the world's most famous companies that feature renowned dancers as well as sumptuous sets and costumes. Valery Kovtun's 2018 staging with the Ballet Company of the National Opera of Ukraine in Odessa is a far less spectacular affair—a perfectly decent provincial account, but hardly the equal of others available. The production follows the traditional two-act St. Petersburg version of 1892, with sets and cos-

tumes designed by Mariia Levytska that are attractive without being particularly opulent. The company orchestra delivers a competent if unexceptional reading of the score under the baton of Oleksiy Baklan, while the chief soloists—Iuliia Moskalenko as Clara and Mykyta Sukhorukov as the Nutcracker Prince—are an engaging pair, who perform their important *pas de deux* effectively. Other company dancers also do well in the smaller roles, and the string of show-stoppers at the close make suitable impact. While this *Nutcracker* is unlikely to be anyone's first choice, it is an agreeable mounting that would appeal to admirers of the Odessa company. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Onegin ★★★★★

(2017) 96 min. DVD: \$31.99, Blu-ray: \$41.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



This 1965 ballet, based on Alexander Pushkin's 1833 Russian verse novel (and the Tchaikovsky opera adapted from it), is regarded as one of the masterpieces (along with *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*) by John Cranko (1927-1973), the dancer/choreographer who became artistic director of the Stuttgart Ballet in 1961 and transformed it into one of the world's premier companies, while also reviving the full-evening story ballet form that had fallen into disfavor in an age devoted to one-act plotless works. This 2017 revival, beautifully mounted by the company, was part of the final season in the tenure of Reid Anderson, the director since 1996, who was mentored by Cranko. The set and costume designs by Jürgen Rose remain exquisite, the score (Tchaikovsky, mostly from *The Seasons*) is played elegantly under the baton of James Tuggle, and the dancing is impeccable. Friedemann Vogel is a superbly disdainful Onegin and David Moore a volatile Lensky, the friend Onegin kills in a duel after Onegin has flirted with Lensky's fiancée Olga (the equally remarkable Elisa Badenes), while Alicia Amatriain captures the full range of Tatiana, Olga's younger sister, whose attentions Onegin first cruelly rejects but comes to desire years later, only to be spurned himself. As an added treat, Marcia Haydée, the original Tatiana, appears as the girls' nurse. One could hardly imagine a more perfect tribute to Cranko's talent and influence as a choreographer than this masterful recreation of one of his greatest works. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray edition) and PCM stereo, extras include an extended interview segment with Anderson, Rose, and Haydée. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice** (F. Swietek)

Orphée et Euridice

★★★1/2

(2018) 129 min. In French w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$35.99. Belvedere (dist. by Naxos of America).



Although the original 1762 Vienna version of Christoph Willibald Gluck's opera, which reformed lyric tragedy by emphasizing emotional expression over vocal pyrotechnics, was performed in Italian, this 2018 production from La Scala in Milan presents the French revision that the composer made for Paris in 1774. In addition to the language alteration, it also adds new music—mostly brief dances for the interpolated ballets that French audiences expected—while rewriting the role of Orpheus, the musician who travels to Hades to bring his late wife back to the world of the living, from alto to high tenor. Juan Diego Flórez does not possess the sort of haute-contre voice for which Gluck wrote (or rewrote) the role, but his heroic tenor is so free, accurate, and dramatic that it would be churlish to complain, while sopranos Christiane Karg (Euridice) and Fatma Said (L'Amour) provide admirable support. Unfortunately, under conductor Michele Mariotti, the orchestra—situated on a moving platform at the rear of the stage—as well as the chorus sound a bit mushy. Nor does Hofesh Shechter's choreography come across as particularly apt, involving mostly angular, spasmodic movements, while the spare sets and modern costumes are not terribly inviting. One might also dispute some staging decisions by Shechter and John Fulljames—for instance, the decision to have Orpheus at the close immolate a mannequin to signify a second funeral service for the wife he has now lost twice. But the quality of the vocalism alone makes this worth considering. Presented in DTS 5.0, Dolby Digital 5.0, and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Woody Guthrie: All-Star Tribute Concert 1970

★★★★1/2

(2019) 80 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Previously unavailable in any form, this remarkable historic concert film—capturing a benefit for the California chapter of the Committee to Combat Huntington's Disease (the fatal illness that took Woody Guthrie's life in 1967)—offers a superb presentation of the Hollywood Bowl event, which taps the combined talents of Woody's son Arlo Guthrie, and such friends and kindred spirits as Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Odetta, Country Joe McDonald, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, and Richie Havens. The 15 songs performed hail from

the vast canon of Americana composed by Woody Guthrie, and the fun (and musically adventurous) angle lies in the occasional mix-and-match of the show's artists on individual numbers. While there are plenty of solo spots (Arlo on "Oklahoma Hills," Seeger's take on "The Sinking of the Reuben James"), the real treat is finding Baez in a duet with Seeger on the appealing "So Long, It's Been Good to Know Yuh," and McDonald, Elliott, and others harmonizing on "Goin' Down the Road Feeling Bad." Two big stars from the era, Peter Fonda (riding high from the success of *Easy Rider*) and Woody's pal Will Geer (soon to be seen in *The Waltons*) host the concert, reading excerpts from Guthrie's copious writings. Although it's too bad that Guthrie protégé Bob Dylan wasn't on hand for the tribute, this is a still huge treat for music fans. Presented in stereo, extras include three bonus songs, and brief audio interviews with Arlo Guthrie and Elliott. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Wozzeck ★★1/2

(2017) 107 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.99. Naxos (avail. from most distributors).



Not long ago, Alban Berg's 1925 opera—with its grotesque plot and astringent atonal music—was rarely performed. Now it is part of the repertory of virtually every international company. Adapted from a play by Georg Büchner, the libretto is based on an actual murder case in which a soldier killed his mistress, an incident that Berg transformed into a powerful music drama, portraying mental deterioration that inexorably led to tragedy. Krzysztof Warlikowski's 2017 production for the Dutch National Opera has many musical strengths, not least the superb conducting by Marc Albrecht, and excellent vocalism from baritone Christopher Maltman as Wozzeck and Eva-Maria Westbroek as his mistress Marie. But Warlikowski's apparent need to do something out of the ordinary leads him not only to jettison the army setting—Wozzeck is simply a barber—but also to expand the role of Marie's little son (played here by Jacob Jutte) to an extraordinary degree. In a long added prologue, the boy is bullied at a dance class, and later recites a monologue from Büchner's play about a child overcome by solitude—which points to the final scene in which he is suddenly orphaned (and for some reason shown taking plastic organs from a mockup of the human body and tossing them into an aquarium). Presumably this is intended to suggest disaster passed from generation to generation, with the boy as doomed as Wozzeck, but the point is elusive at best. Despite its musical strengths, the production is somewhat hampered by the eccentric staging. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray edition) and PCM stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

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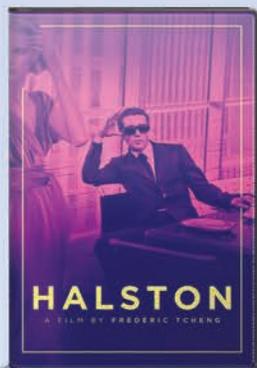
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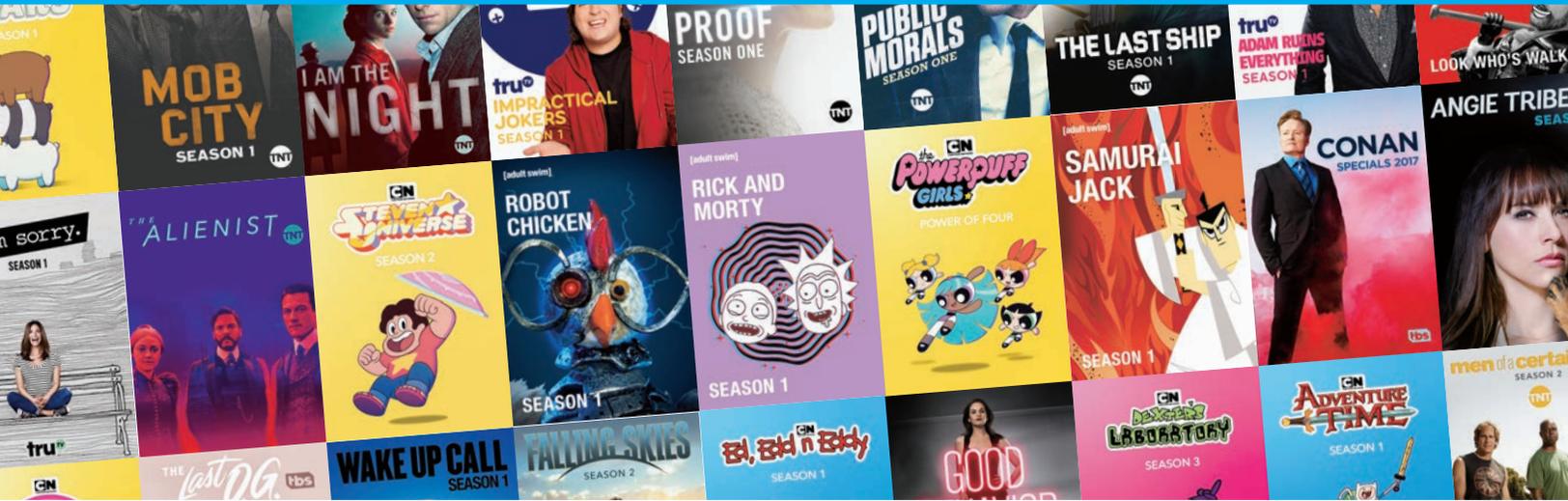
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