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Video Librarian

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Entertainment

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The Last Resort

★★★★1/2

(2018) 70 min. DVD:
 \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from
 www.kinolorberedu.com).
 DRA. Kino Lorber (avail.
 from most distributors).
 Closed captioned.



Inspired by a 1970s photography-documentary project (that was tragically interrupted by murder), filmmakers Dennis Scholl and Kareem Tabsch revisit the bygone days of Miami and South Beach, FL, as major retirement havens, principally for elderly Jews (many of whom were Holocaust refugees). In an environment that was dominated by the elderly, two young and energetic professional shutterbugs—Gary Monroe and Andy Sweet—captured sympathetic character portraits of the aged residents and their fluorescent-kitsch environment, before changing times (including an enormous influx of Cuban refugees), mortality, and crime ultimately altered the social landscape. In addition to that story, *The Last Resort* also tells the tale of Sweet's shocking death in 1982 and the subsequent loss and eventual recovery of his incredible photo archive. Extras include a Q&A with the directors, deleted scenes (one with Pulitzer-winning interviewee Edna Buchanan, an ace Miami crime reporter/author, talking about favorite cases), Tabsch's 2014 short documentary *Cherry Pop* (about a millionaire Fort Lauderdale couple's pampered

show cat who attained feline cult status in her short lifetime), and photo galleries. An offbeat portrait of a bygone time and place in America, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

A fine companion film to *The Last Resort* is *Next Year Jerusalem* (VL-1/15). Reviewer Tom Keogh wrote that filmmaker David Gaynes's "lovely documentary...follows members of a sometimes-invisible population—senior citizens in nursing homes—who do something extraordinary. Proving that there are no age barriers to adventures and new experiences, a group of seniors at a U.S. retirement home makes a long trek to Israel along with a handful of nursing staff, where they visit historic sites, are entertained by schoolchildren, drink wine and converse with locals, and go floating in the buoyant waters of the salty Dead Sea.... Serving up a solid reminder that people in their 80s and 90s deserve better than to be warehoused and forgotten, this [is an] inspirational film."

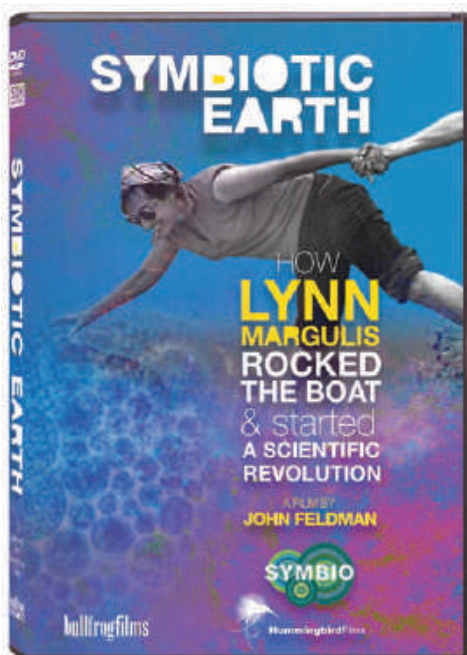


Cover Photo: Andy Sweet

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SYMBIOTIC EARTH



“CAPTIVATING!”

—Telerama

Explores the life and ideas of scientific rebel Lynn Margulis who challenged entrenched theories of male-dominated science. Margulis' vision offers bold insights into health, society, and nature, and inspires creative approaches to our pressing environmental and social crises.

“RECOMMENDED!”

The Ideas of the late biologist Lynn Margulis are groundbreaking, even breathtaking in their boldness.”

—Educational Media Reviews Online

SYMBIOTIC EARTH

A film by John Feldman • From Bullfrog Films • An Icarus Films Release

2018 • 147 min • Color • SDH Captioned • Not Rated • Spanish subtitle option

UPC # 1-94874-50032-9 • SRP: \$24.98

AVAILABLE NOW!

THE RETURN OF THE HERO



“LOTS OF SAUCY INTRIGUE!”

—The List

Set in 1809 France, this delightful screwball farce stars Mélanie Laurent (*Inglorious Basterds*) and Jean Dujardin (*The Artist*) in a hilarious tale filled with lies, deceit, and romance!

“Full to the brim with Gallic charm!”

—VICE

RETURN OF THE HERO

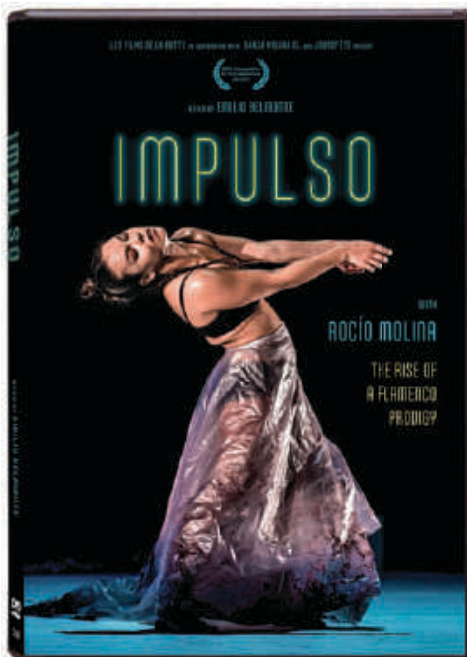
A film by Laurent Tirard • From Distrib Films • An Icarus Films Release

2018 • 90 min • Color • in French w/English subtitles • Not Rated

UPC # 8-54565-00275-3 • SRP: \$26.98

AVAILABLE MAY 14

IMPULSO



“ONE OF SPAIN’S FINEST FLAMENCO DANCERS!”

—The Guardian (UK)

The spectacular avant-garde choreography of flamenco dancer Rocío Molina has electrified audiences around the world. Her extravagant, mesmerizing and mostly improvised pieces combine traditional flamenco with modern-dance, avant-garde theatrics, objects, paint, and eclectic music compositions.

“Ms. Molina is one of the greatest flamenco dancers I have seen, but to say that is not enough.”

—The New York Times

IMPULSO • A film by Emilio Belmonte

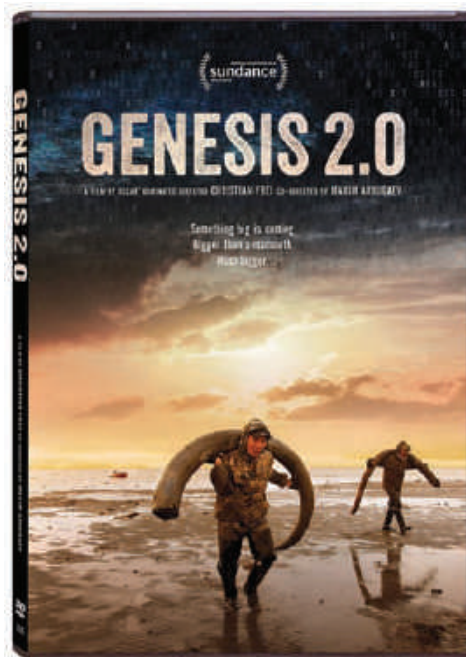
From The KimStim Collection • An Icarus Films Release

2017 • 87 min • Color • in Spanish w/English subtitles • Not Rated

UPC # 6-98452-21433-7 • SRP: \$29.95

AVAILABLE NOW!

GENESIS 2.0



“FASCINATING!”

—The Los Angeles Times

On the remote New Siberian Islands in the Arctic Ocean, hunters search for tusks of extinct mammoths. One day, they discover a surprisingly well-preserved mammoth carcass. Werner Hertzog meets Jurassic Park in this real-life thriller that explores the dawning of unprecedented scientific change.

“The woolly mammoth tusk is just the tip of the iceberg in this haunting excavation.”

—Hollywood Reporter

GENESIS 2.0

A film by Christian Frei and Maxim Arbugaev • A Kimstim Films Release

2018 • 112 min • Color • in English & Russian w/English subtitles • Not Rated

UPC # 6-98452-21453-5 • SRP: \$29.95

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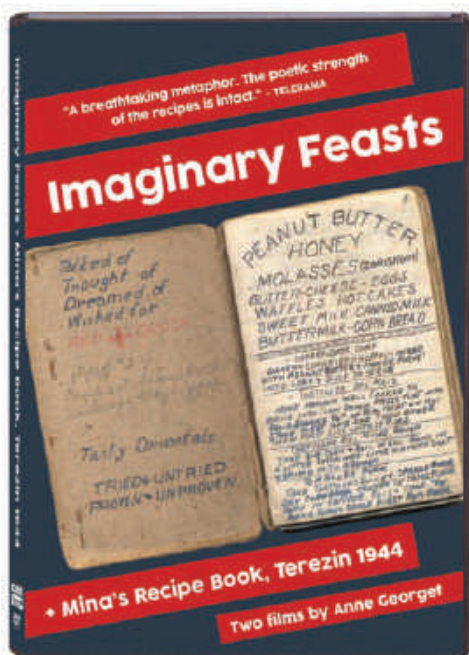
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ICARUS
Films

IMAGINARY FEASTS AND MINA'S RECIPE BOOK



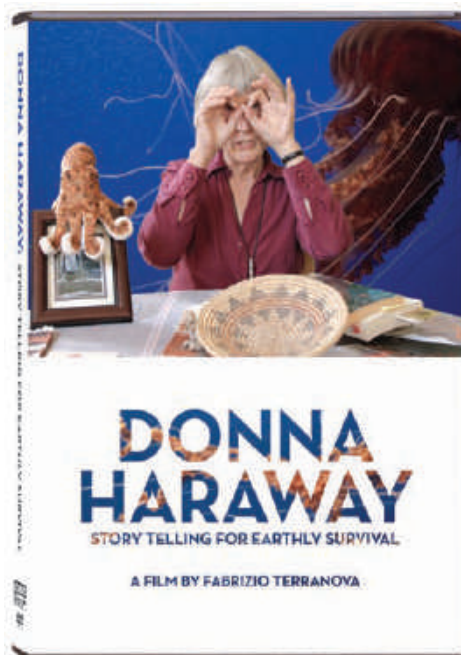
"BREATHTAKING!"
—Telerama

Explores how in Nazi concentration camps, Soviet gulags, and Japanese prison camps, starving prisoners shared and recorded favorite meals and recipes. By examining these objects of survival, the film shows quiet acts of incredible resistance.

**INSPIRED BY THE
NEW YORK TIMES STORY
"HELL'S OWN COOK-
BOOK" AND THE
BOOK "IN MEMORY'S
KITCHEN"**

TWO FILMS BY ANNE GEORGET • An Icarus Films Release
IMAGINARY FEASTS: 2017 • 70 min • Color • in French and English w/English subtitles • Not Rated
MINA'S RECIPE BOOK: 2017 • 45 min • Color • in German and English w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00263-0 • SRP: \$29.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

DONNA HARAWAY: STORYTELLING FOR EARTHLY SURVIVAL



"EXQUISITE!"
—DOXA 2017

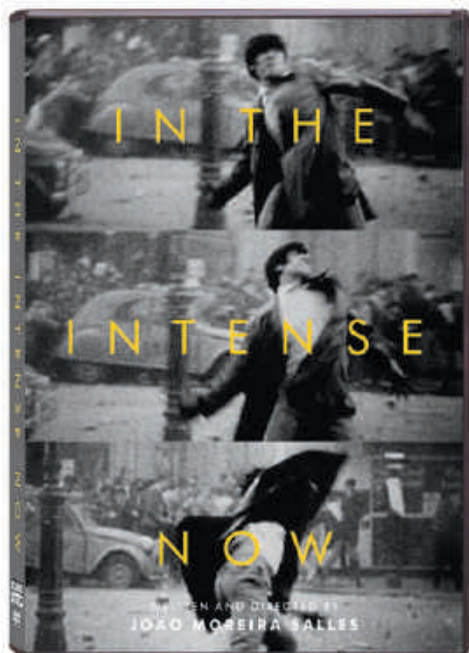
A playful and engaging exploration of the life, influences and ideas of Donna Haraway (author of *The Cyborg Manifesto*). Known for her ground-breaking work on gender, cyborgs, animals and post-colonialism, Haraway is a passionate and discursive storyteller.

**"An ode to this
thinker's expansive
mind and life."**

—VICE

DONNA HARAWAY: STORY TELLING FOR EARTHLY SURVIVAL
A film by Fabrizio Terranova • An Icarus Films Release
2017 • 81 min • Color • in English and French w/English subtitles • Not Rated • Closed Captioned
UPC # 8-54565-00261-6 • SRP: \$29.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

IN THE INTENSE NOW



"SPELLBINDING!"
—Chicago Sun-Times

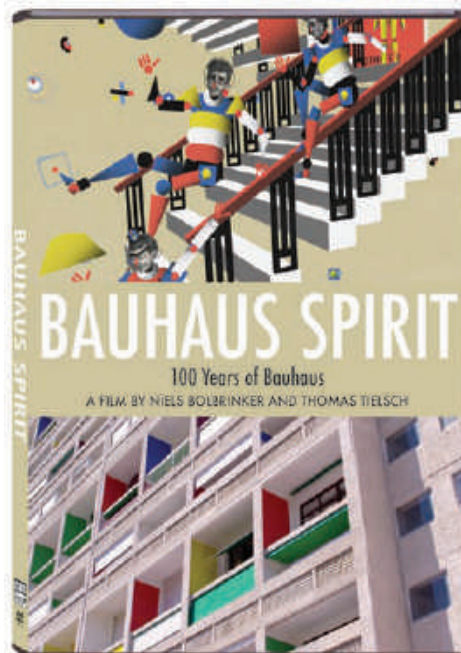
Made following the discovery of amateur footage shot in China in 1966 during the Cultural Revolution, *IN THE INTENSE NOW* speaks to the fleeting nature of moments of great intensity.

**"A rich, immersive
contemplation...
remarkable and
deeply felt."**

—LOS ANGELES TIMES

IN THE INTENSE NOW
A film by João Moreira Salles • An Icarus Films Release
2017 • 127 min • Color and B&W • in Portuguese w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00235-7 • \$29.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

BAUHAUS SPIRIT: 100 YEARS OF BAUHAUS



"INSPIRING!"

—Neues Deutschland

Describes the fascinating story of Bauhaus as a statement, but also the failure and renewal of a social utopia. It tells of artists, scientists and architects today, and how their challenges might relate to Bauhaus. This story unfolds while asking questions still relevant today: How do we want to live, where do we want to go?

**"A briskly paced, fasci-
nating overview of the
movement and its aims."**

—SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

**2019 MARKS THE CENTENNIAL
OF THE BAUHAUS MOVEMENT!**

BAUHAUS SPIRIT: 100 YEARS OF BAUHAUS
A film by Niels Bolbrinker and Thomas Tielsch • An Icarus Films Release
2018 • 90 min • Color • in German and English w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00270-8 • SRP: \$26.98
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will profoundly affect us all.

2018 | 37 mins | SDH subtitles

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FAMILY OF FEAR

Finding Inclusion and Community in the Scariest of Places



Family of Fear shares
the story of a group of
people brought together
by their love of haunted
houses. They come to
scare people. Some come
from broken homes, are
bullied in school, have
depression, loneliness
and other concerns. But in the Arx Mortis haunted
house in Killen, Alabama, they found a family.

2018 | 91 mins | SDH subtitles

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"Wildland" Firefighters Doc Newly Available from FilmRise

FilmRise has just released Alex Jablonski and Kahlil Hudson's feature-length documentary *Wildland* (DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95), which aired on PBS's *Independent Lens* series in an abbreviated version. Telling the story of a 20-man wildland firefighting crew as they struggle with fear, loyalty, love, and defeat over the course of a single season, the film was shot in Grants Pass, OR, a sleepy mountain town that has seen better days. Viewers watch men going through job interviews to become wildland firefighters, many with bad luck and tough stories, but all coming to the hard work of wildland firefighting for their own reasons. Some need to prove themselves, or desire adventure, while others have external pressures—a tough job market, a recent run-in with the law, or a lingering drug habit. John Banner is a 46-year-old rookie who is looking for liberation from his past and a way to be present for his young family, while Charlie and Aidan are 23-year-old Bible college dropouts who see a chance to redefine themselves. What emerges is a portrait of a small group of working-class men, their exterior world, their interior lives, and the fire that they face when the crew is dispatched to the largest blaze in the country, where they will make a stand and engage in a hectic final battle.

"Hedwig and the Angry Inch," Ingmar Bergman Film Trilogy, and More from Criterion Collection in June

On June 4, Criterion's yearlong celebration of releases commemorating Ingmar Bergman's centennial draws to a close with a Blu-ray edition of the Swedish master's chamber dramas exploring faith and alienation, *A Film Trilogy by Ingmar Bergman* (Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$99.95), which includes 1961's *Through a Glass Darkly* and the 1963 films *Winter Light* and *The Silence*. Collaborating with the distinguished cinematographer Sven Nykvist, the series includes searing performances from Bergman's cast of regulars including Harriet Andersson, Gunnar Björnstrand, and Max von Sydow. Slated for June 11 is the Blu-ray debut of George Stevens's 1936 musical romance *Swing Time* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), featuring legendary dancing duo Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers as, respectively, a feckless gambler

and the shrewd dancing instructor in whom he more than meets his match, with beloved songs by Dorothy Fields and Jerome Kern, including the Oscar-winning classic "The Way You Look Tonight." Coming June 18 is French iconoclast auteur Bruno Dumont's exploration of the human condition in his first two films, 1997's *La vie de Jésus* and 1999's *L'humanité* (DVD: \$29.95 each; Blu-ray: \$39.95 each). Arriving June 25 is a 4K restoration and Blu-ray debut of John Cameron Mitchell's 2001 trailblazing queer rock musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), following Hedwig (Mitchell), who undergoes a traumatic personal transformation in order to emigrate to the U.S. and reinvents herself as an "internationally ignored" but divinely talented rock diva. Also slated for June 25 is Sergei Bondarchuk's Oscar-winning 1966-67 epic *War and Peace* (DVD: 3 discs, \$39.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.95), an awe-inspiring adaptation of Tolstoy's classic novel, appearing in a major new restoration.



"What is Democracy?" Documentary Coming May 14 from Zeitgeist Films

Coming at a moment of profound political and social crisis, *What is Democracy?* (DVD: \$29.95) is slated for release on May 14 from Zeitgeist Films. Director Astra Taylor's idiosyncratic philosophical journey takes viewers from ancient Athens' groundbreaking experiment in self-government to capitalism's roots in medieval Italy; from modern-day Greece grappling with financial collapse and a mounting refugee crisis to the United States reckoning with its racist past and the growing gap between rich and poor. Celebrated theorists Silvia Federici, Cornel West, Wendy Brown, and Angela Davis are joined by trauma surgeons, activists, factory workers, asylum seekers, former prime ministers, and others in this timely and urgent film that connects the past and the present, the emotional and the intellectual, and the personal and the political. Bonus features include deleted scenes, a Q&A at New York's Jacob Burns Film Center, and an interview with filmmaker Taylor.



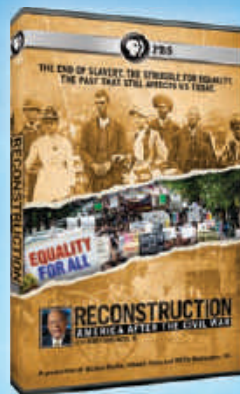
PBS | Educational Media

New from PBS



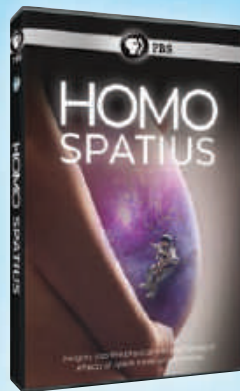
LES MISÉRABLES

In France at a time of civil unrest, this is the story of Jean Valjean, a former convict unable to escape his past life. His future is threatened by his nemesis, the chilling prison guard Javert, who is determined to bring him to justice. Starring Dominic West, David Oyelowo, Lily Collins, and Olivia Colman.



RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

Renowned Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. presents the definitive history of the transformative years following the American Civil War, when the nation struggled to rebuild itself amidst profound loss, massive destruction, and revolutionary social change.



HOMO SPATIUS

Can Homo sapiens evolve into Homo spatius? For over 50 years now, we have been testing our human limits in an effort to conquer outer space. Combining adventure and exploration of the human body, *Homo Spatius* offers unique insights into the physical and psychological effects of space travel on astronauts and measures the impact on medical sciences.



BOSS: THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN BUSINESS

From filmmaker Stanley Nelson comes a film that examines more than 150 years of African American men and women who, from the country's earliest days, have embodied qualities of innovation, risk-taking, and determination to forge a path to a better life— which is at the heart of the American entrepreneurial spirit.



HENRY IX: THE LOST

Investigate the mysterious disappearance from history of a forgotten Scottish prince — Henry Fredrick Stuart, the best king Britain never had. Not many know his name, but Henry started the British Museum and the Royal Collection, and was the first royal prince to back a permanent settlement on American soil in the 17th century.

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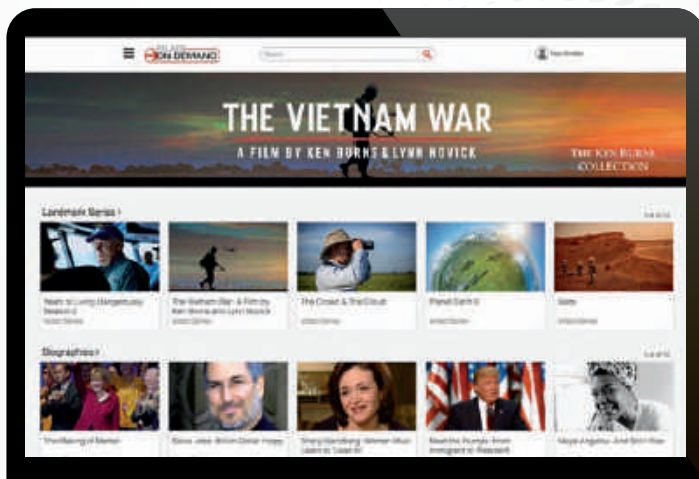
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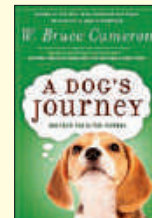
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Books Into Movies

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

Coming in May

A Dog's Journey (May 17) is author W. Bruce Cameron's 2012 sequel to his earlier 2010 novel *A Dog's Purpose*. Directed by Gail Mancuso, the film stars Dennis Quaid, Abby Ryder Fortson, and Josh Gad as the voice of Bailey.

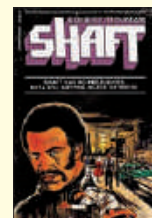


The Sun is Also a Star (May 17) is an adaptation of Nicola Yoon's 2016 romantic drama. Directed by Ry Russo-Young, the YA film stars Yara Shahidi and Charles Melton.



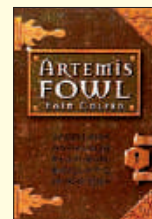
Coming in June

Shaft (June 14) is director Tim Story's fresh take on characters from Ernest Tidyman's titular 1970 detective novel, starring Samuel L. Jackson, Jessie T. Usher, Regina Hall, Method Man, and Richard Roundtree.



Looking Ahead

Slated for August is **Artemis Fowl**, based on the titular 2001 novel and 2002 follow-up *Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident* in Eoin Colfer's sci-fi fantasy series. Directed by Kenneth Branagh, the adventure film stars Ferdia Shaw, Nonso Anozie, Judi Dench, and Josh Gad.



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



One of the most celebrated documentaries of 2018 is now available on Blu-ray and DVD!



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Bisbee '17

A film by Robert Greene

"The best film of the year."

– A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*

"A riveting, emotionally galvanizing achievement."

– Justin Chang, *Los Angeles Times*

"An American riff on *The Act of Killing*; A fascinating and dream-like mosaic about a forgotten American tragedy."

– David Ehrlich, *Indiewire*

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- Audio Commentary by Director Robert Greene • Bisbee '17 Shorts (36m)
- Ghost Towns of Arizona, a short film by Robert Greene (2006, 7m)
- Deleted and Extended Scenes (37m) • Theatrical Trailer
- Booklet featuring an Oral and Visual History of the Making of Bisbee '17

CAT: GF019 / DVD UPC: 853294007329

SRP: \$29.95

CAT: GF019BD / BLU-RAY UPC: 853294007312

SRP: \$34.95

Available 4/23/19

Also from
Robert Greene



Kate Plays Christine

Greene's Sundance prize-winner investigates the story of Christine Chubbuck, a Florida newscaster who committed a shocking act on live television in 1974.

CAT: GF02 / UPC: 853294007008

SRP: \$29.95



Chronicle Of Anna Magdalena Bach

On the occasion of its 50th anniversary, a new digital restoration of the landmark film by Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet

CAT: GF017 / UPC: 853294007275

SRP: \$29.95

CAT: GF017BD / UPC: 853294007282

SRP: \$34.95



Towards Mathilde

Never before available! The great Claire Denis (*High Life*, *Let the Sun Shine In*, *Beau Travail*) offers a striking documentary about dance and movement.

CAT: GF016 / UPC: 853294007268

SRP: \$29.95

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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.

May 12—May 18

My Time at Portia (Team17, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$29.99-\$39.99, Rated: E10+). In this life-simulation game, players embark on an open-world adventure where they will meet and form relationships while using game mechanics including crafting, farming, resource gathering, exploration, and more.

Rage 2 (Bethesda, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this first-person shooter sequel, players take on the role of the last Ranger of the wasteland after an asteroid has annihilated 80% of the Earth's population, and ruthless bloodthirsty gangs roam the open roads.



May 19—May 25

Atelier Lulua: The Scion of Arland (Koei Tecmo, PS4/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this latest entry in the popular third-person *Atelier* RPG series, players step into the shoes of budding alchemist Lulua, who dreams of one day surpassing her famous mother Rorona and becoming the most respected alchemist in all of the Arland Republic.

Team Sonic Racing (Sega, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E). The latest entry in this popular racing series combines the best elements of arcade and fast-paced competitive-style racing, with 15 playable characters from across the Sonic Universe.



May 26—June 1

Crystal Crisis (Nicalis, Switch: \$39.99,

Rated: E10+). Players join an all-star cast of heroes in this puzzle game that is presented like a one-on-one fighting game, but replaces punching and kicking with clearing color-matching falling blocks to inflict damage on opponents.

Hollow Knight (Fangamer, PS4/Switch: \$29.99-\$34.99, Rated: E10+). In this *Dark Souls*-inspired, hand-drawn, 2D action-RPG, players explore a vast interconnected world of forgotten highways, overgrown wilds, and ruined cities featuring powerful enemies.



Lapis x Labyrinth (NIS America, PS4/Switch: \$49.99-\$59.99, Rated: E10+). This 2D dungeon-diving action-RPG sends players on a high-octane treasure-hunting quest, smashing through hordes of monsters and traps to gain riches.

Little Friends Dogs & Cats (Sold Out, Switch: \$49.99, Rated: E). In this pet-training game, players can work with up to three pets at once and own as many as 12 as they get to know their personalities, feed them favorite foods, take them for walks, and compete in the flying disc tournament.



Our World is Ended (U&I Entertainment, PS4/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this visual novel game, players explore a faithful recreation of Tokyo's iconic Asakusa district as they follow a team of game developers trapped between reality and their fictional worlds.

June 2—June 8

MotoGP 19 (Maximum Games, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$49.99, Rated: RP). In this racing game, players can pick their favorite official rider in the 2019 Championship and race on 19 different tracks, as well as tackle an in-depth career mode, starting as a rookie and climbing up the ladder to the top class.

June 9—June 15

Warhammer: Vermintide 2 (Fatshark, PS4/XOne: \$49.99, Rated: M). In this sequel to the critically acclaimed *Vermintide*, players revisit the fierce first-person slaughter-fest, here featuring visceral melee action, set in the apocalyptic end times of the war-ravaged Warhammer world.

June 16—June 22

Crash Team Racing: Nitro-Fueled (Activision, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). This fully-remastered version of *Crash Team Racing* features the original game modes, characters, tracks, power-ups, and weapons, as well as additional karts and tracks.

June 22—June 29

Judgment (Sega, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: M). From the makers of the acclaimed *Yakuza* series, this third-person action-RPG finds players investigating the seedy Red Light District of Kamurocho by stepping into the mind of private detective Takayuki Yagami and utilizing innovative investigation systems to uncover the secrets that lie deep within Kamurocho's corrupt underbelly.



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.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

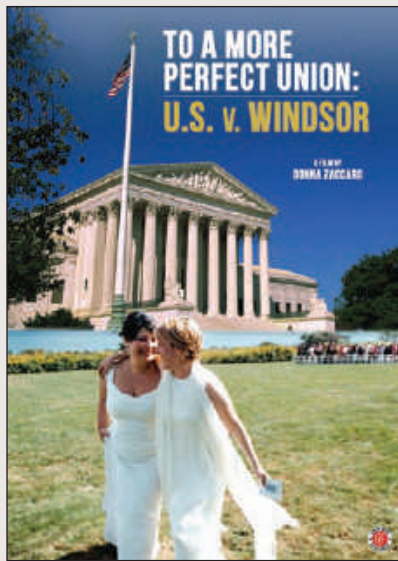
Available Now

The Big C: The Complete Series (Mill Creek, Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$69.98). Laura Linney stars as a schoolteacher who has cancer in this 2010-13 Showtime-aired dramedy series, newly available on high-definition Blu-ray and also featuring Oliver Platt and Gabourey Sidibe.



Dirty John (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Based on the true-crime podcast by Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist Christopher Goffard, this 2018-19 first season of the Bravo and Netflix co-production stars Connie Britton, Eric Bana, Juno Temple, and Julia Garner.

Finding Joy (Acorn, DVD: \$34.99). After a rough breakup, a woman (creator and star Amy Huberman) becomes famous as a network TV vlogger in this 2018 first season of the Irish comedy series.



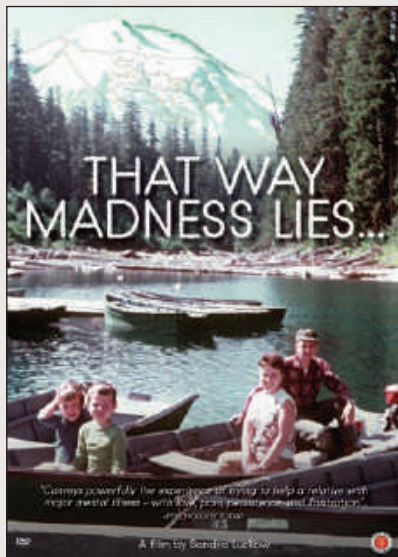
TO A MORE PERFECT UNION: U.S. v. WINDSOR

63 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917858D
ON DVD MAY 28

This is the story of two unlikely heroes, octogenarian Edie Windsor and her attorney, Roberta Kaplan, on their quest for justice. 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 decided to sue the United States government – and won. This documentary about her landmark case in the marriage equality movement includes Lillian Faderman, a leading scholar on LGBTQ history, and Evan Wolfson, who first at Lambda Legal and later as founder of Freedom to Marry was the godfather of marriage equality in the US and now worldwide. Jeffrey Toobin from CNN and Nina Totenberg of NPR also lend their insights.



"This moving documentary establishes both the historical and emotional context for a landmark Supreme Court decision. The film explores the powerful experience of gay rights pioneer — and vivacious personality — Edie Windsor and her fight to be recognized legally as the wife of her decades-long partner. The film reminds us that there are individual human experiences behind the legal decisions that impact an entire country." —Los Angeles Times



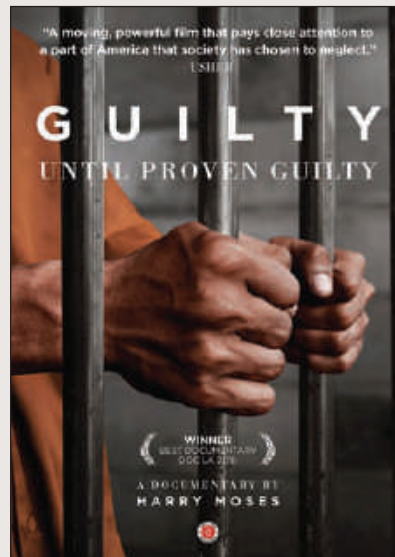
That Way Madness Lies...

101 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917834D
NOW AVAILABLE

What do you do when your sibling descends into a mental black hole – falling for a Nigerian email scam and eventually winding up in the hospital made famous by *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*?

Director Sandra Luckow unflinchingly turns her camera on her own family as they try to navigate the broken mental health system in an effort to save their brother, whose iPhone video diary reveals an unfiltered look at the mind of a man with untreated schizophrenia.

"If this subject has touched your life even minimally, you ought to see this movie." —New York Times



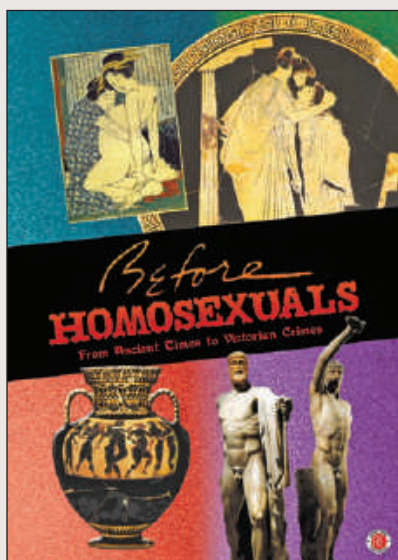
Guilty Until Proven Guilty

53 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917841D
ON DVD MAY 14

Guilty Until Proven Guilty tells the story of Tim Conerly, a young African-American male who was arrested for armed robbery in New Orleans. After more than two years in jail, Conerly must choose between pleading guilty and serving five more years for a crime he insists he did not commit, or risking up to 198 years in prison if he is convicted at trial.

Best Documentary, DOC LA, 2018

"Exposes the inequities faced every day by poor black citizens charged with crimes. This film should be seen by everyone." —Harry Belafonte



Before Homosexuals

87 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917865D
ON DVD JUNE 11

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

With dozens of experts he reveals in lesbian love spells from ancient Rome, censored chapters of the Kamasutra, Native American two-spirit rituals and more. A prequel to *Before Stonewall*, *Before Homosexuals* unearths the garden of human sexual desire.

"This is the history lesson we all need: the affirmation of same-sex love that was etched in stone some 2,500 years ago." —John Scagliotti



Montessori: Let the Child Be the Guide

100 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917872D
ON DVD JUNE 25

Curious about the Montessori Method, filmmaker Alexandre Mourot sets his camera up in the oldest Montessori school in France and observes this child-centered educational approach for an entire school year. The children guide him throughout the year, helping him to understand the magic of their autonomy and self-esteem.

"A masterpiece in that it captures the natural characteristics of the child...I have never seen a Montessori video so authentic." —David Khan, Executive Director of North American Montessori Teachers' Association (NAMITA)

The High Chaparral: Season Three (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$34.99). The titular Arizona Territory ranch is the setting for this 1969-70 third season of the Western series that includes guest appearances by Malachi Throne, Chief Dan George, Jim Davis, and Noah Beery Jr.



I Married Joan: Classic TV Collection #5 (VCI, DVD: \$19.95). Joan Davis is back as the scatterbrained wife of a judge in this fifth compilation of episodes from the 1952-55 sitcom that also stars Jim Backus.

Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 2009 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Russ Abbot arrives as retired milkman Hobbo in this compilation of episodes from the 2009 30th season of the senior citizen sitcom.

Mrs. Wilson (PBS, DVD: \$29.99). Aired on PBS's *Masterpiece*, this 1960s-set 2018 miniseries stars Ruth Wilson as her real-life grandmother in a twisty dramatization of secrets and lies concerning romance with a former MI6 officer.

My Brilliant Friend: The Complete First Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99). Based on pseudonymous novelist Elena Ferrante's "Neapolitan" quartet, this 2018 HBO-aired first season of the Italian-American series following a troubled long-term friendship stars Gaia Girace and Margherita Mazzucco.

Project Blue Book: Season 1 (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$29.99). Produced by the History channel, this drama series focusing on Air Force UFO investigations stars Aidan Gillen, Michael Malarkey, Laura Mennell, and Ksenia Solo.

Ray Donovan: Season Six (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Professional fixer Ray Donovan (Liev Schreiber) reinvents himself in the Big Apple in this 2018-19 sixth season of the Showtime crime drama series that also features Jon Voight.

Shameless: The Complete Ninth Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98, Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$39.99). This compilation features the 2018-19 ninth season of the Showtime-aired ensemble dramedy, with guest stars including Dan Lauria, Katey Sagal, and Courteney Cox.



Victoria: The Complete Third Season (PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Aired stateside on PBS's *Masterpiece*, this 2019 third season of the period drama follows Queen Victoria (Jenna Coleman) through events including the Great Exhibition of 1851 and welcoming new children.

The Wayans Bros.: The Complete Fifth Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). Shawn and Marlon Wayans star in this 1998-99 fifth and final season of the Harlem-set sitcom that also features guest appearances by Gary Coleman, Chip Fields, and Kym Whitley.

May 7

Agatha Raisin: Series Two (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Based on the novels by M.C. Beaton, Ashley Jensen stars as the former PR exec turned Cotswolds crime-solver in this 2018-19 second season that includes "Agatha Raisin and the Wizard of Evesham," "Agatha Raisin and the Fairies of Fryfam," and "Agatha Raisin and the Curious Curate."



Better Call Saul: Season Four (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$35.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$45.99). This 2018 fourth season of the *Breaking Bad* spin-off features guest appearances by Ed Begley Jr., Michael McKean, and Ann Cusack.

Bonanza: The Official Ninth Season, Volume 1 and Bonanza: The Official Ninth Season, Volume 2 (Paramount, DVD: 4/5 discs, \$45.98 each). These 1967-68 compilations following the escapades of the Cartwright family on the Ponderosa ranch feature guest appearances by Michael Murphy, Kim Hunter, Noah Beery Jr., and Jan-Michael Vincent.

Liar: Season One (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98). Co-produced by ITV and Sundance, this 2017 thriller series centering on a romantic date gone wrong stars Joanne Froggatt, Ioan Gruffudd, and Zoë Tapper.



Unforgotten: The Complete Third Season (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). The remains of a teen who disappeared on New Year's Eve 1999 is at the center of this 2018 third season of the ITV crime drama starring Nicola Walker and Sanjeev Bhaskar, aired stateside on *Masterpiece Mystery!*

kar, aired stateside on *Masterpiece Mystery!*

May 14

The Lone Ranger: Seasons 1 & 2 (Universal, DVD: 12 discs, \$26.98). Clayton Moore stars as the titular masked crime-fighter in this compilation of the 1949-51 first and second seasons of the classic Western series.

No Offence: Series 3 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99). Detective Inspector Vivienne Deering (Joanna Scanlan) and her squad are embroiled in scandals surrounding a mayoral election in this 2018 third season of the crime-drama series from Channel 4.



Power: The Complete Fifth Season (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.98). Drug lord and nightclub owner Ghost (Omari Hardwick) responds to the loss of his daughter with revenge in this 2018 fifth season that also stars Joseph Sikora, Lela Loren, Naturi Naughton, and executive producer 50 Cent.

May 21

13 Reasons Why: Season 2 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Following the tragic death from the previous season, this 2018 sophomore run of the teen mystery series introduces new characters with Jake Weber, Meredith Monroe, and Kelli O'Hara.

Call the Midwife: Season Eight (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Midwife nuns help England's mothers through birth and other dramas in this 2019 eighth season of the period series that also includes the 2018 Christmas special.

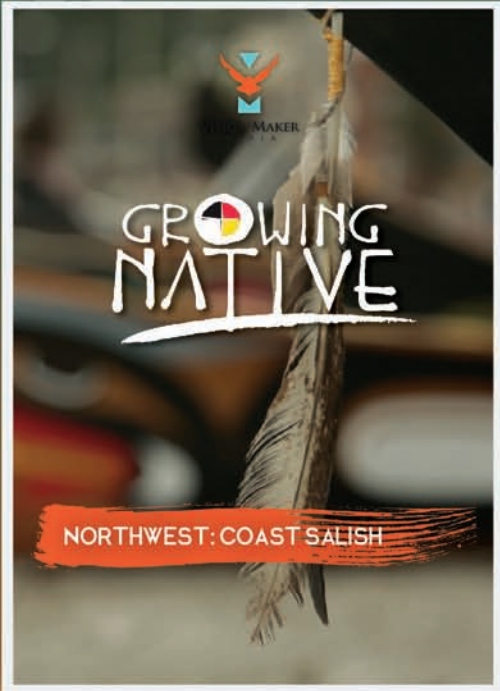
Les Misérables (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Aired on *Masterpiece*, this 2018-19 BBC-produced miniseries adaptation of Victor Hugo's iconic 1862 French historical novel stars Dominic West, David Oyelowo, Lily Collins, and Olivia Colman.



The Public Defender: The Official First Season (ClassicFlix, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Reed Hadley stars as the titular attorney for the poor in this first season compilation from the 1954-55 legal drama that includes guest appearances by Ann Doran and Denver Pyle.

VISION MAKER MEDIA'S GROWING NATIVE

A four-part series focusing on reclaiming traditional knowledge and foodways to address critical issues of health and wellness, the environment and human rights.

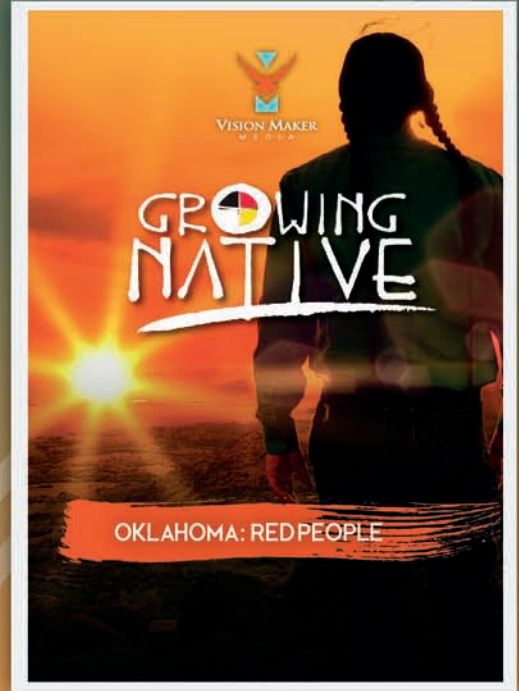


NORTHWEST: COAST SALISH

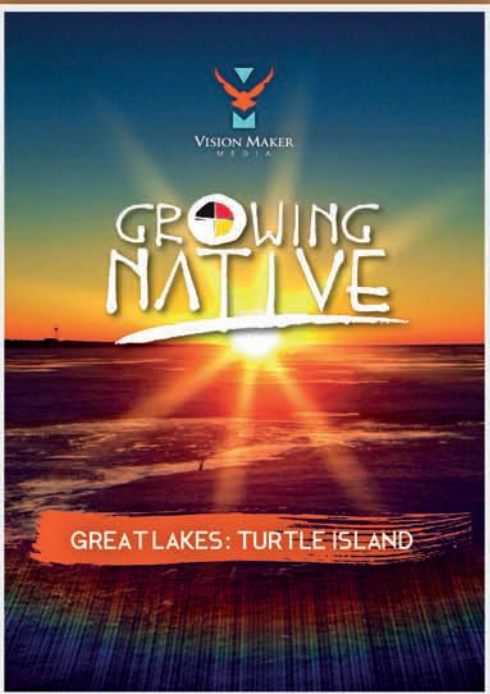
From totem poles, to language revitalization and traditional agriculture, host Chris Eyre, discovers the resilience of the Coast Salish Tribes of the Pacific Northwest.

OKLAHOMA: RED PEOPLE

Oklahoma is home to thirty-nine federally recognized tribes. Nowhere in North America will you find such diversity among Native Peoples, and nowhere will you find a more tragic history. Host Moses Brings Plenty (Oglala Lakota) guides this episode of *Growing Native*, on a journey to Oklahoma's past and present..



OKLAHOMA: RED PEOPLE

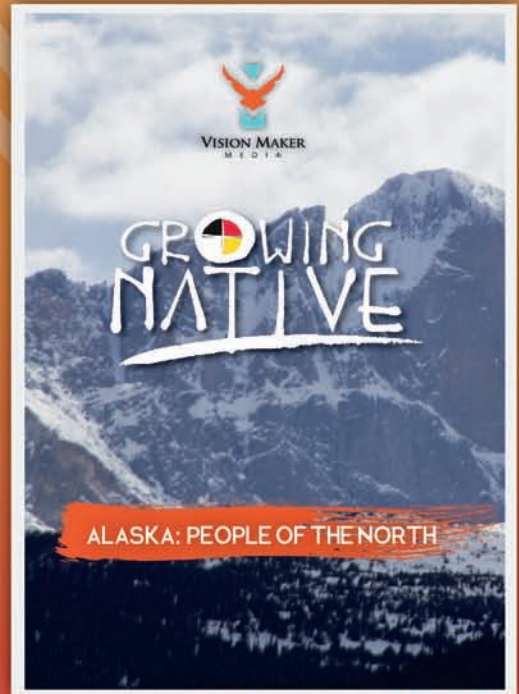


GREAT LAKES: TURTLE ISLAND

The Great Lakes and connecting waterways have been at the center of traditional and contemporary economies for centuries. Growing Native host Stacey Thunder (Red Lake and Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe) guides this journey by engaging tribal voices while touring Indian country with those who still devote their lives to caring for the land.

ALASKA: PEOPLE OF THE NORTH

All across Alaska, Native cultures have depended on the abundant natural resources found there to support their families, cultures and way of life. Now these resources are growing scarce, and the people who have relied on them for centuries have to find new ways to adapt. Host Chris Eyre (Cheyenne Arapaho) meets Alaska Natives who thrive and survive in this complex environment.



ALASKA: PEOPLE OF THE NORTH

Vision Maker Media is the premiere source for documentaries by and about Native Americans. Learn more about *Growing Native* and Vision Maker Media at visionmakermedia.org



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American Public Television

May 28

Blood (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). A respectable Irish doctor (Adrian Dunbar) is not absolved of the supposedly accidental death of his wife when his daughter (Carolina Main) begins to investigate in this 2018 debut season of the Irish crime thriller.

Captain Marleau, Volume 1 and Captain Marleau, Volume 2 (MHz, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.95 each). Succinct and thorough detective Captain Marleau (Corinne Masiero) covers her steely demeanor with a façade of eccentricity in these compilations from the French crime-drama series.

Outlander: Season Four (Sony, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$55.99). Based on the novel series by Diana Gabaldon, this 2018-19 fourth season of the historical time travel show stars Caitriona Balfe, Sam Heughan, Maria Doyle Kennedy, and Sophie Skelton.



South Park: The Complete Twenty-Second Season (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Matt Stone and Trey Parker's cash cow continues to dribble out puerile milk in this 2018 22nd season that includes "A Boy and a Priest," "The Problem with a Poo," and a two-part Amazon strike spoof.

Velvet: Seasons 1-4 (MHz, DVD: 4/5 discs, \$39.95 each). The fictional Galerías Velvet fashion house and the shocking relationship between a business heir and a seamstress are at the center of this 2014-16 Spanish drama series, with each of the four seasons newly available separately.

June 4

Delicious: Series 3 (Acorn, DVD: \$34.99). Former rivals (Dawn French, Emilia Fox) find their tenuous truce threatened by an attractive restaurateur in this 2018-19 third season of the Sky 1 drama series.

London Kills: Series 1 (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Hugo Spear, Sharon Small, Bailey Patrick, and Tori Allen-Martin star in this 2019 crime-drama series that includes "The Politician's Son," "Stag Night," "Blood Lines," "Sex Games," and "Connected."



Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan: Season One (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Based on the titular character by Tom Clancy, this 2018 first season of the Amazon Prime thriller series stars John Krasinski, Abbie Cornish, and Wendell Pierce.



June 11

I Am the Night (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Inspired by a true crime story with a connection to the "Black Dahlia" murders, this 2019 TNT-aired limited series stars Chris Pine, India Eisley, Jefferson Mays, Connie Nielsen, and Golden Brooks.

Magnum P.I.: Season 1 (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$49.99). Jay Hernandez stars as Hawaii private investigator Thomas Magnum in this 2018-19 first season of the contemporary reboot series, also starring Perdita Weeks and Zachary Knighton.

Waterfront TV Series, Collection 2 (VCI, DVD: \$19.95). A tugboat captain (Preston Foster) and his family catch criminals in the Los Angeles Harbor in this second compilation of episodes from the 1954-55 Emmy-nominated series.

June 18

Killing Eve: Season Two (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$29.98). Starting right after the events of the first season finale, this 2019 second season of the drama series based on the *Codename Villanelle* novellas stars Jodie Comer and Golden Globe-winner Sandra Oh.

Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 2010 (BBC, DVD: \$34.98). The cask has finally run dry with this 31st and final 2010 season of the long-running Britcom series starring Russ Abbot, Burt Kwouk, and Brian Murphy.



Mystery Science Theater 3000: Volume XI (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.99). This 11th volume from the cult series spoofing B-movies includes *Ring of Terror*, *Indestructible Man*, *Tormented*, and *Horrors of Spider Island*.

Patrick Melrose (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Adapted from

the novels by Edward St. Aubyn, this 2018 five-part miniseries centers on the life and career of the titular English upperclassman (Benedict Cumberbatch).



Suits: Season Eight (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Katherine Heigl joins the cast in this 2018-19 eighth season of the Manhattan law firm drama that also features Gabriel Macht, Dulé Hill, and Amanda Schull.

Will & Grace—The Revival: Season Two (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). This 2018-19 sophomore season reboot of the 1998-2006 sitcom with returning stars Eric McCormack and Debra Messing features guest appearances by Alec Baldwin, Minnie Driver, and Jon Cryer.

June 25

Manhunt: Season 1 (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: \$34.99). This Acorn TV original series based on a real-life English-Romani serial killer stars Martin Clunes, Stephen Wight, Katie Lyons, and Steffan Rhodri.

Marcella: Season Two (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99). Anna Friel stars as Detective Sergeant Marcella Backland in this 2018 sophomore season of episodes from the ITV-aired Scandinavian noir series.

Looking Ahead

Slated for July is the debut season of **Vidago Palace**, the fifth season of **Gotham**, the sixth season of **Endeavour**, the seventh season of **Dr. K's Exotic Animal E.R.**, and the 12th season of **Murdoch Mysteries**.



Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

The Dr. Andrew Weil Collection (Kino Lorber, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.95). Alternative medicine celebrity doctor Andrew Weil is showcased in this compilation that includes *8 Weeks to Optimum Health* (VL-5/97 ★★★1/2), *Spontaneous Healing* (VL-1/97 ★★★1/2), *Eating Well for Optimum Health* (VL-9/00 ★★★), *Dr. Andrew Weil's Healthy Aging* (VL-7/06 ★★★), and *Dr. Andrew Weil's Guide to Eating Well*. Extras include Q&As, archival and new interviews with Weil, and bonus featurettes.

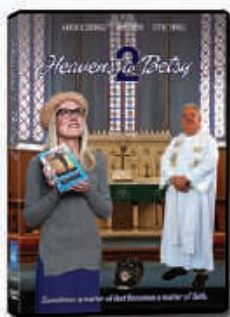
Compelling New Releases from Vision Video



To the Ends of the Earth

More than any other human being, the Apostle Paul was responsible for bringing Christianity to the western world. This drama focuses on Paul's remarkable visit to the Greek city of Philippi. It is believed that it was in Philippi that Paul first preached the gospel on European soil. The film depicts the contrast between pagan culture and Paul's new Christian teaching and recounts how he formed a small band of followers in the city that would soon become an established church. Drama, 45 minutes.

#501827D, \$12.99, UPC 7 27985 01827 0



Heavens to Betsy 2

Author Betsy Simon finally finds career success when her new novel, *Heavens to Betsy*, is published. It tells the story of a young woman who is transported to an alternate universe where all the prayers she ever prayed are answered all at once. Betsy risks her career and her credibility when she claims that the events portrayed in the book actually happened to her. A heartfelt follow-up to *Heavens to Betsy*. Drama, 111 minutes.

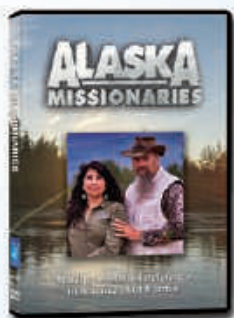
#501823D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01823 2



She Has a Name

Jason, a lawyer, poses as a john to build a legal case against the ruthless pimp who is trafficking girls into Thailand. He meets Number 18, a girl forced to work as a prostitute in a busy Bangkok bar, only to discover her testimony is key to proving his case. Can he convince her to risk her life to testify for the sake of justice? *She Has A Name* explores the global corruption that allows for human sex trafficking across borders and for criminals to thrive off of this industry. Drama, 107 minutes.

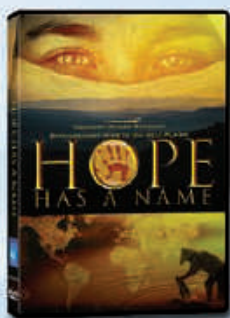
#501831D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01831 7



Alaska Missionaries

Alaska Missionaries is a six-episode reality series about a team of intrepid missionaries who run the Suicide Prevention Summer Camp at Camp Nahshii on the upper Yukon River in central Alaska. Follow these dedicated people as they give their all to make a difference in the lives of hurting young people, even as the missionaries face their own challenges in America's last frontier. Documentary, 168 minutes total.

#501838D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01838 6



Hope Has a Name

In urban America, the bush of Africa, the war zone of the Congo, and in closed nations there are women who are living outside their own cultures, society, and comfort level to care for orphans, build schools, liberate addicts, feed the poor, and love the broken. These ordinary women are reaching into hopeless situations of people and creating hope. *Hope Has a Name* takes you on a candid and intimate journey into their worlds and lives. Documentary, 107 minutes.

#501820D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01820 1



Grace and Gravity

John Palmer, an American Christian on a work assignment in the UK, stumbles across Chris Arnold, a suicidal British atheist who is about to leap from a bridge. John's attempts to share his faith and talk the man down are fiercely rejected by Chris, a quick-witted Brit who knows the Bible better than his Christian counterpart does. *Grace and Gravity* mixes quirky humor and riveting drama to raise challenging questions about faith, friendship. Drama, 80 minutes.

#501615D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01615 3

NOTE: All titles above include English subtitles except *Hope Has a Name*



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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

Apollo 11 ★★★

Universal, 93 min., G, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98, May 14

Meticulously assembled by director Todd Douglas Miller and a team of archivists/editors, this new documentary delves into the details of NASA space exploration, particularly tracing the landmark Apollo 11 mission from launch to splashdown, recapturing the suspense, excitement, and drama of Neil Armstrong's "giant leap for mankind" a half-century ago. Beginning with the crawler-transporter hauling the massive Saturn V rocket to the Cape Kennedy launch pad, *Apollo 11* outlines the complicated tasks that the team had to execute in order to succeed in their historic eight-day mission, inspired by John F. Kennedy's rousing 1961 challenge: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon—and returning him safely to Earth." Newly incorporated archival material includes scenes of the three astronauts donning their spacesuits, the 500 men and one woman (JoAnn Morgan) in Mission Control, and the subsequent 18-day quarantine after the astronauts returned to Earth. As Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin move around the lunar surface, they attempt to describe what they're seeing and experiencing, so there's a remarkably effective "you are there" feeling. The film utilizes stunning 65mm footage and excerpts from 11,000 hours of uncatalogued Mission Control audio recordings that were discovered in the National Archives, employing split-screens and countdown clocks, all set to Matt Morton's background score. Marking Apollo 11's 50th anniversary, this immersive cinematic achievement is an excellent companion to Damien Chazelle's *First Man*, the 2018 Armstrong bio-pic, starring Ryan Gosling. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Arctic ★★★

Universal, 98 min., PG-13, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

In this stark, icy survival story, Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen plays Overgard, a researcher/explorer whose tiny plane crashed in a frozen wasteland. The resourceful Overgard's been living in the plane's cabin for weeks (if not longer), sustained by raw fish pulled from beneath the ice. The viewer first sees him trudging around, digging, scraping, grunting, and clearing a series of paths in the snow—which turn out to form a large black SOS sign in the white tundra, hopefully visible from the sky. In addition, Overgard spends hours manually cranking a transmitter and signaling for rescue. When a helicopter hovers nearby, he's ecstatic—until the ferociously howling polar wind causes it to crash. The only survivor is a badly injured woman (Maria Thelma Smaradottir), who Overgard is determined to save. She's in a state of shock, so Overgard scavenges a functional cigarette lighter, camper stove, instant ramen, and maps and flares, carrying her to his makeshift shelter, where he closes a bleeding gash in her belly with a staple gun. Soon, Overgard realizes that cautiously remaining in his downed plane is futile, so he devises a sled to courageously transport the comatose woman across the vast wilderness, seeking refuge in a cave or quickly constructed igloo. It's an arduous, perilous trek, during which a prowling polar bear is a continuous adversary, first stealing Overgard's stash of arctic trout, and then threatening their lives. Shot in Iceland, Brazilian-born director Joe Penna's engaging survival drama boasts spectacular cinematography by Tomas Orn Tomasson. Recommended. (S. Granger)



A Bag of Marbles ★★★

Passion River, 108 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

This second French production based on the 1973 autobiographical novel by Joseph Joffo is a stirring, often heartbreaking story about a Jewish family separated repeatedly by the imminent threat of capture by Nazis. The bulk of the film follows the sometimes harrowing adventures of two young brothers, Joseph (Dorian Le Clech) and Maurice (Batyste Fleurial), who escape Paris in 1942 at the direction of their parents and barely make their way to Vichy France, where life is temporarily bustling. As things change, Joseph and Maurice adapt to reinvent themselves over and over, always making sure they have a cover story to stand by doggedly—even when a villainous German commander tries forcing them to admit they are Jews. Throughout their travels, the boys' beloved father and mother, as well as



older brothers, weave in and out of the kids' clandestine lives, though never for very long. Director Christian Duguay embraces the narrative's urgency, amplifying every emotion, every greeting and goodbye, every act of decency, by upping the stakes. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Becoming Astrid ★★★

Music Box, 123 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Swedish author Astrid Lindgren (1907-2002) became famous for her children's books, particularly the *Pippi Longstocking* series, but while Pernille Fischer Christensen's biographical film begins and ends with a framing device showing the writer answering letters from adoring fans in her old age, the majority of the story is set in Astrid's youth. The spirited, free-thinking daughter of a farming couple, Astrid is hired as an intern at the local newspaper, where the editor, Blomberg (Henrik Rafaelsen), is enduring an acrimonious separation from his wife. The two have an affair, and Astrid winds up pregnant, which could not only doom the man's plans for a divorce but also perhaps send him to jail. Astrid decides to go to Stockholm to have the baby and then take him to Denmark, where he will be brought up by a foster mother until Blomberg's case is settled—after which he can be named as the child's father, and Astrid and Blomberg can marry. When the plans go awry, Astrid must make sacrifices to support herself and become a single mother to a son who barely knows her. This experience, the film suggests, helps to explain why the writer exhibited such deep empathy for children in her books. Beautifully shot in lovely locations, *Becoming Astrid* features a nuanced lead performance by Alba August as a young woman who takes on much for love—first of a man, and then (especially) for her child. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



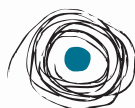
Birds of Passage ★★★ 1/2

Passion River, 125 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95, May 14

Avian symbolism permeates Cristina Gallego and Ciro Guerra's drama about the damaging impact of outside forces on the indigenous peoples of Colombia, telling a *Godfather*-like saga about the drug trade's destruction of the traditional culture of the Wayuu, a group that inhabits the arid Guajira Peninsula in the country's north. In order to secure the dowry he needs to win the hand of the beautiful Zaida (Natalia Reyes), the daughter of local matriarch Ursula (Carmiña Martínez), Raphayet (José Acosta) goes into business as

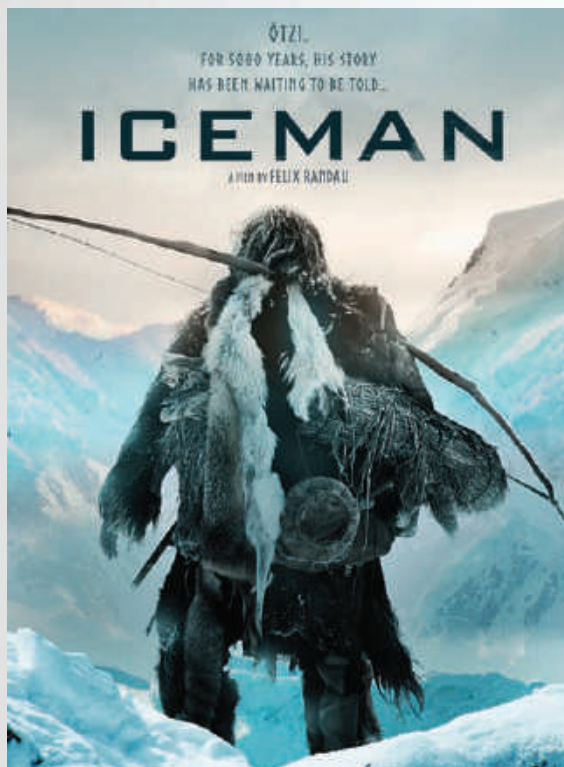


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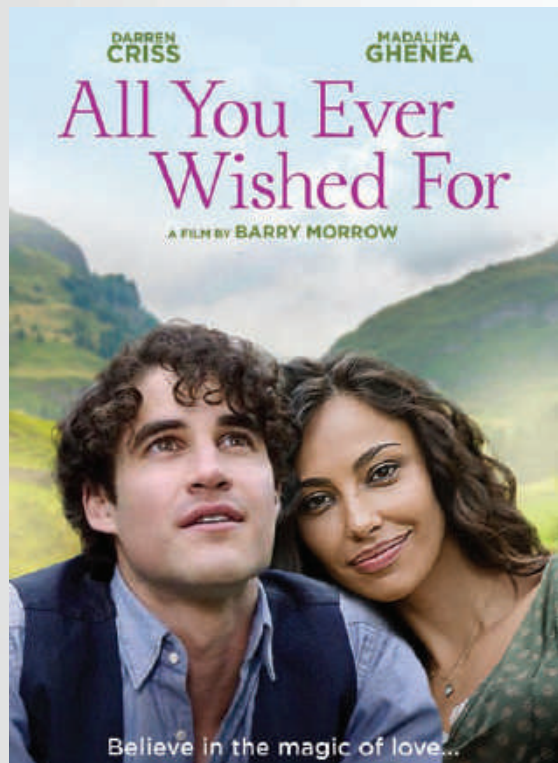
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a middleman between a powerful marijuana grower and buyers from Medellín and the U.S. But the lucrative business brings problems: Raphayet's partner Moisés (Jhon Narváez) is an "alijuna"—or outsider—with a volatile temper and an itchy trigger finger, and Zaida's brother Leonidas (Greider Meza) broods over his loss of leadership in the community. This combination ultimately proves combustible, ripping apart the clan system that is the foundation of Wayuu culture and leading to a virtual civil war that leaves the region's indigenous traditions in tatters and the interlopers in control. *Birds of Passage* conveys a sense of mystery in its depiction of native custom and belief, while at the same time using familiar tropes from gangster melodrama to make the unusual milieu accessible. The result is a distinctive, compelling drama. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Border ★★★

Universal, 110 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, R, Blu-ray: \$29.98



The title of Ali Abbassi's film refers not to national boundaries, but to differences among species. An adaptation of a short story by John Ajvide Lindqvist, the protagonist here is Tina (Eva Melander, her face disfigured by prosthetics and a mask), a Swedish customs officer with an amazingly acute sense of smell that even allows her to detect passengers' emotional states. She lives in a remote cabin deep in the forest, where she communes with animals on long walks. Though she has a "significant other"—a shaggy guy who raises ferocious show dogs—and regularly visits her father in a rest home, she seems lonely and isolated until she encounters a strange man named Vore (Eero Milonoff, wearing makeup similar to Melander's), whose carry-on bag contains jars of insects, and whose body—as her colleague discovers during a strip search—displays very unusual features. Sorry for having embarrassed him, Tina offers Vore the use of her guest house, and the pair develop a close rapport that eventually reveals the truth about Tina's childhood and secrets that Vore has been keeping, which dovetail with a police investigation into a pedophile ring and a subplot about Tina's neighbors and their newborn daughter. *Border* is an unquestionably peculiar but weirdly satisfying romance that raises questions about what it means to be human. Rich in folkloric and quasi-supernatural elements, it fascinates and surprises in equal measure. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Bumblebee ★★★

Paramount, 113 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

As the *Transformers* war between the good-guy Autobots and evil Decepticons for the planet Cybertron continues, this origin story,

set in the late 1980s, reveals how Bumblebee came to Earth and befriended a troubled teenage girl. Still mourning the death of her mechanic father, feisty 18-year-old Charlie Watson (Hailee Steinfeld), who loves repairing automobiles, yearns for a car of her own. Spying a faded yellow 1967 Volkswagen Beetle in a San Francisco Bay Area junkyard, Charlie is determined to restore it. While she's tinkering, the car suddenly morphs into an enormous alien robot. Terrified at first, Charlie soon realizes that she has a new badass buddy, and together they enthusiastically indulge in merry mischief. But then nefarious Decepticons Shatter and Dropkick (Angela Bassett, Justin Theroux) arrive, convincing the gullible U.S. military that they are peaceful visitors who are searching for a dangerous intergalactic traitor. But not everyone is fooled: as suspicious Sector 7 Agent Jack Burns (John Cena) notes, "They're called Decepticons!" In the backstory, Autobot leader Optimus Prime (Peter Cullen) dispatches warrior B-127 (Dylan O'Brien) on a scouting mission so that other Autobots can relocate and protect Earth in the future. But a fiery crash-landing and a losing battle with Decepticon Blitzwing (David Sobolov) quickly sends severely damaged B-127 into hiding—until Charlie finds him and dubs him Bumblebee. Working from a solid coming-of-age script by Christina Hodson, animator-turned-director Travis Knight and his VFX team recapture the inventiveness of Michael Bay's 2007 action franchise original, adding style and sentiment. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Burning ★★1/2

Well Go USA, 148 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



South Korea's official entry for Best Foreign Language film for the 2019 Academy Awards and a critical pick for many top 10 lists, Lee Chang-dong's *Burning* is the quintessential slow-burn art film (at a lethargically-paced two-and-a-half hours) that features a cryptic ending likely to have half the viewers thinking "wow" and the rest "huh?". Based on a short story by Haruki Murakami, with clear references to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the film stars Ah-in Yoo as Jongsu, a laconic, bland post-collegiate would-be writer (his favorite author is Faulkner—with no hint of why) who has returned home to watch over his father's sort-of farm (one cow) while the latter faces charges for assault. Jongsu meets and starts up a physical relationship with former junior high classmate/neighbor Haemi (Jong-seo Jun), who soon takes a trip to Africa and returns with new friend (possibly boyfriend) Ben (Steven

Yuen), an enigmatic rich playboy (like Gatsby) who likes to burn down old greenhouses (for unexplained reasons). Although Jongsu is constantly invited to hang out with Ben and Haemi, he is clearly a third wheel. And when Haemi suddenly disappears, Jongsu begins to obsessively track Ben for some clue to her whereabouts. A snail-paced, cryptic film with a B-movie plot that is salted with enough quirks to hide its underlying familiar DNA, *Burning* is sure to split audiences. A strong optional purchase. (R. Pitman)

Chef Flynn ★★★

Kino Lorber, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



There's nothing quite like a foodie movie to make one dream of abandoning easy dinner recipes plucked from the Internet (although most of us don't follow up by becoming artists in the kitchen). Ten-year-old boy Flynn McGarry, a Studio City wunderkind who got tired of his busy, single mom's limited repertoire of meals, practiced cooking skills in his bedroom before commandeering, in a big way, his home kitchen. The fascinating documentary *Chef Flynn* serves up a collage-like portrait of young McGarry's life, with loads of old home video mixed in with filmmaker Cameron Yates's contemporary footage. Viewers see McGarry grow from babyhood (mixing sugar and spices together in a pot with a wooden spoon), up through the repurposing of his family's living room into a gourmet restaurant (with actual gourmards and food critics enjoying dazzling courses), and on to eventually creating pop-up restaurants in L.A. and New York City at age 14, coping with online trolls, and being recognized from the cover of the *New York Times Magazine*. The most compelling moments occur when McGarry tests his mettle while cooking in New York, becoming stressed and self-doubtful, shouting and cursing as hungry customers await dinners that take longer than expected (even with a full complement of cooks and wait-staff on hand). The reality-TV-like drama is voyeuristically fun, but the emotional anchor of *Chef Flynn* lies in the increasingly challenging relationship between McGarry and his filmmaking mother, Meg, as she reluctantly abandons her work to become a de facto restaurant manager and, for teenaged Flynn, a parental distraction. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

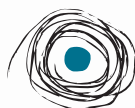
Columbus ★★★

Oscilloscope, 104 min., in English & Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



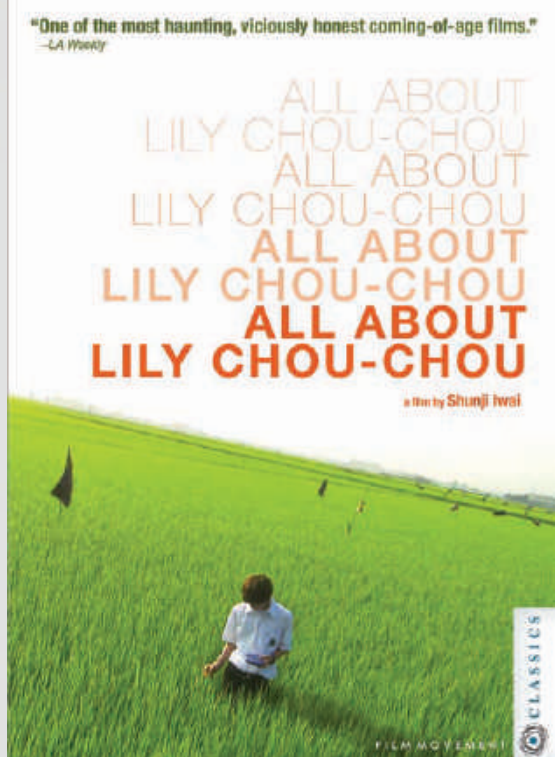
Driven by understated yet passionate performances by John Cho and Haley Lu Richardson, the stirring drama *Columbus* is

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NINA (AVAILABLE 5/14)

Struggling in her marriage, Nina longs to have a child but is unable to conceive. An accidental encounter with the young and beguiling Magda renews her hope in finding a surrogate but also awakens a repressed desire.

Polish, LGBTQ, Women's studies
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the debut feature from mono-named film critic Kogonada. Like Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson*, this is a film that inextricably links place with ideas, and ideas with characters that are in a holding pattern. The question is whether such a story can find a way to marry the brain and heart, but *Columbus* pulls it off movingly. Cho plays Jin, a translator who has arrived in Columbus, IN, because his estranged father, an internationally renowned architect, has suffered a stroke while visiting the city—a mecca of remarkable modernist buildings—to give a lecture. Jin meets Casey (Richardson), a high school graduate who works in a library and has eschewed college ambitions to stay in town and care for her mother, a recovering drug addict. Each has a deep well of sadness, and while their age difference all but prohibits romantic attachment, they bond as friends over visits to and conversations about Columbus's architecture, especially buildings that can't help but evoke powerful thoughts and feelings. This coming together of two outwardly different people, who each need understanding as well as a jolt to move forward in life, ultimately proves to be irresistible. Also featuring Parker Posey in a small but important part, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Dark River ★★★

FilmRise, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95



Acting leads Ruth Wilson and Mark Stanley raise this British drama above its ceaseless tone of misery, although the film is also truly compelling for its evocation of strangely menacing farm country. Wilson is Alice, a thirtysomething woman returning to her recently-deceased father's (played by Sean Bean in flashbacks) farm following 15 years of absence. Confronting her upon arrival is Alice's older brother Joe (Stanley), who is resentful that she has not been seen at all while he cared for their father through the latter's protracted illness. The backstory on Joe and Alice's painful family history is alluded to in disturbing bursts of memory as tensions escalate between the siblings when they end up competing for tenancy of the farm. The images of Yorkshire country carry a deceptive beauty, as the rich green belt of Alice's and Joe's farm teems with unfathomable, even unsettling, numbers of creepy-crawly life. Although the ending is a bit clunky, overall writer-director Clio Barnard's *Dark River* offers a fascinating exploration of what happens when a family is not ready to confront, forgive, and heal. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

The Day After ★★

Cinema Guild, 101 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

South Korean director Hong Sang-soo's film presents an uncomfortable comic story of

infidelity. Bongwan (Kwon Hae-hyo) is a Seoul book publisher whose wife Haejoo (Cho Yun-hee) is aware that her husband is having an affair. She tries to interrogate him over breakfast, but he is evasive. Bongwan was having an affair with his assistant Changsook (Kim Sae-byuk), but that soured and she quit her job. Replacing Changsook is Areum (Kim Min-hee), a sensitive aspiring writer. Unfortunately for Areum, her first day on the job is thrown into tumult when Haejoo arrives at her husband's office and violently mistakes Areum for Changsook. Haejoo's physical assault on the unsuspecting young woman enables Bongwan to lie to his wife that Areum was a one-time mistress and he will not retain her as an assistant—which results in Areum being fired and Changsook being brought back into the office. Hong's filmmaking style involves lengthy conversations between the characters, non-linear sequences, and dreary black-and-white cinematography. Optional. (P. Hall)



A Dog's Way Home

★★★1/2

Sony, 96 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99



Adapted from the titular 2018 book by W. Bruce Cameron (*A Dog's Purpose*), the plot of filmmaker Charles Martin Smith's live-action canine soap opera centers on the old incredible journey chestnut of an animal making its way back to its owners over a long distance. Bella (voiced by Bryce Dallas Howard—yes, she talks) is a puppy brought up by a cat after her pitbull mother is seized by a nasty animal control officer. Bella eventually finds a home with med student Lucas (Jonah Hauer-King) and his mother Terri (Ashley Judd), the latter an army veteran coping with post-service depression. Lucas falls afoul of a developer who not only is planning to tear down some deserted houses where stray cats and dogs live but also enlists a dogcatcher to target Bella. In desperation, Lucas and his girlfriend Olivia (Alexandra Shipp) arrange for Bella to stay temporarily with Olivia's folks in New Mexico, but she escapes and begins a perilous quest through the wilds of New Mexico and Colorado towards home. So long as the movie focuses on Bella and the animals she encounters along the way—particularly an orphaned cougar cub she befriends—the story is engaging enough, especially since the locations are gorgeous. Unfortunately, the human characters are unbearably bland—not only Lucas, Terri, and Olivia, but also the people that Bella interacts with on her journey. And it is this mediocrity of the human element that undermines one's enjoyment of Bella's quest.

Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

El Angel ★★1/2

Passion River, 115 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Carlos Robledo Puch was a baby-faced 19-year-old in 1971-72, when he went on a crime spree in Buenos Aires that included 11 murders, as well as numerous robberies, rapes, and kidnappings. After his arrest, Puch was called the "Death Angel" or "Black Angel" because of the inexplicable divergence between his good looks and solid upbringing and his unspeakable actions. Luis Ortega's docu-drama can be criticized for failing to provide much psychological insight into Puch and for romanticizing his story, but it does boast a charismatic turn from Lorenzo Ferro—who bears a strong physical resemblance to the actual killer as a young man—and striking visuals, with the period settings captured in colorful widescreen images. Still, the narrative is thoroughly unpleasant, charting Puch's evolution from a high school kid who enjoys breaking into houses and stealing motorcycles, to a hardened thief who pulls off heists of guns and money, and finally to a killer who apparently enjoys shooting people just for the thrill of it. Anyone looking for answers about why Puch embarked on a career of mindless violence will undoubtedly be disappointed, but *El Angel* does present an effective account of this disturbing case. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Ferahfeza (Ships) ★★★1/2

IndiePix, 97 min., in Turkish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Turkish filmmaker Elif Relig's feature film directing debut, which won the FIPRESCI Award and the Special Jury Prize at the 2013 European Film Festival, centers on Ali (Ugur Uzunel), a shipyard worker stuck in a tiresome job due to his father, who works in the same shipyard. Bored by the monotony, Ali spends time watching ships sail off to distant horizons that he fears he will never visit. One day, Ali discovers a half-completed graffiti mural of a ship and takes it upon himself to find the artist. That creative force is Eda (M. Sitare Akbas), who is also in a suffocating relationship with her father. Ali believes the pair are foreordained to travel to faraway destinations together, although his dreams and reality never quite manage to overlap. The two leads have a dynamic chemistry and their poignant union helps fuel this emotional drama. And under Relig's expert direction, the relationship between Ali and Eda never grows soggy, while the story also swerves in

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unpredictable directions that keeps the drama compelling. Cinematographer Tursoy Golebeyi, who shot this feature in 16mm, deserves special kudos. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Fighting with My Family

★★★1/2

Universal, 109 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, May 14



Saraya-Jade Bevis (Florence Pugh) was raised by parents, Ricky (Nick Frost) and Julia (Lena Headley) Knight, who run a minor-league wrestling league in Norwich, England. At first, Saraya wasn't interested in joining their troupe but, after an exhibition bout with her ambitious big brother Zak Zodiac (Jack Lowden), she became enthused. As Saraya and Zak set their sights on the WWE, they have a chance encounter with Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, who urges them to be themselves and not try to imitate anyone else. Talent scout/coach Hutch Morgan (Vince Vaughn) wants to promote 18-year-old Saraya, but not Zak, which causes a crisis since despairing Zak has a growing family. Goth-girl Saraya then rebrands herself as Paige, named after a favorite character played by Rose McGowan on TV's *Charmed*. When Paige arrives at the WWE's NXT training facility in Orlando, she faces not only loneliness but also disillusionment, discovering that her fellow recruits are conventionally sexy blonde bikini-clad models/dancers, and she struggles to keep up with the physical and psychological challenges. Meanwhile, her family back home also grapples with change. As pro wrestling fans know, flamboyant Paige became WWE's Divas Champion, but after a sex-tape hacking and an injury in the ring, she retired from wrestling at age 26. Writer-director Stephen Merchant's simplistic bio-pic is an often predictable, triumph-of-the-underdog tale that will still appeal to wrestling fans. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Free Solo

★★★1/2
National Geographic, 120 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.98



What kind of person risks life and limb to climb the treacherous face of Yosemite National Park's famous 3,200-foot granite wall—known as El Capitan—without a rope or any other safety equipment? Daredevil Alex Honnold has completed more than 1,000 solitary climbs and is thought to be the world's greatest surviving free-soloist. Recalling an emotionally isolated childhood in Sacramento, CA, and a "bottomless pit of self-loathing," Alex keeps a meticulously detailed journal about his mountaineering, noting every hand and foot placement. A self-confessed "dork" and "loner," ascetic Alex eats cans of beans warmed on a hot plate

and lives in a minimally equipped van. He dates occasionally but declares that he "will always choose climbing over a lady." At a book signing for his 2015 memoir *Alone on the Wall*, Alex meets cheery Sanni McCandless, who shares Alex's climbing passion. Filmed by his longtime friend/collaborator Jimmy Chin and the latter's wife, Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi (who together directed *Meru*), this Oscar-winning documentary delves into Alex's thrill-seeking motivations—including an MRI scan that reveals Alex's amygdala (the brain's fear center) requires unusually high levels of stimulation before the fear response kicks in. Alex's troubled mother wonders if he's on the Asperger's spectrum, although Alex recalls that one of her favorite sayings was: "Almost doesn't count." As his fatalistic friend/veteran climber Tommy Caldwell notes "Everybody who has made soloing a big part of their lives...is dead now." The film's centerpiece covering Alex's historic climb up El Capitan on June 3, 2017 is vertigo-inducing, awesome, and intense. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

The Guilty

★★★1/2
Magnolia, 88 min., in Danish w/English subtitles & English-dubbed, R, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



There is a particular kind of challenge to making a movie tethered to a single, self-contained location where the dialogue is conducted almost entirely over the phone and the story plays out in real time. This Danish thriller centers on Asger Holm (Jakob Cedergren), a police officer temporarily demoted to an Emergency Services (Denmark's version of 911) call center. Asger treats the job with barely concealed contempt, judging his callers before sending help their way, until he answers a call from a woman who has been abducted by her ex-husband (who thinks she's phoning their daughter). Asger keeps her on the line with yes or no questions and passes on the information, which is supposed to be the end of his involvement but he can't let it go and he starts investigating on his own. As we learn more about Asger—he's under investigation for questionable use of force—he himself begins to realize that he may have jumped to the wrong conclusions. *The Guilty* is an impressive debut from Swedish filmmaker Gustav Möller, who isolates Asger within the frame as the tensions build, creating a thrilling drama where all the action occurs offscreen and phone silence only adds to the anxiety. An incisive portrait of a self-righteous officer who confronts his own assumptions and prejudices, this was Denmark's official entry for the Oscars. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Heavens to Betsy 2

★★★
Vision, 111 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99

When we last saw Betsy (Karen Lesiewicz)

in *Heavens to Betsy*, she had discovered that life in an alternative universe where God had granted all of her many wishes—for success, love, and relationship do-overs—ultimately robbed her of the challenges that lead people to hard-won growth. Safely ensconced again in her mercurial, unpredictable, frustrating but original cosmos, Betsy is once more slogging through her days, a single woman with a dead-end job and a trademark skepticism toward others. But with the support and wise counsel of her lovably bearish pastor (Jim O'Heir), Betsy decides to write an inspiring novel about her experience and—boom!—the book is a hit. Before long, Betsy's agent is dragging her to the right social engagements, bookstore signings are plentiful, and everybody with a microphone is clamoring for an interview. There's just one problem: for Betsy, the book is a deeply personal testament to her Christian faith. She knows those weird events were an act of God to help her understand some things, but for everyone else, her bestselling narrative is a delightful fantasy. Reconciling this crisis of authenticity is not going to be easy, especially when a radio personality who specializes in the humiliation of guest plots to destroy her during a live broadcast. *Heavens to Betsy 2* has a lively charm stoked by writer-director Robert Alaniz, and while a budding romance fails to ignite anything, the scenes between Lesiewicz and O'Heir are pure gold. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



How to Train Your Dragon: Hidden World

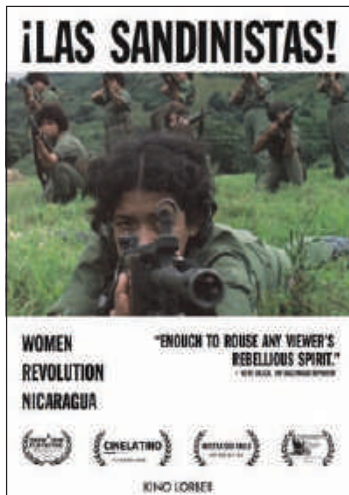
★★★

Universal, 104 min., PG, DVD: \$34.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.98, May 21



This is the third installment in the animated fantasy franchise, chronicling how teenage Hiccup (voiced by Jay Baruchel) befriended fire-breathing Toothless, breaking the Viking tradition of fighting with dragons. In the sequel, Hiccup succeeded his late father (Gerard Butler) as tribal chieftain, following the lead of his mother (Cate Blanchett), a dragon-whisperer. Now, the island village of Berk is "the world's first dragon-Viking utopia." But there are overcrowding problems and an unwelcome influx of dragon hunters, particularly villainous poacher Grimmel the Grisly (F. Murray Abraham). With his fiancée Astrid (America Ferrera), Hiccup watches as Toothless, thought to be the last of the inky-black Night Fury species, falls in love with a blue-eyed, alabaster-skinned female dragon, dubbed Light Fury. So Hiccup and Toothless travel to the mythical Hidden World at the edge of the Earth—an ancestral dragon habitat—where Toothless courts Light Fury. Hic-

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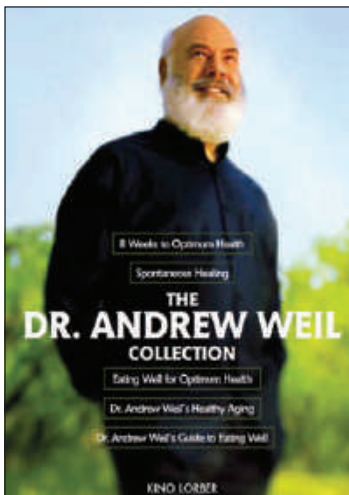
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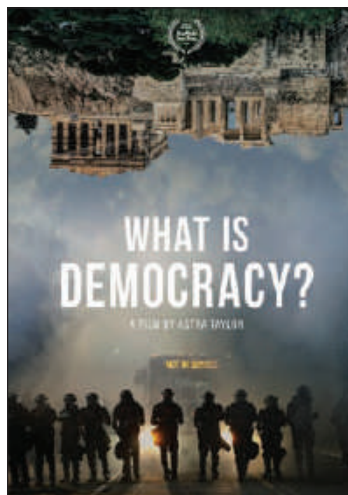
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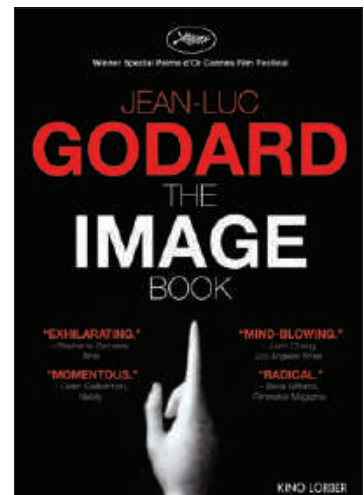
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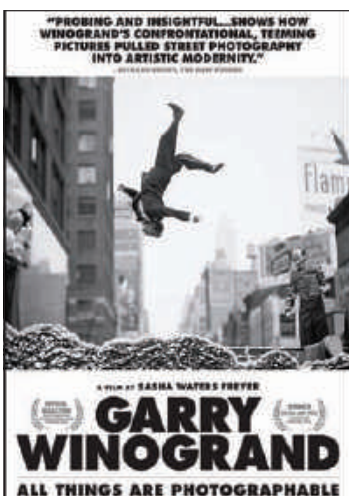
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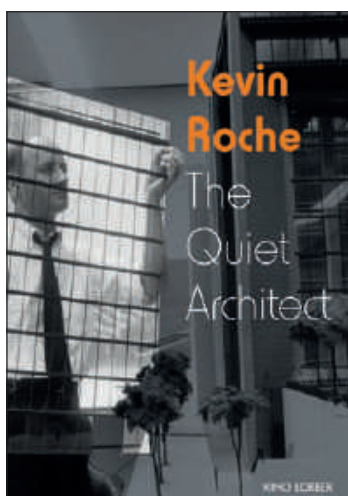
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STREET DATE: 5/28/19
DVD UPC: 738329237394 • SRP: \$29.95
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cup's friends supply comedic relief, including Snotlout (Jonah Hill), Fishlegs (Christopher Mintz-Plasse), and the birdbrained twins Ruffnut (Kristen Wiig) and Tuffnut (Justin Ruppel). But, as Hiccup's father once said, "With love comes loss, son; it's part of the deal." Adapted from Cressida Cowell's children's book series by writer-director Dean DeBlois, this is an enchanting, endearing, and bittersweet coming-of-age conclusion to the popular series. Recommended. (S. Granger)

I Am Not a Witch ★★★

Film Movement, 93 min., in English, Bemba, Nyanja & Tonga w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Serving up sharp social commentary presented as deadpan satire, *I Am Not a Witch* tells a tale of exploitation, oppression, and superstition in an African nation straddling the modern world and ancient beliefs. An 8-year-old girl (Maggie Mulubwa) living in a rural Zambian village is accused of witchcraft and quickly sent to a government "witch camp" when she refuses to either confirm or deny the accusation. Christened "Shula," she is the sole child in a community of old women who have accepted their position in a combination work camp/tourist attraction, where they are displayed like a sideshow. Shula becomes a goldmine for Mr. Banda (Henry B.J. Phiri), the government official who runs the camp for his own profit, and he puts her on TV and sells her services as a witch. Zambian-Welsh filmmaker Rungano Nyoni presents Shula's ordeal as a surreal fairy tale (the women are all "leashed" by long, white ribbons, which are supposed to prevent them from flying away)—one with a dark, deadpan sense of humor that underscores but never undercuts the serious themes. The witches are all women who, with no legal recourse, accept their position and play the part, but they also band together to help and protect Shula from the hard labor and the worst of the exploitation they endure. Mulubwa centers the film with her open face and largely impassive expression that communicate a sense of dislocation, incredulity, and sadness. It's a beautiful, funny, haunting, and devastating film. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Invisibles ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 110 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



In 1943, Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels declared Berlin to be "free of Jews." But in reality at least 7,000 Jews were hiding in the German capital, with 1,700 managing to escape Nazi detection and survive the Allied invasion. Claus Räfle's film features archival interviews with four Jewish Berliners who survived—Cioma

Schönhaus, Eugen Friede, Ruth Arndt, and Hanni Lévy—although they never crossed paths during wartime. But rather than take a straightforward documentary approach, Räfle creates elaborate dramatic re-enactments of each survivor's story. Cioma (Max Mauff) finds an underground niche as a forger, where his talents earn him black market profits. Hanni (Alice Dwyer) dyes her hair blonde and freely walks through the city, arousing no suspicion from the Nazi authorities. Ruth (Ruby O. Fee) dresses in black and pretends to be in war widow's garb, ultimately landing a job as a maid for a Nazi Party member. And Eugen (Aaron Altaras) is initially protected because his father was Christian, but later eludes capture and takes shelter with a Communist family who are active in the underground. The re-enactments are emotionally harrowing, with the ensemble cast delivering solid performances, and the real-life stories from the survivors are powerful and eloquent. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Jupiter's Moon ★★1/2

Icarus, 129 min., in Hungarian & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99



People fly all the time as a matter of course in today's superhero movies, but director Kornél Mundruczó uses the ability to soar as the premise for a wildly imaginative parable about guilt and redemption in a Hungary (and, by extension, all of Europe) torn by anti-immigrant fever. The strange, surrealistic mixture of religion and politics here focuses on Aryan (Zsombor Jéger), a handsome Syrian refugee—son of a carpenter, no less—who is shot by brutal cop Laszlo (György Cserhalmi) while trying to cross the border. Instead of dying, however, Aryan literally takes flight, and winds up in a hospital where down-on-his-luck Dr. Stern (Merab Ninidze) observes the man's unusual powers and decides to use him as a moneymaking tool, showing him off to rich patients for a handsome fee as an angel sent by God to cure them. As they travel through the city, the cynical Stern comes to believe that Aryan might actually be a divine messenger, and starts to wonder whether he can reform his own life. Meanwhile, the two are pursued relentlessly by Laszlo, who wants to finish the job, and the three men eventually confront one another in a sumptuous hotel. The individual strands of *Jupiter's Moon* make for intriguing viewing, but in the end they fail to meld into a coherent whole. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

King of Thieves ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 108 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$21.99

No honor is found among the aged thieves played by some of Britain's most distin-

guished actors in James Marsh's dramedy, inspired by the 2015 burglary of London's Hatton Garden Safe Deposit Company—the largest heist in England's history. The film provides a vehicle for a gaggle of stars—Michael Caine, Jim Broadbent, Tom Courtenay, Ray Winstone, Paul Whitehouse, and Michael Gambon—whose presence alone invites nostalgia for all the pleasure they have given audiences over the years. But their involvement is not enough to make this film entirely successful. While the heist proceeds pretty much as planned, things shortly begin to fall apart, and when it comes to dividing the proceeds, animosities old and new break out. The cops have little difficulty in identifying the perpetrators, thanks to a series of blunders made along the way, and most of the thieves are taken into custody without much difficulty. Among the ensemble, Caine and Courtenay come off best, the former because he still retains the ability to chillingly shift from avuncular to menacing, and the latter because his role as the milquetoast of the bunch fits him like a glove. Despite a snazzy score and some quick editing, however, the movie too often strives for a realism that comes across as dull. Still, the stars are a joy to watch, making this a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Knife + Heart ★★1/2

Altered Innocence, 102 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$27.99, June 4



Yann Gonzalez's movie is a combination of early Dario Argento and Brian De Palma—a lurid French period *giallo* set in the sweltering Parisian summer of 1979 that centers on a director of gay soft-porn movies whose cast members are being gruesomely killed off by a creepy masked figure. Vanessa Paradis plays Anne, the lesbian filmmaker whose repertory company of handsome studs suddenly become targets—the first a curly-haired Adonis whose murder (by dildo—tricked out with a switchblade) is intercut with clips from the last scene he filmed being edited into final form by Anne's estranged lover. While the killings continue—in similarly outrageous fashion—Anne tries to uncover the identity and motive of the perpetrator, eventually setting a trap to lure the murderer into the open by making another film. *Knife + Heart* ultimately provides answers, but as in many similar genre pieces the explanations are outlandish. Nonetheless, the film is so stylishly mounted (on an obviously meager budget) that it holds one's interest despite gaping plot holes. *Knife + Heart* cannot match the wacky seductiveness of Argento

or De Palma at their best, but it works as a homage to their most memorable work. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Last Race ★★

Magnolia, 75 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.99

Michael Dweck's elegiac but awkward documentary begins with some truly niche background information: a history of auto racing on Long Island, NY. Among other things, viewers learn that during the sport's peak popularity there, an almost unimaginable 40 racetracks did brisk business. But now Long Island is down to one, Riverhead Raceway, a longtime mom-and-pop operation that has seen better days. Dweck has several journalistic goals in *The Last Race*, including championing the many eccentrics who either participate in stock car racing at Riverhead or frequent the stands as paying fans. (In the film's strangest and most disconcerting scene, Dweck films one of the drivers at his day job destroying beehives; we watch as poisoned bees crawl on the ground in their final moments.) Also featured here are the track's owners, Jim and Barbara Cromarty, seen in their office trailer and while Jim announces races from a booth. While a lot of racing footage is featured, Dweck spoils these scenes with Mozart's "Requiem" on the score, a pretentious choice that amounts to overkill regarding Riverhead's decline. While there are amusing and interesting moments of frayed glory here, this is ultimately a scattershot documentary. Optional. (T. Keogh)



The Man Who Killed Hitler and Then the Bigfoot ★★1/2

RLJE Films, 97 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.99

Sporting the most bizarre title I've seen in years, this inventive action/adventure/alternative history film centers on an American legend no one has ever heard of. During World War II, Calvin Barr (Sam Elliott) remained anonymous, although he was secretly the soldier who shot the Führer. Quietly living out his retirement years in a small northeastern town along the Canadian border, Barr's constant companion is his golden retriever. Barr often recalls the moment when his aptitude for languages and knowledge of 1940s-era weaponry led him to the fateful spot where he killed Adolf Hitler, whose "ideas continued to do their damage without him." In flashbacks, Barr is played by Aidan Turner (TV's *Poldark*). Barr still mourns the loss of the love-of-his-life, a schoolteacher named Maxine (Caitlin FitzGerald), and his only friend is his gregarious younger brother (Larry Miller). But when a series of homicides



occurs nearby, Barr is recruited by an FBI agent (Ron Livingston) and a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman (Rizwan Manji) to use his remarkable tracking ability. His mission: to kill the mythical Bigfoot, a creature infected with a deadly virus that could devastate mankind. And this quest leads Barr, once again, to question society's concept of heroism. Graphic-artist-turned-filmmaker Robert D. Krzykowski's somewhat overly talky film scores points for originality (and that title). A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Miss Bala ★★

Sony, 104 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Filmmaker Catherine Hardwicke's (*Twilight*) English-language remake of a well-regarded 2011 Mexican film plays like a pilot for a Jane Bond-ish franchise, but while the tale of a young woman caught between drug traffickers and law-enforcement is fast-paced, it also comes across as curiously bland. Gloria (Gina Rodriguez) is the Hitchcockian protagonist, an innocent caught up in a dangerous situation. The struggling California cosmetologist travels to Tijuana to support her friend Suzu, who has entered a beauty pageant. But a bunch of thugs headed by suave, handsome drug kingpin Lino (Ismael Cruz Cordova) invades a party they attend at a snazzy nightclub, and in the melee Suzu disappears. Gloria is intent on rescuing her, but for a variety of unlikely reasons her efforts put her in the middle between Lino's gang (who force her to transport money and drugs across the border) and a brusque DEA agent (who intends to use her to set a trap for Lino). Gloria quickly learns that she must fend for herself, not merely to survive but also to save Suzu: certainly none of the male characters—the criminals, the U.S. agents, the local police and politicians—can be relied upon, since all are corrupt and duplicitous. Naturally, Gloria proves entirely capable of outwitting and outmaneuvering all of them. Another mediocre effort to create a Hollywood action heroine, this is an optional purchase, at best. (F. Swietek)



Moko Jumbie ★★★

IndiePix, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Set amidst the tropical beauty and mysteries of Trinidad, *Moko Jumbie* tells a tale of collision: between descendants of Africans and Indians, between immigrant cultures in different lands, the past and present, real and magical, and political danger versus relative safety. Asha (Vanna Girod), a 16-year-old British subject of Indian descent, goes to Trinidad to visit her aunt Mary (Sharda Maharaj). Although the latter is generous and kind,



Mary proves to be quite bossy concerning the girl's whereabouts, preventing her from mingling with other teenagers, especially with a black family living in a ramshackle house next door. Mary suspects that their teen son Roger (Jeremy Thomas) robbed her house. The film suggests that some kind of dark magic is behind these tensions, particularly after Asha experiences a sort of *Rosemary's Baby*-like fever dream under Roger's roof. A crossing over of spirits into the human realm becomes a startling, persistent theme here, not as a fear factor but rather as a revelation of blurred cultural traditions. Asha absorbs the many contradictions around her, becoming part of the intermingled fabric of this world in filmmaker Vashti Anderson's haunting, often beautiful movie, which fearlessly travels unexpected paths. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Monsieur & Madame Adelman ★★1/2

Icarus, 120 min., in French w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99

Trying to successfully cram the high- and low-lights of a 40-plus-year relationship into a compelling two-hour movie is not easy. But the French writing and acting team of Nicolas Bedos and Doria Tillier make a valiant attempt to do just this, exploring the on-again-off-again obsessive-compulsive relationship between novelist Victor (Bedos) and gifted Sorbonne PhD Sarah (Tillier). The film begins in the early 1970s when both are struggling to make their way out of stifling bohemianism into professional life. Victor develops from a pretentious Camus imitator to a serious novelist in adulthood, while the suggestion is that Sarah is his unofficial editor and, at times, ghostwriter. After raising a couple of horrible kids, the two make a habit of going their separate ways before always managing to find each other again. Victor becomes the quintessential eccentric self-indulgent novelist, while Sarah ultimately makes a fortune as a software designer. But once Victor becomes old and feeble-minded, Sarah has to make a fateful decision. While the film often feels scattershot, and sometimes the moral and emotional transformations of Sarah and Victor seem far-fetched, this is an interesting character study, overall. A strong optional purchase. (M. Sandlin)



The Mule ★★★

Warner, 116 min., R, DVD: \$21.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99

This based-on-a-true-crime drama is 88-year-old Clint Eastwood's 37th film as a director. He also stars as a crusty curmudgeon who starts running drugs for a Mexican cartel to pay off debts. An avid horticulturalist, Earl Stone (Eastwood) has always spent more

time cultivating his flowers than his family. As a result, he has disappointed his ex-wife (Dianne Wiest) and bitterly disillusioned daughter (Alison Eastwood). Earl's work—growing, hybridizing, and selling daylilies—has been ruined by the Internet. When his house is repossessed and he can't pay for his granddaughter's (Taissa Farmiga) wedding, Earl needs to do something—quick. That opportunity arises when, due to his perfect driving record (no tickets, ever), Earl is recruited to transport a package from Illinois to Texas. Unknowingly rattling along in his beat-up truck, he enjoys pop music on the radio, stopping along the way for a pulled-pork sandwich and companionship. Since no one would suspect this sociable old codger of cocaine-smuggling, one successful run leads to another. Earl becomes known as dependable "Tata," and he enjoys having cash while singlehandedly financing the rebuilding of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars hall. But when Earl is wine and dined by the Sinaloa Cartel's kingpin (Andy Garcia), it arouses the suspicion of the boss's #2 man (Ignacio Serricchio). Meanwhile, Chicago-based DEA agents (Bradley Cooper, Michael Peña) are urged by their quota-hungry superior (Laurence Fishburne) to capture this elusive criminal. Inspired by Sam Dolnick's *New York Times* article about WWII vet Leo Sharp, *The Mule* suffers somewhat from supporting characters that lack depth, but this should appeal to Eastwood fans. Recommended. (S. Granger)



No Date, No Signature

★★★1/2

Icarus, 104 min., in Farsi w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99

This gripping Iranian drama begins with forensic pathologist Dr. Nariman (Amir Agha'ee) driving on a busy highway one night when another car carelessly runs him off the road. Trying to avert catastrophe, Nariman unintentionally collides with a motorcycle carrying an impoverished family. An 8-year-old boy shrugs off his head bump from the mishap as no big deal, but after giving the child's angry father, Moosa (Navid Mohammadzadeh), a wad of cash, Nariman recommends that the boy be taken to a nearby health clinic—advice Moosa ignores. Shortly afterward, the child dies and his body is brought to Nariman's hospital. An autopsy concludes that the cause of death was botulism, but Nariman harbors secret doubts. *No Date, No Signature* becomes a story of two men, Nariman and Moosa, who feel deeply responsible for the boy's fate, although for entirely different reasons: was it the accident, or was it rancid food bought on the cheap? Co-writer and director Vahid Jalilvand

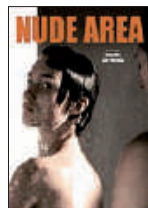


creates twin lines of falling dominoes as each guilt-ridden character takes desperate actions, making what could have been a contained situation much, much worse. As in the best Iranian dramas, Jalilvand has a strong grasp on the moral parameters within a restricted society's everyday passions and ordinary tragedies. The world of Nariman's work, dealing with illness and corpses, is a supersized bureaucracy of multiple protocols that barely manages the flow while routinely dismissing the human element in loss. Iran's official entry for the Academy Awards, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Nude Area ★★1/2

Film Movement, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

In this dialogue-less film set in Amsterdam, one young woman becomes obsessed with another. Hama (Imaan Hammam), who is of Arab descent, attracts the attention of Naomi (Sammy Boonstra), a pale waif, at various urban locations, including a pool and a train. A lulling jazz score, dominated by spare piano and late-night saxophone, serves as the soundtrack for these observation sessions, while Polish director Urszula Antoniak frequently cuts away to close-ups of water droplets rolling down feminine curves. These glimpses of Naomi's fantasies turn out to be scenes from a ladies' sauna (the only nudity in the film). In addition to their physical differences, Antoniak intimates class and religious differences, as Hama, a waitress, wears a hijab. Naomi, who has no discernible vocation, lives in an expensive-looking house and appears more isolated than Hama (who sometimes travels with a group of friends). Naomi eventually sends her crush object a vague, if admiring letter. Until this point, the voyeurism feels like harmless wishful thinking, but when Naomi appears to humiliate Hama at her place of employment, Naomi becomes less sympathetic. Naomi imagines the pair spending time together afterward, hitting the town in matching satin dresses, with Hama's woman's headscarf entering into these fantasies in ways that seem fetishistic. Everything flows through the eyes of the more privileged character, although the ending suggests that that was the point all along. So little happens in this film that it might have worked better as a short, but it does score points for originality and the tech credits are consistently first-rate. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)



On the Basis of Sex ★★

Universal, 120 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

This informative bio-pic focuses on Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's early years as a persevering law student and pioneering attorney. In 1956, when

wide-eyed Ruth Bader (Felicity Jones) was married to Martin Ginsburg (Armie Hammer) and had a baby daughter, Ginsburg became one of only nine women in the Harvard Law School class of more than 500 men.

"What does it mean to be a Harvard man?" the Dean (Sam Waterston) rhetorically asks. Despite having graduated from Columbia Law School (tied for first in her class), she cannot get a job in a New York law firm. So she teaches at Rutgers—until she discovers a tantalizing 1972 sex discrimination case. A Colorado caregiver, Charles Moritz (Chris Mulkey), is denied a \$296 tax deduction because he is male, and caregivers are assumed to be female. Discrimination against men? Yes, this is what propels Ginsburg through the 10th US Circuit Court of Appeals and up to the Supreme Court. It's impossible to chronicle Ginsburg's rising legal career without acknowledging the devotion of her husband (also a lawyer), who was incredibly supportive, including doing the household chores, while she pursued her passion. Worshipfully written by Justice Ginsburg's nephew Daniel Stiepleman, the film is somewhat formulaically directed by Mimi Leder, who adroitly casts Kathy Bates as activist attorney Dorothy Kenyon and Justin Theroux as Mel Wulf of the ACLU. And it concludes with a cameo of the real RBG walking up the steps of the Supreme Court building. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Out of Love ★

Omnibus, 100 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Suffocating and tedious, the bumpy relationship drama *Out of Love* centers on a once-hopeful romance that sours quickly and brings out the crazy in both people. Varya (Naomi Velissariou) and Nikolai (Daniil Vorobyov) meet over coffee and intuitively know that a passionate affair is ahead of them should they choose to take the step. They do, and after a brief can't-keep-their-hands-off-each-other honeymoon, the fireworks start. Varya lashes out, breaking stuff, getting weird at parties; Nikolai tries to contain and control her, but ultimately turns violent. There's nothing in any of this that is remotely clarifying about how love goes wrong, or about the meaning of bringing baggage into relationships, no matter how good things are in the early days. Writer-director Paloma Aguilerá Valdebenito emphasizes the claustrophobia of erotic fixation, strategically shooting many scenes in a tiny kitchen where everything from nurturing to tantrums plays out. It's a smart move, but ultimately doesn't make this couple any more interesting or sympathetic. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)



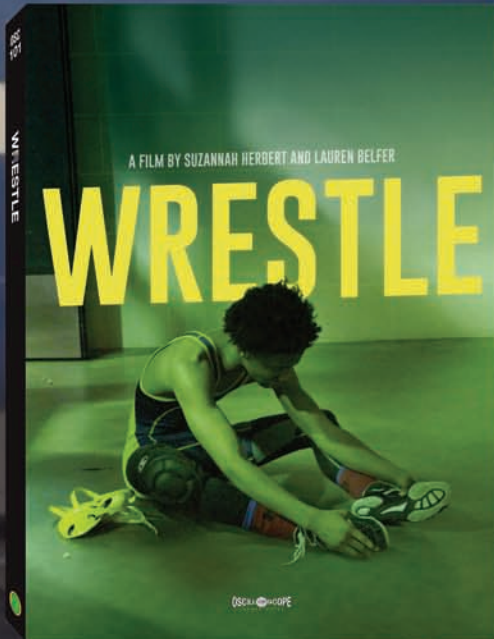
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Hoop Dreams goes to the mat in this intimate, coming-of-age documentary about four members of a high-school wrestling team at Huntsville's J.O. Johnson High School, a longstanding entry on Alabama's list of failing schools.

STREET: JUNE 11TH

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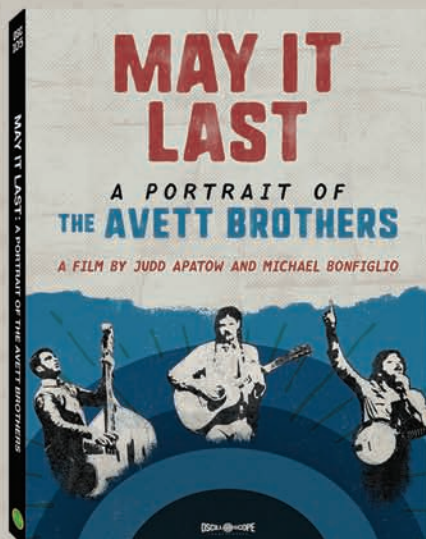
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MAY IT LAST

A PORTRAIT OF
THE AVETT BROTHERS

A FILM BY JUDD APATOW AND MICHAEL BONFIGLIO

MAY IT LAST IS AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT OF THE ACCLAIMED NORTH CAROLINA BAND THE AVETT BROTHERS, CHARTING THEIR DECADE-AND-A-HALF RISE, WHILE CHRONICLING THEIR PRESENT-DAY COLLABORATION WITH FAMED PRODUCER RICK RUBIN ON THE MULTI-GRAMMY-NOMINATED ALBUM "TRUE SADNESS."

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STREET: JUNE 18TH

A Paris Education

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 142 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Aspiring filmmaker Etienne (Andranic Manet) leaves his “provincial” town of Lyons for film school in Paris in this French drama. Shot in black-and-white and directed with a laidback ease, it’s a long, talky movie that meanders through philosophical debates (both in class and at parties) and romantic affairs as Etienne makes friends with fellow cinephiles, becomes obsessed with the outspoken (and generally disliked) student Mathias (Corentin Fila), and cheats on his hometown girlfriend in a series of affairs. Etienne is crippled by self-doubt, which helps explain his man crush on student provocateur Mathias, and he has a tendency to avoid making hard decisions, passively letting others do the breaking up and moving on. Some viewers will consider this to be just the kind of “whiny French film” that Mathias complains about, but it’s a brand that the film embraces as it explores the passion and intensity of young adults as they dive into art (or politics, or whatever matters to them) and struggle to find themselves in the crucible of academia and kindred souls. Film fans will have fun with the cinematic debates over the merits of Italian horror auteurs and the state of modern French cinema but that’s a small part of the overall film. The pretensions of the students are spot on, capturing the self-involved state of young people at a time when philosophical positions can seem like the defining element of their lives. Filmmaker Jean-Paul Civeyrac (a film professor himself) follows their evolution through solipsism to a more mature approach to life. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

The Party’s Just Beginning ★★★1/2

Passion River, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



In filmmaker Karen Gillan’s very Scottish directorial debut, she plays Liusaidh (“Lucy”), a party girl who drinks, smokes, and sleeps with men she’s known for a matter of minutes. The aimless 24-year-old lives with her oblivious parents and works in the cheese section of a grocery store. For fun, she likes to get high with her friend, Alistair (Matthew Beard), an openly gay man with a closeted boyfriend, and watch reality competition shows. In her more introspective moments, Liusaidh stares out her bedroom window at neighbors whose lives seem happier. Suicidal individuals tend to gravitate towards her, including an elderly man who mistakenly dials her number instead of a suicide hotline. As moody techno music swirls around her, she’s also haunted

by visions of a man leaning over a bridge she visits late at night (the site is infamous in Inverness because if the fall doesn’t kill the jumper, the train below will finish the job). After glancing in her direction, the man jumps to his death, a mystery that will be explained in due course. Things start to look up when Liusaidh meets Dale (a bearded Lee Pace), a divorced dad, but he leaves town after a few days—seemingly for good—and Alistair’s precarious personal life enters crisis mode. Although it starts out as a dark comedy, the film drops the humor once sexual assault and substance abuse enter the picture. It’s all a bit more than this randy character piece can handle, but Gillan holds promise as a director, and she manages to render Liusaidh sympathetic even as the latter makes one serious mistake after another. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennesy)

Permanent Green Light

★★★★1/2

Altered Innocence, 92 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$21.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99, May 7



American filmmakers Dennis Cooper and Zac Farley co-directed this French feature about a teenager who becomes obsessed with the notion of blowing himself up with explosives in public. Roman (Benjamin Sulpice) lives in an unnamed suburb, and his bizarre obsession is not based on creating terrorist mayhem or putting an early end to an unhappy life. Instead, he is enchanted with the concept of creating a spectacular event that ends with his complete disappearance. Roman watches videos of explosions to gain ideas on how to achieve his goal, and he enlists the help of a teen girl named León (Rose Mousselet) who collects suicide vests. León is also suicidal, a fact that upsets Roman but does not dissuade him from moving ahead with his goal. Roman’s friends learn about his plans, but somehow wind up becoming support to his unlikely farewell to the world. *Permanent Green Light* tells a very creepy but thought-provoking story that offers troubling considerations on the meaning of life and the human relation with death. Sulpice’s central performance is wonderfully enigmatic, and his character serves as a magnet that attracts other emotionally damaged teenagers who carry burdens of varying pain. A disturbing drama that is both boldly original and intellectually devastating, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Piercing ★★★1/2

Universal, 82 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$22.98

Kinkiness and menace merge in Nicolas Pesce’s weird but ultimately unsatisfying adaptation of Ryu Murakami’s 1994 novel. The antihero is Reed (Christopher Abbott), who

is introduced contemplating stabbing his infant daughter with an ice pick. The child tells him what he has to do to overcome the urge: take a trip to pick up a prostitute in another city and kill her savagely, thus working out his bloodlust, which will help stem past trauma. Reed checks into a hotel, orders a girl from an escort service, and nervously practices what he intends to do. But when Jackie (Mia Wasikowska) shows up, she proves to be no less needy—and in an equally unusual way. What transpires is a cat-and-mouse game that repeatedly shifts perspective and eventually winds up in Jackie’s apartment. Revealing the twists would be unfair, even though none are particularly surprising. More interesting are the choices that Reed and Jackie make: each could end their dance of death at any time, but they don’t, suggesting that the will to live is not uppermost in their minds. Pesce, however, is less interested in exploring their motives than in presenting an unsettlingly surrealistic portrait, sometimes grim and often funny, of the two circling one another like scorpions in a bottle. Abbott and Wasikowska are entirely in tune with this vision, but while *Piercing* maintains an air of dry, dark humor throughout, in the end it is pulled down by its own overwhelming nihilism. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



The Quake ★★★1/2

Magnolia, 108 min., in Norwegian w/English subtitles & English-dubbed, PG-13, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



A weak sequel to filmmaker Roar Uthaug’s 2015 Norwegian disaster film *The Wave*, in which cliffs collapsing into a beautiful fjord caused a tsunami that wiped out a village, director John Andreas Andersen’s *The Quake* follows the destruction of Oslo during a seismic catastrophe. Kristoffer Joner returns as Kristian, a rumpled, tell-it-like-it-is seismologist who challenges the government’s willfully blind eye to evidence of coming destruction. Now suffering from PTSD, Kristian is separated from his family (who he fought so hard to save the last time around) and is uncertain as to whether he might be delusional about more troubles ahead. Given the riveting layers of human drama and tragedy in *The Wave*, it’s surprising that *The Quake* is so narratively predictable and emotionally flat during its first half (before the disaster), and so narrowly focused (on one collapsing building) in the second. But there are still plenty of moments of tension—a scene in which a vulnerable character is separated from doom by a pane of glass popping with spidery cracks is certainly effective—even if overall the film comes

BIGGER LIKE ME EXTENDED DIRECTOR'S CUT

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KANARIE

Drafted into the South African army during apartheid, a young soldier heavily influenced by Boy George and Depeche Mode joins the military's traveling choir, and romance on the battlefield causes him to deal with his long-repressed sexual identity.

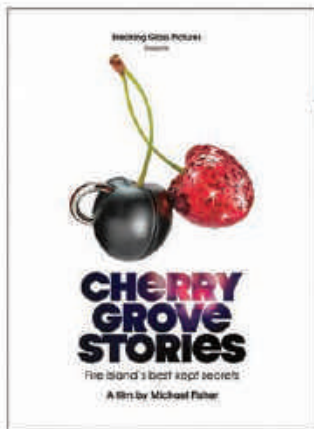
OUTSHINE FILM FESTIVAL
HONORABLE MENTION - BEST FEATURE
REELING: CHICAGO LGBTQ+ INT FF
WINNER - JURY AWARD - BEST NARRATIVE FEATURE



MARILYN

While working as a caretaker on a ranch, Marcos is just waiting for the arrival of Carnival, a time when he can show just how he feels inside. The sudden death of his father leaves his family in a vulnerable position. Known as "Marilyn" by other teenagers, Marcos will ultimately see himself facing the impossibility of being who he wants to be...

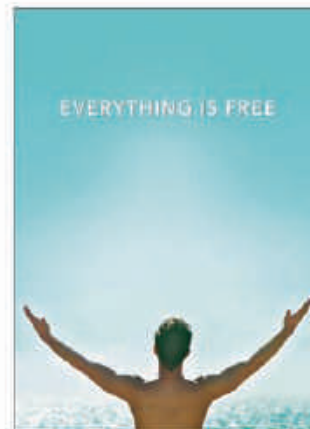
SAN SEBASTIÁN INT FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION
BERLIN INT FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION



CHERRY GROVE STORIES

This documentary film by Michael Fisher recounts the unique character of Cherry Grove, a community on Fire Island, New York. Cherry Grove became a safe haven for gays during a time when two men holding hands in public was illegal. Fisher's interviews with residents expose hidden stories and unknown facts that need to be told.

BFI FLARE: LONDON LGBTQ FF
WORLD PREMIERE
NEWFEST FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION



EVERYTHING IS FREE

Ivan, a gay American painter living in Colombia, is visited by his straight best friend, Christian, who brings along his younger brother, Cole. When Cole expresses interest in Ivan, the two begin secretly sleeping together. However, when Christian finds out, the otherwise idyllic summer affair reveals difficult and surprising emotions between the three...

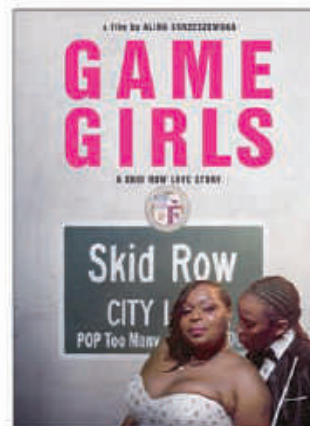
FRAMeline42 FILM FESTIVAL
WORLD PREMIERE



AND THEN THERE WAS EVE

A successful photographer wakes one morning to find her apartment ransacked and her husband missing. Left with nothing to offer the police, she turns to his colleague, Eve, a talented jazz pianist. While getting to know Eve, Alyssa finds herself falling in love again.

LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL
WINNER - LA MUSE AWARD - BEST FICTION FILM
SAN DIEGO INT FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION



GAME GIRLS

Teri and her girlfriend Tiahna attempt to navigate their relationship through the chaotic world of Los Angeles' Skid Row, aka the "homeless capital of the U.S." One is a player in the underground economy, while the other is driven by a powerful desire to get out. Can their love survive the violence of their past and their current environment?

BERLIN INT FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION

across as a payday sequel. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Ritual: A Psychomagic Story ★★★

Film Movement, 95 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Depressed and emotionally unstable Lia (Désirée Giorgetti), a successful dress designer, has a sexually dominant, thrill-seeking boyfriend named Viktor (Ivan Franek), who demands she have an abortion when she becomes pregnant. After the procedure, a mournful Lia takes her therapist's advice and goes off to stay with her aunt Agata (Anna Bonasso) at the latter's spooky old villa in the country. Once there, a blurring of the real and the supernatural takes hold, not only for the increasingly delusional Lia (who communicates with a pair of come-and-go young children who seem to know a lot about her grief), but also for Agata, a benign witch who practices psychic surgery. When an enraged Viktor suddenly intrudes, the battle for sanity—with magical overtones—commences in earnest. Writers-directors Giulia Brazzale and Luca Immesi throw the audience off track with a hint of elegant depravity in the film's opening scenes, with a refined and beautiful Lia appearing to submit to Viktor's sexual authority with coy confidence. But it isn't long before the more authentic characters beneath the games emerge, at which point anarchy reigns. With most of the film's color washed away, *Ritual* basks in unnerving shadows, deep darkness in spooky tunnels below Agata's big house, and shattered light in a garden's leafy gauntlet. And film buffs will appreciate a cameo appearance by legendary and no doubt inspiring cult filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky (*El Topo*). Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Room 304 ★★

Film Movement, 88 min., in German, Danish & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99

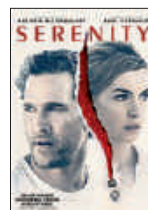


For all of the intensity, grief, betrayal, and sexual catharsis in this Danish drama, there is precious little reason to feel invested in anyone's particular story. Multiple strands run through a complex tale taking place in an unnamed Copenhagen hotel, uniting various characters—many of them strangers to one another—in overlapping destinies. Screenwriter Kim Fupz Aakeson and director Birgitte Staermose play with non-linear timelines and a jumble of nationalities and languages to lay out the sordid events that transpire over a single day. A gunshot starts the narrative, immediately leading back to a series of actions preceding the pistol fire: the hotel manager is having an affair with

his married assistant; a Spanish stewardess seeks out a disposable sexual partner in the lobby bar and ends up with a selfish jerk; a gun-wielding dishwasher, out to avenge the 1990s rape of his wife in the former Yugoslavia, confronts her attacker; an unsmiling concierge gets caught in the middle of everything; and a maid becomes collateral damage. Unhappiness pours through every hallway like the blood in *The Shining*'s Overlook Hotel, although it all amounts to superficial ironies since every action by one person merely dovetails—without a resonating point—with that of another. If something more had been made of the possibilities in the script (perhaps dealing with the wide array of class and privilege represented by the hodgepodge of characters), there might have been more to this connect-the-random-dots would-be thriller. Optional. (T. Keogh)

Serenity ★

Universal, 107 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98



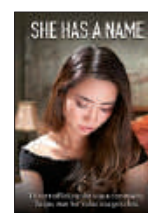
In this alleged neo-noir thriller, Matthew McConaughey stars as chain-smoking Iraq War vet Baker Dill, a fishing boat captain who caters to tourists while obsessively pursuing an elusive giant tuna off a Caribbean-like island called Plymouth. Drinking rum from a *World's Greatest Dad* mug, Dill lives alone, although he's dallying-for-dollars with Constance (Diane Lane), a hot-to-trot divorcee. Suddenly his sultry ex-wife Karen (Anne Hathaway)—a beautiful blonde femme fatale—struts into the only bar on the island. Karen offers Dill \$10 million to take her obscenely rich but also mean and sadistic new husband, Frank Zariakas (Jason Clarke), fishing on Dill's twin-engine cutter, dubbed *Serenity*, and throw him overboard for the sharks. Of course, Dill demurs—at first—until he realizes exactly how abusive Frank is, not only to Karen but also to Dill's teenage son Patrick (Rafael Sayegh). While Dill's dutiful first-mate (Djimon Hounsou) tries to steer him away from temptation, there's also the appearance of Reid Miller (Jeremy Strong), a nerdy fishing-supplies sales rep on a mission. And there's a surreal, mind-bending twist. British writer-director Steven Knight gives McConaughey more cheesy nude scenes than either of his female costars in this sleazy, sweaty, and ultimately unsatisfying waterlogged potboiler. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

She Has a Name ★★1/2

Vision, 107 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99

A gritty thriller about an American attorney going undercover to build a case against a notorious, Bangkok-based human trafficker, *She Has a Name* benefits from a driven cast. Giovanni Mocibob plays Jason, who is en-

listed by Marta (Deborah Fennelly)—a handler from U.S. intelligence—to act like a repeat customer at a brothel full of underaged girls. Jason slowly cultivates a bond of trust with a girl known only as Number 18 (Teresa Ting). But as he's not trained to be a dispassionate cog in the slow-turning wheel of international justice, his paternal rage kicks in, and he becomes determined to save 18. When a trafficker-godfather type (Will Yun Lee) begins to suspect that there's a U.S. plot against him, Jason's rogue plans ratchet up. There's a by-the-numbers feel to the story, with only so many directions that the script's cyclical action can take and make sense. And a subplot involving a rescued girl describing her experiences on video repeatedly stops the narrative's momentum. But the film is carried by some memorable performances, especially from a charismatic Lee and adventurous Ting. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

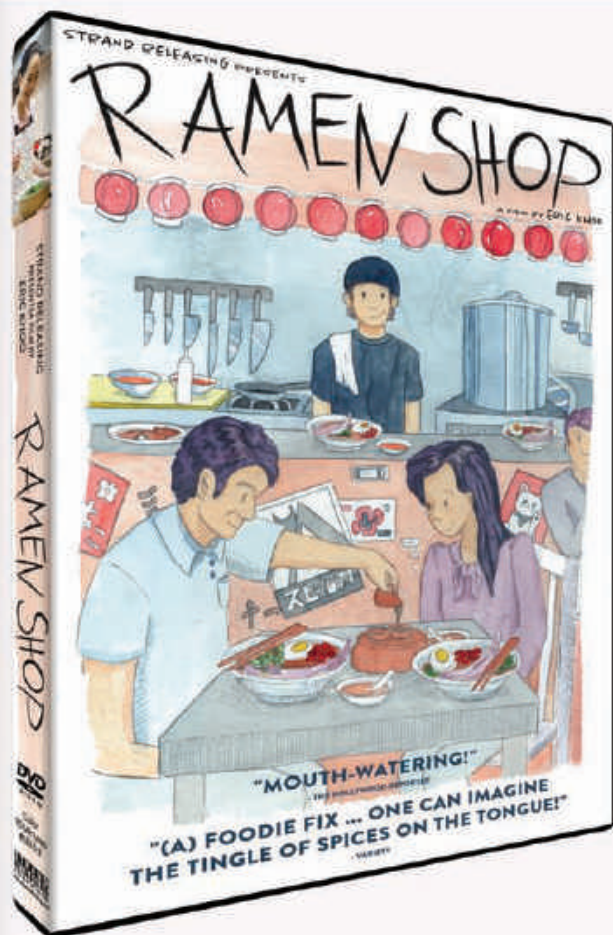


Shoplifters ★★1/2

Magnolia, 120 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.99



"What defines a family?" is a question that runs through many of the films of Japan's Hirokazu Kore-eda, from the heartbreaking abandoned children of *Nobody Knows* (2004) to the loving acceptance and embrace of *Our Little Sister* (2015). An Oscar nominee for Best Foreign Language film, *Shoplifters* presents a family on the margins that is brought together by circumstance rather than blood. Three generations live together in a tight little hovel, living off grandma Hatsue's (Kilin Kiki) meager pension, father Osamu's (Franky Lily) menial day jobs, mother Nobuyo's (Sakura Ando) laundry work (supplemented by whatever she pilfers from pockets), and adult daughter Aki's (Mayu Matsuoka) joyless peep show job, with groceries shoplifted daily by adolescent son Shota (Jyo Kairi) while dad keeps lookout. When father and son come across a withdrawn little girl named Yuri (Sasaki Miyu) shivering in the cold night (locked outside by a callous mother), they take her home and she is welcomed into the warmth and bustle of the overcrowded apartment. Kore-eda doesn't romanticize their poverty or thievery; the "family" always seems to be one misstep away from losing it all and becomes more unsettled as the girl's face is suddenly all over the news (she is, after all, technically kidnapped). But as he reveals more of their checkered pasts and poor parenting choices, the viewer's instinctive affection for these outcast and abandoned people becomes more complicated. Kore-eda favors the intimate and subtle over big drama and this film is filled with both touching and heartbreaking



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Los Angeles Times

"Heart-warming & mouth-watering!"

-Film Inquiry

"One can imagine the tingle of spices on the tongue!"

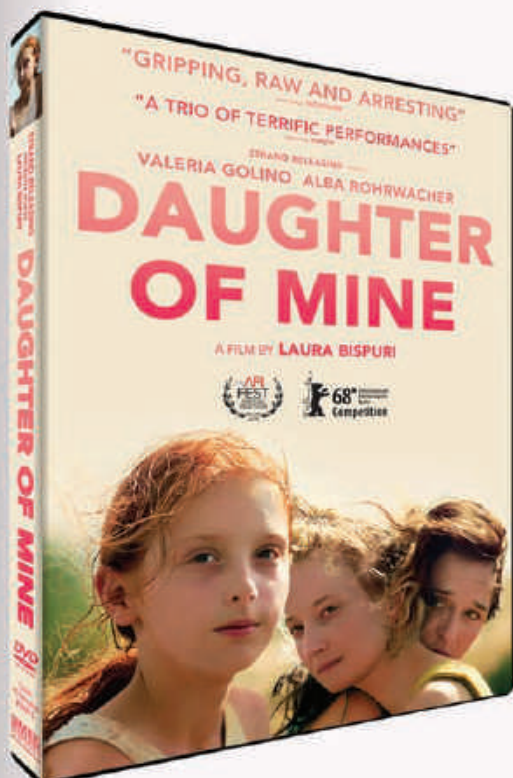
-Variety

Young Ramen Chef Masato leaves his home and family's ramen shop in search of his mother's family and the recipes she left behind. There he traces a culinary path of delicious dishes to find his estranged family. With the help of food blogger Miki, he learns the recipes of his mother's homeland and the way to his grandmother's heart.

Street Date: **June 25, 2019** | SRP: \$27.99

DVD # 3810-2 | UPC 7 12267 38102 9

90 Minutes - In Japanese, Mandarin & Cantonese with English subs - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated



DAUGHTER OF MINE
"Deeply felt study of motherhood!"

-CineVue

Starring Alba Rohrwacher (*Happy as Lazzaro*) and Valeria Golino (*Rain Man, Leaving Las Vegas*), *DAUGHTER OF MINE* is the story of a young girl torn between two mothers. Ten-year-old Vittoria's close relationship with her mother is upset when she discovers local party girl Angelica is her birth mother.

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

DVD # 3809-2 | UPC 7 12267 38092 3

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



SORRY ANGEL

"Exquisite! A gift that will stay with you!" *-SF Chronicle*

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



moments of affection and disappointment. Beautifully acted and directed, *Shoplifters* is a poetic film about what makes a family, and how we forgive those we love. Winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Stan & Ollie ★★★

Sony, 98 min., PG, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$31.99



After fame and fortune left the world-famous vaudeville comedy team of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy far behind, they embarked on a career-concluding tour of Great Britain. After a brief prologue introduces the duo making *Way Out West* (1937), *Stan & Ollie* flashes forward to 1953, when the pair are desperately trying to attract audiences, trotting out classic routines while playing to half-empty music halls in the hinterlands before winding up on London's West End, eager to secure financing for a new Robin Hood spoof titled *Rob 'Em Good*. Disgruntled but not discouraged, they turn to public relations stunts to sell tickets. In addition to Hardy's persistent health problems, they constantly bicker, dredging up old grievances. Tenacious Stan (Steve Coogan) was always more driven, while easygoing Ollie (John C. Reilly)—a prolific gambler—was less ambitious. The eventual arrival of their respective wives—domineering Ida Laurel (Nina Arianda) and doting Lucille Hardy (Shirley Henderson)—only makes the situation worse as it becomes painfully obvious that while these funnymen can't live with each other they also can't live without one another. Oozing authenticity, *Stan & Ollie*—based on A.J. Marriot's 1993 book *Laurel & Hardy: The British Tours*—is a poignant character study, confidently directed by Jon S. Baird. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Then Came You ★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 108 min., not rated, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray: \$22.99



Although filmmaker Peter Hutchings's teen dramedy boasts a couple of attractive young leads in Asa Butterfield and Maisie Williams, it ultimately comes across as *The Fault in Our Stars*-lite. Butterfield plays Calvin, a young man with a sad past, shown in flashbacks and revelations dribbled out over the course of the film. Having dropped out of college and moved back in with his parents—a troubled mother and supportive father—Calvin works as an airport luggage handler despite a fear of flying. But his real obsession is his health: certain that he has cancer, Calvin joins a cancer support group, where he meets Skye (Williams), the prototypical free spirit, who enlists him in completing her "bucket list"—which results in a flurry of montages as the duo engage in a

variety of slapstick adventures. But of course as he helps her prepare to die, she aids him in finding a reason to live again—even encouraging a romance with a beautiful flight attendant (Nina Dobrev). *Then Came You* is a film that has its heart in the right place but is sabotaged by entirely too many sappy clichés. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Tommy Battles the Silver Sea Dragon ★★★

Random, 111 min., not rated, DVD: \$18.99



Tommy Battles the Silver Sea Dragon has ambition to burn and a dark heart that is revealed through a beginning-to-end mix of pop opera and paranoid fantasy. It's the kind of outside-the-box concept one is likely to see on a particularly creative TV program or binge-worthy series on Netflix. While *Tommy* doesn't entirely work as a feature film, you have to admire the chutzpah of writer, director, and star Luke Shirock, who conceived the project and spent several years completing it. Shirock plays Tommy Silver, a young man whose guilt-ridden psyche invents an imagined court trial, where a prosecutor, judge, defense attorney, jury, and onlookers are all manifestations of his torment over several deaths in his life, including those of his mother (Pap Shirock) and his girlfriend Carolyn (Celine Held). The story of his relationship with Carolyn and his struggles opening up to her are recounted in memories that are both gilded and tragic. A multi-talented cast brings tremendous energy to match Shirock's capable handling of the rapid-fire visuals (not an easy thing to do when having to match shots full of dancing, leaping, and intense emotions). A composer and actor, Shirock has scant official credits, yet he seems to have popped into existence as a fully formed filmmaker. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Touch Me Not ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 128 min., in English & German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Adina Pintilie's film combines drama and documentary (or perhaps quasi-documentary) to reflect on the fear of physical intimacy and how it might be addressed by therapy. One of the central characters is Laura Benson, a middle-aged English woman who speaks of her inability to enjoy sex; she hires a male prostitute but can do no more than watch as he showers and masturbates, after which she seeks relief for her condition through conversations with Hanna Hoffman, a transgender woman, and more physically demanding encounters with an advisor named Seani Love. Meanwhile, Pintilie observes and interviews two men

with physical abnormalities—Tómas Lemarquis, who lost all of his hair as a child, and Christian Bayerlein, who suffers from spinal muscular atrophy—as they explore one another's feelings and learn to appreciate each other's beauty. We also learn of Christian's very active sexual relationship with his wife Grit Uhlemann. Pintilie deliberately blurs the line between fiction and reality, setting scenes in various locales (hospitals, bedrooms, therapy workshops) but also often letting her own camera equipment appear in the frame. There is a significant amount of nudity in *Touch Me Not*, but it is hardly exploited for titillation; rather, the film is designed to encourage viewers to see the physical attractiveness in bodies that on the surface appear disfigured. A strange, thought-provoking film that will certainly not appeal to everyone, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Tyrel ★★★

Magnolia, 87 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Set during the weekend following Donald Trump's inauguration as U.S. president in 2017, *Tyrel* is a peculiar psychological thriller. Written and directed by Sebastián Silva, the film stars Jason Mitchell as New York restaurateur Tyler. (The film's title, a butchered version of the central character's name, is an early hint of unintentional but baked-in racial division in the story.) Tyler, an African American, accompanies his white friend Johnny (Christopher Abbott) to the Catskills for a wintry weekend gathering of Johnny's all-white male friends—and friends of those friends—at a house in snow-covered woods. Given the beery, frat-house vibe of Johnny's pals, viewers might well fear the worst: that Tyler has fallen into the hands of white supremacists. But that's not what happens. Quite simply, Tyler increasingly feels ill-fitting in a 48-hour stag party with a large group of dopey white guys, despite how inviting and solicitous they all are, even as he gets more drunk and uncomfortable. Silva has cleverly carved out a fascinating gray area in which race plays a factor even in situations that seem utterly benign, with his camera constantly following the crosscurrents of the party's many on-the-move guests and repeatedly landing on a distressed Tyler, who is buffeted like a guppy in a populous fish tank. Mitchell is excellent, and Michael Cera is very good as a particularly eccentric member of the group—an effete rascal who might have stepped out of a *Wodehouse* novel. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Unknown Soldier ★★★

Kino Lorber, 180 min., in Finnish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Based on the 1954 novel *Tuntematon Sotilas*

by Väinö Linna about Finnish soldiers during 1941-44, when Finland allied itself with Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union, director Aku Louhimies's *Unknown Soldier* is the most expensive film ever made in Finland. The story follows a machine-gun company from its initial mobilization to the armistice that ended hostilities. The squad is made up of various stock characters—the idealistic lieutenant, the Communist, the practical joker, the cynic, and so on—but the focus is on two men in particular. Rokka (Eero Aho) is a crusty old veteran who is unhappy about being recalled to service and having to leave his wife and farm, but willing to make the sacrifice for his country. Although he is easily the most capable man among them, he refuses to bend to what he sees as pointless demands by discipline-minded officers, including Koskela (Jussi Vatanen), the platoon leader who serves as the model of national rectitude. Most of the film is devoted to battlefield action, but there are occasional interludes, involving time spent back home and even, in one case, a wedding (the film also includes some archival documentary footage to provide context). *Unknown Soldier* will mean the most to Finnish audiences, but it is sufficiently compelling to engage others—even if the version here (the full three-hour cut released in Finland, rather than the 133-minute “international” one) is frequently repetitive. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Vanishing ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 107 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$21.99

For years, Scotsmen have pondered the Flannan Isles Mystery, which revolves around three lighthouse keepers who disappeared from the Outer Hebrides (inspiring the famous poem *Flannan Isle* by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson). Set in 1938, this speculative psychological thriller begins on the ferry to the tiny, remote island on Scotland's rugged west coast. Taciturn widower Thomas Marshall (Peter Mullan) has been a lighthouse keeper for many years, along with James Ducat (Gerard Butler), who bids farewell to his wife and children on the mainland. The third member is Donald McArthur (Connor Swindells), an inexperienced trainee who gets violently seasick. Arriving for their six-week shift, they make necessary repairs to the lighthouse. “Many a keeper's lost their mind to quicksilver,” James warns Donald, scooping up spilled mercury used to lubricate the lighthouse machinery. Soon after, Donald discovers what appears to be the body of a man whose rowboat is beached in a deep crevasse. As Donald is lowered on a rope,



the man suddenly comes to life and attacks him, ostensibly protecting a wooden chest. In self-defense, Donald kills him. After discovering that the chest contains solid gold bars, the men marvel at their newfound riches and debate what to do next. Before long, however, two men show up looking for their “missing crewmate,” and Thomas's hastily contrived story fails to convince them. Danish director Kristoffer Nyholm evokes an ominous atmosphere of windswept desolation. Unfortunately, the actors' heavy Scottish brogue is often difficult to decipher, and the film disappoints somewhat with an enigmatic conclusion. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Classic Films

Blue Movie ★★1/2

Cult Epics, 89 min., in Dutch w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.95



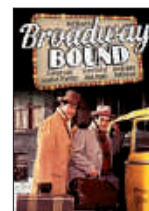
The taboo-challenging work of producer-director Pim de la Parra, which inaugurated the so-called “Dutch Sex Wave” in movies of the early 1970s, has been recently seen in the Cult Epics release of his 1973 film *Frank & Eva*, which is now joined by this earlier 1971 groundbreaker that also stars *Frank & Eva*'s Hugo Metsers but is directed by Wim Verstappen. The flimsy plot follows Michael (Metsers)—just released from prison after a five-year stint for bedding an underage girl—as he becomes the resident lothario in the high-rise apartment building where his parole officer has placed him to facilitate his re-assimilation into society. Before long, Michael is organizing orgies for the desperate housewives who are his neighbors, even if his main interest lies in Elly (Carry Tefsen), who lives next door and is his partner in the enterprise. *Blue Movie* is historically interesting as the opening cinematic salvo in the sexual revolution taking place in Holland at the time. As a film, it is fairly mediocre—slow, repetitive, and pretty tame by today's standards—although the cinematography by Jan de Bont, who went on to have an illustrious Hollywood career, shows admirable fluidity on a clearly limited budget. Extras include a 1971 interview with Verstappen, new interviews with de la Parra and Metsers's son Hugo Jr., a featurette on the Eye Film Institute in Amsterdam (where the film was restored), and a poster and photo video gallery. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Broadway Bound ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

While the first two plays in the late Neil Simon's semi-autobiographical “Eugene Jerome” trilogy—*Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Biloxi Blues*—were turned into feature films, the final play went directly to the small screen as

a made-for-TV 1992 production scripted by Simon. Corey Parker takes the role of Eugene while Jonathan Silverman (who played Eugene in the original Broadway production) is Eugene's older brother Stanley. (Matthew Broderick was Eugene on stage in the first two plays in the trilogy.) Both boys aspire to write comedy for radio and TV (much to the consternation of their father) and they turn to their own family for inspiration—including the breakdown of their parents' marriage—to do their first radio sketch. Anne Bancroft is their optimistic mother, while Jerry Orbach brings a weary sadness and resignation to his role as their father, a man who neglects his wife to look after an ailing former lover. And Hume Cronyn won an Emmy for his performance as the feisty grandfather who never seems to get Eugene's brand of humor. The production is set almost entirely in a Brooklyn apartment and directed by TV veteran Paul Bogart like a piece of theater—intimate and cutoff from the surrounding world (except for the radio), while Simon preserves the stylized theatrical dialogue. Fans of Simon and Broadway should appreciate the faithfulness to the source but others may find the drama a little too low-key. Presented in both the original 90-minute broadcast version and an extended 94-minute cut, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



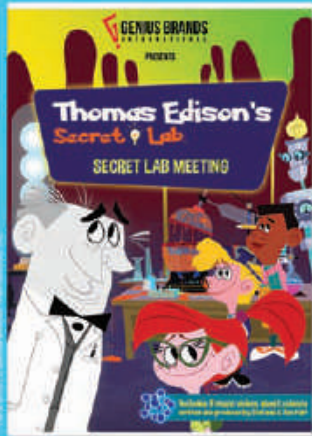
The Doctor ★★★

Kino Lorber, 122 min., PG-13, DVD: \$11.99, Blu-ray: \$19.99



William Hurt stars as a brilliant but glib and somewhat obtuse heart surgeon who finds his life turned around when he is diagnosed with a cancerous tumor in his throat. Despite enjoying the status of attending physician at a San Francisco hospital, Dr. Jack MacKee (Hurt) is treated no differently than any other vulnerable patient only a few floors below his own professional terrain—which he doesn't like one bit. MacKee's outrage pivots to a heretofore unknown empathy for all patients when he begins to see himself in the way his own dismissive doctor (Wendy Crewson) ignores his fears and discomfort. Elizabeth Perkins costars as June, who is dying of brain cancer and becomes an influential friend to Jack, helping him understand the mortal stakes of a potentially terminal disease. June also is perceived as a threat by Jack's wife (Christine Lahti), who has been emotionally marginalized during her husband's crisis. A nice supporting cast including Mandy Patinkin, Adam Arkin, and Charlie Korsmo add luster to this 1991 prestige movie that is well-directed by Randa Haines, adapted from a 1988 book by Dr. Edward Rosenbaum about his own experi-

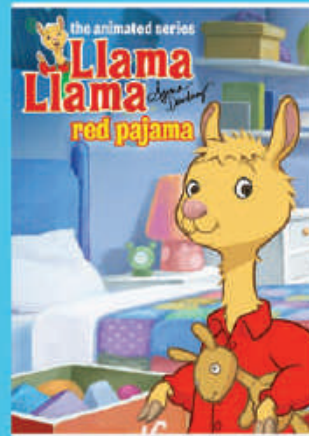
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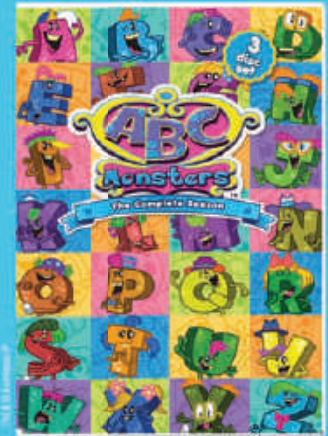
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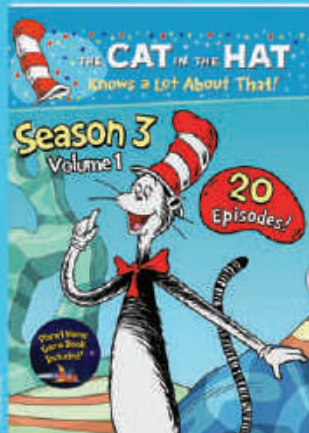
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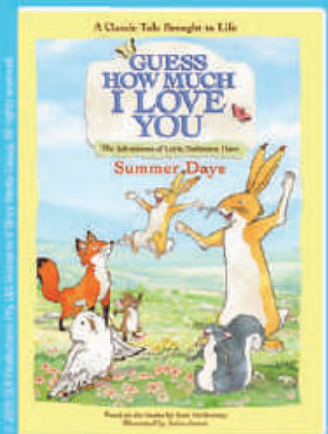
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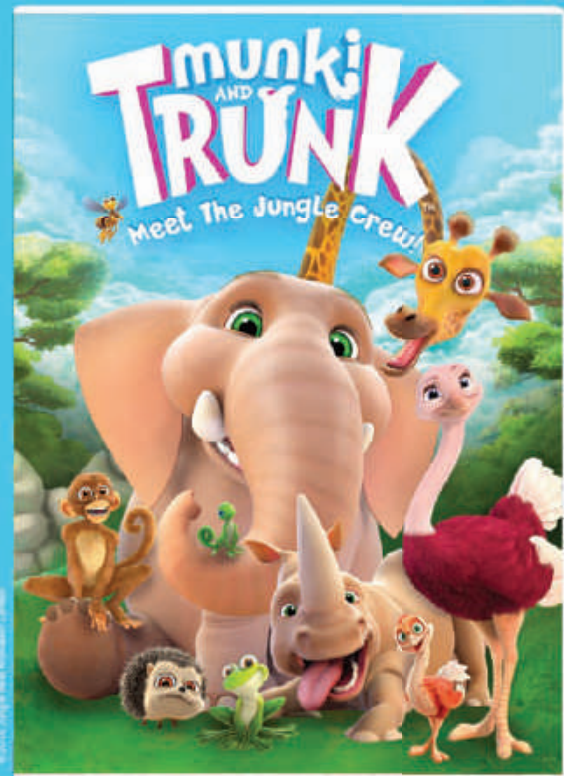
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ence. Extras include an audio commentary by Haines moderated by filmmaker Heather Buckley. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask ★★

Film Movement, 72 min., in English, French & Arabic w/ English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Those who don't know much about Frantz Fanon before seeing this sort-of cinematic essay are not likely to have a handle on much more by the end. A fascinating and internationally influential figure who died at age 36 in 1961, Fanon was a mixed-race (although clearly black) youth born in Martinique, back when it was a French colony. Leaving the island in 1943 to join Free French forces during World War II, he later found that, despite his demonstrated bravery during the fight and his loyalty to France, he was subject to profound racial hostility from European whites. After becoming a psychiatrist, Fanon eventually took the reins of a psychiatric hospital in Algeria. Between his developing beliefs about the psychological underpinnings of race-based colonialism and a series of personal experiences leading to his support for Algerian revolution against France, he would create a lasting legacy for people struggling against occupation and oppression through his writing, relationships with fellow intellectuals, and pan-Africanism ideas. Unfortunately, little of that is clear or cohesive in this 1995 film by Isaac Julien, which fails to provide enough context for viewers to be able to truly grasp why Fanon is still an important figure. Featuring Colin Salmon as Fanon in dramatic re-creations, this is a visually indulgent work, with opaque lyricism and confusing refrains. Extras include the 1992 short drama "Between Two Worlds" by producer Mark Nash, and a booklet with essays by Julien and Nash. Optional. (T. Keogh)

The Group ★★

Kino Lorber, 150 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

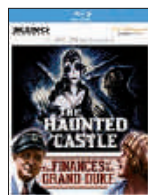


Eight women at a Vas-sar-like college during the Depression become close friends in this 1966 drama adapted from the 1954 novel by Mary McCarthy. Candice Bergen is top-billed as the maverick Lakey, who runs off to Europe and returns arm-in-arm with a German countess, but the film mainly focuses on the women who remain behind looking for love, marriage, or a meaningful career. Jessica Walter is most memorable as the high-living group gossip, Joan Hackett has an affair with a bohemian artist (Richard Mulligan) in which she feels love (but he doesn't), Shirley Knight is a hospital nurse with a mentally unstable

father, and Elizabeth Hartman is an idealist whose devotion to Roosevelt's New Deal is smothered by a controlling conservative husband who turns her pregnancy into a social experiment. Joanna Pettet, Mary-Robin Redd, and Kathleen Widdoes fill out the group, while James Broderick, Larry Hagman, and Hal Holbrook are some of the men in their lives. *The Group* tries to engage issues being raised in the 1960s through the prism of the 1930s, but it fails to successfully evoke the earlier period and too often slips into high-toned soap opera bordering on parody. Sidney Lumet, usually a strong director of actors, stumbles while trying to embrace the large ensemble and sprawling, rambling screenplay. And this film about the lives of women is directed, scripted, and produced by men, which may help explain its often awkward and arch presentation. Ultimately, this is a cinematic artifact from the dying days of the Production Code when adult issues were still being tangentially addressed, although it does feature the film debuts of Bergen and Holbrook. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

The Haunted Castle/The Finances of the Grand Duke ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 159 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.99

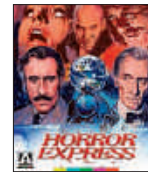


German filmmaker F.W. Murnau was one of the greatest and most influential directors of the 1920s, helming such masterpieces as *Nosferatu* (1922), *The Last Laugh* (1924), and *Sunrise* (1927). This release features the Blu-ray debuts of two of his lesser-known films. Despite the title, *The Haunted Castle* (1921)—the earliest surviving Murnau film on disc—is neither horror film nor ghost story. It's a psychological drama and tepid murder mystery that plays out in a magnificent country manor like a chamber piece. Murnau's visual approach is mildly expressionistic with stately acting that evokes the theatrical tradition rather than the lively cinematic style he would perfect over the next decade. But he deftly sets up the complicated relationships and fills in backstory with limber crosscutting between various conversations, and he creates great dramatic tension and an ominous mood in the stillness of his compositions. *The Finances of the Grand Duke* (1924)—which couldn't be more different—is a lighthearted espionage thriller set in an island nation with a charming "benevolent dictator" who is about to have his entire country repossessed as an industrialist enlists a group of shaggy anarchists to overthrow the government. Scripted by Fritz Lang collaborator Thea von Harbou and photographed by expressionist master Karl Freund, the film feels more like a romantic Ernst Lubitsch lark than the dark expressionism that made Murnau's reputation. But both movies show the master filmmaker

developing the skills that would later flourish in some of the greatest masterpieces of the silent era. Featuring musical scores composed by Neil Brand and Ekkehard Wölk, extras include audio commentary on *Finances* by film historian David Kalat. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Horror Express ★★

Arrow, 91 min., R, Blu-ray: \$39.99



This 1972 Spanish production featuring British horror stars Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing serves up an odd but entertaining mix of murder mystery, supernatural horror, mummy movie, zombie film, and alien attack set at the turn of the 20th century. Lee plays archeologist professor Sir Alexander Saxton, traveling from Northern China on the Siberian Express with the frozen remains of a "missing link" that comes back to life, preys upon passengers, and then jumps bodies to survive. Cushing is rival gentleman scientist Dr. Wells, who shifts from enemy to colleague when the milky-eyed victims come back to life as undead zombies. Both actors maintain their dignity during all the ridiculousness of the crazy horror, sniping and sabotaging one another before finally teaming up. There's also a beautiful spy, a Rasputin-like monk, a pair of aristocrats in a private car, and Telly Savalas adds a blast of personality in a small but memorable role as a Cossack officer. It's a minor but very entertaining production, filled with incident and paced by director Eugenio Martín like a speeding train. Extras include audio commentary by film historians Stephen Jones and Kim Newman, an introduction by *Fangoria* editor Chris Alexander, appreciations by filmmakers Steve Haberman and Ted Newsom, and interviews with Martín, producer Bernard Gordon, and composer John Cacavas. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

La Vérité ★★1/2

Criterion, 128 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Brigitte Bardot gives the most complex and committed performance of her career in this film by Henri-Georges Clouzot, a mix of courtroom drama and romantic melodrama set in the collision between conservative morality and the young adult culture of bohemian Paris. Bardot is Dominique Marceau, a wild child from the provinces who is on trial for murder. Witness testimony paints her as a "bad girl" indulging in the decadence of Paris nightlife while her serious sister Annie (Marie-José Nat) studies music, but dramatic flashbacks reveal that she is a free-living young woman who embraces the beatnik culture of casual sex

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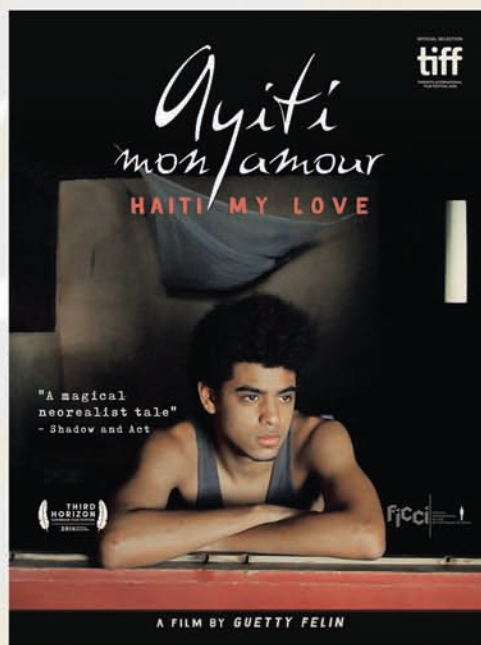
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and social engagement without judgment or pretense. French New Wave icon Sami Frey plays the devoted music student dating Annie who falls hard for the uninhibited Dominique and becomes pathologically jealous over her flirtatious behavior. Clouzot weaves in multiple storytellers through the witness statements and extended flashbacks, making the dense narrative look effortless while also pulling strong performances from the entire cast. And in keeping with Bardot's sex kitten image, Clouzot offers teasing shots of an undressed Bardot just shy of explicit nudity. *La Vérité* is a film that dangles a lurid crime of passion in front of the audience but ends up being a character portrait of a woman in an unsympathetic world. Largely overshadowed by Clouzot's more famous films, notably *The Wages of Fear* and *Diabolique*, it was nominated for an Academy Award and won a Golden Globe in 1961. Extras include a 2017 documentary on Clouzot, archival interviews with Bardot and Clouzot, and a booklet with an essay by film scholar Ginette Vincendeau. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Peppermint Soda ★★★

Cohen, 101 min., in French w/ English subtitles, PG, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99



The 1977 directorial debut of actress turned filmmaker Diane Kurys follows a year in the life of two teenage sisters in 1960s Paris. Anne (Eléonore Klarwein) and Frédérique Weber (Odile Michel) return from summer on the beach in Normandy with their father and begin the year back home with their mother, whose new boyfriend claims much of her time and attention. Anne is an adolescent at an all-girls school where the teachers are tyrannical bullies and misinformation about sex is passed along on the playground as "common knowledge." It's 1963 and as Anne navigates the onset of puberty, her older sister Frédérique is becoming interested in both boys and politics and she gets into trouble at school for selling peace sign buttons and protesting the Algerian War. *Peppermint Soda* is an episodic film that is less concerned with big drama than with the details of individual experiences in this time of rebellion and sexual awakening. Much of this is observed through the wide-eyed attention of Anne, who is learning the cues of the mysterious adult world from her mother and older sister. While the details evoke a past era, the emotions and anxieties are timeless and the film remains a touching and sensitive portrait of the difficult teenage years for girls. Extras include interviews with Kurys, Klarwein, and composer Yves Simon, as well as an archival featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Phantom Lady ★★★

Arrow, 87 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Ella Raines gives a star-making perfor-

mance as Carol Richman, a Girl Friday to civil engineer Scott Henderson (Alan Curtis), who is convicted of murdering his wife—a crime that he insists he didn't commit—in this fine low-budget mystery from Robert Siodmak, one of the masters of film noir. Henderson's only alibi is a mysterious woman who attended a musical revue with him, a woman whose name he never learned, so Richman turns amateur detective to find out why the witnesses are lying to police about this phantom lady's existence. Franchot Tone takes top billing as a famous sculptor and best friend of the convicted man, one who has ulterior motives when he joins the investigation. Based on a 1942 novel by Cornell Woolrich (writing under the pseudonym William Irish), this is a minor masterpiece of film noir, featuring a strong, professional working woman at the center of the tale. The narrative is built on the kinds of plot contrivances common to murder mysteries of the time but the script is clever and Siodmak delivers superb set pieces and striking images on a comparatively tiny budget. Cult actor Elisha Cook Jr. (*The Maltese Falcon*) plays a drummer who takes Richman to an underground jazz jam session in one of the film's standout sequences, and future Oscar nominee Thomas Gomez is the no-nonsense police detective who helps her out with the investigation. Extras include the 1994 British TV documentary *Dark and Deadly: 50 Years of Film Noir*, the 1944 radio adaptation of the film featuring Raines and Curtis, and a gallery of stills and promotional material. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Prize ★★1/2

Warner, 135 min., not rated, DVD: \$21.99



Paul Newman stars as Andrew Craig, a cynical, hard-drinking, shamelessly womanizing American author who is in Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize, and Elke Sommer is his "handler" Lisa Andersson, in this 1963 Cold War thriller. Andrew insists that he's there for the prize money but there is also the lure of his beautiful handler and a mystery surrounding the sudden personality change in a physicist (played by Edward G. Robinson) who is also attending the ceremony. *The Prize* is a thriller in the Hitchcockian vein, complete with shadowy thugs, tantalizing clues, and a web of conspirators determined to either make Andrew look foolish or kill him. It's even scripted by *North by Northwest* screenwriter Ernest Lehman, who adapts Irving Wallace's 1962 novel but adds set pieces that are right out of his great Hitchcock lark. Lehman has plenty of fun with the dialogue, both in Andrew's sassy flirtations ("And what was she wearing?" "Sort of an

off-the-shoulder smile") and his smart-aleck remarks when no one believes that someone is trying to kill him. The pacing is snappy and the romantic interludes are entertaining, but Mark Robson otherwise directs with dutiful professionalism, and never actually manages much in the way of suspense or thrills. Still, Newman's rascally performance keeps the film alive, while Sommer is sexy, sharp, and delightfully exasperated by Andrew's shenanigans, which she finds increasingly hard to resist. Diane Baker, Micheline Presle, and Kevin McCarthy costar. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Sarah T.: Portrait of a Teenage Alcoholic ★★★

Shout! Factory, 96 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$27.99



Two years after the release of *The Exorcist*, child star Linda Blair had a memorable turn as the eponymous lead in the provocative 1975 TV movie *Sarah T.: Portrait of a Teenage Alcoholic*. Playing an amorphous 15-year-old girl with a spiraling addiction to alcohol, Blair demonstrates a keen grasp of an addictive personality who becomes increasingly lost and destructive. At the same time, Blair also proves to be pretty convincing as a denier who refuses to admit the obvious about Sarah's problems and accept help. The teleplay by Richard and Esther Shapiro (*Dynasty*) ably balances the clinical with the personal, creating a well-rounded drama that is aided immeasurably by actors who within a few years would become pop culture icons: Mark Hamill (*Star Wars*), Verna Bloom (*Animal House*), William Daniels (*Knight Rider* and *St. Elsewhere*), and Larry Hagman (*Dallas*). Add to that soon-to-be-A-list director Richard Donner, whose 1978 *Superman* would play a part in ushering in the superhero genre. Donner gives *Sarah T.* a shadowy look and feel while never descending into cheap shocks or strained seriousness. Extras include new interviews with Donner and producer David Levinson, and with Blair. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Shame ★★★

Criterion, 103 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Ingmar Bergman became famous for his stark portraits of relationships under stress, characters struggling with faith, and allegorical dramas set in the distant past. *Shame* brings all of these themes together in a tale set in the midst of a modern civil war in an unnamed country. Bergman's longtime collaborators Max von Sydow and Liv Ullmann star as married couple Jan and Eva Rosenberg, former musicians in a disbanded orchestra, who now struggle



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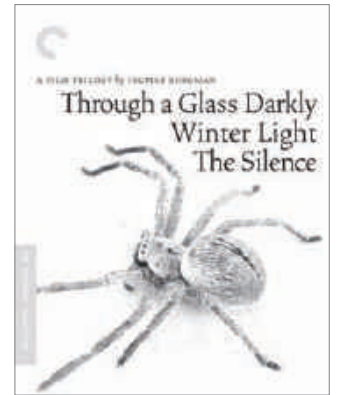
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as farmers. They are a ferry ride away from the city yet the war is all around them in transport trucks and distant gunfire, and they watch the battle get closer before finally being invaded. The Rosenbergs are used for propaganda by the enemy, arrested and interrogated as collaborators, and attacked by rebels. Ultimately their home is destroyed along with any hope of being untouched by the violence. *Shame* is very abstract—the factions have no clear politics and there is no discussion of ideologies—and the imagery becomes increasingly more devastated and desolate. The weak-willed Jan grows more cold-blooded with each assault upon the couple and their marriage strains to the breaking point under the pressure. It's as bleak a portrait as you'll find in Bergman's *oeuvre* and it plays like a brutal, humorless satire of modern warfare, propaganda, morality, and survival, where civilized, educated people are reduced to savagery and inhuman behavior. Extras include the 1968 documentary "Introduction to Ingmar Bergman" (made during the production of the film), a new interview with Ullmann, and archival interviews with Bergman. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Tarnished Angels

★★★

Kino Lorber, 91 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Although not as well-known as his Technicolor melodramas such as *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) and *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), filmmaker Douglas Sirk's 1957 black-and-white film based on William Faulkner's lesser novel *Pylon* (1935) still carries a decent dramatic punch and boasts fine performances from its star trio. Rock Hudson is Burke Devlin, an alcoholic journalist intent on covering former WWI hero turned barnstorming pilot Roger Shumann (Robert Stack), who has made an art out of flying such tight patterns that he clips the marker pylons during competitive races for money. But Devlin is as much interested in Roger's neglected wife, LaVerne (Dorothy Malone), who performs daring parachute feats and becomes a tawdry pawn when Roger sends her to "ask" sleazy rival owner Matt Ord (Robert Middleton)—whose pilot died—whether Roger can fix up a broken-down Ord plane to use in a race. Jack Carson co-stars as Jiggs, Roger's devoted comrade and mechanic extraordinaire, who also carries a torch for LaVerne (when LaVerne was in a family way, Roger and Jiggs flipped a coin to see who would marry her and Roger "lost"). The dynamics between the characters will, of course, shift over the course of this tale as the four men circle around the smoldering LaVerne in between exciting airplane races. Extras include audio commentary by film historian Imogen Sara Smith. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here ★★★

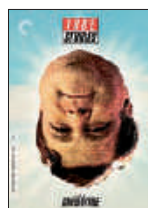
Kino Lorber, 98 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Robert Redford receives top billing in this 1969 Western inspired by real events, playing Deputy Sheriff Cooper, who makes the manhunt for Willie Boy (Robert Blake), a Paiute Indian accused of murder, a personal matter. Redford was a newly-christened major star after *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, but the more interesting story here belongs to Willie Boy, a restless young man who is frustrated by his oppressive existence on the reservation but unwelcome in the cities of 1909 America. Willie Boy kills the father of his girlfriend, Lola (Katharine Ross in unfortunate red-face makeup), in self-defense and then runs off with her, claiming Lola as his wife as per tribal custom. Susan Oliver is the reservation agent who demands that Cooper, who is also her sometime lover, bring Lola back to the res. The manhunt through the California desert plays out as President Taft visits the state, bringing national attention to this local crime. This was the first film from Communist witch-hunt blacklisted director and Oscar-nominated screenwriter Abraham Polonsky in over 20 years, and it is full of commentary on racism, bigotry, class arrogance, mob justice, and media hysteria. The film was not a financial success but Redford is excellent, and the themes are as relevant as ever. Extras include audio commentary by actor/filmmaker Pat Healy and film historian Jim Healy. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

True Stories ★★★

Criterion, 89 min., PG, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$49.99



David Byrne plays host as well as co-writer and composer for his sole directorial feature film effort, a whimsical tour through the oddball Americana of a small (fictional) Texas town. Dressed in a black ten gallon hat and a succession of nicely-fitted casual suits in an ice-cream-rainbow of colors while driving a red convertible through the endless plains, Byrne addresses the camera directly like a master of ceremonies as he leads us through the eccentric characters and curious activities of the fictional town of Virgil, TX, as it prepares to celebrate the state's 150th anniversary. John Goodman (in his first major screen role) is the good-natured Louis Fyne, a man who just wants to fall in love and get married, and he's the closest the film has to a main character as his story winds through that of others, including a happily married couple who haven't spoken in 15 years, a pathological liar, and the laziest woman in the world, as well as the most surreal fashion show ever seen. Four of Byrne's songs are performed by his band Talking Heads, while the others are

sung by characters in the movie. But *True Stories* is not a musical in any conventional sense; rather, it is an affectionate satire of suburban culture and small-town quirks, filled with kitsch and deadpan gags but also warmth for its characters. Extras include a new documentary, a featurette on late graphic designer Tibor Kalman, a vintage behind-the-scenes featurette, an homage to Virgil, TX, deleted scenes, a bonus CD soundtrack, and a booklet with essays and production photos. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

What Ever Happened to Aunt Alice? ★★★

Kino Lorber, 101 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



The title of this 1969 horror film evokes the 1962 modern Gothic hit *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, as does the casting of senior citizen actresses Geraldine Page and Ruth Gordon. Page plays elderly widow Mrs. Marrable, left penniless by her husband, who finds a way to live comfortably in her old age by robbing her servants of their life savings, murdering them, burying their bodies in the desert garden of her Arizona bungalow, and planting fir trees over their unmarked graves. Gordon (under a curly red wig) is Mrs. Dimmock, who answers the ad for the latest newly-vacant position. The film is produced by Robert Aldrich, who directed *Baby Jane* and pretty much created the horror subgenre featuring aging actresses as mad killers (nicknamed "hagsploitation" in the industry), but he leaves the direction to TV veteran Lee H. Katzin, who lacks Aldrich's visual style but brings out solid performances from both Page, who plays the role as a sly, cunning survivor with a barbed tongue, and Gordon, who is more outsized and flamboyant as the snooping servant trying to find out what happened to her predecessor (Mildred Dunnock), in between her household chores. The desert setting and sunny photography brings a different style to the genre, while the script (adapted from the 1962 novel *The Forbidden Garden* by Ursula Curtiss) provides a few clever twists. A minor but satisfying late-'60s thriller, extras include audio commentary by film historian Richard Harland Smith. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

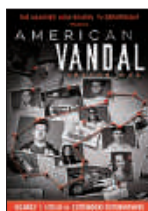
Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) during May and June for DVD/Blu-ray-specific comments added to the video movies reviewed here, as well as new reviews of current and classic films, including: *Cold Pursuit*, *Destroyer*, *Everybody Knows*, *Glass*, *The Golem*, *Isn't It Romantic*, *Replicas*, *The Upside*, *What Men Want*, and much more!

American Vandal: Season One ★★½

CBS, 2 discs, 267 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

As documentaries have become more popular, send-ups have predictably followed, so it was inevitable that someone should make a mockumentary of true-crime investigatory series like Netflix's *Making a Murderer* and the podcast *Serial* (which is cited by the chief "documentarian" here as his inspiration). The "crime" analyzed in this Netflix series is a puerile high school prank—spray-painting crude cartoon penises on the cars of faculty members at Hanover High in Oceanside, CA—and the filmmakers are a couple of nerdy students (Tyler Alvarez and Griffin Gluck). Their aim is to determine whether Dylan Maxwell (Jimmy Tatro), the campus bad boy expelled on the basis of eyewitness testimony from class dweeb Alex Trimboli (Calum Worthy) is guilty—and to earn notoriety in the process. Along the way, they ruffle the feathers of school administrators and classmates whose secrets are revealed in the course of their efforts. Although undoubtedly (and intentionally) absurd, *American Vandal* is surprisingly well acted and skillfully edited. If viewers can tolerate the series' cascade of juvenile humor, the show does prove consistently amusing, although one might have trouble deciding whether the soul-searching narration about not letting high school define your life is intended seriously or as a joke. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2017 debut season, extras include extended "interviews" with Maxwell, Trimboli (interrupted by Dylan's goofball friends), and strenuously "cool" history teacher Steve "Kraz" Krazanski (Ryan O'Flanagan), as well as an "uncut" version of the school board meeting that resulted in Maxwell's suspension. An offbeat series, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



grandmother. He becomes emboldened when asked to hide a handgun (used in the murder his sister is investigating) by his seductive, drug-dealing next door neighbor and he embarks on a series of increasingly brazen holdups. In the tradition of similar dramas, the investigation ties the crimes of the present to their father's death and his hidden life of petty crimes, while it also leads Gina to a conspiracy surrounding a human trafficking ring. But the most interesting aspect of the drama explores the troubled family relationships between the siblings, their somewhat estranged mother, and their bullying stepfather, while also measuring what lengths people will go to in order to protect their family. Presenting all eight episodes from 2017, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Charlemagne ★★½

Dreamscape, 155 min., in German & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Gabriele Wengler's three-part 2013 miniseries, centering on the titular Frankish king who became the first medieval Western emperor in 800 A.D., is an odd hybrid. Much of it consists of speculative dramatic re-enactments of historical episodes: Pippin the Great's seizure of the Frankish crown from the Merovingian ruler he served; the division of the realm between Charlemagne and his brother Carloman and the ensuing hostility between them until Carloman's death, after which Charlemagne drove his nephews into exile and reunited the kingdom; Charlemagne's wars against Lombards in Italy, Saxons in Germany, and Moslems in Spain; his attempts to revive learning in what was called the Carolingian Renaissance; his crowning as emperor by a pope he had saved from being dethroned; and the weakening of the empire under his sons. These episodes are dramatized as the memories of his biographer, the monk Einhard, who dictates them to a young novice, and are presented in German with English subtitles, although they are introduced by a narrator speaking English who also occasionally interrupts to add documentary digressions about such matters as Frankish armor, important medieval manuscripts in various monastic libraries, and the creation of the calligraphic script known as the "Carolingian minuscule." Also added are excerpts from interviews with historians (in English, French, and German). Together these elements make for a reasonably good portrait—benefiting from impressive production values and solid performances (especially by Alexander Wüst in the title role)—that covers Charlemagne's flaws as well as his accomplishments. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



House of Cards: The Final Season ★★½

Sony, 3 discs, 441 min., not rated, DVD: \$38.99, Blu-ray: \$45.99

The ghost of Frank Underwood, the supremely manipulative U.S. president played by Kevin Spacey in the first five seasons of this Netflix series—before the actor was fired after accusations of sexual impropriety—hangs heavy over this final run. The focus has shifted to his widow Claire (Robin Wright), whose selection as vice-president was engineered by Frank before he resigned, bringing her to power. Although Frank's death is peremptorily announced in the opening episode, its cause remains a mystery until the very end. The short season's narrative arc concentrates on the efforts of a powerful corporate couple (Greg Kinnear and Diane Lane) to undermine Claire, working in cahoots with their tech-savvy son (Cody Fern) and Claire's newly-appointed vice president (Campbell Scott). Claire must also face down challenges from such diverse opponents as the Russian president, unreliable staff and cabinet members, snooping reporters, and especially Doug Stamper (Michael Kelly), her late husband's chief fixer, who thinks Claire has robbed him of his fair share of Frank's legacy. This last season is filled with countless plots, counterplots, betrayals, double-crosses—even a pregnancy—but it sorely misses the demonic energy that Spacey brought to the over-the-top goings-on, as Wright's cool solemnity does not prove to be an adequate replacement. Still, this at least provides *House of Cards* fans with a degree of closure. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2018 sixth and final season, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Bang: Series 1 ★★★

RLJ, 3 discs, 392 min., in Welsh & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$49.99

As the title hints, there is indeed a gun at the center of the crime drama miniseries *Bang*, set in the depressed industrial town of Port Talbot in Wales, but its reverberations echo far beyond any individual crime. Siblings Gina and Sam witnessed the execution style murder of their father as children. Twenty years later, Gina (Catrin Stewart) is an ambitious patrol cop eager to take on big cases, and she gets her chance after stumbling across a crime scene on an expensive boat and a body that was dumped in the ocean. Her brother Sam (Jacob Ifan), meanwhile, is a meek, reclusive underachiever, working a dead-end job while looking after an ailing



Kidding: Season One ★★★

Paramount, 2 discs, 290 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Jim Carrey stars in this dark cable comedy series as Jeff Piccirillo (aka Jeff Pickles), a beloved children's TV host who takes his mission as both an educator and role model for children seriously but whose private life is coming apart. He lost a son to a car accident, is separated from his wife (Judy Greer), and is unable to reach his surviving son (Cole Allen). Jeff's inability to express his pain and loss is taking a toll on his mental well-being. Frank Langella costars as his father, the producer of the *Mr. Pickles' Puppet Time* show and manager of the brand, and Catharine Keener is his sister, who creates the imaginative puppets on the series but is frustrated both professionally and personally. The *Mr. Pickles* show resembles *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* with *Sesame*



Street-like puppets, and the series—created by Dave Holstein for Showtime—plays the show-within-a-show straight, never stooping to ridicule either the public TV series or its sincere, dedicated host, played by Carrey with compassion and depth. It's the drama around the show that is presented with black humor as Jeff's bottled-up emotions periodically explode, and his father attempts to sustain the *Mr. Pickles* franchise by working around its creator. Michel Gondry, who directed Carrey in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and has a gift for surreal humor and inventive imagery, is an executive producer and directs multiple episodes. It is a smart and creative show that takes on difficult emotions and is definitely not for kids. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2018 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Krypton: The Complete First Season ★★1/2

Warner, 2 discs, 427 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Although the legacy of Superman hangs over this series produced for the Syfy Channel, *Krypton* is set two generations before the birth of the planet's most famous son. The hero of the story is Seg-El (Cameron Cuffe), a former member of the "guilted" class who is reduced to living in the slums of the "rankless" after his grandfather (Ian McElhinney) was executed for treason. Seg-El is visited by Adam Strange (Shaun Sipos), a human who travels through time and space to warn him that someone is coming to disrupt the timeline and prevent the birth of his grandson, who will become the greatest hero in the universe. Strange is fixated on saving Superman (which ultimately depends on the destruction of Krypton) but Seg-El is more concerned with the threat of an invading planet-swallowing alien named Brainiac that his grandfather predicted. *Krypton* has less in common with the interconnected DC Universe TV superhero shows on the CW network than with other Syfy original shows. It imagines the technologically-advanced alien civilization with a production design that suggests a low-budget *Blade Runner* and presents a corrupt, dictatorial theocracy that uses the military to keep the poor in perpetual poverty. The first season follows the conflicts, conspiracies, and power struggles between the clans and classes while also introducing elements familiar to the Superman legacy, from the Fortress of Solitude to the treasonous General Zod. Presenting all 10 episodes from the 2018 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, a 2017 Comic-Con panel, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

The Purge: Season One

★★★

Universal, 2 discs, 426 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$44.99



The titular mean-spirited, ultra-violent movie franchise—about an annual 12-hour period during which a fascistic American government gives citizens license to brutalize and kill with impunity—spawned this USA Network spinoff. Developed by James DeMonaco, the mastermind behind the films, the show contains numerous scenes of death and torture, but the mayhem is more muted than on the big screen. More importantly, the human dimension is explored with a bit more depth, thanks to the expanded running time of a TV series. *The Purge* follows the stories of a small group of characters from the hours preceding the start of the purge through its conclusion and aftermath: Miguel (Gabriel Chavarria), an ex-Marine trying to save his sister Penelope (Jessica Garza), who has joined a cult where members intend to sacrifice themselves as purge victims; Rick and Jenna (Colin Woodell and Hannah Emily Anderson), a yuppie couple trying to secure investment funds from a government bigwig (Reed Diamond); Jane (Amanda Warren), a financial specialist with grievances against her boss; and Joe (Lee Tergesen), a blue-collar guy whose rescue of prospective victims only masks a dark plan of his own. The acting is stiff, the dialogue wooden, the production cheesy, and the final revelations more than a little ridiculous, but at least this *Purge* is less gruesome and offensive than its big-screen inspiration. Presenting all 10 episodes from the 2018 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, a conversation with cast and crew, deleted scenes, and a table read. Optional. (F. Swietek)

The Resident: The Complete Season One

★★★1/2

Fox, 3 discs, 615 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99



Matt Czuchry takes the lead in the medical drama *The Resident* as Conrad Hawkins, the maverick outspoken senior resident intern in a private hospital in Atlanta, while Manish Dayal is Devon, the first year intern he's assigned in the show's opening episode. Devon is smart, driven, and talented, and Conrad gives him a crash course in the reality of modern medicine that collides with his idealism—from budget constraints, to bureaucracy, to the ego of Dr. Solomon Bell (Bruce Greenwood), the chief of surgery, who is covering up his increasingly frequent surgical mistakes. Conrad, however, has a habit of playing God and it is up to Nicolette (Emily VanCamp), a gifted nurse practitioner

and his former girlfriend, to be his conscience and sometimes his shadow. It's a mix of workplace drama and medical melodrama, filled with the kinds of diagnostic mysteries and personality clashes familiar to such shows, but the portrait of veteran doctors as well as administrators who are more concerned with personal reputations, public perceptions, and profits than ethics and individual responsibility provides an interesting twist on the formula and it fuels the show's righteous indignation (which can be a little heavy-handed at times). Shaunette Renée Wilson costars as a surgical superstar intern from Nigeria who secretly performs many of Dr. Bell's procedures and Melina Kanakaredes is a famous oncologist who goes to extreme lengths to keep her patient's medical records hidden. *The Resident* is an entertaining but in many ways still familiar addition to the medical drama genre. Compiling all 14 episodes from the 2018 debut season, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Spring Tide ★★1/2

MHz, 3 discs, 430 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.99



A cold case propels Cilla and Rolf Börjind's made-for-Swedish-TV adaptation of their 2012 crime novel. The long-term mystery surrounds the 1990 murder of a still-unidentified woman, who was buried alive on an island beach and left to drown. The case comes to the attention of Olivia Rönning (Julia Ragnarsson), a student at the police academy, who learns that her deceased father was the chief investigator, and she decides to solve the mystery. That requires finding her dad's partner, Tom Stilton (Kjell Bergqvist), who left the force years ago and is now living on the streets. Stilton, who is among the targets of a group of young toughs who are helping to run underground cage fights and beating up the homeless for amusement, is eventually located by Olivia, and he reluctantly joins her unauthorized investigation. That probe will also come to involve a second murder—of Nils Wendt (Dag Malmberg), who disappeared for more than a quarter-century and then returned, apparently to blackmail Linn Magnussun (Helena Bergström), the CEO of a powerful mining company accused of malfeasance in its African operations. Other continuing characters include a prostitute and her adolescent son; the woman's pimp, an old snitch for Stilton; Stilton's various homeless comrades; and a bevy of current cops, at least one of which is corrupt. The narrative is predictably convoluted, but all of the plot threads are tied together by the close, with a sudden twist revelation. Although it often strains credulity, *Spring Tide* remains intriguing enough to hold one's interest. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2016, this is a strong optional purchase. (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

Breathe with Me ★★★

(2019) 16 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-97492-606-0.

This iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2018 picture book written by Harvard University alum Mariam Gates and illustrated by Sarah Jane Hinder features vignettes of a wide-eyed curly-haired protagonist who demonstrates different methods of using breathing exercises in daily life, which carry benefits for relaxation, nerves, morning energizing, and rest at night. Punctuated by some sound effects and facts ("You will breath 25,000 times today!"), the 11 exercises—including "dandelion," "rainbow," "belly," and "balloon"—are shown through repetition, although the format is somewhat rudimentary. Overall, however, this is well-suited for younger viewers. Narrated by Laura Knight Keating and featuring a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut ★★★

(2018) 12 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-97492-119-5.

Offering a refreshingly unique take on a slice-of-life for young men of color, this iconographic-animated adaptation of writer Derrick Barnes and illustrator Gordon C. James's 2017 picture book is narrated by Adam Lazarre-White. The book—a winner of numerous awards including the Kirkus Prize

and Newbery, Caldecott, and Coretta Scott King honors—captures the atmosphere and feelings tied to a trip to the barber shop. The realistic oil paintings and soundtrack that skips between blues, jazz, and hip-hop add to the flavor of *Crown*, which is rhythmically-spoken and includes descriptive passages such as "You came in as a lump of clay...a blank canvas" and "You'll have more waves on your head than the Atlantic Ocean." On the other hand, some of the passages were odd, related to getting better grades from teachers because of a hairstyle or "being viewed in your mother's eyes as someone that matters" due to a fresh cut (good gawd, if your own Mama can't love you beyond your hair, who can?). Overall, however, this is a fine ode to a rite of passage. Featuring a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Mary McScary ★★★

(2018) 8 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-33828-471-3.

Joining forces again following their 2015 collaboration on *The Little Shop of Monsters*, *Goosebumps* author R.L. Stine and *Arthur* illustrator Marc Brown are back with this animated adaptation of their 2017 picture book, narrated by Emily Eiden. Antagonistic Mary McScary "scares" her parents and others—including inanimate objects, such as a balloon—with mean looks and pranks, but she worries about being at the top of her game because she never seems to faze her cousin Harry. He's actually a very genial foil for the pesky protagonist: every lame trick she poses, he responds in the most chill of manners, even ending up cuddling with a supposedly vicious hippopotamus. Mary wracks her brain to find a way to get to Harry, resulting in a goofy climax that is well-suited to the target

audience. Also featuring a read-along option and a bonus behind-the-scenes featurette with Stine and Brown, this is recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Sea Bones ★★★

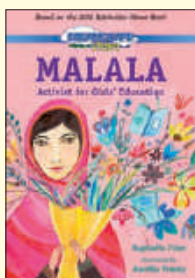
(2018) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-33828-485-0.

This animated adaptation of author and illustrator Bob Barner's 2018 picture book features non-scale drawings of various ocean creatures in bright colors, with a loud and cheerful (albeit somewhat intrusive) theme song sung by narrator Crystal Taliefero of the Billy Joel Band. After some whimsical rhyming about organisms that "have bones like you and me," *Sea Bones* gets down to business with facts and diagrams concerning jellyfish, lobster, coral reef, seals, and blue whales. The importance placed on exo and endo skeletons seems to be the apparent point, but overall this short is not as informative or interesting as the much better adaptations of Barner's books *Dem Bones* (VL-5/04) and *Dinosaur Bones* (VL-5/07). Featuring a read-along option, this is an optional purchase. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

She Persisted ★★★1/2

(2018) 12 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-33833-526-2.

An animated adaptation of former First Daughter and author Chelsea Clinton and illustrator Alexandra Boiger's 2017 picture book, *She Persisted* provides a concise look at 13 women who made iconic contributions in their fields. Major figures such as Harriet Tubman, Helen Keller, Sally Ride, and Oprah are mentioned, but fresh light is also shed on lesser-known women, including garment factory organizer and activist Clara Lemlich,



Malala ★★★

(2019) 20 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-97492-587-2.

This iconographic-animated adaptation of Raphaële Frier's 2017 picture book tells the story of Malala Yousafzai, the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, who at age 17 earned the award for her role as an author, creator of an education foundation, and activist for the education rights of youngsters. Born in Mingora, Pakistan, in 1997, young Malala soon recognized that under Taliban rule women were treated differently than men. At age 11, she began speaking out about the fact that girls were not allowed to attend school. Eventually, the Taliban closed all schools, eliciting more outrage from Malala. Slight animation (waving arms, blinking eyes, rolling bus wheels) of Aurélia Fronty's colorfully expressive illustrations help viewers grasp Malala's activism, courage, and dedication, while Caroline H. McLaughlin's smooth narration of the text is comforting (an assassination attempt on Yousafzai and family death threats are handled sensitively). Background sound effects and soothing piano and violin music add atmosphere to this profile that ends with a recap of Malala's achievements, complete with a photograph of the young hero and information on how youngsters can search the Internet to find out more about her life and continuing mission. Also featuring a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (S. Beauregard)

anesthesiologist and baby advocate Virginia Apgar, bus boycott poster girl Claudette Colvin, and space travel contributor Margaret Chase Smith. Featuring music by Michael Bacon and narration by Nikki M. James, this short film offering glimpses into the stories of fine American heroes should whet young viewers' appetites for more information. Also including a read-along option, and an interview with Clinton (who shares family photos and talks about her inspiration and personal connections to the featured women), this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

The War in Between ★★★

(2019) 66 min. DVD: \$129; public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

The "Wolves and Warriors" program brings military veterans together with wolves that have been rescued from harrowing situations. It's hard not to see the parallels between the two populations. Matt Simmons, a Gulf War veteran, and Dr. Lorin Lindner, a clinical psychologist, founded the Lockwood Animal Rescue Center in California, starting with an abused wolf named Wylie, who inspired them to dedicate a sanctuary to wolves (instead of horses, their original intention). Although they receive many inquiries, the pair only have funding for two to three workers at a time. These prospects spend the day doing chores around the ranch, which also houses pigs and parrots, before sitting down with Matt for an interview. Matt tells Juan Francisco Mosquera, an Afghanistan veteran of Ecuadorean descent, that the program taught him patience and acceptance. Lindner notes that the presence of animals reduces blood pressure, heart rate, and stress levels. Since the wolves are used to human contact, they welcome the attention, although workers must still take necessary precautions. Lindner believes that the relationships the men form with the wolves can help in their human relations. Juan joins Jim Minick, an Iraq War veteran, in caring for the wolves. The latter entered the Navy in the wake of 9/11, motivated by revenge. But after three deployments, he developed a drinking problem. Juan, who served as an Army sniper, laments that he never found his place in society, either before the military or after. Director Riccardo Ferraris doesn't provide an epilogue to their stories, but it's clear that Juan and Jim have benefited greatly from their time with the wolves. An engaging film about an interesting form of therapy, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Donna Haraway: Story Telling for Earthly Survival ★★★

(2017) 81 min. DVD: \$29.98 (\$348 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Ideas espoused by Donna Haraway, UC Santa Cruz Feminist Studies professor, have had wide-ranging influence, but are impossible to categorize or pigeonhole easily. Although she has been described as an ecofeminist, her preference for calling the epoch we live in Chthulucene (as opposed to the alternatives Anthropocene and Capitalocene) points toward an overarching view of the interconnectivity among species and genders that radically alters our understanding of the natural world and creativity. While her writing is often dense and allusive, it is also frequently playful. Filmmaker Fabrizio Terranova's documentary on Haraway is equally multifaceted, largely consisting of Haraway speaking directly to the camera about concepts she has enunciated in works that have been widely praised (and criticized), but she also talks about other things: her Catholic upbringing, unusual domestic history, and companionship with a beloved dog—while also suggesting relevant connections. Opening with a humorous anecdote on the history of orthodontics and closing with Haraway reading a sci-fi story that she interprets philosophically,

Terranova's film uses cinematic devices to italicize many of Haraway's idiosyncratic emphases (a giant jellyfish superimposed behind Haraway moves languidly across the room at one point). Haraway proves an ebullient, engaging personality, and Terranova has fashioned a film that is remarkably successful in reflecting the uniquely supple views of this important postmodernist thinker. Extras include a Skype Q&A with Haraway and her filmed introduction to a London screening. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Mantra: Sounds Into Silence ★★★

(2017) 85 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

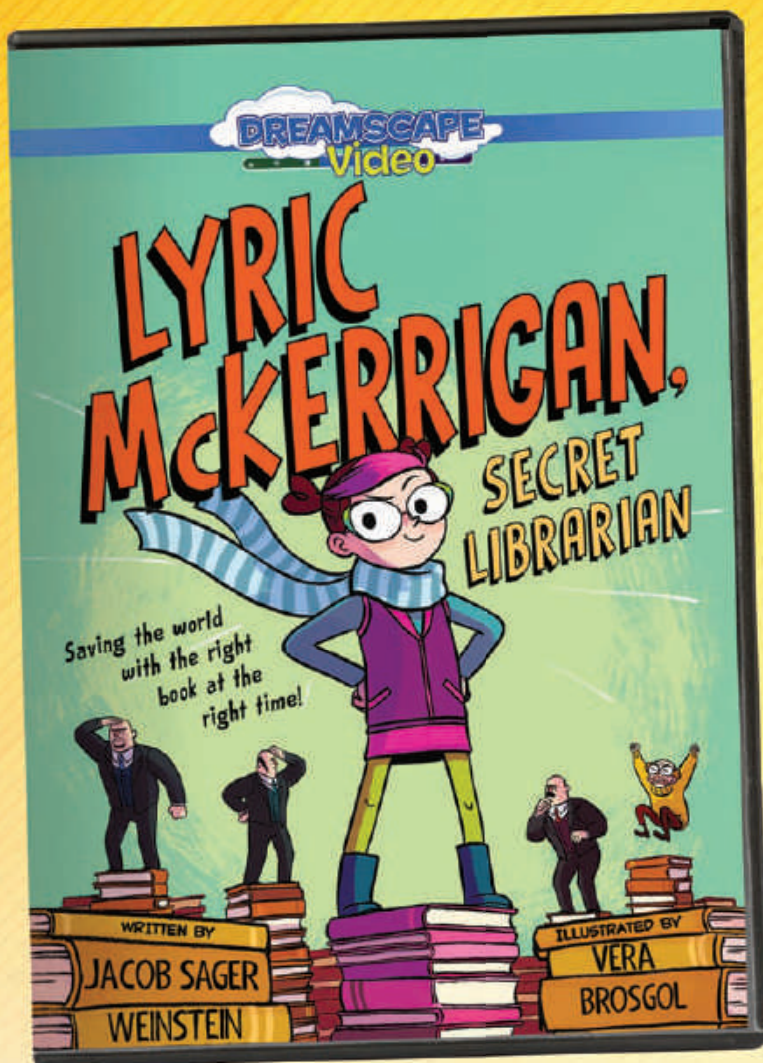
A mantra is a word or phrase to help a meditator focus, cutting through the noise and chaos in one's head. In this lovely documentary, viewers are introduced to another level of mantra magic: bringing music and singing to the practice, especially in a communal setting. A team of excellent cinematographers work with filmmaker Georgia Wyss to capture this melding of music and mantra in India, Japan, Russia, and the U.S. Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and less traditional faiths are represented here, and a number of chanters/singers and instrumentalists—including Krishna Das, Jai Uttal, MC Yogi, and Mirabai Ceiba—are heard in concert performances that prove to be both mesmerizing and joyful. Extras include "making-of" featurettes and additional scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



The Gospel of Eureka ★★★

(2018) 73 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Eureka Springs, AR, was just waiting for someone to show up with a camera and make a film about its quirky juxtaposition of a large LGBTQ population and an equally sizable evangelical Christian community, capped by a garish (and daily) outdoor stage production of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Does that sound like the making of a small town culture war? Yes it does, but that's not quite what happens. With locals soon heading toward the polls to vote on a referendum that would banish all discrimination against LGBTQ people in the town, there is much discussion going on, but it's not as divided as one might think. There are plenty of Christians in the LGBTQ community, including at a gay nightclub, where transvestite entertainers thump the Bible at the same time they're singing ribald songs. Similarly, some of the devout people of faith we meet, including the proprietor of that year-round Passion Play, may hate the alleged sin of homosexuality but not the sinners. As such, they won't let their divine, open-to-all churches and faith-based businesses be told what to do by anybody who would codify blatant discrimination into law. It's interesting and even heartening to see these nuances at a time of rampant camp warfare in America. At the center of filmmakers Michael Palmieri and Donal Mosher's documentary are Lee and Walter, the married gay couple who own that nightclub (referred to as a "hillbilly Studio 54"). Their three-decade history and in-the-moment narrative adds emotion and poignancy to the film. Extras include deleted scenes and a booklet with an essay by film critic Caden Mark Gardner. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



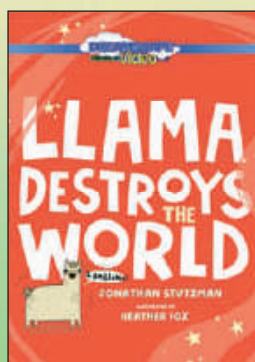
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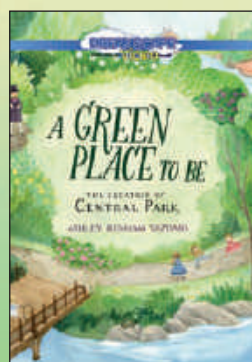
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Releases May 7, 2019



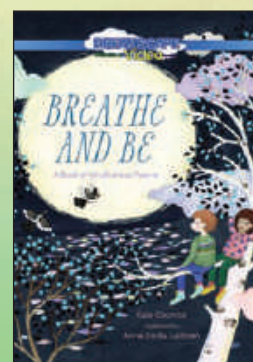
A bilingual story about the farm maiden and her cadre of animals who crafted a festive piñata.

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Sacred ★★★

(2016) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0221-2.

The human family is not only diverse, but also marked by striking similarities. This PBS-aired documentary directed by Oscar-winner Thomas Lennon marks a worldwide collaboration that combines the efforts of 40 filmmakers to present an impressionistic picture showing the worlds of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Native American life. Beginning at the moment of birth, the film proceeds to coming-of-age ceremonies and celebrations, adolescence, and up through old age, terminal illness, and death, before finally coming full circle back at a maternity hospital. Spiritual journeys abound throughout, including a pilgrimage to Mecca, a bizarre mock crucifixion, and numerous challenges (refugee camps, terrorist bombings, Ebola), plus hopeful milestones, such as weddings and starting a family. Underlying much of this odyssey are questions such as what and where is God, and how do we reach Him? One person notes that "God wants conversation," which is most often engaged through prayer. The documentary makes no effort to provide equal time for all faiths and cultures, and fortunately leaves politics out of the picture entirely. The message subtly advanced here is one of hope, and an unspoken plea for understanding. Serving up a beautifully photographed parade of images capturing sacred rites and rituals and the endless variety of world cultures, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

To the Ends of the Earth ★★★

(2018) 39 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

Drawn largely from the New Testament's

"Acts of the Apostles," director David Batty's narrative drama focuses on a key chapter in Paul the Apostle's (played by Aki Avni) missionary work, set 18 years after his storied conversion to Christianity. The film begins with that pivotal experience when Paul sees the risen Jesus, a scene nicely crafted as jumbled fragments of visions. Jumping well ahead in time to a middle-aged Paul's ministry, viewers see him in a desert, diverted from his next preaching destination because of a dream imploring him to head toward Philippi, in Macedonia. Once there, he finds a number of people who, despite Roman occupation, are ready to be baptized. Many more events described in "Acts" are well dramatized here, including a scene featuring a demonically possessed soothsayer girl and one capturing the famous collapse of the walls of Philippi's prison, where Paul was jailed. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

America; I Too ★★★

(2017) 20 min. DVD: \$50: high schools & public libraries; \$125: colleges & universities. DRA. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57448-167-9.

Featuring Academy Award nominee Barkhad Abdi playing an undocumented Somali, this short dramatization concentrates on three illegal immigrants, all of whom are arrested and detained in the same facility. In addition to Abdi portraying pizza deliverer Ahmed, Jose Diaz costars as 18-year-old Manny and Linda Yim takes on the role of Korean immigrant Myeong. Manny is arrested while working on an outdoor mural

that he has been hired to paint. Both Ahmed and Myeong are apprehended during a surprise immigration raid at a garment factory where Myeong works and Ahmed is making a food delivery. The drama skips around to show the experiences of the three main characters and reveal how each delays or avoids deportation through various legal channels. Manny follows his mother's directives that if arrested, he has the right to remain silent, should seek legal counsel, and refrain from signing deportation documents. Because Myeong cares for a granddaughter with autism, she is eventually released on the stipulation that she wear an uncomfortable ankle monitor. And while in detention, Manny steers Ahmed to an immigration attorney. Based on actual testimonies and experiences, writer-director Anike Tourse's credible short drama successfully explores some of the complex issues regarding the constitutional rights of immigrants. Featuring closed captioning in Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Vietnamese, and Brazilian-Portuguese—ensuring accessibility for a wide audience—this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Beauregard)

Between the Shades ★★★

(2019) 82 min. DVD: \$59.99 (\$50 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

You know how some politicians will do anything to prevent LGBTQ people from attaining what straights already have (equal rights, marriage equality, no government-sanctioned discrimination)—until suddenly "evolving" on the issue because their son or daughter is gay? The documentary *Between the Shades* is intended to awaken that same evolution of consciousness in everyone—including those without a family member to protect. Filmmaker Jill Salvino, inspired by conversations with friends about enormous diversity among LGBTQ individuals in terms of life histories, personalities, dreams, relationship status, etc., decided to interview a host of interesting people to show just how multi-hued that rainbow of possibilities can be. Salvino's approach isn't scientific: most of her subjects come from the arts world (so not a broad sampling in that respect), while a few practice law, business, or other pursuits. What matters is that Salvino—literally casting everyone in flattering light and filming them against a neutral, studio-like backdrop—coaxes a common denominator of humanity from a wide spectrum of men and women in many forms, shapes, ages, colors, dress, class, education, and relationship preferences. While the parade of talking heads (over 50) becomes monotonous at times (the film never ventures beyond that safe space for conversations), Salvino's well-intentioned documentary makes a solid argument for understanding and acceptance. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Among Wolves ★★★

(2019) 95 min. In Bosnian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

A documentary about a motorcycle gang made up in part of grizzled Bosnian war veterans may sound like the recipe for a bumpy ride, but director Shawn Convey's surprising film about the Wolves Moto Club—based in the small town of Livno, in Bosnia and Herzegovina—is a touching story of pursuing a higher calling after surviving destruction and death. The Wolves' leader, "Lija" Lijovic, is the former head of paramilitary groups that fought in the 1990s war following the collapse of Yugoslavia. Lijovic is a tough bird—at one point we see him running a Wolves meeting and calling out members who are making things hard on everybody by speeding through town. But the Wolves aren't a blot on the economically distressed region; on the contrary, they spend their time in charitable pursuits: launching blood drives, delivering medical gear to schools, and fixing electrical issues for some nuns. Their volunteerism is inspiring, presenting a different picture than most films about veterans of pitiless wars. Most touching are dreamy scenes of wild horses romping and grazing on what was once a deadly battlefield full of mines and blood-soaked mud. Lijovic and the other Wolves have made it their mission to care for these creatures. Watching Lijovic commune with the unrestrained horses on a misty hill covered in green is a testament to the healing powers of time and purpose. Extras include an audio commentary by the director. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



Black Memorabilia ★★★

(2019) 60 min. DVD: \$25: individuals; \$195: institutions. C-LineFilms. PPR.

Chico Colvard's film is a self-described hybrid that blends straightforward documentary footage with some staged material and prepared dialogue to present an overall view of the import and enduring popularity of objects that relate to the era of slavery and racial stereotyping in America. *Black Memorabilia* touches on three aspects of the subject—manufacture, collection, and reclamation. The first involves both historical artifacts and newly-created objects, but much of the segment is devoted to a female ironworker in a remote Chinese village whose family produces hundreds of what are called “jolly [n-word] banks” for sale worldwide; she eventually becomes aware of how her work might add to racial strife. The second focuses on a woman with a private collection of racially-themed objects that she exhibits and trades at craft fairs; she is aware of their controversial nature but insists she is not motivated by bigotry but rather respect for the past. Finally, Colvard, a professor at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, turns to contemporary black artists who are reclaiming the stereotypes in their own work, thereby taking their power away from those who have used them for odious ends. One might find the employment of fiction-based devices troubling, especially in the Chinese section, but overall *Black Memorabilia* presents a thoughtful treatment of the role such items have played—and continue to play—in American culture. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Cleaners ★★★

(2018) 95 min. DVD: \$295. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from www.filmplatform.net). PPR.

With the rising proliferation of false, inflammatory, and pornographic material in social media postings, this disturbing documentary by filmmakers Moritz Rieseewieck and Hans Block raises the pressing question of whether the poisonous effect can be removed or at least mitigated, and if so who should lead that effort. The film takes us to Manila, where Filipino workers are engaged (through intermediary firms) by such Internet giants as Facebook and Google to scan submissions to their sites and “ignore” or “delete” them according to self-imposed rules regarding content. These workers, most from poor backgrounds, endure a daily diet of questionable postings and must make split-second decisions about whether or not to allow them, often prompted not just by company policy but also by personal beliefs, such as their Catholic faith. The pernicious effect on these “cleaners” is one of the film's major concerns—one worker committed suicide after constantly watching grisly videos—but larger geopolitical issues are also addressed, often through interviews with former tech ex-



The Facebook Dilemma ★★★

(2018) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0637-1.

While at Harvard, Mark Zuckerberg conceived the idea for Facebook, with the aim of using Internet technology to make the world more “open and connected.” The young company also posted a slogan at their headquarters: “move fast and break things,” which some critics read as Facebook's admission that they were unconcerned about the impact of their actions. Hosted and directed by James Jacoby, this PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary looks at Facebook's first 15 years. Hopeful and optimistic, Facebook's goal was to be a power for good, “rewiring the world from the ground up.” Their success was immediate, thanks to meteoric growth. One of the first examples of real-world consequences was during the Arab Spring in 2011. But while the site could connect people and serve democratic change, it also allowed bad actors to spread rumors, lies, and hate speech. Facebook sought ways to monetize the site, using features like News Feed and a “like” button. But the business was hampered by understaffing, which didn't keep up with growth, as well as a complacent, even arrogant belief that they were the good guys—part of the solution, not the problem. Initially, users didn't realize how their personal data was being shared and their privacy compromised, and as politics became more tribal, conspiracy opportunists misled users with fake news. Even worse, hyper-partisans in countries like Myanmar used Facebook to foment hate and genocide, while Russian trolls fanned discontent in the Ukraine and disrupted America's 2016 election. Zuckerberg pledged to do better, but changes to its business model were slow in coming. Is this a case of idealism gone wrong, and/or a company having too much power? Featuring testimony from congressional critics, tech gurus, and select Facebook officials, this is a still unfolding but compelling look at Facebook's dilemma. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

ecutives. The questions are whether powerful companies should be permitted to outsource their responsibility to police material that can incite ethnic violence against minorities or pervert democratic processes, and if broader governmental intervention is called for. *The Cleaners* offers no easy answers—indeed, the film suggests there might be none—but it does a useful service in addressing the extent of the problem. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Desolation Slow ★★

(2018) 62 min. DVD: \$200. Allen Killian-Moore. PPR.

Allen Killian-Moore's film about alienation and homelessness in America is partially presented as a documentary focusing on Joe Ortega, who talks at length about his unhappy life, but also as a visual tone poem. Killian-Moore, a video artist and writer whose work has been featured in a variety of galleries in the Midwest, constructs a montage of grainy black-and-white footage shot in Salt Lake City and rural Utah, mostly showing decaying structures, people walking about aimlessly, and vacant vistas, together with snatches of dialogue from unidentified souls drawn from Internet archives. But *Desolation Slow* also adds periodic chunks of interview footage with Ortega, who speaks about his brutal childhood, bouts with drugs and alcohol, and life on the streets. The film closes with the revelation that Ortega has joined the 5% of the state's homeless population who have been provided a permanent residence

through a project called Housing First (and he appears determined to turn his life around). While one can appreciate the motivation behind Killian-Moore's effort—a closing bow to Dorothy Day and her work helping those affected by the Great Depression makes his empathy for the less fortunate quite clear—the film itself suffers from being repetitive and unmodulated. Optional. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

G Is for Gun: The Arming of Teachers in America ★★★

(2017) 27 min. DVD: \$225. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-948745-08-9.

The job of being a teacher in America is hard enough thanks to insufficient resources, low pay that doesn't reflect the long hours, and other challenges, but now some are also expected to serve as the first line of defense against active shooters. Co-directors Kate Way and Julie Akeret look at the movement to arm teachers, focusing on the unassuming town of Sidney, OH. In the wake of the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting in Newtown, CT, teachers in seven area schools have acquired access to guns. To proponents, including school administrators and firearms instructors, it only makes sense, but to opponents, such as academics who have studied the issue, it's a short-sighted solution that could cause more harm than good. As physical education teacher Lori Hedberg notes, her school has firearms, but lacks air conditioning. Others, like social studies teacher Wade New, are more enthusiastic about the program, although

the police chief is skeptical due to the risk of confusion during active shooter situations involving several participants (if the margin for error is high for trained police officers, teachers seem even more likely to make lethal mistakes). Randolph Roth, a professor of history at Ohio State University, adds that most school shooters are suicidal and depressed, so armed teachers are unlikely to serve as a deterrent. And other speakers, such as author Katherine Newman (*Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*), would like to see a greater value placed on prevention. This short documentary focuses on a specific community, but the multiplicity of voices (including Scott Jackson, a member of the Sandy Hook Advisory Committee), gives this timely issue the wider attention it deserves. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Femmessy)

The Invisible Heart ★★½

(2018) 80 min. DVD: \$29.99: individuals; \$325: institutions. DRA. Outcast Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Does private sector investment help solve society's ills, or just make things much worse? That is the question at the center of this documentary focusing on social impact bonds (SIBs), which often relies on Sir Ronald Cohen (a former refugee turned venture capitalist turned impact investor) to help put the concept into accessible context. An SIB is an investment of capital into one or another segment of society struggling with chronic failure (public schools, prisons). If certain markers of progress are achieved by specific deadlines, investors earn dividends that are paid for by appropriate levels of government (city, county, state, etc.). The latter can afford this, in theory, because measurable progress in education, as well as reduction of crime

and drug use, will save taxpayers millions of dollars. *The Invisible Heart* takes a hard look at how SIBs operate in the real world of housing for at-risk populations, widespread drug use, low-performance classrooms, overcrowded prisons, and more. The evidence of real progress is mixed, but Canadian filmmaker Nadine Pequenez wisely turns her attention to big ethical questions. Should the public throw in the towel on addressing problems through government, and instead privatize solutions? Can capitalism and the public good be partners? In an era when extreme income inequality has become sharply contentious, will voters support SIB investors who profit from human crises? This thought-provoking film is sure to spark discussion on the pluses and minuses of SIBs. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Lost Village ★★½

(2018) 90 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Roger Paradiso's documentary shines a harsh light on the changing personality of New York City's Greenwich Village. Once a hub of eccentric culture with bohemian boutiques, off-beat book stores, performance venues for iconoclastic talents, and low-rent apartments that housed struggling artists, today's Greenwich Village is pockmarked with empty stores created by landlords who jacked up rents. Instead of mom-and-pop shops, the neighborhood now features a proliferation of bank branches and franchises from national retailers. Paradiso is particularly angry at the encroachment of New York University (NYU) into the local real estate market and the financial toll on students. According to this film, some NYU students resort to taking jobs as sex workers

in order to cover their exorbitant tuition and housing costs (one also claims that she is unable to transfer her NYU credits to another school where tuition is considerably lower). Anyone who is even vaguely familiar with Greenwich Village's history will surely be depressed by the litany of drastic changes forced on this once-vibrant community. But Paradiso's focus is somewhat unwieldy, spreading a broad brush over too many perceived injustices (despite the filmmaker's insistence, NYU is not responsible for all of the neighborhood's ills, and landlords have a right to charge whatever they want for rent). Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Northwest: Coast Salish ★★½

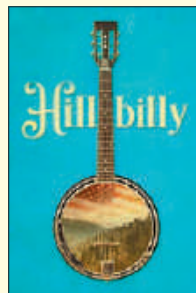
(2018) 57 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$225 w/PPR). Vision Maker Media. Closed captioned.

In 1989, the state of Washington celebrated its centennial anniversary. Elders from the Coast Salish tribes of indigenous peoples, specifically those in Western Washington's Puget Sound region and the Olympic Peninsula, decided to fete their own place in history. A "Paddle to Seattle" was organized around 12 tribes who would travel by canoes through natural waterways in the state's upper left corner, just as their ancestors plied those same waters for food and trade over the centuries. That 1989 lengthy journey south has been held annually ever since (now going all the way to Olympia), with the numbers of participating tribes from all across Washington expanding, comprising an impressive, boisterous fleet. Writer-director Charles "Boots" Kennedy's *Northwest: Coast Salish* is an episode in the four-part documentary series *Growing Native*, which focuses on the resurgence of Native American interest and pride in tribal traditions, language, and education taking place all over North America. Often suppressed and buried for generations by white authorities, as host Chris Eyre recounts, these cultural identity markers are now striking chords with a younger generation, as well as older people who are rediscovering their skills and voices. Here, Eyre travels around the Tulalip Tribes reservation, among other places, discovering the work of artists and craftspeople grounded in Native American histories, as well as schools that emphasize language and culture, and food producers who are canning salmon and cooking camas bulbs in a pit with smoldering leaves. A fine celebratory look at Native American culture in Western Washington, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

Hillbilly ★★★

(2019) 85 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Ever wonder what happened to that weird, banjo-playing, inbred-looking kid from the 1972 movie *Deliverance*? His name is Billy Redden, and he is now in his 60s. Redden appears in this powerful, thought-provoking documentary, working at his job of pushing carts in the parking lot of a Kentucky-based Walmart. Speaking to the camera, he says he dreams of getting to Los Angeles one day to resume acting. This scene is one of many unexpected yet also illuminating moments in *Hillbilly*, which dramatically puts human faces on the people of Appalachia, who have long been stereotyped as backwoods yokels and political pawns. The film's co-director, Ashley York (collaborating with Sally Rubin), returned to her Kentucky home in 2016 following the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency. York wanted to see what made so many people in Appalachia, including her grandmother and other family members, vote for a candidate with so much ethical baggage and policy proposals (such as eradicating Obamacare) that could actually harm the region's economically struggling families. Her dialogues with relatives are kind and loving (some of them, such as her father, are fervently anti-Trump). But the bulk of *Hillbilly* serves up a composite of pop culture renderings of coal-country people as being easily dismissed hicks. As *Hillbilly* reminds us, they were waiting for a leader who at least claimed to remember and care about them. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



Olancho ★★★

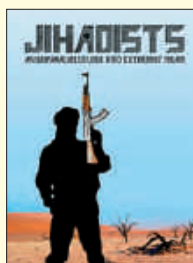
(2018) 70 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

"Olancho" refers to a region of Honduras that is riddled by the kind of violence rarely seen outside of a war zone. Los Plebes de

Jihadists ★★★

(2019) 75 min. In French, English, Arabic & Bambara w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.99. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

Co-directors Lemine Ould M. Salem and François Margolin's documentary goes into the belly of the beast in the modern radical Islamic state, filming in Mali, Tunisia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, where viewers see and hear directly from tedious, armed fanatics enforcing Shariah law, fighting under the flag of ISIS, or carrying out acts of terrorism in Western cities. The initial shock of this footage—shot professionally as a series of glossy interviews interspersed with grainy film of stonings (of adulterers), hand amputations (of thieves), floggings (of anyone, for any reason), and random executions—quickly overwhelms. And this is not only because we're witnessing a murderous pathology disguised as a noble religion, but also because the titular jihadists we meet are largely young and full of themselves. The cameras capture a lot of blather about why it's necessary to tear bodies apart because someone got caught drinking an ounce of beer, or a guy and girl had a secret rendezvous. But also heard are familiar rationales for the destruction of the World Trade Center and the *Charlie Hebdo* killings in Paris, and the film revisits an ISIS video of American journalist James Foley on his knees shortly before he was beheaded. A deeply disturbing documentary (banned in France), *Jihadists* presents a close-up portrait of one of the world's greatest menaces. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



Olancho, a popular narcocorrido music outfit, promote their shows by driving through rural areas with a loudspeaker, announcing the details and communing with the citizens they meet along the way. Early on in Chris Valdés and Ted Griswold's revealing, tension-filled documentary, they are preparing for a gig when two men get into a scuffle, resulting in the older man's death (the show goes on anyway). Manuel, the front man, explains that it's dangerous to play narco ballads, but it pays better than manual labor. Manuel grew up on a farm without electricity or running water, but he makes a better living than his father, who continues to work the land. He's also lucky to be alive, since the band's previous front man met a mysterious and violent end by way of vehicular homicide. Orlin, the youngest member (who looks considerably older than his 28 years), tempts fate by playing private shows for narcos (the directors blur out the faces and bleep the names of the cartel members to whom he directs his songs in exchange for cocaine, which he snorts enthusiastically). As a structuring device, Valdés and Griswold use a radio interview with Manuel, in which he discusses his reasons for relocating to the United States. Although he finds his new life comparatively dull, he expresses gratitude for the greater security, and holds out hope that he can return to his homeland someday. A powerful documentary (viewers should be advised that the film features victims of internecine violence in addition to livestock slaughter), this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Pension Gamble ★★★

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0883-2.

For many years, public service employ-

ees—including teachers, police officers, and firefighters—were covered by defined benefit pensions, secure in the knowledge that money in retirement would compensate for the less than great salaries they earned while working. However, in recent decades, pensions have been replaced by 401K plans and funding shortfalls have been worsened by investment bubbles and the 2007-09 stock market meltdown. Martin Smith hosts this PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary on America's pension crisis, focusing on Kentucky, which has one of the worst-funded plans in the country. Smith examines the role of state pension boards and Wall Street as contributing factors in the crisis. Perhaps lured by complacency and crippled by a lack of financial skills in local government, public employees have slowly become aware that their money may not be there when they retire. Much was invested in risky hedge funds, marked by high fees and little transparency. Belatedly, teachers and others have reacted with political protests and rallies, pointing to promises made, but politicians and public officials cite other state financial obligations and the need to maintain low taxes. Using horse racing as a metaphor, angry state workers claim they have been "betrayed by the state," and politicians play a desperate catch-up race and blame game. Some 350,000 Kentucky employees are affected, and with \$3 trillion dollars invested nationwide in pension funds, this situation will potentially affect many more. Featuring interviews with state officials, employees, union representatives, and Wall Street investors, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

The Pushouts ★★★

(2018) 56 min. DVD: \$129: high schools & public libraries; \$349: colleges & universities. DRA. Good Docs (avail. from www.gooddocs.net). PPR.

The Pushouts centers on a Los Angeles pro-

gram for youth aged 16-24 who have dropped out of school. Victor Rios, a member of a gang during his teens, once walked in their shoes, growing up poor in West Oakland, becoming a car thief, and racking up three felony convictions. His mother, who had a third grade education, struggled to provide for him and his brother. Director Katie Galloway incorporates footage of Rios from the 1994 *Frontline* documentary *School Colors* (VL-5/95). With the help of mentor Martin Flores, Rios gave school another chance, culminating in a PhD in sociology and a tenured professorship at UC Santa Barbara. Although he's built a good life for himself, he also feels guilty that he hasn't done more to help others. Flores, who grew up poor himself in East Los Angeles, worries that the underprivileged youth of today face more significant challenges than ever, so he reaches out to Rios for assistance. Initially, Rios declines, but after consulting with his wife, Rebecca, a fellow professor, he decides to participate in the summer program. Galloway focuses on four of their students: Dulce, 21; William, 19; Victoria, 18; and Rynisha, 19. Rios encourages them to keep a journal, explaining that that's how he wrote his 2011 book *Street Life*. They also receive instruction in algebra and a form of tightrope-walking designed to build confidence and trust. At the end of the summer, William and Dulce share journal entries that indicate a willingness to move on from traumas in their past. As Flores puts it, "education is a way up and a way out." An inspiring film, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Small People, Big Trees ★★★1/2

(2018) 45 min. DVD: \$350. DRA. Grasshopper Film. PPR.

Russian filmmaker Vadim Vitovtsev traveled to the Central African Republic to shoot this documentary on Bayaka pygmies, a tribe struggling to keep its structure together in the face of outside cultural encroachment. At the film's center is a family that works together and with its community in the gathering of food, captured in an extraordinary segment in which tribal members scale a tree and extract honeycombs while carefully keeping the unhappy bees at a distance with smoke. The segment was shot with cameras attached to the Bayaka climbers who ascend the tree without tools and carefully lower the honeycombs to the ground in a basket made from leaves and twigs (the view from the treetops is stunning). But not everyone is eager to maintain the ways of the past, and another major element here involves a young Bayaka's journey into a neighboring town, which ultimately brings the music and protocol of the wider world into this small, tradition-bound society. The introduction of paper currency into the Bayaka world has also created a confusion among the elders, many of whom are baffled by the value put on the small strips of colorful paper. A compelling and

insightful look at the contemporary struggle between old and new African societies, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Watched ★★★

(2017) 20 min. DVD: \$75: public libraries; \$175: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Cognitive dissociation has been just one of the devastating effects on victims of an elaborate police sting operation that took place in New York City between 2011 and 2015. A secret division of the New York Police Department, intent on rooting out material support by local Muslims for terrorist groups or individuals, sent an undercover cop to Brooklyn College, where she infiltrated an on-campus association of Muslim students. Filmmaker Katie Mitchell's *Watched* is a startling documentary about that secret investigation and its ramifications for the now-traumatized students who befriended and supported their faux cohort for four years. Going by the name of "Mel," the spy not only attended events, but socialized at the students' homes, and even served as a bridesmaid for one of the women. Suspicions about Mel did grow as she sometimes aggressively pushed people for information about their beliefs and politics. Now well past graduation, some of those students still feel vulnerable and targeted by authorities. The former students interviewed here generally agree that Mel's infiltration, which was eventually exposed, caused them to lose personal motivation toward career and life goals that might have made them more open members of society. An unsettling film about brazen and unwarranted religion-based profiling and invasion of privacy, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Trump's Showdown ★★★

(2018) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0882-5.

Head-spinning events during President Trump's first two years in office are at the center of this summary of a "White House at war" that was filmed before the midterm elections and resignation of Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Directed by Michael Kirk, this PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary examines Donald Trump's ongoing battles with special counsel Robert Mueller, Sessions, the intelligence community, and, some would say, truth itself. Trump proudly claims to be a counter-puncher, a trait he learned from lawyer Roy Cohn, who was once an adviser to Communist-baiting Senator Joe McCarthy. The documentary notes that a lot of White House efforts involve keeping the president "within the box," controlling Trump's temper and visceral reactions to the sprawling investigations in the wake of concerns over Russia's role in tampering with the 2016 elections. Topics include the infamous dossier that helped kickstart the Russia probe, the establishment of Mueller's investigation, and Trump's fury over Sessions's decision to recuse himself from oversight. As might be expected, questions here are raised about Trump's tweets, firings, demands for loyalty, and repeated claims of a witch hunt, as well as the role of the Fox TV opinion shows, and recent revelations about Trump's one-time "fixer" Michael Cohen. In the end, the film notes that Trump is intent on "becoming his own Roy Cohn," vigorously defending himself from all critics. A solid time capsule look at Trump's first two years in office, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

LANGUAGE ARTS

American Sign Language Made Easy: ASL for Beginners—ABCs, Numbers & Everyday Signs ★★1/2

(2018) 30 min. DVD: \$34.99. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

Teaching American Sign Language for beginners, this short film covers letters of the alphabet, numbers, colors, grammar, fingerspelling, and a few common signs. Expressive and enthusiastic instructor Clarissa Story strives to make learning sign language fun, later working with a hearing-impaired individual to demonstrate signing. Signs are only presented once using a mirror view in which the instructor uses her left hand to illustrate the alphabet and numbers but encourages use of the dominant hand for fingerspelling out words. While Clarissa signs clearly, she also moves through signs fairly quickly, and the instruction does not allow for repetition of the sign or any practice. She also illustrates how to use facial expressions—especially moving the eyebrows up or down—along with signs to convey yes/no and "w" questions such as what, where, and who. And she covers common signs for "name," "slow down," "hard of hearing," "don't understand," and more. When Clarissa practices signing with a hearing-impaired individual, she signs in full sentences, challenging the student to interpret the signs. This would have been a better film with more repetition and a slower pace, and a short quiz at the end is good but only tests a few signs. Still, this should



be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Root)

LAW & CRIME

The If Project ★★★

(2018) 88 min. DVD: \$50 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. Closed captioned.

Giving one's life some narrative shape in the form of a written autobiographical story can reveal patterns and trajectories that lead to the present moment. But what if that moment finds you in prison, apart from your children, home, and freedom? That's the big question at the heart of *The If Project*, a documentary about a writing program for prisoners at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. Co-founded by two women at opposite ends of the criminal justice system—a Seattle police officer named Kim Bogucki and third-time offender and former cop hater Renata Abramson—the program is intended to slow or even stop cycles of dysfunction and lawlessness. The incarcerated women are asked, among other things, what one message might someone have told you that would have kept you from committing a crime? Answering that question on paper turns out to be a profound experience for many of the women here, some sobbing with self-awareness and deep regret. Further writing assignments focus on confessions, or the joys of simple things that are missed. For Bogucki, the point of all this is to understand better the forces that drive women onto a path that ends in imprisonment. For Abramson, the project—which is about a decade old now—has been transformative. Filmmaker Kathlyn Horan's fly-on-the-wall, discreet presence with a camera captures something rare here: the look and sound of real vulnerability and courage in a world where survival is a challenge. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Looking for the Wild: Unai's Journey

★★★1/2

(2016) 70 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39: public libraries; \$79: high schools; \$129: colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. SDH captioned.

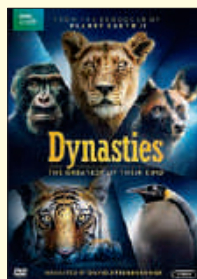
Leaving his home in Spain, 10-year-old Unai accompanies his wildlife photographer father (along with his mother and sister) on a journey to each continent to take pictures of seven representative animals who have faced extinction or habitat destruction. Traveling for over a year, Andoni Canela (who also directs) and his son pursue

the sometimes elusive animals needed for photos for Canela's book. Camping in the deserts of Namibia and in nearby Botswana, Unai and his father pursue elephants. In North America, the pair visit the Badlands of South Dakota, Yellowstone, and Colorado to find bison. To photograph penguins, the family travels to an island off the coast of Chile (Canela also captures pictures of gentoo penguins in Antarctica). In addition, father and son photograph hornbills in Thailand and Laos, saltwater crocodiles in Australia, pumas in Chile, and Iberian wolves in northern Spain. Narrating the film, Unai brings his unique perspective to what he sees and learns on the journey (he also delights in alternating from English to Spanish as he describes their adventures). Even in the remotest places with makeshift living quarters, Unai expresses his love of nature, exploration, and ability to have fun with his sister. A published photographer, Canela includes exceptional still photos of each of the animals. The spectacular shots of glaciers, sand dunes, snowy mountains, rainforest foliage, and deserts convey the wondrous and stark beauty of places all over the globe, along with the message that humankind should protect these animals and their natural surroundings. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Root)

Minute Bodies: The Intimate World of F. Percy Smith ★★★

(2016) 53 min. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR.

F. Percy Smith (1880-1945) was a pioneer of nature documentary filmmaking, noted for his groundbreaking use of time-lapse photography, underwater photography, and microcinematography, in capturing the life cycles of plants and insects—shooting much of the footage on the grounds of his suburban London home. Some of his short films made for the *Secrets of Nature* and *Secrets of Life* series have been previously available, but *Minute Bodies* offers a compilation of brief excerpts from Smith's various works—newly edited under the direction of Stuart Staples, lead singer of the British alt-rock band Tindersticks, into a luminous and almost hallucinatory series of eerily beautiful images, accompanied by a band musical score (with guest artists) that pulses with rhythm while also employing unusual instruments. The result naturally jettisons the instructional purpose behind Smith's work—without narration or captions, it is virtually impossible for anyone but experts to identify what is occurring in the cascading snatches of film. But *Minute Bodies* works on its own terms as a sort of cinematic tone poem combining entrancing images and throbbing music. An obvious labor of love for Staples, the film succeeds in putting Smith's still-amazing visuals to a new and aesthetically effective use. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



Dynasties ★★★1/2

(2018) 250 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; 4K/Blu-ray Combo: 4 discs, \$49.99. BBC Worldwide Ltd. (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Taking a different approach from their geographically-themed *Planet Earth* and *Blue Planet*, this BBC series—once again hosted by the avuncular Sir David Attenborough—focuses on dynastic families in the animal kingdom: chimps, lions, tigers, wild dogs, and the more oddball choice of emperor penguins. While viewers might be tempted to dismiss the individually-named representatives as anthropomorphic critters created by editing, the excellent bonus behind-the-scenes documentary makes clear that the BBC camera crews were aided by researchers who had spent upwards of a decade or more with these particular animals. “Chimpanzee” follows an aging alpha male named David who struggles to maintain his leader status against younger rivals and suffers a devastating attack that places his role in jeopardy. “Lion” centers on an incredible lioness named Charm who leads her pride and tries to raise her offspring in the face of challenges that include male lions, unforgiving climate changes, and humans who poison the animals to protect their cattle. Both “Painted Wolf” (wild dog) and “Tiger” feature combative mother-daughter relationships that are as much driven by shrinking territories as by power grabs. “Emperor” tells the least personal story (and most well-known for anyone who has seen *March of the Penguins*), although like all of the other episodes, it too benefits from truly spectacular cinematography. As the “making-of” extra documents, the filmmaking crews experienced an emotional rollercoaster as some animals they knew intimately were maimed or killed (although the policy is not to intervene, the filmmakers occasionally did just that—most touchingly when a group of penguins were trapped with their chicks in an ice crevice and the team chipped out a path to safety). Another winning nature series from the BBC, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (R. Pitman)

Super Cats ★★★1/2

(2018) 160 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0861-0 (dvd), 978-1-5317-0862-7 (blu-ray).

Aired on PBS's *Nature* series this three-part BBC documentary narrated by F. Murray Abraham is a feast for lovers of wild felines, even as it studiously avoids showing extreme predator gore or troubling mating/dying footage. The first two episodes, “Extreme Lives” and “Cats in Every Corner,” survey the worldwide range of wild felines, from lions and tigers (lions actually merit their regal reputation by surpassing other big cats in intelligence tests) to the inevitably cute genus of “small wild cats.” The latter include the squirrel-size rusty spotted cat and Africa's black-footed cat—a tabby-like charmer whose unmatched success rate for catching small prey statistically wins it the title of the deadliest of all the species. The closing episode, “Science and Secrets,” addresses human-feline interactions, such as conservation of endangered species (bringing back the Iberian lynx from the very edge of extinction, although there is no mention of the recent disappearance of the Tasmanian tiger), while also looking at how wildlife cinematographers captured the incredible high-tech footage of the animals here. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

World's Fastest Animal ★★★

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0600-5.

Peregrine falcons are the world's fastest animals, and one of nature's most successful predators. With exceptional eyes (twice as good as the hawk's), sharp talons and beak, they can move three times faster than a cheetah, reaching speeds up to 200 mph. Filmmaker Simon Baxter's PBS-aided *Nature* documentary holds up the Peregrine falcon as a testament to the survival of the fittest. Nearly wiped out by the DDT pesticide, the bird can adapt to almost any environment, and is found on every continent, except Antarctica. Surprisingly, they have made a home in big cities, nesting in high rises, where rising thermal air currents, 24-hour lighting, and abundant prey such as pigeons and sparrows provide for a good life. The falcon's eyes take up to 50 percent of its skull, enabling it to detect targets at great distances, while its strong bones and stiff tail aids in navigation and the ability to survive hard impacts (the bird generally avoids the ground and must maneuver around the city's many obstacles). Trainers in rural Scotland help orphaned chicks prepare for life in the wild, where their astonishing capabilities—like a food pass among birds in mid-air, and the “stoop” dive from great heights in which falcons, wings folded against the body, free fall to catch prey by surprise—enable them

to thrive. The documentary also shows the trial and error process in which parents teach young and inexperienced chicks to hunt. And the footage is spectacular, with drones helping to provide a bird's eye view of one of the world's greatest hunters. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Addiction ★★ ★ 1/2

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0815-3.

Filmmaker Sarah Holt's PBS-aired NOVA documentary focuses on the opioid crisis that has destroyed countless lives in recent years. The abuse of narcotics like heroin and fentanyl and reckless overprescribing of OxyContin and other drugs have impacted Americans across all socioeconomic demographics. The film seeks insight from doctors, psychologists, and neuroscientists, who explain in layperson's terms how addictions can occur and why it becomes very difficult to easily break the destructive habits. Arguably, the most fascinating segment here shows scans of what the human brain looks like when a person is hooked on drugs. *Addiction* also focuses on treatments for weaning a person away from opioid self-abuse, and discusses the still-lingering stigma that burdens many addicts, who are often viewed as pariahs or worse by the wider society (several former addicts speak frankly and eloquently about the physical and emotional pain they underwent). Narrated by Joe Morton, this compelling, disturbing, and timely look at a social disaster that shows no immediate signs of abating is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Overloaded: Ten Ways to Deal with Stress ★★ ★ 1/2

(2018) 20 min. DVD: \$149.95 (study guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-096-7.

"Change what you can, cope with what you can't" is the advice given in this self-help/self-awareness program aimed at alleviating stress. Two stylish hosts and participant teens are joined by clinical psychology professionals including L. Kevin Chapman, Robin F. Goodman, and Peter Montminy, as the roots of physical, mental, and emotional strain are discussed. Noting that a good balance of stress is important (too much is bad, too little isn't challenging and can cause lethargy), the program breaks down 10 tips, including being physically active to release endorphins, working out a better plan for sleep hygiene, practicing good nutrition, avoiding drugs and alcohol, and engaging in relaxation techniques such as meditation. Although the problem-solving methodology of *Overloaded* includes a fair amount of common sense

guidance, it also serves as an apt reminder of how to recognize if you need help, while encouraging viewers to find their passion and live better. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Modified ★★ ★

(2017) 87 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$125; public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Award-winning food blogger and web series cook Aube Giroux set out to make a documentary about growing good organic food, a passion she shared with her late mother. The last thing Giroux wanted to do was dwell on thorny issues concerning genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the dominant role that they now play in our food production. It is enough, she thought, for people to take charge of their own food, confidently choosing reliable sources for health and happiness in the kitchen—just as her mother did. But Giroux soon found there was no way around a discussion of GMOs and how most consumers reluctantly buy biotechnology-tweaked food products. *Modified* explores the ways in which farmers are backed into growing and harvesting herbicide-resistant crops from GMO seeds and why organic farmers trying to grow food from heritage seeds are nevertheless finding GMO crops in their fields. The United States and Canada do not require food labels to list the presence of GMOs (64 other countries do). The fact that American politicians are more

interested in protecting Monsanto's profits than promoting consumers' right to know the facts is always an infuriating theme, but Giroux adds her strong voice to others who are also fighting over this highly controversial issue. Extras include cooking videos featuring recipes from the film. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

Family of Fear ★★ ★

(2018) 91 min. DVD: \$39; public libraries; \$79: high schools; \$150: colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. SDH captioned.

There is a microgenre of behind-the-scenes documentaries following obsessives of the macabre who spend much of the year staging "haunted attractions" that are targeted at the Halloween trade. Filmmaker Stephen Lackey's *Family of Fear* focuses on the players at Arx Mortis, a nationally recognized, grassroots haunted attraction maintained in a rambling compound in Killen, AL. Amusing bookends have a couple—who come off as the Siskel & Ebert of haunted houses—complaining that Arx Mortis disappointed them last October. Lackey's *vérité* lens follows the organizers as they try to get their scare game in better shape for a new season, welcoming fresh actors as well as re-energizing longtime participants. A recurring theme here finds Arx Mortis team members complaining of school-age bullying (especially those who are LGBT) and feeling like misfits in their community—so putting on ghastly makeup and gory little shows provides a bit of therapy and a lot of fellowship and otherwise lacking camarade-



Cuban Food Stories ★★ ★

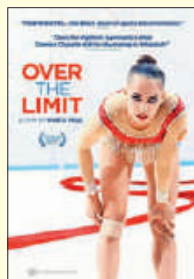
(2018) 82 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Director Asori Soto, a Cuban native and founder of the Cuban Independent Film Movement, recalls the impact that the collapse of the Soviet Union had on his island nation. Deliveries of food and necessary goods slowed to a trickle, and Soto remembers living on bread for a while as a child. But Cuba rebounded, and a variety of dishes, from sea and land, can be found while touring the country—which is exactly what Soto does in this colorful documentary. Divided into nine chapters, *Cuban Food Stories* introduces not only cuisines but also people whose lives and livelihoods are closely aligned with what's on the menu. A former worker from a nuclear power plant project that was never completed now goes out to the sea every day to see what he can catch for market. The owner of a Trinidad guest house for foreign travelers carries a deep sense of the unique cultural history of his community—not only regarding food but even local door frames. A coffee farmer, living in the mountains where Fidel Castro and his insurgents gathered during the revolution, takes pride in growing coffee beans and teaching the tradition to his youngest son, who in turn wants to study agricultural engineering. In what is arguably the most warmly human chapter, a mission-driven chef who specializes in smoked meats feeds an outdoor festival crowd deep into the night from his plaza stand, withstanding everything from rain to an electrical outage. Soto captures it all with an air of happy familiarity and an eye for those things that dramatically distinguish one city from another in what is a small but variegated nation. Extras include a mini-cookbook. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Over the Limit ★★

(2019) 77 min. In Russian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

If you are not an Olympics-caliber, Russian rhythmic gymnast, consider yourself lucky. This brutal documentary serves up a horrifying revelation of the living hell that Russian athlete and gold medal winner Margarita Mamun endured while training and performing her way up the ladder of competitions leading to the 2016 Olympics. Directed by former rhythmic gymnast Marta Prus, who had intimate access to then 20-year-old Mamun's tribulations and occasional sweet moments (briefly seeing her boyfriend; playing with pals at the beach), *Over the Limit* captures Mamun's extraordinary talent and graceful movements as she dances with a hoop or long ribbon. But between those gymnastic treats, viewers witness the daily, vicious attacks that she absorbs from trainers, particularly one Irina Viner-Usmanova, a middle-aged, Cruella de Vil type with too much makeup, imposing hats, and a foul mouth who is seemingly dedicated to traumatizing and berating Mamun. All of this is happening while Mamun is nursing an injured foot and coping with her father's losing battle with cancer. Prus chooses not to intentionally denounce Viner-Usmanova, but just lets her camera roll as the trainer strips Mamun of self-esteem, toward no constructive purpose. In the end, this is a disturbing film about a young woman's inner resolve to save herself and triumph in the face of relentless adversity. Extras include Johnson Cheng's 2017 short film "Iron Hands," centering on a 12-year-old girl trying out for the traditionally all-male Chinese youth Olympics weightlifting team. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



rie. Occasionally repetitious in the telling, this close-up look into the psychological mindsets of lost-and-found souls drawn to horror is nonetheless an eye-catching and often engaging film. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Hot to Trot ★★

(2017) 88 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

In Gail Freedman's open-hearted ballroom dance documentary, the intrigue lies more in the drama behind the scenes than in the actual competition. She begins in 2012 as her subjects are preparing for the 2014 Gay Games. The two couples profiled eschew mainstream competitions that specify male (lead) and female (follower) dance partners. As judge Benjamin Soencksen puts it, "It's Fred and Fred and Ginger and Ginger." San Francisco contestants Kieren Jameson and Emily Coles are partners in dance rather than life. Kieren, a New Zealand-born tech worker with a history of depression, credits dance for keeping her alive. It's how she met her wife, BW. Emily, who has type-1 diabetes, also met her girlfriend, Uzbekistan-born Katerina, through dance. Ernesto Palma, a former meth user of Costa Rican descent, says that "it makes me feel better about myself." His partner, dance instructor Robbie Tristan, hails from Hungary. After a fall, Robbie finds out that he has a brain tumor, and returns to his native country for more affordable health-care. Ernesto finds a new partner in Nikolai Shpakov, a more introverted Russian dancer new to same-sex competition. On their way to the games, Ernesto and Nikolai find romance and explore parenthood, but it doesn't slow either of them down. In the end, one couple

wins their competition and the other breaks up for reasons that have nothing to do with it. By taking the time to get to know her subjects and their families, Freedman's film is more about gay lives in America than about a specific athletic pursuit, and it's all the stronger for it. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

RAAM Bam Thank You Mam ★★

(2017) 44 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

Race Across America (RAAM) is a coast-to-coast international bike race covering over 3,000 miles of desert, mountains, hills, and plains. Backed by a crew of 13 men and women, four Australian women thoroughly plan and intensely train for the challenge of winning the coast to coast race in seven days. With a yellow blown-up kangaroo for a mascot, the Veloroos team begins the race in Los Angeles and they withstand the extreme heat of the desert before beginning the ascent into the Rocky Mountain foothills. Along the route, the women overtake other teams, changing riders following six hours of cycling. Bicycling through Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri, the women seem to enjoy the experience as well as the competition. The crew accompanies the bikers in an RV, daily checking the riders' hydration and weight, and making sure that they eat and rest as they alternate cycling. By the halfway point, the Veloroos are ahead of other teams and focus on conserving their strength to finish the race. Viewers witness the scenery in director Anthony Gordon's film through the eyes of the women, while a crew pilot provides overhead shots of the race and landscape. The team members say that they are just ordinary women—not pro athletes—who

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like to challenge themselves, have a sense of adventure and fun, and are willing to push themselves to their limits. A solid personal sports documentary, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Root)

THE ARTS

Band vs Brand ★★1/2

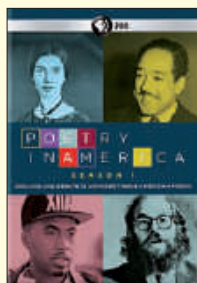
(2019) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Dozens of artists, most from the world of heavy metal, offer their thoughts about bands as brands in Bob Nalbandian's informative, if somewhat dispiriting documentary. There's a degree to which major acts have always been brands as they lose key members but retain the name. For Dave Lombardo (Slayer), that model idea makes him uncomfortable as fans get taken in by outfits that have little relation to their original incarnation. As David Ellefson (Megadeth) puts it, "It's so much better to see the original guys playing it." In some cases, however, fans want to see tribute bands in order to experience something they would have missed out on otherwise. With record company profits in decline, more artists are following the brand model by generating income through merchandising, licensing arrangements, and VIP packages. This has always been the case for the rock band KISS, who licensed their logo and images for innumerable products. As Marc Ferrari (Keel) notes, the profit margin is also higher on T-shirts than record sales (a significant issue for him personally, since the motor company Ferrari once objected to the use of his name on a shirt). Jean Beavoir (Plasmatics, Little Steven) says that it can be a rude wake-up call for musicians to realize that "the brand is more powerful than I am." Other speakers include publicists, managers, and label owners. *Band vs Brand* is a scrap-heap-looking documentary (with functional camera work and crude graphics) that would have benefited from examining more genres than metal, but it provides food for thought for musicians, fans, and others interested in the music business. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

Carretera Cartonera: Discover the World of Cartonera Publishers ★★1/2

(2016) 37 min. In Spanish & Portuguese w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$99: high schools & public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. DRA. PRAGDA. PPR.

Italian filmmakers Marta Mancusi and Anna Trento traveled across South America to film this documentary short on the Cartonera book production industry. Created in Argentina in 2003 in response to the nation's economic problems, the Cartonera movement unites junk salvagers—who collect cardboard from garbage dumps and



Poetry in America: Season 1 ★★★★★

(2017) 2 discs. 305 min. DVD: \$39.99 (\$69.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0870-2.

At its best, poetry "holds the unsayable," employing words in new ways to express the "power of what the mind can conjure up." In the eight-episode first season of this PBS-aided series directed by Harvard English professor Elisa New, academics, poets, politicians, and relevant professionals are brought together, weighing in on classic, modern, and neglected poems. Highlights include an Emily Dickinson work, discussed and recited by actress Cynthia Nixon, who portrayed Dickinson in the film *A Quiet Passion*.

Although private almost to the point of being a recluse, Dickinson relished being a rebel poet with an edge, challenging norms with jagged forms and punctuation. Carl Sandburg's "Skyscraper" expresses his double vision as poet and journalist, capturing a big city's dissonance, celebrating both its outsized scale and beauty, while also lamenting its human cost. Former President Bill Clinton draws on his southern heritage to appreciate Langston Hughes's poetic meditation on a "dream deferred," while former Vice President Joe Biden taps his working-class roots to interpret Robert Hayden's great and overlooked "Those Winter Sundays," and the late Sen. John McCain recalls his POW experiences, discussing Gwendolyn Brooks's "To Prisoners." Also covered are the world of sports ("Fast Break"), fashion ("Shirt"), rap (written by "disciples of the streets"), the Beat generation, and Emma Lazarus's powerful ode to immigration "The New Colossus," found at the base of the Statue of Liberty. Not all poems here will please everyone's taste, but most discussions will leave viewers hungry to go back and rediscover these works. Essential for high school and college literature classes, as well as anyone who simply loves poetry, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

sell their bounty to recycling plants—and small publishing operations, who use the recycled cardboard as covers for handcrafted books. The covers are decorated with unique artwork, thus providing one-of-a-kind copies of distinctive literary output. And the books are sold at relatively lower prices, offering low-income readers who cannot afford retail store books the opportunity to enjoy new material. The camera pinballs between Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay to interview the junk salvagers who have found their social status improved within their communities as the Cartonera industry has taken on a new importance in the continent-wide push for sustainability. Also featured are the artists who show how they turn the recycled cardboard covers into extraordinary displays of color and imagination. Mancusi and Trento have found a fascinating subject that touches multiple bases at once: socioeconomic struggles, publishing, entrepreneurship, contemporary Latin American society, and sustainable business practices. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Eternity Has No Door of Escape ★★★

(2017) 80 min. In French & German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR.

Filmmaker Arthur Borgnis's documentary presents an excellent history of what is called outsider art or, to use the French term, *art brut*—primarily works by those suffering from mental illness, but also including artwork made by practitioners of Spiritism (under purportedly supernatural influences), and self-taught visionaries. The

film initially focuses on pioneering figures such as psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn and artist-collector Jean Dubuffet, who were instrumental in developing an appreciation for such artwork, and then looks at attempts to curate collections of *art brut* and ensure that the works would be properly maintained (although there were differences of opinion as to whether it should be publicly displayed). But the documentary also connects the interest in outsider art with more mainstream movements such as surrealism, abstraction, and structuralism, while providing mini-studies of some of the most notable artists of the genre, such as Adolf Wölfli, who produced a stream of work in an institution after his conviction for child molestation, and August Natterer, labeled by Prinzhorn as a "schizophrenic master." Illustrated with a wide array of archival material and ample artwork examples, coupled with extensive excerpts from interviews with scholarly experts and collectors, Borgnis's film offers a splendid introduction to a fascinating byway in the course of art history. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Meow Wolf: Origin Story ★★1/2

(2018) 88 min. DVD: \$75: public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. DRA. Tugg. PPR.

Game of Thrones creator George R.R. Martin plays a significant role in the last section of filmmakers Jillann Spitzmiller and Morgan Capps's homespun documentary about a Santa Fe, NM-based art collective that has grown from modest beginnings in 2008 to what its current director dreams could become a billion-dollar brand. Initially, a

small band of struggling artists pooled their meager resources to rent not just a common living space but also a warehouse where they could exhibit their individual pieces (an amusing, rapid-fire reminiscence montage from some of the founders recalls how they picked their name). But as the group grew and moved into collective work, a modicum of organization and leadership was needed, especially in regards to fundraising. As various members admit, this evolution resulted in some serious disagreements, but also made possible large-scaled collaborative exhibits that emphasized interactivity and an immersive atmosphere. *Meow Wolf* culminates with the creation of the collective's first permanent installation—*House of Eternal Return*—aided by a donation from Martin that allowed the group to lease and renovate a bowling alley as a signature facility. Success has led to exhibit tours in other cities and plans to expand the operation to satellite complexes. Combining archival material, newly-shot segments, and excerpts from numerous interviews with member artists (as well as Martin), the documentary provides a somewhat rambling view of what was originally a group of rebellious outsiders who appear to be transforming into a more mainstream operation. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Move! Dance Your Life ★★

(2017) 74 min. DVD: \$39; public libraries; \$79; high schools; \$150; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR.

Presenting plenty of music and movement (with no dialogue or narration), filmmaker Fanny Jean-Noël's infectious film consists simply of dance routines shot in nearly 20 locales around the globe—in the U.S., Madagascar, India, Argentina, Spain, New Zealand, Japan, Morocco, Tanzania, Panama, Brazil, Tahiti, Indonesia, Ireland, and Republic of Georgia. Some are expressions of indigenous culture performed by individuals, such as a Native American tribal ritual (ironically shot on an urban roof), or a mountaintop dance by a Maori warrior, while others are elaborate exhibitions of national styles, complete with gorgeous costumes and complicated choreography. There are ostensibly impromptu but also obviously well-planned ensembles such as dances by street crowds, and comic interludes, including a routine by restaurant workers who provide their own music with utensils and food containers. Romantic duets in the snow are followed by Irish jigs in churches and pubs, and communal festivities in the Sahara—the last juxtaposed with gyrations on a neon-lit nightclub floor. Moments of poetic intimacy are combined with outpourings of public frenzy, all making the point that

dance is as much a universal language as music—a form of expression common to all of humanity (the implication, of course, being that it can also help bridge differences among peoples). *Move!* is entertaining, inspiring, and even a bit profound. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Narcissister: Organ Player ★★1/2

(2019) 91 min. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Narcissister is a New York performance artist who is always masked, even when appearing in public offstage (as when she briefly dated Marilyn Manson in 2011). Her routines, which contain strong autobiographical elements, feature not only elaborate costumes but also mannequins and oversized props—most notably a huge cartoon cutout of a woman with legs spread, from which Narcissister emerges to writhe and gyrate. Her movements are obviously deeply sexual, commenting—albeit not always with complete clarity—on issues of race and gender. Directed by Narcissister, this film features performance snippets, archival clips of the director with Manson, and an appearance on *America's Got Talent*. Much of it, however, is devoted to her describing her life, particularly the California childhood during which she was made to feel inferior due to her mixed ethnic background.



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Her comments are accompanied by excerpts from scrapbooks and home movies, in which Narcissister coyly keeps her own face covered, instead putting the emphasis on her parents—especially her ever-supportive mother, whose decline due to cancer is followed obsessively up through her death, which her daughter stages as a piece of performance art (while intended as a tribute, this cannot help but feel rather self-promoting). Extras include deleted/extended scenes. Likely to attract a relatively small audience (just as its subject does), this should still be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Twelfth Night ★★

(2017) 141 min. DVD: \$24.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Christopher Luscombe's 2017 Royal Shakespeare Company production of the Bard's 1602 comedy not only updates the setting to late-19th-century England (alternating scenes between town and country), but effectively (albeit anachronistically) turns it into a sort of 1930s musical, with songs that suggest Gilbert and Sullivan or Noël Coward. It also adds a colonial/imperial element to the mix by making the main sibling characters Indian: Viola (Dinita Gohil) and Sebastian (Esh Alladi)—the shipwrecked and separated twins who become involved (Viola dons the guise of a man, with typically uncomfortable results) with lovesick Duke Orsino (Nicholas Bishop) and Countess Olivia (Kara Tointon), the latter still mourning the loss of her father and brother. And the same is true of Olivia's servant Feste (Beruce Khan). All of these alterations—along with a transposition of the initial scenes—might bother purists, but they actually work reasonably well, and the secondary plot, involving the humiliation of Olivia's stuffy steward Malvolio (Adrian Edmondson) by her uncle Toby (John Hodgkinson) and his friend Aguecheek (Michael Cochrane), is played more or less traditionally. The sets and costumes are elegant and the cast is overall excellent, with Edmondson and Cochrane in particular showing their strong comic chops, and while the romantic interplay of the Orsino-Olivia-Viola-Sebastian quartet sometimes feels a mite too decorous and understated, this is ultimately a sumptuous, enjoyable rendition of Shakespeare's beloved comedy. Extras include an audio commentary by Luscombe, an interview with Gohil, and a cast gallery. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

Aircraft Carrier: Guardian of the Seas

★★1/2

(2017) 43 min. 4K/Blu-ray Combo: \$39.95. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

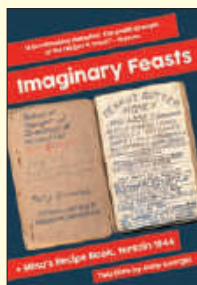
Veteran IMAX director Stephen Low's latest

big-screen short documentary pays homage to aircraft carriers in decidedly cheerleading fashion (with thanks to participating companies including Lockheed Martin). Like the similar *We, The Marines* (VL-3/19), *Aircraft Carrier* interweaves historical tidbits, here drawn from 4,000 years of naval warfare (touching on ancient ships, WWI battleships, and the famous WWII-era Battle of Midway), but the primary focus is on a U.S.-led RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific) naval exercise involving 22,000 men and women and 55 ships from 26 nations (including Japan, South Korea, and China). At the center is the USS *Ronald Reagan*, a Nimitz-class supercarrier with over 5,000 crew members. Some of the most interesting (if also fairly technical) segments use 3D CGI to illustrate the inner workings of the ship's uranium-powered nuclear reactors, the piston-driven aircraft launch system (0-160 mph in three seconds), and the drag line that will stop a landing jet in a mere two seconds. But overall this has the feel of a big military parade. Viewers are told that the RIMPAC exercise is a complicated, team-based event, but no real attempt is made to follow the proceedings; instead, we see a highlights reel of planes strafing targets and submarines firing missiles, all accompanied by tending-towards-purple narration filled with superlatives. Extras include audience testimonials and promo spots. *Aircraft Carrier* looks sharp in 4K on a big-screen TV, but it's more spectacle (with somewhat repetitive montages) than in-depth exploration of the subject. Still, this will likely appeal to military buffs, making it a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (R. Pitman)

Last B-24 ★★1/2

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0792-7.

In December 1944, a U.S. B-24 Liberator bomber known as the *Tulsamerican* crashed off the coast of the former Yugoslavia. Although most of the crew were rescued, three men on board—flight engineer Charles E. Priest, navigator Russell C. Landry, and pilot Captain Eugene Ford—were unable to escape and went down with the aircraft into 135 feet of water. Filmmaker Kirk Wolfinger's PBS-aided NOVA documentary details the story of the *Tulsamerican* and the efforts to locate the missing fliers who disappeared. The plane was notable for being the last B-24 built in Oklahoma, and it was financed by the factory workers, who contributed their own funds to its construction. The U.S. Department of Defense located the wreckage of the *Tulsamerican* near what is now the Croatian island of Vis, and in 2017 a combined U.S. and Croatian military team joined underwater archeologists to investigate. Extensive forensic testing was done on the recovered remains, which offered a degree of closure for the families of the missing fliers. The film includes an interview with one of the *Tulsamerican* crash survivors, bombardier First Lieutenant Val Miller, who describes the tragic event in vivid detail (the 94-year-old Miller passed away shortly after the interview). Serving up a fascinating mix of World War II history and cutting-edge investigative technology, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



Imaginary Feasts + Mina's Recipe Book ★★

(2017) 115 min. In French, German & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.98. Icarus Films Home Video (available from most distributors). Closed captioned.

These two films by Anne Georget present a haunting examination of one of the coping mechanisms by which prisoners in concentration camps psychologically fought their confinement, mistreatment, and hunger: not merely dreaming and talking about the food they enjoyed before being jailed, but using scraps of paper to record recipes of favorite and exceptional dishes they could never actually prepare. *Imaginary Feasts* offers a broad treatment of the subject: the camera scans across pages from little notebooks written not just at Nazi death camps but also Japanese wartime prisons and Soviet gulags, while voices dreamily whisper the contents. Interspersed are recollections from camp survivors and reactions from a variety of experts—a master chef amazed by the texts, as well as historians, linguists, psychiatrists, philosophers, and scientists, who try to explain what the compilations must have meant to those who created them. *Mina's Recipe Book* focuses on one surviving document, the notebook of Mina Pachter, an art historian sent to the "model" camp of Theresienstadt at Terezin in Czechoslovakia, where she died in 1944. After tracing the circuitous route through which the notebook made its way to Pachter's daughter Anny Stern in 1969, the film records how it was translated (by a survivor of Terezin) and published in 1996. In interview footage, Anny's son David recalls his grandmother and her cooking, and offers his own grandson the opportunity to sample caramels made from her recipe. An unusual Holocaust-related offering, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Last Tsarinas ★★1/2

(2017) 52 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

As a general introduction to the German princesses who married into the Russian Romanov family and became grand duchesses and (in some cases) tsarinas, filmmaker Hannes Schuler's documentary is simply adequate. Mitigating the possibility of a dry history lesson by placing, front and center, a descendant of last Empress Alexandra Fedorovna (spouse of Tsar Nicholas II, who ruled from 1894 through 1917), the film follows Maria von Preusen, a modern young woman who beams delightedly anytime someone tells her that she resembles her royal ancestor. Not surprisingly, the documentary largely focuses on Alexandra—the former Princess Charlotte of Prussia—and how her former life and identity completely disappeared during her formal transformation into becoming first a Romanov and then Tsarina. Along the way, the film also employs animation and numerous aerial images of the luxurious mansions, palaces, and institutes that the Romanovs built at the cost of a rising revolt. Likely to appeal to both armchair travelers and history buffs—particularly those with an interest in the Romanovs—this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Other Side of Home ★★★

(2016) 40 min. In English, Turkish & Armenian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$250 w/PPR) (study guide included). EPF Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-933724-55-3.

Shortlisted for an Oscar nomination, this 2016 documentary is a personal work for California-based filmmaker Nare Mkrtychyan, who embraced her ethnic roots and attended the 100th commemoration in Armenia of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. A controversial subject on the world stage, as well as for American foreign policy and certainly for Turkey (the World War I-era Ottoman government waged a campaign to exterminate 1.5 million Armenians, but Turkey rejects the "genocide" label), this historic tragedy is only blurrily known to many contemporary Turks and Armenians. Seeking a focus for her film, Mkrtychyan finds 42-year-old Maya, who lives in Turkey but has recently learned that her great-grandmother was Armenian. As a child, the latter barely survived the massacre of her family. Escaping to Turkey, Maya's great-grandmother was forced to reinvent herself with a fake name, becoming immersed in a new culture and religion. In light of these revelations, Maya decides to attend the commemoration, and agrees to let Mkrtychyan film her and ask questions. What emerges is a portrait of Maya—part

Turk, part Armenian—struggling to reconcile those adversarial parts of herself, going so far as to rationalize, with obvious internal conflict, why the murders and mass starvation of Armenians was not technically genocide. Maya's strained psychology is both fascinating and tragic. Mkrtychyan spends a bit too much time with well-intended, mournful but also redundant images of people marching at the centennial anniversary of the genocide. But overall this is a powerful reminder of a horrific 20th-century tragedy that is still not universally acknowledged. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Parkland: Inside Building 12 ★★★

(2019) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

Charlie Minn, an investigative documentary filmmaker whose *One October: A Nightmare in Las Vegas* (VL-11/18) recounted the Las Vegas concert shootings of 2017, and whose *49 Pulses* (VL-5/18) captured the moment-by-moment carnage at an Orlando nightclub in 2016, brings his granular, oral-history approach to the horror story of the 2018 murders at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. To Minn's credit, he never mentions the name or backstory of the 19-year-old gunman who killed 17 students and teachers (and wounded others) on Feb-

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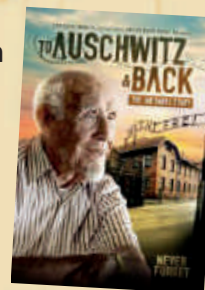


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iLas Sandinistas! ★★☆☆1/2

(2018) 96 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Jenny Murray's documentary is a captivating and ultimately shocking history of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (or FSLN), as told from the perspective of Nicaraguan women who abandoned domesticity in the 1970s to become insurgents and commanders in a popular war against the corrupt, repressive Somoza regime. Drawing on extensive archival footage, Murray reconstructs Nicaragua's 20th-century history of U.S.-backed dictatorship in the Latin American nation, which led to extreme wealth inequality, starvation, illiteracy, and scant resources to survive. Interviewing a number of women who made the leap from student life or motherhood to spend years training to fight as soldiers, it becomes quite clear why an armed insurrection was the only tenable choice left for an abused citizenry. Women made up a third of the Sandinista fighting force, becoming highly-regarded officers, receiving training in Cuba, and leading many of the battles that were spread across Nicaragua. While the Sandinistas prevailed in 1979, not one of the brave women who fought the good fight was invited into President Daniel Ortega's directorate for running the country. Worse, after Ortega lost re-election but was voted back into the presidency in 2006, an institutional hostility toward women and women's rights took hold, including a ban on all abortions, a rise in rapes and murders of women, and a systematic eradication of the history of women's participation in the revolution. None of the veteran Sandinista women here is represented in any official narrative or commemoration. A film that stokes more than a little outrage, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

ruary 14. But through devastating footage shot on students' cell phones during the rampage (most of the images were taken from inside locked yet vulnerable classrooms), the killer's presence is experienced via the sound of relentless shooting in the hallways and the sight of bloodied bodies. Using simple graphics, Minn traces the precise movements and lethal actions of the killer as he traveled up and down three floors in Building 12. But as in his earlier films, Minn's best resource is his ability to get victims and eyewitnesses to clearly describe what they saw and endured, all without exploiting emotions or states of mind. The result is a mosaic-like record of a sprawling atrocity, and a chance for viewers to note the dignity, humanity, and courage of survivors. Minn is sometimes criticized for the unpolished look of his documentaries, but the taut simplicity of his brand of journalism allows him to keep up with the sad frequency of gun-related massacres in America. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Woman in the Iron Coffin ★★☆☆

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0647-0. SDH captioned.

Filmmaker Adam Luria's documentary—aired on PBS's long-running *Secrets of the Dead* series—details the 2011 discovery of the remains of a woman in an abandoned lot in Queens, NY. While police investigators initially believed the body to be a recent homicide, forensic tests discovered that she was a 19th-century woman who died from smallpox. Broken metal fragments found around the body were later determined to be parts of a form-fitting iron coffin that helped

preserve the mummified body. But that only raised a new question: who was this woman and why was she buried in such an unlikely place? Research determined that the woman was Martha Peterson, an African American who died in 1850 at the age of 26 from smallpox, whose resting place had been the site of a burial ground for blacks. The unusual and expensive iron coffin was used under the belief that it would prevent the spread of the contagious disease that took Peterson's life. Offering a fascinating look at forensic science, old-fashioned investigative research, and insights into African American life in pre-Civil War New York City, this real-life mystery is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Discoveries...America National Parks: New Mexico Ancestral Pueblo People & Fort Union ★★☆☆1/2

(2019) 57 min. DVD: \$24.95. DRA. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-216-7.

This latest entry in Jim and Kelly Watt's acclaimed high-def series on America's national parks focuses on the remains of ancient structures once inhabited by ancestral Puebloan peoples—habitats and other spaces that served many generations over centuries. First up is Chaco National Historical Park, a huge concentration of 10th-to-12th-century pueblos located in a remote canyon in Northwestern New Mexico. Featuring the single largest number of pre-Columbian an-

tiquities and ancient ruins among all southwestern parks, Chaco Park includes ruins of multiple complexes for living and cultural purposes (as well as astronomy). Nearby Aztec Ruins National Monument features scores of medieval-era dwellings carved out of caves in a steep volcanic ash wall (spaces that are still accessible by ladder). Bandelier National Monument also contains cliff dwellings, although these came much later for Puebloan people (up through the 17th century). The area's large expanse housed multitudes and the rising elevation—up to a mile—meant different kinds of environments for inhabitants. El Morro National Monument honors a pueblo that housed 1,000 people; once a farming community with water below a mesa, El Morro is remarkable for both its ancestral petroglyphs and Spanish inscriptions on rocks. Also visited is Fort Union National Monument, where adobe remains of a 19th-century town on the Santa Fe Trail reveals a once-thriving hub for hundreds of traveling wagons. Another fine armchair travelogue that will appeal to vacationers and history buffs, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

BIOGRAPHY

Antonio Lopez 1970: Sex Fashion & Disco ★★☆☆

(2019) 95 min. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

James Crump's dishy documentary isn't just a portrait of a specific person—fashion illustrator Antonio Lopez—but of a whole milieu, with a funk-and-disco-hits soundtrack that keeps the pace lively and the mood upbeat. *Interview* editor Bob Colacello describes the 1970s as a time when the underground culture and sexual politics of the '60s came forward. The late *New York Times* street fashion photographer Bill Cunningham fondly remembers his friendship with Lopez, a bisexual man of Puerto Rican descent, who moved into Cunningham's old apartment in Carnegie Hall. Model Pat Cleveland was drawn to his talent, charisma, and colorful outfits. Lopez and makeup artist Corey Tippin socialized with a coterie of young women, including Donna Jordan and Jane Firth, who became style icons through their modeling sessions and high-profile excursions with the two men. Others, such as Grace Jones and Jessica Lange, became world-famous recording artists and award-winning actresses. In addition to Tippin, Lopez worked closely with his art director boyfriend, Juan Ramos, on drawings for *Elle* and other magazines. Lopez loved to party and dance, but got his assignments in on time, and friends remember him as warm and empathetic. Crump's documentary follows Lopez from New York to Paris, where he collaborated with designer

Karl Lagerfeld and enjoyed a relationship with Texas-born model Jerry Hall, his best known discovery. By 1987, AIDS had claimed Lopez's life. Crump builds a persuasive case that he deserves to be remembered for the creativity and *joie de vivre* he brought to the fashion scene. Extras include archival footage, extended interview excerpts with Cunningham, and a bonus short film. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Garry Winogrand: All Things Are Photographable ★★★

(2018) 91 min. DVD: \$29.95. DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Aired on PBS's *American Masters* series, filmmaker Sasha Waters Freyer's portrait of controversial art photographer Garry Winogrand (1928-1984) notes that the Bronx-born Winogrand was a student of painting who picked up a camera and never stopped clicking. From photojournalism he evolved as a widely praised "street shooter," making important impromptu images while also burning through so much celluloid film that one interviewee here says he anticipated "selfies" and the no-limit aesthete of digital media. Influenced by Robert Frank, Winogrand traveled between NYC, LA, and Texas, and his own outspoken interviews (along with a recorded conversation with fellow shutterbug Jay Maisel) outline a seemingly existential quest to make sense of life through nonstop picture-snapping. Winogrand's work angered feminists and the political-correctness storm troops, and he ultimately fell notoriously behind in printing—or even developing—many rolls that were still in storage at his death. MOMA photography curator John Szarkowski, Winogrand's initial champion,

critically downplayed this "posthumous" work, but here revisionists praise then-ailing, poignantly thrice-divorced photographer for still managing to produce compelling pictures that he was destined to never see. Featuring interviewees including Winogrand biographer Geoff Dyer, this engaging portrait of an unusual artist is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Humboldt in Mexico: The Vision of the Explorer ★★★

(2017) 83 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$250 w/PPR) (study guide included). EPF Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-933724-57-7.

A grand film about German polymath Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) is certainly warranted, given his enormous impact on natural sciences, influence on a European conception of "New Spain" (i.e., Mexico), opposition to slavery and early warnings about climate change, years-long exploration of Mexico (and its flora, fauna, minerals, and volcanoes), and his magnum opus—the 21-volume *Kosmos*, in which he concluded that the universe is a living, interconnected phenomenon. Filmmaker Ana Cruz mixes dramatic re-creations (with Alexander Holtmann in the role of Humboldt) and scholarly commentary to present an introduction to Humboldt and his extraordinary legacy, focusing more on his impact as a sometimes-daring naturalist (one anecdote describes how he walked on freshly-created, flimsy domes on an active volcano) than as a Romantic philosopher who saw all things as integrated. The film skillfully blends together extensive visual evidence of Humboldt's comprehensive study of the

Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes ★★★

(2018) 107 min. DVD: \$24.98. Magnolia Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Roger Ailes (1940-2017), the father of Fox News, fell from grace—and his position as head of the company—after accusations emerged of long-time sexual impropriety with employees. Ailes remains a polarizing figure, admired by some on the right—despite the scandal that engulfed him at the end—for his success in popularizing conservative views, while being detested by others as one of the main figures in the tabloidization and politicization of TV news. Alexis Bloom's documentary is a warts-and-all (actually, mostly warts) portrait, blending archival material and new interviews to cover Ailes's life, from his youth spent in the shadow of a stern and demanding father, up through working his way into TV (as an executive on *The Mike Douglas Show*), and then into political consulting, where he proved a savvy, ruthless operator who was instrumental in the victories of Richard Nixon, George H.W. Bush, and Mitch McConnell. Ailes's creation of a conservative TV talk platform, which morphed with Rupert Murdoch's support into Fox News, made him even more powerful, as shown by his central role in the election of Donald Trump. Bloom might have more thoroughly examined the seedy culture at Fox News, but her coverage of Ailes's history of harassment and vicious tactics paints him as a bully whose childhood might explain—although cannot excuse—his later conduct. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



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Nick Kitchin, Take One, Cambridge Film Festival Reviews

physical Mexico, including rare minerals and his gorgeous lithographs of plants and animals. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Little Gandhi ★★½

(2017) 91 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

The Arab Spring protests in repressive Middle East countries saw hundreds of thousands of people put their lives on the line for freedom in 2010. But in Syria, the world is still witnessing the tragic consequences of President Bashar al-Assad's unconscionable and continuing destruction of his own people. Filmmaker Sam Kadi's documentary serves as a reminder of what Syrian hopes looked like all those years ago, particularly how a young hero and martyr—26-year-old Ghayath Matar—became the face of Arab Spring resistance in Syria at the beginning. *Little Gandhi* offers little visual or audio evidence of Matar's advocacy of non-violence, but there are plenty of interviews with former activists who tell detailed stories about his enormous influence on the movement before he died brutally at the hands of government torturers. Matar hoped to persuade security forces that the people marching in the streets were their brothers and sisters, but both Assad and the men with guns had other ideas. The film also reminds viewers that while ordinary Syrians took up arms to fight back, the international community did little to stop Assad as he destroyed cities and murdered or displaced millions. Although often disheartening, this film serves as a powerful memorial for a brave man who tried to make a difference. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Nellie Bly Makes the News ★★★

(2018) 23 min. DVD: \$79: public libraries; \$149: colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Penny Lane's cleverly animated short tells the story of groundbreaking journalist Nellie Bly (1864-1922). Facing the camera, the adult journalist answers offscreen questions about her life, describing how she was "stuck cleaning houses and caring for children" until she wrote a letter to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* in 1885 that landed her a job writing newspaper columns dealing with typically feminine issues, including fashion, gardening, and hairstyles. After a few years, Bly headed to New York City, hoping to find work at one of the 13 city newspapers, and tackle some meatier issues. She was hired at *The World* and her first assignment was to gain admittance to an insane asylum, where she stayed for 10 days, subsequently reporting on harrowing conditions. In what was dubbed stunt journalism, she went on to do similar undercover assignments, including posing as a chorus girl and pretending to be a mother giving up an unwanted baby. All of these experiences resulted in headline-grabbing

newspaper stories. Her biggest and most well-known venture was her unaccompanied circumnavigation of the globe to beat the time of character Phileas Fogg in Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*. The animation style here is eye-catching—both color and black-and-white—with newspaper headlines, realistic sound effects, and lively musical accompaniment. An entertaining look at a clever journalist that can spur discussions about investigative journalism, women's roles in history, and storytelling, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (S. Beauregard)

On Her Shoulders ★★½

(2018) 94 min. In Arabic, English & Kurdish w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$34.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95. Oscilloscope (avail. from most distributors).

Before Nadia Murad's Yazidi religious minority village in northern Iraq was raided by ISIS in 2014—the community's men were killed, including Murad's brothers, along with many old women and children, while girls and other women were kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery—she was a 19-year-old with dreams of one day opening a beauty salon. As viewers witness in director Alexandria Bombach's wrenching documentary *On Her Shoulders*, Murad endured three months of torture at the hands of the Islamic State before escaping enslavement. By 2016 she was living in Berlin and touring Europe and North America, a reluctant activist giving countless interviews about sexual enslavement in war, meeting with sympathetic but hamstrung politicians, visiting with Yazidi and other refugee groups, and preparing to address the United Nations General Assembly. This is a painful portrait of greatness thrust upon someone barely in emotional shape to carry the responsibility of telling the world about the Yazidis and atrocities of ISIS. Murad is often breathlessly rushed from one unpromising appointment to another, from a dissatisfying radio conversation to wasteful meet-and-greets with do-nothing officials. Between engagements, Murad (always close to tears) withdraws, at one point curled up in a fetal position in the backseat of a car. Yet somehow her strength rises when she needs it most, and the film powerfully captures the foundational experiences of this future Nobel Peace Prize recipient, who is now a 25-year-old leader in advocacy for victims of genocide. Extras include an interview with the director. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Video Librarian Online

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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.

Kino Lorber is releasing the latest volume in Warner Bros. animator Friz Freleng and creator Blake Edwards's compilations with **The Pink Panther Cartoon Collection, Volume 5: 1976-1978** (153 min., DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95), which includes "The Pink Piper," "Cat and the Pinkstalk," "Rocky Pink," and "Sherlock Pink." See review of *The Pink Panther Classic Cartoon Collection* in VL-3/06.



PAW Patrol: Ultimate Rescue (94 min., DVD: \$14.99) is the latest addition to the Paramount Home Entertainment and Nickelodeon-aided computer-animated series that spotlights the efforts of the Ruff-Ruff Rescue crew. See review of *PAW Patrol* in VL-7/14.

Developed in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education, **WordWorld: Fun & Games** (110 min., DVD: \$9.99) is the newest program in the Emmy-winning PBS Kids series, featuring eight stories designed to help preschoolers with reading. See review of *WordWorld: Birthday Party!* in VL-7/15.

Newly available from Shout! Factory is **Super Sentai Ninpuu Sentai Hurricane: The Complete Series** (1,200 min., DVD: 8 discs, \$59.98), featuring three survivors from a Jakanja attack at Hayate Way's Ninja Academy who work together to stop the enemy in this 2002-03 26th production of the long-running franchise. See review of *Super Sentai Chojin Sentai Jetman: The Complete Series* in VL-1/19.

Also recently released by Shout! Factory is **Sesame Street: Celebrate Family** (139 min., DVD: \$14.98), the latest addition to the iconic educational series, featuring five stories that focus on family activities including making meals, Mother's and Father's Day preparations, and stepfamilies. See review of *Sesame Street: Be a Good Sport* in VL-5/14.



Anime-Gataris: The Complete Series

★★★1/2

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



Spun off from short subjects shown in anime-heavy Japanese theaters, this daffy classroom farce essentially amounts to a self-referential, post-modern anime infomercial, but it is impossible to dislike. Japanese teen Minoa is haunted by childhood images she dimly remembers from an obscure TV cartoon. When she learns that fabulously rich and beautiful classmate Arisu is an anime buff, the pair start an odd-couple friendship (more a master-apprentice one) to revive an inactive school anime club and populate it with fellow obsessives—most of whom subject novice Minoa to intense anime binge-viewing, cosplay, convention-going, and hectoring anime 101 lectures (viewers will learn that “God rays” is the term for inexplicable beams of light that miraculously block full nudity). Meanwhile, mysterious opposition to the club comes from the highest levels in the school, and a running gag finds that even characters who seem indifferent or hostile to anime are secretly the most fanatical otaku purists. In the zany apocalyptic closing episodes, reality is literally invaded by the universe of anime (which is certainly wish-fulfillment for the target audience). If cult immortality doesn’t await the series *Anime-Gataris* (literally “anime talk”) it definitely should. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-PG, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Citrus: The Complete Series

★★★1/2

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



Yuzu Aihara is a free-spirited teen who is forced to move to a new city and school after her mother remarries. Yuzu finds her new surroundings a little too conservative for her style, and her iconoclastic personality creates friction with the student council at her new school. Complicating matters is having the student council president, Mei Aihara, as her new stepsister. The girls have to share a bedroom and initially cannot stand each other. But as time progresses, their animosity begins to dissolve and they experience unexpected romantic feelings. This *yuri* anime—with a lesbian-themed storyline—is presented with a degree of maturity and sensitivity that is frequently absent from similar productions. Yuzu is a particularly memorable character, whose free-wheeling, reckless behavior creates cha-

os that often blossoms into surprising plot developments. Still, *Citrus* feels padded and the emotional bond between Yuzu and Mei takes a very long time to solidify. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2018 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Dagashi Kashi: Season One

★★★1/2

(2016) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$29.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This loose anime series focuses on Kokonotsu Shikada, an aspiring manga artist nicknamed “Coconuts.” His career goals do not coincide with the plans of his father Yo, who insists that Kokonotsu inherit the family’s dagashi shop (dagashi being the Japanese equivalent of cheap candies and snack foods marketed to small children). Kokonotsu’s life is happily disrupted by Hotaru, a beautiful but somewhat strange young lady who arrives at the shop and tries to recruit Yo to work at her own family’s candy company. But Yo will not leave the shop until Kokonotsu agrees to accept his inheritance, so Hotaru decides to stick around and influence Kokonotsu. Hotaru brings a heavy-handed degree of sexual innuendo to her business dealings, often embarrassing Kokonotsu with her shenanigans. *Dagashi Kashi* works best as a satire of Japanese food obsessions (think of it as an anime riff on Juzo Itami’s 1985 classic *Tampopo*) and will work best for viewers somewhat familiar with the culinary aspects of Japanese culture. On the narrative side, the series is silly without being laugh-out-loud funny, with zany Hotaru dominating the mayhem while poor Kokonotsu is often an unwitting victim. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include episode commentaries. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Divine Gate: The Complete Series

★★★

(2016) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$29.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Adapted from a 2013 cell phone game, this action anime series is set in a world transformed by the appearance of the titular structure, which has caused social chaos by connecting the human realm with that of the gods. A World Council established to restore a semblance of order has created an academy—presided over by Arthur—to train special youngsters known as adaptors, who are endowed with special powers tied to the elements of air, fire, and water. The students hone their abilities with the aim of opening the gate and thereby (according to rumor) earning the fulfillment of their innermost desires—which might mean becoming gods

themselves. Students Akane and Midori encounter a strangely despondent boy named Aoto (who Arthur is anxious to recruit) accompanied by a mysterious spirit called Boy K that only he can see. These three become the major characters in a journey that will end at the gate, although many other figures also play roles in the complicated plot—including a wizard named Oz, Shakespeare, and the manipulative god Loki. *Divine Gate* boasts some striking visuals, but the narrative is so overloaded with revelations and convolutions that a narrator is needed to straighten out the twists, and the conclusion is an excruciatingly prolonged series of life lessons. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include a featurette that breathlessly explains the premise of the series, an episode commentary, and promo videos. A disappointing effort to translate the game to the screen, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Konohana Kitan: The Complete Series

★★★1/2

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



Based on a manga by Sakuya Amano, this colorfully animated if at times overly sweet anime series centers on Yuzu, a naïve foxgirl brought by her guardian, a nun, to work on the staff of the Konohanatei Hotel, which is located in a sort of neverland between Heaven and Earth and is owned by Okami, a fox who can adopt the guise of a woman. The narrative thrust of the series lies in the relationship between Yuzu and her co-workers: Satsuki, a no-nonsense type who wants to become a priestess; Ren, a beautiful foxgirl with fears that stem from her childhood; Natsume, a tomboyish extrovert; petite, mysterious Sakura; and Kiri, the staff overseer. As the series progresses, Yuzu learns from them and they from her, and all are taught lessons by the unusual guests who stay at the inn. Supernatural elements abound: a peculiar egg attaches itself to some of the foxgirls and a baby grows in short order into a teenager, a strange girl weaves a rainbow, a ghost tries to lure Yuzu to the underworld, and Satsuki is shrunk to tiny size. Overall, the series lacks forward momentum, yet even though the individual stories never quite mesh into a coherent whole, they still offer incidental pleasures along the way. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Kumamiko: The Complete Series

★★★1/2

(2016) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$24.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).

Based on Masume Yoshimoto’s 2013

manga, this anime series centers on Machi, a village girl who wants to move to the city, and her best friend and constant companion Natsu, a talking bear. In many respects their story would appeal to young children, as the relationship between girl and animal is sweet, but the lack of an English dialogue track, plus some sexual allusions in the later chapters, make this inappropriate for that age group. The narrative's overall trajectory finds terribly shy Machi, who is incapable of mastering modern technology and is subject to panic attacks, repetitively being forced into public appearances by her cousin Yoshio, who wants to enhance their hometown's image. Eventually Machi, who has suffered numerous indignities while trying to connect to the city, not only abandons her desire to escape her small village for the opportunities afforded by urban life, but she is also content to remain childishly unconcerned with the larger world and its complexities (a message that some parents might find unpalatable). On the other hand, *Kumamiko* does boast colorful animation and could appeal to older kids. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2016 in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-PG, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Liz and the Blue Bird

★★1/2

(2018) 90 min. DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

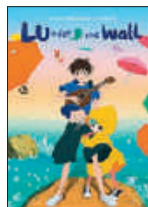


A gentle 2018 anime feature that explores the friendship between two high school girls, the story centers on Mizore, a shy, retiring girl who plays oboe in the student orchestra, and confident, outgoing Nozomi, her best (and perhaps only) friend, who plays flute. The two are featured in a duet in their new piece inspired by the titular children's storybook, but they can't quite get it right, which reflects their increasingly awkward friendship as they near the end of high school and find themselves drawn in different directions. Directed by Naoko Yamada, this original story based on characters from the popular *Sound! Euphonium* series of YA high school novels offers little in the way of plot or dramatic action. Yamada is more interested in exploring the delicacy and intensity of female friendship, expressed through simple imagery and evocative body language. Passages from the storybook (animated in a style that recalls Hayao Miyazaki) echo the narrative arc of the girls, while abstract images that suggest a bird in flight accompany the musical performance. Ultimately, this is a slight but sweet tale with some insight into female relationships. Presented in a dual-language

edition on separate DVD and DVD/Blu-ray Combo releases, suitable for 13-up, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Lu Over the Wall ★★1/2

(2017) 112 min. DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



Director/animator Masaaki Yuasa—whose earlier films include the outrageous 2004 *Mind Game* (VL-11/18)—presents a much more conventional tale in this 2017 movie about Kai, a Tokyo teen who moves with his father to a small fishing village after his parents' divorce. Hinashi Town is notable for its proximity to an island reputed to be the home of ningyo—malevolent merfolk who endanger shipping (which has led to the island being walled off from the village by a huge boulder). After the depressed Kai, an aspiring songsmith, is befriended by two classmates who pressure him to join their band, all three repair to the island which—despite the ban—they use for their practice sessions. The music attracts Lu, a gregarious little mermaid whose tail turns to feet as she dances to the rhythm. Lu becomes entranced with Kai, as he does with her. Meanwhile, Hinashi Town has a new resident—a huge, strange fellow who retools the working of the local fish processing plant to astronomically increase production. *Lu Over the Wall* also features a town celebration involving lots of music and dance, the disappearance of Kai's female band mate, and a massive chase at sea. But while the film exhibits imagination and energy, it also ultimately feels a little bland in comparison to Yuasa's earlier work. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, rated PG, extras include an audio commentary by Yuasa and an interview with the director. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Maquia: When the Promised Flower Blooms

★★★

(2018) 115 min. DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



This 2018 anime feature about an immortal girl named Maquia, who is separated from her clan and raises a human child, is a fantasy with epic scope and an intimate focus. The story features a kingdom of warriors who conquer the clan to recharge their bloodline, flying dragon-like lizards that are slowly dying off, the past and future woven into mysterious cloths on sacred looms, and a culture suspicious of outsiders. And it spans decades while the innocent Maquia sacrifices everything to raise her son. Since she never

ages, Maquia has to move before people become suspicious, and as her son Ariel grows into a young man, her eternal youth adds another dimension to his rebellion. Mari Okada, a veteran screenwriter of both animated and live-action features and TV shows, brings a fresh dimension to the fantasy genre, exploring the challenges of parenthood and the complex feelings of being an outsider in another culture in this touching, bittersweet tale about being human. Presented in a dual-language edition on separate DVD and DVD/Blu-ray Combo releases, suitable for 13-up, extras include a "making-of" featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Nanbaka: Part One

★★★

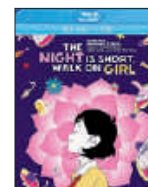
(2016) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Jailbreak sagas are typically harsh, but not so much in the absurd *Nanbaka*, based on Japanese comics. Longtime readers of American funny papers might note an echo here of gag-a-day strips from the Johnny Hart/Brant Parker factory such as *B.C.*, *The Wizard of Id*, and *Crock* before this anime grows suddenly schizophrenically serious in latter episodes. The island-fortress prison Nanba is supposedly escape-proof, but four largely non-violent offenders in cell block 13—young pals who have served time in penal institutions worldwide—frequently try to break out or otherwise outwit their ferocious alpha-guard frenemy Hajime just for fun (these inmates actually enjoy this particular joint). The humor centers on protracted guard-vs-prisoner "New Year's Tournaments," progressing from card games to bloody martial arts death matches (there's a secret conspiracy to turn prisoners into super-powered mutants). Sometimes this is played for deadpan mock-melodrama but basically the series spoofs anime tropes and whatever else comes to mind (cross-dressing charas, the tragic backstory of one prisoner having been groomed from boyhood to be a movie actor/ninja, etc.). At one point, even the narrator confesses to having no idea what's going on (at least the sexiness and violence are presented at an unabashed Looney Tunes level). Presenting the first 13 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this offbeat series is recommended. [Note: *Nanbaka: Part Two* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

The Night Is Short, Walk on Girl ★★

(2017) 93 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



A teenage girl's long, eventful night on the town becomes a fan-

tastical adventure in this 2017 anime feature film by Masaaki Yuasa. A high school sophomore known only as “The Girl with Black Hair” joins a pair of harmless con artists for a night on the town to see what being an adult is like. In her case, it means drinking copious amounts of alcohol and meeting a bizarre collection of characters, including a dirty old man and a stinky dude who refuses to change his briefs until he finds his lost girlfriend. Meanwhile Senpai, an upperclassman with an unrequited crush on our heroine, vows to finally make his move by finding her favorite childhood book at a book fair. Along the way to their inevitable meeting they cross paths with the “library police,” the young god of old books, a gang that steals the underwear of teenage boys, and a guerilla theater troupe who perform an operatic musical in short street performances. Yuasa, a cult figure in Japan for his distinctive and unconventional approach to animated storytelling, brings wit, whimsy, and great creativity to his adaptation of Tomihiko Morimi’s 2006 novel. The titular character’s adventures become chapters of an epic fantasy, and the benevolence of the vision makes even the sketchiest characters harmless. She even gets through it all without a hangover, which may be the most fantastical twist of all in this delightful romantic fantasy. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, suitable for ages 13-up, extras include an interview with the director. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Perfect Blue ★★★

(1997) 82 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



This 1997 debut anime feature from Satoshi Kon, one of the most accomplished anime filmmakers of the past two decades, is an adult psycho-thriller that uses the freedom of animation to blur the lines between objective and subjective perspectives. Mima is a singer who leaves her squeaky-clean pop idol image to become an actress in a violent TV series, a career move that angers her fans. Full of self-doubt and tormented by humiliating compromises, she is also plagued by an obsessive stalker in her waking life and an accusing alter ego in her dreams. Kon, adapting a novel by Yoshikazu Takeuchi, shows viewers the world from Mima’s schizophrenic perspective: days blur, dreams cross over into the waking world, and the TV show blends into her real life until she can’t separate the ghosts from the real-life stalkers, even as her co-workers are being brutally slain around her. The scenes of sexual assault border on lurid exploitation, but otherwise this is a smart, stylish thriller with a provocative psychological dimension that serves up a savvy portrait of celebrity in the digital age. Kon went on to make the

acclaimed animated features *Millennium Actress* (2001), *Tokyo Godfathers* (2003), and the heady *Paprika* (2006) before his untimely death in 2010 at the age of 46. Presented in a dual-language DVD/Blu-ray Combo edition, unrated and suitable for adult audiences, extras include an archival lecture by Kon, interviews with Japanese and English voice casts, and a music video. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Silver Guardian

★★★1/2

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



This anime series focuses on gamer and high school student Suigin Riku. Although he attends the Shinryou Private Academy, which attracts the children of the very rich, Suigin hails from a working-class background and must juggle a series of part-time jobs to cover his tuition. One day, Suigin jumps into a pool to save his pet cat from drowning, forgetting that he cannot swim. He is rescued by Rei Riku, the daughter of a game developer, who Suigin later learns is also an online player in one of his favorite games. Rei introduces Suigin to a new game called Grave Buster, and when Rei is kidnapped, Suigin must enter the new game to rescue her from danger. Suigin’s adventures in this virtual parallel universe are entertaining, and the characters are often charming, but the series ultimately wears out its welcome, although its visually striking animation helps compensate for any storytelling shortcomings. Compiling all 18 episodes from the 2017-18 first and truncated second seasons in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Tales of the Abyss

★★★1/2

(2009) 7 discs. 650 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$54.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Based on the titular 2005 PlayStation 2 game, this otherworldly action anime set on a planet divided into two hostile realms—Kimlasca and Malkuth—centers on Luke fon Fabre, teen son of the ruler of Kimlasca, who has been kept safe in the palace after his rescue from kidnappers years earlier. While he is training with his teacher Van, a woman attacks and mysteriously transports Luke into Malkuth. Revealed to be Tear Grants, Van’s sister, she volunteers to escort Luke back home, and along the way they encounter numerous friends and foes, including a knight named Asch who bears an uncanny physical resemblance to Luke. Confronting a succession of challenges, Luke gradually ma-

tures as a person, while also contending with the members of the religious society Order of Lorelei, which is devoted to the interpretation of “The Score,” an ancient prophecy outlining the world’s future preserved on fragments of tablets that both nations (and others) are anxious to acquire. With its plethora of technical terms, plot convolutions, and characters, this will probably most appeal to those familiar with the original game, but it offers decent entertainment for anyone willing to make an effort to enter into this fantasy world. Compiling all 26 episodes from 2008-09 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Urahara: The Complete Series ★★★1/2

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



This anime series focuses on a trio of high school girls who plan to open a pop-up shop in Tokyo’s Harajuku area. While the girls seem more interested in trendy fashion and eating out than the fate of the world, they refocus their attention when an army of aliens arrives with the goal of stealing the world’s most beloved cultural landmarks. The girls somehow manage to create a protective bubble around Harajuku by using tools and magic gained from the alien invaders. While this unlikely shield keeps the extraterrestrials from wreaking havoc, there is an unexpected side effect: everyone inside of the bubble is trapped in the district and unable to leave. Typical of the series’ odd humor is having the dead aliens turn into donuts, albeit with staring eyes (the girls are unfazed by the ocular features of these unlikely pastries and eat them anyway). For sheer silliness, *Urahara* serves up a zany riff on multiple anime tropes as the unlikely heroines giggle and wiggle their way through mischief with insouciant charm amidst a happily garish visual production. The nutty concept eventually starts to lose steam about halfway through, but until that point it offers joyfully nonsensical entertainment. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-PG, this is a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

More Star Blazers

One of the pioneering anime series returns in *Star Blazers 2202: Part One* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 4 discs, \$64.98), set three years after the spaceship Yamato’s voyage to restore Earth. A new threat once again puts humanity to the test as the Yamato and its crew undertake one more mission.



Contact information for distributors of titles reviewed in this issue are listed below. Some titles must be ordered direct, while others are available from a wide variety of distributors.

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Duluth, MN 55806
Tel: (612) 239-0329
Web: allenkillianmoore.com

Bennett-Watt HD Productions
1380 W. 2nd Ave.
Eugene, OR 97402
Tel: (800) 260-3869
Web: bennett-watt.com

Bullfrog Films
P.O. Box 149
Oley, PA 19547
Tel: (800) 543-3764
Web: bullfrogfilms.com

C-LineFilms
P.O. Box 80
Somerville, MA 02143
Web: c-linefilms.org

Cinema Libre Studio
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Burbank, CA 91502
Tel: (818) 588-3033
Web: cinemalibrestudio.com

Collective Eye Films
1315 SE 20th Ave., #3
Portland, OR 97214
Tel: (971) 236-2056
Web: collectiveeye.org

Dreamscape Media
1417 Timberwolf Dr.
Holland, OH 43528
Tel: (877) 983-7326
Web: dreamscapeab.com

EPF Media
324 S. Beverly Dr., PMB 437
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
Tel: (888) 570-5400
Web: epfmedia.com

Film Movement
237 West 35th St., Ste. 604
New York, NY 10001
Tel: (866) 937-3456
Web: filmmovement.com

First Run Features
630 Ninth Ave., Ste. 1213
New York, NY 10036
Tel: (800) 229-8575
Web: firstrunfeatures.com

Grasshopper Film
12 East 32nd St., 4th Fl.
New York, NY 10016
Tel: (646) 586-3060
Web: grasshopperfilm.com

Green Planet Films
P.O. Box 815
Stonington, CT 06378
Tel: (415) 377-5471
Web: greenplanetfilms.org

Human Relations Media
59 Kensico Dr.
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
Tel: (800) 431-2050
Web: hrnvideo.com

Icarus Films
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Brooklyn, NY 11201
Tel: (800) 876-1710
Web: icarusfilms.com

Kino Lorber Edu
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New York, NY 10018
Tel: (800) 562-3330
Web: kinolorberedu.com

Music Box Films
173 N. Morgan St.
Chicago, IL 60607
Tel: (312) 241-1320
Web: musicboxfilms.com

Naxos of America
1810 Columbia Ave., Ste. 28
Franklin, TN 37064
Tel: (615) 771-9393
Web: naxos.com

New Day Films
350 N. Water St., Unit 1-12
Newburgh, NY 12550
Tel: (888) 367-9154
Web: newday.com

Outcast Films
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New York, NY 10011
Tel: (646) 512-2596
Web: outcast-films.com

Passion River
154 Mt. Bethel Rd.
Warren, NJ 07059
Tel: (732) 321-0711
Web: passionriver.com

PBS Video
2100 Crystal Dr.
Arlington, VA 22202
Tel: (800) 531-4727
Web: pbs.org

PRAGDA
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Tel: (718) 473-0647
Web: pragda.com

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Web: visionmaker.org

Vision Video
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Web: visionvideo.com

Weston Woods Studios
90 Old Sherman Tpke.
Danbury, CT 06816
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Netflix Blues

As of April 11, all of the films nominated for Best Picture at this year's Academy Awards have been released on home video—except for one. Alfonso Cuarón's multi-Oscar winning *Roma* is the sole holdout and the reason for this is simple: *Roma* is a Netflix title.

The subscription streaming giant has been steadily increasing its slate of original movies over the past four years and currently has over 200 films to its credit, starting with 2015's Golden Globe-nominated *Beasts of No Nations*, directed by Cary Fukunaga.

Other memorable entries include Dee Rees's Oscar-nominated *Mudbound*, Angelina Jolie's *First They Killed My Father*, the Coen brothers' Oscar-winning *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*, Susanne Bier's *Bird Box*, Alexandre Lehmann's *Paddleton*, and Orson Welles's *The Other Side of the Wind*. Later this year, Martin Scorsese's new film *The Irishman*, starring Robert De Niro, will debut on Netflix.

And those are just the movies. Consider some of the documentaries: Ava DuVernay's *13th*, Errol Morris's miniseries *Wormwood*, Evgeny Afineevsky's Oscar-nominated *Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom*, Bryan Fogel's Oscar-winning *Icarus*, Jon Shenk and Bonni Cohen's *Audrie & Daisy*, and Werner

Herzog's *Into the Inferno*.

What do all of these films have in common? None are currently available on DVD or Blu-ray.

TV is more of a mixed bag, because studios were involved in many of the earlier series, so shows like *House of Cards* and *Orange Is the New Black* are available on home video.

Like millions of others, I am a Netflix subscriber (currently binge-watching *Breaking Bad*) with an ambitious to-watch list. I am especially looking forward to the new David Attenborough-hosted *Our Planet* and I hope that it does not become the first major series created by the BBC nature crew that doesn't appear on DVD and Blu-ray.

But anyone who has followed the conversations on UC Berkeley's indispensable videolib listserv (<https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/VRT-lists>)—moderated by Media Resource Center librarian Gisele Tanasse—about acquiring or showing Netflix titles has experienced a fair amount of frustration over Netflix's fuzzy and shifting stances. The major takeaway is that regardless even of filmmaker input, very few Netflix titles are available to libraries, even to stream.

We are seeing a seismic sea change in the acquisition of visual media in libraries that began with the cherished 16mm collections in the 1960s, '70s, and early '80s; flourished

during the golden age of VHS in the '80s and '90s; and saw enhanced quality but diminished availability of titles on DVD and later Blu-ray from the mid-'90s through our current era (how many great documentaries do you think will bow on 4K?).

Streaming always simultaneously posed the most promising cornucopia of movies, documentaries, TV shows, and more, on the one hand, and the greatest threat to acquiring and maintaining visual media collections in libraries, on the other.

With its tight-fisted approach to distribution, the Netflix model is the worst-case scenario writ large. Today, more and more studios are starting their own subscription services, including the just announced Disney+. What this will mean for the future of physical media is open to question. But even the most amateur of crystal ball-gazing Jeane Dixons can't be predicting an all-roses future.

Ultimately, this is that Henry V Saint Crispin's Day speech moment in time when our happy few band of brothers (and sisters) must either find a workable solution to the Netflix dilemma or watch as millions are shut out of access to significant films that are a part of our cultural heritage.

Randy Pitman



Tens of thousands of titles published **ONLY** on VHS are no longer commercially available. As a library with a significant investment in VHS and a need to make sure that content remains viable, what are your options? Digitizing under US Copyright Section 108 is viable, but expensive and time-consuming.

We started the Academic Libraries Video Trust so libraries can share the time, cost and research about the copyright-related issues associated with this process. The ALVT is a cloud-based content repository, run as a cooperative, that **ANY** library can join.

Unlike a streaming service or a distributor, ALVT provides library-staff access to ready-to-use files for content you already own on VHS, and the ability to share files you've digitized with other libraries that also own the content on VHS.

Visit our site now, at videotrust.org, so you can see our growing database, the group of flagship libraries that helped us get started, and our generous terms of membership.

We're happy to answer your questions!

Visit our FAQ page and contact us directly. info@videotrust.org



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Academic Libraries Video Trust

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HOT NEW RELEASES TO GROW YOUR CATALOG BEFORE THE SEMESTER ENDS



BIRDS OF PASSAGE

Directed by Academy Award Nominated Filmmaking Duo



The New York Times
Critic's Pick

'Best Foreign Language Film'

2019 Oscar Shortlist

"Outstanding...closer in tone to *Narcos* than any telenovela"

salon

"A Colombian *Godfather*"

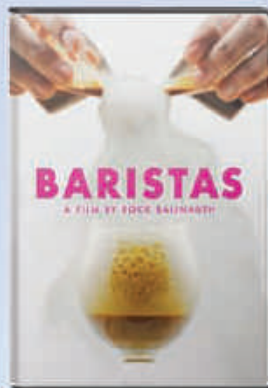
PLAYLIST

From the Oscar-nominated team behind the genre-defying *Embrace of the Serpent*, comes an equally audacious saga centered on the Wayúu indigenous people during a crucial period in recent Colombian history.

Torn between his desire to become a powerful man and his duty to uphold his culture's values, Rapayet enters the drug trafficking business in the 1970s and finds quick success despite his tribe's matriarch Ursula's disapproval. Ignoring ancient omens, Rapayet and his family get caught up in a conflict where honor is the highest currency and debts are paid with blood.

A sprawling epic about the erosion of tradition in pursuit of material wealth, *Birds of Passage* is a visually striking exploration of loyalty, greed, and the voracious nature of change.

Narrative | Foreign | Latin American Studies | Indigenous Studies | Crime | Drugs
125 min. | UPC: 889845942931 | SRP: \$24.95 | PPR: \$350.00 | Closed Captioned
Blu Ray UPC: 889845943099 | Blu Ray SRP: \$34.95



BARISTAS

The Long-Awaited Follow-Up To The Smash-Hit Documentary *Barista*

Key Title For Audiences Who Enjoy:

Top Chef, Master Chef

and **The Great British Bake-Off**

The World Barista Championship has received major press coverage worldwide including:

Los Angeles Times



Forbes

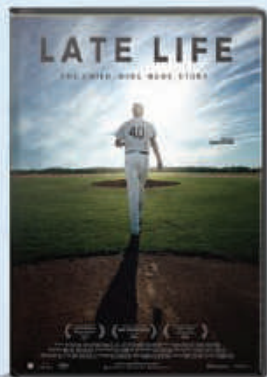
The Washington Post

What does it take to make the perfect cup of coffee?

Four passionate National Barista Champions from the United States (Kyle Ramage), Ireland (Niall Wynn), Germany (Chloe J. Nattrass) and Japan (Miki Suzuki) represent their countries and their craft in an attempt to win the World Barista Championship in Seoul, South Korea.

Baristas, the follow up to the hit documentary *Barista*, places particular emphasis on the Japanese Champion, Miki Suzuki, as she attempts to become the first female World Barista Champion in history.

Documentary | Food & Beverage | International Studies | Womens Studies
98 min. | UPC: 889845943082 | SRP: \$24.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Captioned
Available Exclusively to Libraries



LATE LIFE:

THE CHIEN-MING WANG STORY

As Seen In Theaters Nationwide

Chronicle Life of

First & Only Taiwanese

New York Yankees Baseball Player

Chien-Ming Wang

"an **inspiring** account of an elite athlete with the tenacity (and resources) to battle adversity and keep his dream alive."

Los Angeles Times

Chien-Ming Wang was a supernova in Taiwan. His success as the Ace of the New York Yankees rocketed him into a cult-like status on the island nation. His face was so ubiquitous and his impact so meaningful, that he was donned the title of "Pride of Taiwan" - a national honor he was never fully comfortable with. Wang, a man of quiet, humble disposition, never sought out the attention. All he wanted to do was play.

We find Chien-Ming now at age 35, bouncing around the Independent and Minor Leagues, a fallen icon. The film delves into his comeback attempts, his life between endless rehab programs, his lengthy and often lonely stints away from home and family, and the inner struggles and weight he carries on his injured shoulders. We follow him as he works towards a singular goal: to fight his way back into the Major Leagues.

Documentary | Sports | Asian Studies | Sports Psychology
100 min. | UPC: 888295877558 | SRP: \$24.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Captioned



LITTLE MISS WESTIE

What would you do if your children swapped genders?



"has **already inspired viewers** to think more deeply - and compassionately - about trans individuals"

- *WomenandHollywood.com*

"**Incredibly relevant...**"

- Ruth Somalo,
DocNYC on NPR

Little Miss Westie follows two transgender siblings as they navigate puberty, school, dating and transitioning during the Trump era.

Ren is competing in the Lil Miss Westie Pageant as the first out trans-girl and her older brother Luca is coaching her on posing, make-up, and talent. He knows his stuff because he competed six years ago when he was living as a girl.

Moving and unflinching, *Little Miss Westie* challenges fundamental ideas about gender identity as this brother and sister navigates puberty and transitioning all while bickering and competing for the crown.

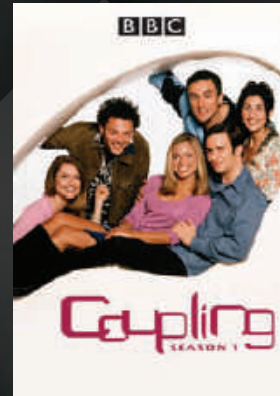
Documentary | LGBTQ+ Studies | Gender Studies | Family Psychology
85 min. | UPC: 602573829820 | SRP: \$59.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Captioned
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