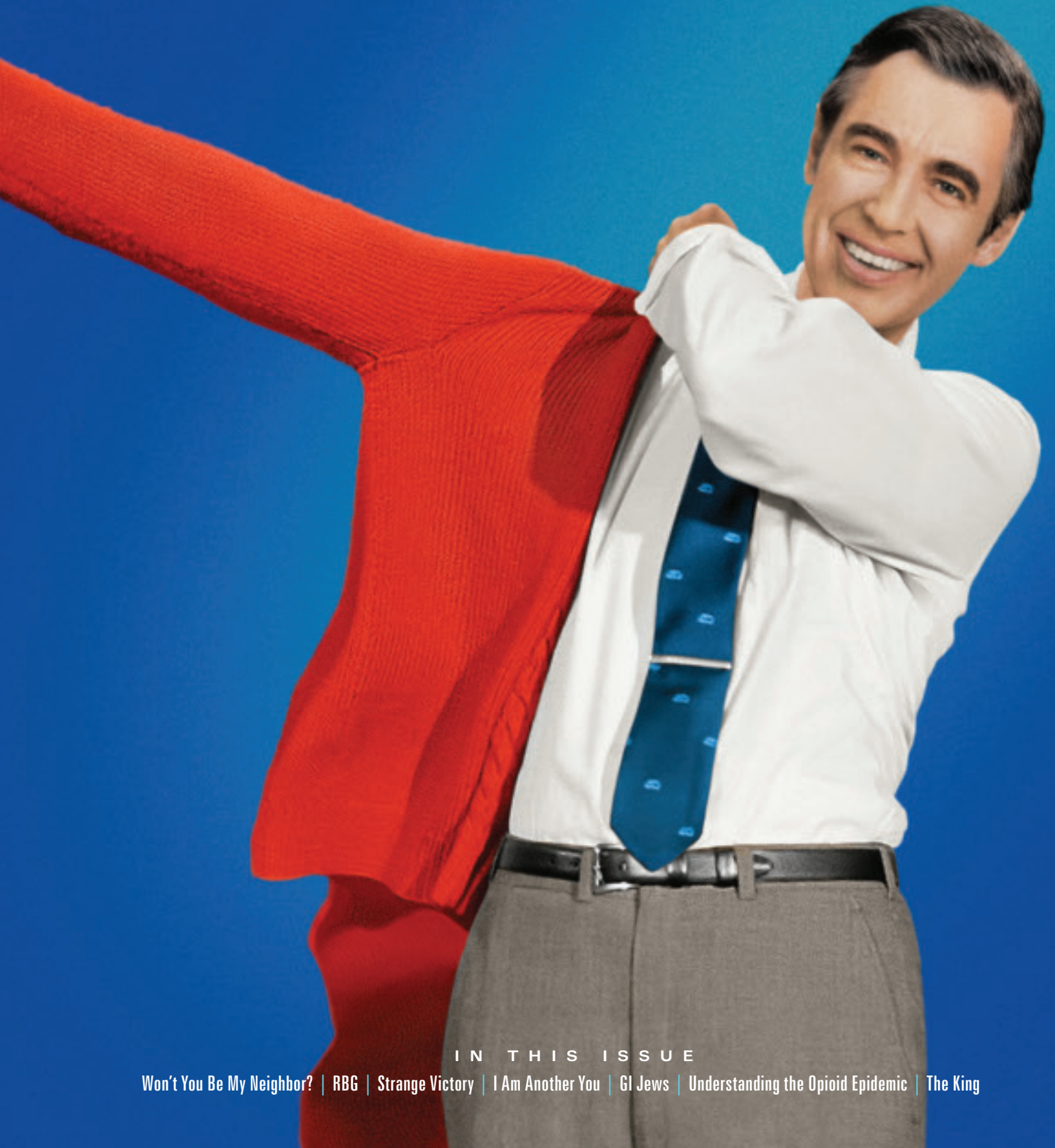


September-October 2018

Video Librarian

VOL. 33 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 5



IN THIS ISSUE

Won't You Be My Neighbor? | RBG | Strange Victory | I Am Another You | GI Jews | Understanding the Opioid Epidemic | The King

Entertainment

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Won't You Be My Neighbor? ★★★★★

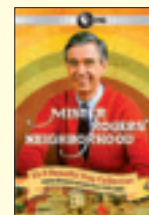
Universal, 95 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$27.99, Sept. 4

Morgan Neville's uplifting documentary about the man behind the scenes of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* centers on Fred Rogers (1928-2003), an ordained Presbyterian pastor who viewed the mass media of children's television as his ministry. Arriving at the end of the turbulent 1960s, Rogers delivered a soft-spoken yet persuasive message about love and kindness. For more than 30 years, he worked to instill in young viewers a sense of self-worth, which he believed was fundamental to growing up. His leisurely-paced show taught empathetic life lessons, tackling sticky subjects like divorce and death, while also dealing with dark emotions, including fear, anger, and jealousy. In response to a case of racial discrimination—whites attacking African Americans who tried to swim in desegregated pools—Rogers invited "Officer Clemmons" (costar François Clemmons), who was black, to join him in cooling off his feet in a tub of water on a hot day. "Love is at the root of everything," he maintained, adding, "All learning, all parenting, all relationships. Love or the lack of it. And what we see and hear on the screen is part of what we become." And that is why he was



so upset over the proliferation of frenetic, violent children's TV. Offscreen, Rogers was married to Joanne and the couple raised two sons, John and James, who share their recollections here. Some may be surprised to learn that Rogers was a lifelong Republican who entered the political arena in 1969, testifying before the Senate against the Nixon administration's plan to cut funding for public television. An illuminating portrait of a beloved American icon, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)

A perfect companion to *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, PBS's *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: It's a Beautiful Day Collection* (VL-7/18) celebrates the 50th anniversary of Fred Rogers's pioneering children's television show with a four-disc compilation featuring 30 episodes (plus a bonus episode). As our reviewer noted: "With his unassuming manner, Rogers taught youngsters life lessons about how to play imaginatively, respect others, and appreciate the world around them, imparted gently and without condescension."



Cover Photo: Fred Rogers cover photo courtesy of Universal Studios Home Entertainment

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**DARK
HOLLOW
FILMS**

New Releases

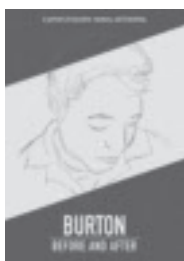


A NEW ECONOMY

Seven organizations move towards a more cooperative future by experimenting with non-traditional business models.

"This isn't touchy-feely stuff; this is about getting the world to actually work."

—Richard Sennett, London School of Economics



BURTON BEFORE AND AFTER

A short documentary portrait of one person's gender-affirming transition showing what life was like before the change and then fifteen years after.

"Deeply, sweetly human."

—Parent of a gender non-conforming child



SEED & SPROUT

Can ordinary people end hunger? This film follows eight innovative food rescue initiatives in an effort to find out.

"This film is a must see for those who care about our environment and are concerned about our hungry citizens."

—Michelle Winning,
Vista/EndHunger.org

www.darkhollowfilms.com

Video Newsbriefs

"The Princess Bride," "Shampoo," "Sisters," and More Coming from Criterion Collection in October

Criterion's October slate will kick off October 2 with the Blu-ray debut of Cornel Wilde's 1965 stripped-down action film *The Naked Prey* (Blu-ray: \$39.95), the story of an ivory-hunting safari that turns torturous after offending a group of South African hunters. Coming on October 9 is a 2K restoration of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's long-unavailable 1972-73 TV series *Eight Hours Don't Make a Day* (DVD: 3 discs, \$39.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.95), a working-class soap opera that tracks the everyday triumphs and travails of young toolmaker Jochen (Gottfried John) and many of the people populating his world, including the woman he loves (Hanna Schygulla). Arriving October 16 is the Blu-ray debut of director Hal Ashby's 1975 political send-up *Shampoo* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), which follows a Beverly Hills hairdresser (Warren Beatty) who searches for business funding on the eve of the 1968 presidential election, co-starring Goldie Hawn, Julie Christie, and Lee Grant (in an Oscar-winning role). Coming October 23 is Brian De Palma's 1973 horror drama *Sisters* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), the twisted and terrifying tale of a beautiful model (Margot Kidder) separated from her Siamese twin and accused of murder. Finally, on October 30 comes a clothbound storybook Blu-ray edition of Rob Reiner's beloved 1987 fairy-tale classic *The Princess Bride* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), based on screenwriter and author William Goldman's swashbuckling romantic comedy, starring Cary Elwes, Robin Wright, Chris Sarandon, and Peter Falk.



Kino Lorber to Release "Filmworker" Doc on Actor Leon Vitali September 11

Kino Lorber has announced the release of the documentary *Filmworker* (DVD: \$29.95), slated for September 11. Leon Vitali was a rising British television actor when Stanley Kubrick picked him for the role of Lord Bullingdon in *Barry Lyndon*. That first encounter with the famed auteur proved decisive—Vitali

swiftly resolved to devote the rest of his life to working for the director, this time behind the scenes, and took on just about every job available: casting director, acting coach, location scout, sound engineer, color corrector, A.D., promoter, and eventually restorer of Kubrick's films. Tony Zierra's affecting documentary enthusiastically recounts Vitali's days with the notoriously meticulous, volatile, and obsessive director, celebrating the invisible hands that help shape masterpieces. Bonus features include a Q&A session with Vitali and Zierra.

Shout! Factory to Release Blu-ray Limited Edition of Oliver Stone's Anti-war Drama "Platoon" on September 18

Shout! Factory has announced the September 18 release of *Platoon* (Blu-ray: \$26.99), remastered from a brand-new 4K scan approved by writer-director Oliver Stone. The 1986 Academy Award-winning drama was inspired by Stone's own experiences and follows the story of PFC Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen), a young Army recruit who witnesses the horrors of Vietnam. Bonus features for this edition include audio commentaries by Stone and military adviser Dale Dye, deleted and extended scenes with optional commentary by Stone, production documentaries and featurettes such as "Flashback to *Platoon*," "One War, Many Stories," "Preparing for 'Nam,'" "Caputo & The 7th Fleet," "Dye Training Method," and "Gordon Gekko," and more.

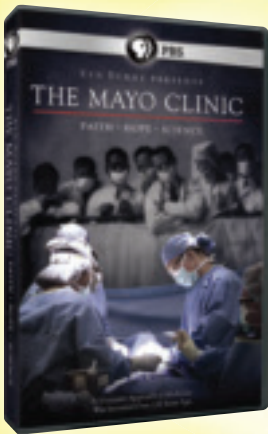
National Media Market at 40

The 40th National Media Market will be held in Indianapolis, IN, at the Embassy Suites Indianapolis Downtown from October 7-11. Producers/distributors will showcase new programming and technology during the event, which in addition to on-site film screenings will include informal networking meetings for buyers and exhibitors, plus professional development sessions covering film acquisitions, streaming options, licensing, copyright, budgeting, captions, film pedagogy, and more. National Media Market is celebrating its 40th anniversary as the premier gathering for librarians and film distributors. *Video Librarian* is proud to be a sponsor, along with Alexander Street, Films Media Group, Sage Publishing, Docuseek 2, and Bullfrog Films. For registration and more information, visit www.nmm.net.



PBS | Educational Media

Fall in Love with New Autumn Releases from PBS



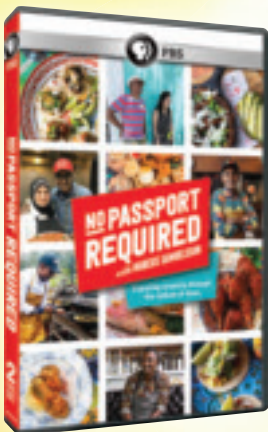
THE MAYO CLINIC: FAITH, HOPE AND SCIENCE

This is the story of the renowned institution that has been called the “place for hope when there is no hope.” By combining the history of the institution with stories about present-day patients, the film makes an important contribution to discussions about our commitment to taking care of each other, about the role of money and profit in medicine, and about the very nature of healing itself.



THE MINIATURIST

A haunting, sumptuous period thriller, *The Miniaturist* tells the story of a house where, beneath the lavish beauty and privilege, lie forbidden passions and dangerous secrets. Based on the popular novel by Jessie Burton, this three-part film stars Romola Garai, Alex Hassell, Hayley Squires, Paapa Essiedu, and Anya Taylor-Joy as Nella.



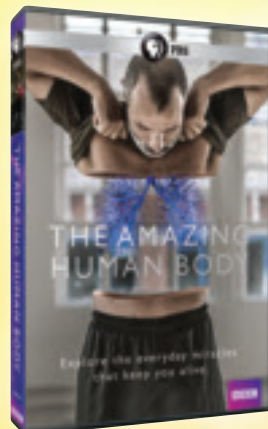
NO PASSPORT REQUIRED

No Passport Required is a new documentary series following chef Marcus Samuelsson as he immerses himself in diverse immigrant communities and cuisines in cities across the U.S. In each hour, Marcus will travel to a different city and dive into a new food culture. He'll discover the important immigrant histories—and delicious culinary traditions—that shape the way America eats today.



DARK MONEY

Dark Money examines one of the greatest present threats to American democracy: the influence of untraceable corporate money on our elections and elected officials. The film takes viewers to Montana—a frontline in the fight to preserve fair elections nationwide—to follow a local journalist working to expose the real-life impacts of the US Supreme Court's Citizens United decision.



THE AMAZING HUMAN BODY

Your body is the most sophisticated organism on earth and much about it remains a mystery. This 3-part series uses cutting-edge graphics to reveal the surprisingly beautiful biological processes that keeps you alive. Discover the ingenious ways your body develops, adapts, and endures, and witness the fascinating and finely tuned systems that keep your body motoring—and the scientists guessing.

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



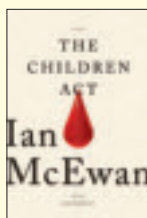
The following films based on books are slated to open during September and October. Movie release dates are subject to change.

Coming in September

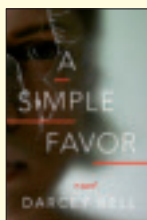
Bel Canto (Sept. 14) is based on Ann Patchett's 2001 literary thriller. Directed by Paul Weitz, the South American-set hostage drama stars Julianne Moore, Christopher Lambert, and Ken Watanabe.



The Children Act (Sept. 14) is adapted from the 2014 novel by Ian McEwan. Directed by Richard Eyre, the High Court drama stars Emma Thompson, Stanley Tucci, and Fionn Whitehead.



A Simple Favor (Sept. 14) is based on Darcey Bell's 2017 debut thriller. Directed by Paul Feig, the small-town mystery stars Anna Kendrick, Blake Lively, Henry Golding, and Jean Smart.



The House with a Clock in Its Walls (Sept. 21) is based on the 1973 YA gothic horror novel by John Bellairs. Directed by Eli Roth, the film stars Jack Black, Cate Blanchett, and Kyle MacLachlan.



The Sisters Brothers (Sept. 21) is based on Patrick DeWitt's 2011 offbeat Western novel. Directed by Jacques Audiard, the film stars Joaquin Phoenix, John C. Reilly, and Jake Gyllenhaal.

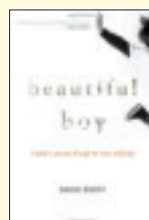


Little Women (Sept. 28) is the latest adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's classic 1869 novel about the four March sisters. Director Clare Niederpruem's modern retelling stars Lea Thompson, Sarah Davenport, and Lucas Grabeel.



Coming in October

Beautiful Boy (Oct. 12) is based on the 2008 memoirs *Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction* by David Sheff and *Tweak: Growing Up on Methamphetamines* by his son Nic Sheff. Directed by Felix Van Groeningen, the biographical drama stars Steve Carell, Timothée Chalamet, and Maura Tierney.



First Man (Oct. 12) is based on James R. Hansen's 2005 book *First Man: The Life of Neil A. Armstrong*. Directed by Damien Chazelle, the film stars Claire Foy, Corey Stoll, and Ryan Gosling as the iconic astronaut.



Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween (Oct. 12) is based on YA horror author R.L. Stine's 1990s novel series. Directed by Ari Sandel, the comedy-fantasy film stars Jeremy Ray Taylor, Caleel Harris, Ken Jeong, and Wendi McLendon-Covey.



I Still See You (Oct. 12) is based upon Daniel Waters's 2012 thriller *Break My Heart 1,000 Times*. Directed by Scott Spear, the film stars Bella Thorne, Dermot Mulroney, and Richard Harmon.



Can You Ever Forgive Me? (Oct. 19) is based on literary forger and thief Lee Israel's 2008 memoir. Directed by Marielle Heller, the biographical dramedy stars Melissa McCarthy, Richard E. Grant, and Jane Curtin.



The Hate U Give (Oct. 19) is based on Angie Thomas's Coretta Scott King Award-winning 2017 YA novel. The story of a girl who takes to activism when an unarmed friend is gunned down by police, the crime drama from director George Tillman Jr. stars Amandla Stenberg, Regina Hall, and KJ Apa.



Hunter Killer (Oct. 26) is an adaptation of Don Keith and George Wallace's 2012 novel *Firing Point*. Directed by Donovan Marsh, the submarine thriller stars Gary Oldman, Gerard Butler, Common, and Michael Nyqvist.



Looking Ahead

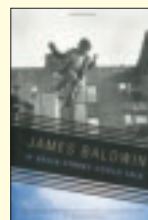
Slated for November is the sequel **Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald**, based on J.K. Rowling's 2001 *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, again directed by David Yates and starring Eddie Redmayne as Newt Scamander.



Also coming in November is **The Girl in the Spider's Web**, based on the 2015 addition to late author Stieg Larsson's crime novel series, which was taken over by David Lagercrantz. Directed by Fede Álvarez, the film stars Sverrir Gudnason and Claire Foy as computer hacker Lisbeth Salander.



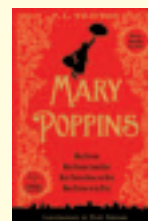
An adaptation of James Baldwin's 1974 contemporary classic **If Beale Street Could Talk** is also scheduled for November. Directed by Barry Jenkins, the Harlem period drama stars Kiki Layne, Stephan James, Regina King, and Dave Franco.



Coming in December is **Mary Queen of Scots**, based on John Guy's 2004 biography *Queen of Scots: The True Life of Mary Stuart*. Directed by Josie Rourke, the film stars Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie.



Also slated for December is Rob Marshall's **Mary Poppins Returns**, adapted from the sequels by P.L. Travers (written between 1935-88) and starring Emily Blunt as the beloved magical maid.



Making new friends can be scary!

“Youngsters will connect with Ghoulia’s warm personality and the relatable challenge of making friends. This series starter is definitely a treat.”

- Booklist



Other children are afraid of Ghoulia. But when Halloween rolls around, the little zombie girl hatches a brilliant plan to make new friends.

Available September 11

ISBN 9781974922109

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

Video Games

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

Available Now

Dead Cells (Merge, PS4/Switch: \$29.95-\$34.95, Rated: T). This brutally challenging 2D action-platformer—a rogue game with *Dark Souls*-lite combat—puts players on a sprawling, ever-changing, and seemingly cursed island.

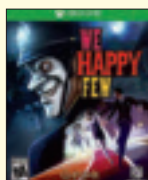


Divinity: Original Sin II (Bandai Namco, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this turn-based third-person RPG sequel, players return to the land of Rivellon for more magic and adventure.

Monster Hunter Generations: Ultimate (Capcom, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: T). Marking the debut of this popular series on the Nintendo Switch, this third-person adventure game is a remake of the 3DS original as the player embarks on hundreds of quests tracking brand-new monsters.

Shenmue I & II (Sega, PS4/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: T). Sega's most requested re-release of all time finally comes to current-gen consoles with two third-person action-adventure games that put players in the role of Ryo Hazuki, who is out to avenge the murder of his father.

We Happy Few (Gearbox, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). Set in a drug-fueled, retro-futuristic city in an alternative 1960s England, this first-person action-adventure game challenges players to hide, fight, and conform their way out of a delusional "Joy" drug-obsessed world.



September 2—September 8

Dragon Quest XI: Echoes of an Elusive

Age (Square Enix, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). The 11th main entry in the critically acclaimed third-person RPG series features new characters, a beautifully detailed world, turn-based combat, and an immersive fantasy story.

Marvel's Spider-Man (Insomniac, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). Starring the world's most iconic superhero, this third-person action-adventure game puts players in the suit of the titular wall-crawler, famed for his acrobatic abilities, improvisation, and web-slinging.



NASCAR Heat 3 (704Games, PS4/XOne: \$49.99, Rated: E10+). In this racing simulation game, players test their driving skills across three NASCAR national series and an all-new drag racing circuit.

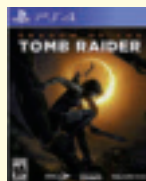
NBA Live 19 (EA, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). This latest entry in the acclaimed basketball simulation series features ultra-realistic NBA gameplay with new features including Real Player Motion.

September 9—September 15

NBA 2K19 (2K, PS4/XOne/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: E). The NBA 2K series celebrates 20 years in this latest edition of the basketball simulation game in which players can compete through the complete NBA season, or take control of an entire NBA franchise.

NHL 19 (EA, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). The latest iteration of this hockey simulation game returns the sport to its roots in the great outdoors, as players journey from the pond to the pros.

Shadow of the Tomb Raider (Square Enix, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). This third entry in the reboot of the popular third-person action franchise puts players in the role of Lara Croft, who must master a deadly jungle, overcome terrifying tombs, and persevere as she races to save the world from a Mayan apocalypse.



September 16—September 22

Spyro Reignited Trilogy (Activision, PS4/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). This HD-remastered classic third-person (or dragon) adventure game collection includes *Spyro the Dragon*, *Spyro 2: Ripto's Rage!*

and *Spyro: Year of the Dragon*.

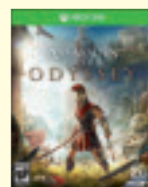
September 23—September 29

FIFA 19 (EA, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). This latest entry in the hit soccer simulation series introduces the prestigious UEFA Champions League.

Valkyria Chronicles 4 (Sega, PS4/XOne/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: T). Set in an environment that looks like 1930s Europe, this latest entry in the third-person turn-based strategy RPG game in the series continues the war between the Federation and the Empire.

September 30—October 6

Assassin's Creed Odyssey (Ubisoft, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). The latest entry in the popular third-person action-adventure series puts players in the role of a Spartan hero in ancient Greece.



Fist of the North Star: Lost Paradise (Sega, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-adventure RPG set in the world of the beloved *Fist of the North Star* manga, players control protagonist Kenshiro as they progress through an alternate universe version of the original story.

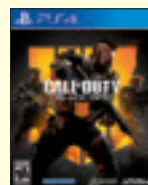
Forza Horizon 4 (Microsoft, XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). In this new Forza racing simulation game, dynamic seasons change everything as players choose from over 450 cars.

Mega Man 11 (Capcom, PS4/XOne/Switch: \$29.99, Rated: E10+). The latest entry in this iconic series blends classic 2D platforming action with a fresh new visual style and revamped game mechanics.

Super Mario Party (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: E). The *Mario Party* board game series arrives on the Nintendo Switch with new elements including character dice blocks.

October 7—October 13

Call of Duty: Black Ops 4 (Activision, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). The latest edition of this popular first-person shooter series is reported to be multiplayer only—with a required online connection—and features new





FIRST RUN FEATURES PRESENTS



STRANGERS ON THE EARTH

97 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917667D
COMING TO HOME VIDEO ON OCTOBER 2

Europe's most popular pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago attracts wayfarers of all stripes to walk its ancient paths in search of meaning. One such pilgrim is Dane Johansen, an American cellist who walks the Camino with his instrument on his back, performing music for his fellow pilgrims along the way.

Accompanied by the vast landscapes of Northern Spain, the haunting music of Bach (performed by Johansen), and the very personal struggles and joys of the many pilgrims encountered along the way, the film examines the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the journey and the vital role it can play as part of the human experience.



"An inspiring and transporting portrait, captivating and beautifully shot."
-Los Angeles Times



NANA

100 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917650D
COMING TO HOME VIDEO ON SEPTEMBER 18

NANA is the story of Maryla Michalowski-Dyamant, an Auschwitz survivor forced to be Josef Mengele's translator, who after the war dedicated her life to publicly speaking about her survival to younger generations.

Directed by her granddaughter Serena Dykman, NANA joins Serena and her mother on a journey to explore how Maryla's activism continues today, in a world where survivors are disappearing, and intolerance, racism and antisemitism are on the rise.

"The world's most badass grandmother brings light into this dark tale, and makes NANA an absolutely gripping film."
-The Telegram



WINNER at
FIFTEEN
Film Festivals



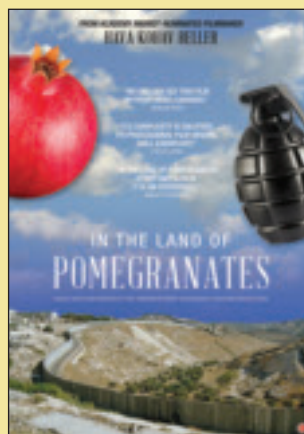
RESISTANCE AT TULE LAKE

78 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917681D
DVD STREET DATE: OCTOBER 30

This new documentary tells the little-known story of incarcerated Japanese Americans who defied the government by refusing to swear unconditional loyalty to the U.S.

Though this was an act of protest and family survival, they were branded as "disloyals" by the government and packed into the newly designated Tule Lake Segregation Center.

"A potent piece of history at a time when the United States is once again feeling less than hospitable." -New York Times



IN THE LAND OF POMEGRANATES

125 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917698D
DVD STREET DATE: OCTOBER 30

The pomegranate is the fruit of the land, a symbol of rejuvenation and rebirth. It is also a euphemism for a hand grenade.

From Oscar-nominated director Hava Kohav Beller comes a suspenseful, multi-layered documentary centered on a group of young people born into a violent, on-going war. They are young Palestinians and Israelis, caught in the duality of the pomegranate: will they embrace rebirth and each other's humanity, or will they pull the pin on the grenade?

"Sobering and clear-eyed." -New York Times

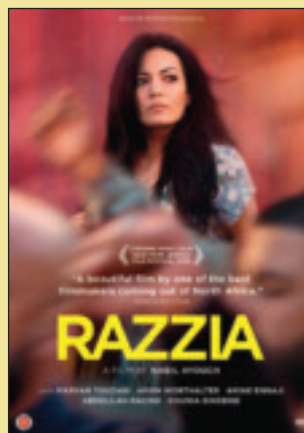


ALONE ON THE ISLAND OF THE BLUE DOLPHINS

58 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917643D
AVAILABLE NOW

Every November, nearly half a million 4th graders read *Island of the Blue Dolphins* – for many, their first chapter book. Educators selected it because it's an exciting story of survival and empowerment – a female Robinson Crusoe. The book tells the story of a 12 year-old Native American girl who was left alone for 18 years on San Nicolas Island, the most remote of California's Channel Islands, in the 1800s.

The true story that inspired the book is even more extraordinary than the fictionalized retelling. This new documentary explores the girl behind the legend, and interviews author Scott O'Dell.



RAZZIA

119 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917636D
AVAILABLE NOW

In this searing and mesmerizing drama, five Moroccans from different social and religious strata are pushed to the fringe by their extremist government. Spanning three decades and several storylines, director Nabil Ayouch weaves an intricate tale of lost loves, forbidden desires and fragile dreams in modern day Morocco.

The Moroccan Entry for the 2018 Academy Awards, *Razzia* was the Opening Night Film at this year's New York Jewish Film Festival.

"A beautiful film by one of the best filmmakers coming out of North Africa." -Toronto Star

weaponry, maps, and modes.

WWE 2K19 (2K, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). The popular wrestling game returns with a massive roster of WWE's and NXT's most popular superstars and legends.

October 14—October 20

Battlefield V (EA, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). This latest addition to the blockbuster first-person action-shooter series is set during World War II.

LEGO DC Super Villains (Warner, PS4/XOne/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this LEGO third-person action-adventure game, players will have the ability to create and control an all-new super-villain, unleashing mischievous antics and wreaking havoc in a hilarious story.

SoulCalibur VI (Bandai Namco, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). Set in the 16th century, this latest entry revisits events from the original *SoulCalibur* in the premier weapons-based, head-to-head fighting series.



Starlink: Battle for Atlas (Ubisoft, PS4/XOne/Switch: \$74.99, Rated: E10+). Players take on the role of heroic interstellar pilots dedicated to freeing the Atlas Star System in this toys-to-life game that lets players build their own modular starship model, mount it to a controller, and take part in epic space combat.

Warriors Orochi 4 (Koei Tecmo, PS4/XOne/Switch: \$59.99, Rated: T). This third-person action-adventure game features heroes from across the Warring States period of Japan and the Three Kingdoms era of China, merged by an unknown entity.

October 21—October 27

Just Dance 2019 (Ubisoft, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E). This latest version of the ultimate party game features 40 hot tracks, from chart-topping hits to family favorites, including "Finesse (Remix)" by Bruno Mars featuring Cardi B., "Havana" by Camila Cabello, and more.



Nickelodeon Kart Racers (GameMill, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E). This

racing game lets you select characters from your favorite Nickelodeon series, including SpongeBob, Patrick, and Sandy from *SpongeBob SquarePants*; Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Donatello from *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*; and more.

PAW Patrol: On a Roll (Outright Games, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E). This third-person (canine) puzzle-platforming action game sends players on 16 exciting rescue missions.

Red Dead Redemption 2 (Rockstar, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this third person action-RPG sequel to the popular Western game, a robbery goes wrong and the Van der Linde gang are forced to flee—with federal agents and the best bounty hunters in the nation on their heels—fighting their way across the rugged heartland of America.



TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

A.P. Bio: Season One (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98). Starring Glenn Howerton, Tom Bennett, and Patton Oswalt, this 2018 first season of the comedy series is set at an Ohio high school.

The Blacklist: The Complete Fifth Season (Sony, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99, Blu-ray: \$55.99). Featuring James Spader in a Golden Globe-nominated role as FBI fugitive turned fixer Red Reddington, this 2017-18 fifth season of the crime drama also stars Megan Boone and Diego Klattenhoff.



Brooklyn Nine-Nine: Season Five (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). The wacky members of the NYC precinct are back in this 2017-18 fifth season of the police comedy series starring Andy Samberg and featuring guest appearances by Dean Cain, Jimmy Smits, Katey Sagal, and Danny Trejo.

Chicago Fire: Season Six (Universal, DVD: 6 discs, \$44.98). Jesse Spencer, Taylor Kinney, and Monica Raymund star in this 2017-18 sixth season of the fire squad series from super-producer Dick Wolf.

Chicago Med: Season Three (Univer-

sal, DVD: 5 discs, \$44.98). The staff of the Gaffney Chicago Medical Center take on personal and professional problems in this 2017-18 third season starring Nick Gehlfuss, Yaya DeCosta, and Torrey DeVitto.

Cooper Barrett's Guide to Surviving Life: The Complete Series (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). Friends and roommates navigate twentysomething life in this short-lived 2016 comedy series that features guest appearances by Paula Abdul and Jane Kaczmarek.

The Exorcist: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$37.99). Alfonso Herrera and Ben Daniels star in this 2016 first season of the anthology horror series based on the classic creepy novel/film. Also newly available is **The Exorcist: The Complete Second Season**.



Get Shorty: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). A former criminal turned movie producer sets his sights on Hollywood in this 2017 first season of the crime-comedy series based on the novel by Elmore Leonard, starring Chris O'Dowd, Ray Romano, and Sean Bridgers.

The Good Doctor: Season One (Sony, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). Autistic savant syndrome surgeon Shaun Murphy (Freddie Highmore) works wonders at a prominent San Jose hospital in this 2017-18 debut season of this medical drama that also stars Nicholas Gonzalez and Antonia Thomas.

Here and Now (HBO, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). Holly Hunter, Tim Robbins, and Jerrika Hinton star in the 2018 single season of this short-lived HBO-aided dysfunctional-family drama.

Hillary (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Andrew Munro stars as Sir Edmund Hillary and Dean Cain plays his climbing partner George Lowe in this 2018 six-part drama series aired on PBS.

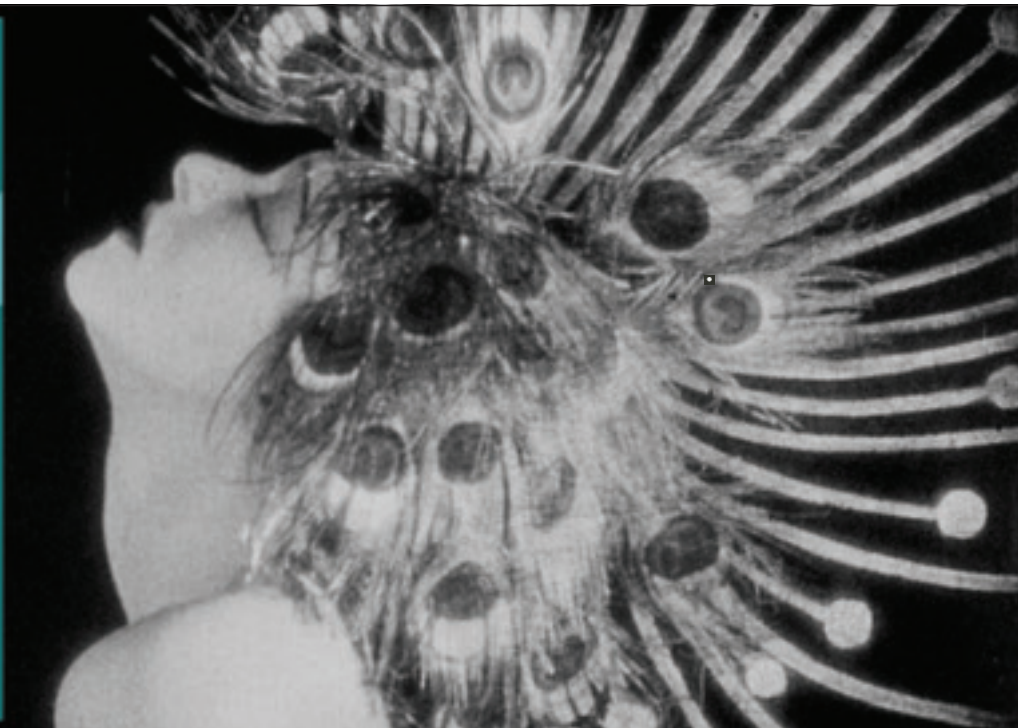


Hostages: Season 2 (Kino Lorber, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). The Prime Minister is abducted and the police are getting closer in this 2016 sophomore season of the Israeli thriller series starring Jonah Lotan, Ayelet Zurer, and Tomer Capon.

The Last Man on Earth: The Complete

New Releases From KINO LORBER.EDU.COM

PIONEERS: FIRST WOMEN FILMMAKERS NOW AVAILABLE FOR EDUCATIONAL PURCHASE



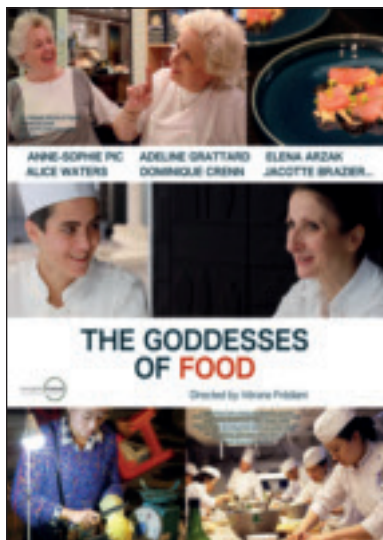
In the early decades of cinema, some of the most innovative and celebrated filmmakers in America were women. Alice Guy-Blaché helped establish the basics of cinematic language, while others boldly continued its development: slapstick queen Mabel Normand (who taught Charlie Chaplin the craft of directing), action star Grace Cunard, and LGBTQ icon Alla Nazimova. Unafraid of controversy, filmmakers such as Lois Weber and Dorothy Davenport Reid tackled explosive issues such as birth control, abortion, and prostitution. This crucial chapter of film history comes alive through the presentation of a wide assortment of films, carefully curated, meticulously restored in 2K and 4K from archival sources, and presented with new musical scores. Includes films made from 1911-1929. Produced in collaboration with the Library of Congress.

DVD Total running time: approx. 1,320 Min. Blu-ray Total running time: approx. 1,710 Min.

"A corrective to our collective amnesia. A thrilling look at the variety of films made by women, most before they won the right to vote." – Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*

"Provides a rare opportunity to see some of the greatest films helmed by early Hollywood's intrepid women... filling in the blanks of the past and reclaiming the medium's forgotten stories." – Christina Newland, *Village Voice*

NEW & NOTABLE RELEASES



THE GODDESSES OF FOOD

In the male dominated food universe, discover the women changing the game on all levels. Presenting the best female chefs, including multi-Michelin star chefs Dominique Crenn and Barbara Lynch, and introducing rising new stars and those making incredible food in all corners of the world. *GODDESSES OF FOOD* is a global journey exploring female strength in gastronomy.

Prominent chefs and journalists investigate what holds women chefs back in the modern mediated world of cuisine and what needs to be done to change the way women in the food industry are viewed and covered in the press. Featuring Michelin chefs and sommeliers from USA, France, Italy, UK, Spain.



ATOMIC CAFE

The Atomic Cafe is an absurdist blast from the past that would be downright laughable if it weren't so eerily relevant to our fake news present. This 1982 cult classic juxtaposes Cold War history, propaganda, music and culture, seamlessly crafted from government-produced educational and training films, newsreels and advertisements. Taken together, these sources cheerily instruct the public on how to live in the Atomic Age, how to survive a nuclear attack and how to win a nuclear war. As a U.S. Army training film advises, "Viewed from a safe distance, the atomic bomb is one of the most beautiful sights ever seen by man."

"A stunner, a movie that has one howling with laughter, horror and disbelief. Deserves national attention."

– Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*

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Fourth Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). Recently canceled by Fox, this 2017-18 fourth and final season of the post-apocalypse sitcom features guest appearances by Jack Black, Chris Elliott, and Martin Short.

Maigret: The Complete Series (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Rowan Atkinson stars as author Georges Simenon's titular French detective in this 2016-17 ITV series, also starring Lucy Cohu and Shaun Dingwall.



Midtown: Season Two (Fox Hollow, DVD: \$19.95). This 2016 second season of the comedy series is based on the real-life work stories of former police officer Scott Baker, who also stars.

Mr. Mercedes: Season 1 (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$26.99). Based on the novel by Stephen King, this mystery thriller about a killer who drives a car into a crowd stars Brendan Gleeson, Harry Treadaway, Kelly Lynch, and Mary-Louise Parker.

Once Upon a Time: The Complete Seventh and Final Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$79.99). This 2017-18 seventh season of the fantasy fairy-tale series is set several years after the last and features storybook characters including Captain Hook (Colin O'Donoghue), Rapunzel (Gabrielle Anwar), and Cinderella (Dania Ramirez).

Pitch: The Complete Series (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). Kylie Bunbury stars as the first woman to play in professional baseball in this 2016 drama series that also features Mark-Paul Gosselaar and Mark Consuelos.

Rosewood: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 5 discs, \$34.95). Morris Chestnut stars as the titular Miami pathologist in this 2015-16 debut season of the police procedural that also features Taye Diggs and Nicole Ari Parker. Also newly available at the same price is **Rosewood: The Complete Second Season**.



Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In: The Complete Fifth Season (Time Life, DVD: 7 discs, \$39.95). Hosted by Dan Rowan and Dick Martin, this 1971-72 fifth season of the sketch comedy series features appearances by Sugar Ray Robinson, Johnny Cash, Charo, and Three Dog Night.

Second Chance: The Complete Series (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). A corrupt deceased sheriff (Philip Baker Hall) is brought back to life as a younger man (Robert Kazinsky) in this 2016 sci-fi series.



Six: Season 2 (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98). Aired on the History channel, this 2018 sophomore season of the military drama following Navy SEALs stars Olivia Munn, Dominic Adams, and Barry Sloane.

Son of Zorn: The Complete Series (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). Animated barbarian Zorn (voiced by Jason Sudeikis) tries to connect with the son he has with a live-action woman in this 2016-17 comedy series also starring Cheryl Hines, Tim Meadows, and Johnny Pemberton.

SS-GB (Warner, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 3 discs, \$29.98). Based on Len Deighton's 1978 alternative history novel, this 2017 five-part miniseries positing that Germany won WWII stars Sam Riley, Kate Bosworth, and James Cosmo.

S.W.A.T.: Season One (Sony, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). Shemar Moore stars as an L.A. Special Weapons and Tactics lieutenant in this 2017-18 debut season based on the classic 1975 crime drama series.

The Terror: The Complete First Season (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$29.98). Adapted from the 2007 novel by Dan Simmons, this 19th-century Arctic expedition drama stars Ciarán Hinds, Jared Harris, Tobias Menzies, and Paul Ready.

The Walking Dead: The Complete Eighth Season (AMC, DVD: 5 discs, \$70.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$80.99). The zombies are back in this 2017-18 eighth season of the post-apocalyptic horror series starring Andrew Lincoln, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, and Norman Reedus.



Wayward Pines: The Complete Second Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). Secret Service agent Ethan Burke (Matt Dillon) finds more than he bargained for in a strange Idaho town in this 2016 second and final season based on the books by Blake Crouch.

September 4

Bull: Season Two (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$49.99). A jury consulting firm tackles various dramatic cases in this 2017-18 second season starring Michael Weatherly, Freddy Rodriguez, and Jaime Lee Kirchner.

The Goldbergs: The Complete Fifth Season (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$26.99). Based on the life of creator Adam F. Goldberg, this 2017-18 fifth season of the wacky family series stars Wendi McLendon-Covey, Jeff Garlin, George Segal, and Sean Giambrone as Goldberg.



The Good Karma Hospital: Series 2 (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). A lovelorn junior doctor (Amrita Acharia) may find a connection with a co-worker (James Floyd) while adjusting to her move from the U.K. to South India in this 2018 second season.

Hawaii Five-0: The Eighth Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$49.99). Aloha State crimes are solved by the titular task force in this 2017-18 eighth season of the police procedural reboot starring Alex O'Loughlin and Scott Caan.

Supernatural: The Complete Thirteenth Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$54.98). The Winchester brothers (Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles) play surrogate family to Lucifer's son in this 2017-18 13th season of the fantasy series.

Wolfblood: Season Four (Cinedigm, DVD: 2 discs, \$14.95). This 2016 fourth season of the British-German teen drama follows creatures who can shift between human and wolf and stars Leona Vaughan, Michelle Gayle, and Louis Payne.

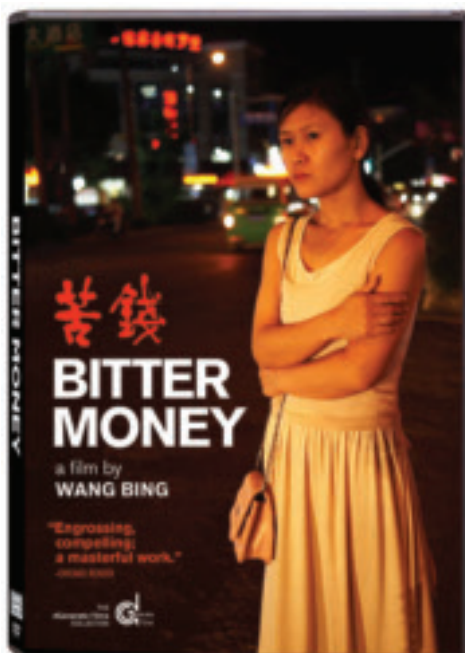
Young Sheldon: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Narrated by Jim Parsons in character, this spin-off from *The Big Bang Theory* follows the childhood escapades of genius Sheldon Cooper (Ian Armitage) and his family.



September 11

The Big Bang Theory: The Complete Eleventh Season (Warner, DVD: 2 discs,

BITTER MONEY



**"PAINFULLY
HEARTFELT."**
—Hollywood Reporter

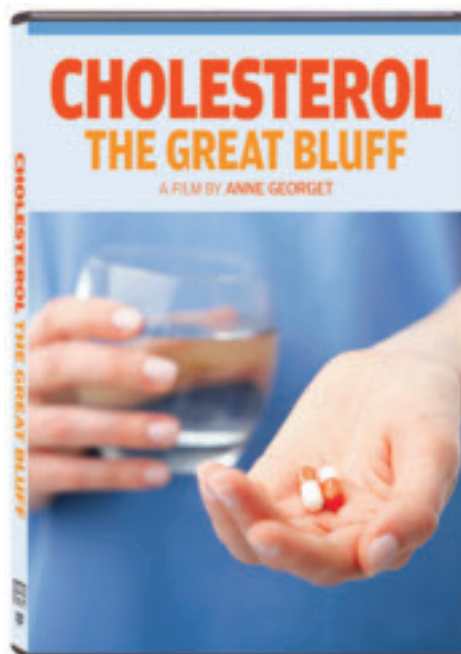
Follows Chinese clothing factory workers, many of them migrants from rural areas in the surrounding provinces, both at work where they labor for more than 12 hours a day, and in their off hours, as they hang around dorms drinking, dreaming of home, worrying about getting paid, and trying to decide whether their jobs are worth keeping.

**"A profound sense
of heart and rage."**
—Slant Magazine

BITTER MONEY • A film by Wang Bing • From dGenerate Films • An Icarus Films Release
2016 • 152 min • Color • in Mandarin w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00244-9 • SRP: \$29.98

AVAILABLE NOW!

CHOLESTEROL: THE GREAT BLUFF



"FASCINATING!"
—Télé-Loisirs

Convincingly argues that the link between cholesterol and heart disease is tenuous – and that its persistence results from a potent mix of bad science, entrenched interests, and pharmaceutical profits.

BONUS FILM!
Includes
documentary
**BRANDING
ILLNESS**

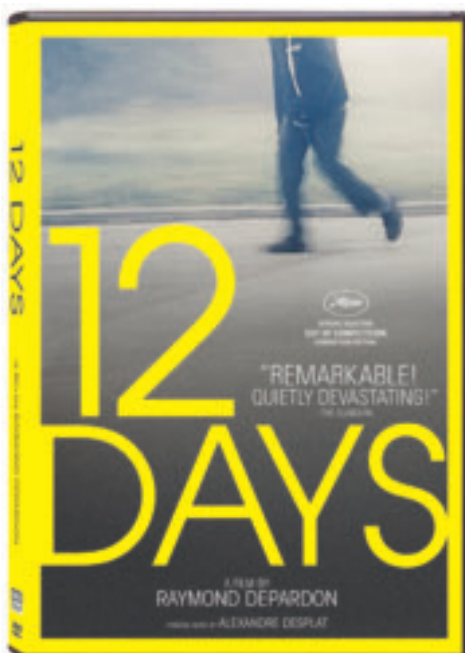
**"The results are as
fascinating as they
are surprising."**

—Films & Documentaires.com

CHOLESTEROL: THE GREAT BLUFF • A film by Anne Georget • An Icarus Films Release
2016 • 82 min • Color • in French w/English subtitles • Closed Captioned
UPC # 8-54565-00247-0 • SRP: \$29.98

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 11

12 DAYS



"REMARKABLE!"
—The Guardian

Every year in France, 92,000 people are placed under psychiatric care without their consent. 12 DAYS focuses on those who have been involuntarily remanded to a mental hospital, and more specifically documents the hearings that, according to a 2013 law, are required to take place 12 days after each patient has been committed.

**DELUXE SET
WITH BOOKLET
AND BONUS FILMS!**

**"A proudly
humane film."**
—Sight & Sound

12 DAYS • A film by Raymond Depardon • An Icarus Films Release
2017 • 87 min • Color • in French w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00249-4 • SRP: \$34.98

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 6

OUR DAILY BREAD



"A MUST-SEE!"
—New York Times

Welcome to the world of industrial food production and high-tech farming. OUR DAILY BREAD looks without commenting in the places where food is produced: monumental spaces, surreal landscapes and bizarre sounds – a cool, industrial environment which leaves little space for individualism.

**"The 2001: A
Space Odyssey
of modern food
production."**

—The Nation

FIRST BLU-RAY EDITION!

OUR DAILY BREAD • A film by Nikolaus Geyrhalter • An Icarus Films Release
2015 • 92 min • Color • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00250-0 • SRP: \$32.98

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 25



\$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Marked by Sheldon and Amy's (Jim Parsons, Mayim Bialik) nuptials, the 2017-18 11th season of the Chuck Lorre science-themed sitcom features guest appearances by Bill Gates, Mark Hamill, Kathy Bates, and Teller.

Chicago P.D.: Season Five (Universal, DVD: 6 discs, \$44.98). This 2017-18 fifth season of the Windy City police drama stars Jason Beghe, Jon Seda, Jesse Lee Soffer, and Elias Koteas.

Law & Order True Crime: The Menendez Murders (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Starring Edie Falco as defense attorney Leslie Abramson, this 2017 first season of the anthology spin-off focuses on the 1989 murders of wealthy entertainment executive José Menendez and wife Kitty by their sons.



Modern Family: The Complete Ninth Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). The 2017-18 penultimate ninth season of the Emmy-winning sitcom features guest appearances by Nathan Lane, Billy Crystal, Vanessa Williams, Chris Martin, and Gabriel Iglesias.

Scorpion: The Final Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$49.98). Elyes Gabel, Katharine McPhee, and Eddie Kaye Thomas star in this 2017-18 fourth and final season of the high-tech drama series.

This is Us: The Complete Second Season (Fox, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.98). Bouncing between the present and flashbacks, this 2017-18 sophomore season of the ensemble drama centers on the "Big Three" siblings (Sterling K. Brown, Chrissy Metz, and Justin Hartley).



September 18

American Horror Story: Cult (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Set after the 2016 presidential election, this 2017 seventh season of the Ryan Murphy creepy anthology series stars Sarah Paulson, Evan Peters, and Cheyenne Jackson.

The Gifted: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Set in the Marvel Comics universe, the 2017-18 debut season of this sci-fi adventure series introduces viewers to the Strucker family,

who discover that their children have mutant powers.

The Looming Tower: A Limited Series (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Lawrence Wright's 2006 non-fiction book served as the basis for this 9/11-backdrop drama that stars Jeff Daniels, Peter Sarsgaard, and Tahar Rahim.



MacGyver: Season 2 (Lionsgate, DVD: 5 discs, \$29.98). Lucas Till stars as government operative and inventor Angus MacGyver in this 2017-18 second season of the rebooted action series that also features George Eads and Sandrine Holt.

Madam Secretary: Season 4 (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$45.98). The U.S. Secretary of State (Téa Leoni) clashes with her husband (Tim Daly) in his new job at the CIA in this 2017-18 fourth season of the political drama.

Modus: Season 2 (Kino Lorber, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.95). U.S. President Helen Tyler (Kim Cattrall) goes missing during a Stockholm state visit in this 2017 second season of the Swedish psychological thriller series.

Supergirl: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$49.99). DC Comics superhero Kara Zor-El (Melissa Benoist) is back in this 2017-18 third season of the action-adventure series.

The X-Files: The Complete Season 11 (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99). This 2018 11th season continuation of the earlier 1993-2002 sci-fi horror drama features David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson reprising their roles as FBI special agents Mulder and Scully.



September 25

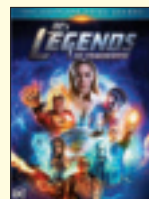
C.B. Strike: The Series (Warner, DVD: \$24.98). Based on detective novels by J.K. Rowling writing as Robert Galbraith, this crime drama series—aired stateside on Cinemax—starring Tom Burke and Holliday Grainger includes *The Cuckoo's Calling*, *The Silkworm*, and *Career of Evil*.

Dynasty: Season One (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.98). Grant Show, Elizabeth Gillies, and Nathalie Kelley star in this 2017-18

debut season of the reboot spotlighting the powerful Carrington and Colby families.

East West 101: Series 3 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). An armored bank transport robbery hits close to home for Muslim Sydney detective Zane Malik (Don Hany) in this 2011 third and final season of the Australian drama series.

Legends of Tomorrow: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99). A mix-up of timelines causes havoc for the Legends team in this 2017-18 third season of the DC Comics series starring Victor Garber, Caity Lotz, and Dominic Purcell.



Midsomer Murders: Series 20 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Pathologist Fleur Perkins (Annette Badland) joins the team in this 2018 20th collection from the British detective drama.

Sando (Acorn, DVD: \$39.99). Badly behaving discount furniture maven Victoria "Sando" Sandringham (Sacha Horler) tries to pick up the pieces of her tattered family in this 2018 Australian comedy series.

October 2

The Originals: The Fifth and Final Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98). Set seven years after the previous season, this 2018 fifth and final outing for the supernatural *Vampire Diaries* spin-off stars Joseph Morgan, Daniel Gillies, and Danielle Rose Russell.

Vikings: Season 5, Volume 1 (Fox, DVD: \$29.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99). Jonathan Rhys Meyers joins the cast as a religious warrior priest in this first set of episodes from the 2017-18 fifth season of the historical drama series.

October 23

The Americans: The Complete Final Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). The exploits of the embedded KGB Jennings family come to a close in this 2018 sixth and final season of the FX-aired period drama starring Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys.



COMPELLING NEW DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO

The Fantasy Makers: Tolkien, Lewis, and MacDonald

J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and George MacDonald were the pioneers of the fantasy genre and their impact is unmistakable. Their works—exploring Middle-earth, Narnia, and other tales of redemption, sacrifice, and the battle of good and evil—have become best-selling books and blockbuster movies. Contemporary fantasy writers such as J.K. Rowling grew up inspired by their works.

All three were deeply rooted in their Christian faith, which permeated their writing. They engaged and challenged from the pulpit of imagination, speaking truth through fantasy.

The Fantasy Makers examines the spiritual influences of these fantasy pioneers and the lasting impact their works have on our present-day culture.

Featuring Rowan Williams, Kristin Jeffrey Johnson, Malcolm Guite, Allister McGrath, and Michael Ward. Documentary, 88 minutes.

#501732D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01732 7



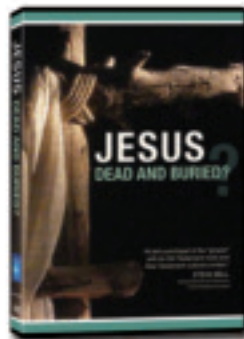
Shipping October 9, 2018



Adoniram and Ann Judson

Adoniram and Ann Judson were American missionaries who sacrificed enormously to reach the people of Burma (present day Myanmar). Suffering resistance, persecution, imprisonment, personal loss, and ill health, Adoniram and Ann's faithfulness led to the establishment of a church that continues to flourish today. Experience the struggles and triumphs of these remarkable missionaries in this illuminating documentary. 65 minutes.

#501793D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01793 8



Jesus: Dead and Buried?

For 2,000 years Christians have been claiming that Jesus died in Jerusalem on a cross and that he subsequently "rose from the dead." But how can we know if what they say is true? Presenter Luke Waldock travels to Jerusalem to see the places where Jesus himself would have walked during the last few hours of his life. He sifts through the evidence—historical, medical, and theological—and he finds answers. Documentary, 47 minutes.

#501805D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01805 8



Carry Me Home: A Remember America Film

Carry Me Home is a short film following the true story of Maria Ennals (Lindsey Grimble), a young mother trapped in slavery who seizes the opportunity to escape with her family when she encounters Harriet Tubman (Karen Abercrombie). Harriet leads the young family through a number of trials on the Underground Railroad, causing them all to question whether or not freedom is worth the price they must pay to obtain it. Drama, 23 minutes.

#501801D, \$12.99, UPC 7 27985 01801 0



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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

Always at the Carlyle

★★★1/2

Good Deed, 92 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.95



Director Matthew Miele offers a glimpse inside the Carlyle, Manhattan's legendary Upper East Side hotel, where Bobby Short held forth in the Cafe Carlyle for decades and Woody Allen still plays the clarinet. Originally created for an elite clientele by Polish-born banker Moses Ginsberg, the hotel's guests have included current luminaries such as George Clooney, Lenny Kravitz, Tommy Lee Jones, Bill Murray, the late Anthony Bourdain, Roger Federer, Vera Wang, Jeff Goldblum, Wes Anderson, Sofia Coppola, and Naomi Campbell, as well as many earlier notables, including President John F. Kennedy—with or without his wife Jacqueline. The late Elaine Stritch actually lived there. Anjelica Huston here recalls nights with her then-lover Jack Nicholson, while Harrison Ford bitches, "My room's \$1,100!" (which is nothing compared to the \$10,000-a-night Royal Suite, where a housekeeper embroiders the pillowcases with the occupant's first name or monogram). Condoleezza Rice counters, "Here, you get what you pay for"—not that she ever picked up the bill. Long-time concierge Dwight Owsley and bartender Tommy Rowels reminisce about the old days and there's a story about Michael Jackson, Steve Jobs, and Princess Diana once sharing an elevator. When artist Ludwig Bemelmans was hired to redo the murals in the bar, he lived there for 18 months, creating drawings that depicted his whimsical *Madeline* characters as well as a fantasy version of Central Park Zoo. Superficial and sycophantic, this fluffy documentary is also an enjoyable indulgence for celeb watchers. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

American Animals

★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 116 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$21.99

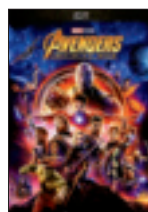


This ostensibly true misadventure follows four upper-middle-class college students who in December 2004 planned one of the most audacious art heists in U.S. history. Hidden in the Special Collections Library at Transylvania University in Lexington, KY, are folios of John James Audubon's *Birds of America* and a first edition of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, overseen by librarian Betty Jean Gooch (Ann Dowd). These tomes are the targets of jittery, wannabe artist Spencer Reinhard (Barry Keoghan) and volatile, sociopathic Warren Lipka (Evan Peters), who enlist two acquaintances—fitness fanatic Charles "Chas" Allen II (Blake Jenner) and accounting expert Eric Borsuk (Jared Abrahamson)—to help with the theft. Related from multiple perspectives—including those of their older, wiser, real-life counterparts and bewildered parents, plus the hapless librarian—British writer-director Bart Layton's *American Animals* meticulously reconstructs the entire operation, from its fanciful beginning to its ignominious conclusion. After obtaining the library blueprints, the quartet devise ways to circumvent the surveillance equipment and clear an escape route, while also obtaining "elderly" disguises and making elaborate plans for how to fence the stolen property after the getaway. Much of this is inspired by researching movies ranging from Stanley Kubrick's *The Killing* to Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*. A shallow, yet stylishly suspenseful, criminal caper flick, this should still be considered a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Avengers: Infinity War

★★★★

Disney, 149 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



In this massive comic-book spectacle, the new villain is Titan's gigantic galactic warlord Thanos (Josh Brolin), who decimates Asgard on his path towards cosmic genocide, a task he can only accomplish by stealing six Infinity Stones. When the stones are combined in a Gauntlet, Thanos will be able to control time, space, and energy, altering the laws of physics and reality. Loki (Tom Hiddleston) has the blue Space stone; Doctor Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch), the green Time stone; The Collector (Benicio Del Toro), the red Reality stone; Vision (Paul Bettany), the yellow Mind stone (embedded in his forehead); and Star-Lord (Chris Pratt) and his Guardians of the Galaxy (including scene-stealing Groot), the purple Power stone. And then there's the elusive, sacrifice-demanding Soul Stone. So it's up to 20-plus Marvel superheroes to maintain

order in the universe under the leadership of Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) and Thor (Chris Hemsworth), who is still minus an eye (and a hammer). There's Wakanda's Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman), Captain America (Chris Evans), Spider-Man (Tom Holland), Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson), Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen), War Machine (Don Cheadle), Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), and the Incredible Hulk (Mark Ruffalo). Even so, Thanos, clutching his "adoptive" daughters Gamora (Zoe Saldana) and Nebula (Karen Gillan), isn't about to give up easily. Not surprisingly, it all ends with a cliffhanger, setting up for a 2019 sequel. Directors Joe and Anthony Russo move these crossover superheroes around like chess pieces, adding a few new characters (the most memorable played by Peter Dinklage) in this fun entry in the popular series. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Back to Burgundy

★★★1/2

Music Box, 113 min., in French & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



This sweet, sentimental drama by French filmmaker Cédric Klapisch serves up a gorgeous travelogue of the winemaking life through the seasons of a family vineyard that is set against the gentle melodrama of three siblings who inherit their father's legacy along with a big bill. Jean (Pio Marmaï), the eldest, is the prodigal son returning after 10 years in Australia (where he runs a vineyard with the mother of his child), who wants to sell it all. Sister Juliette (Ana Girardot), who took over as heir apparent to their father's management of the business, wants to keep it but is unsure of her own ability to rise to the challenge of being the boss. Jeremie (François Civil), the youngest, has married into a rival wine family with a bigger business and a track record of safe, uncomplicated vintages with mass appeal. All three face decisions about their own futures, but the film is just as much about the activity of a vineyard through the seasons, from one harvest to the next, with almost documentary detail. A warmly engaging film about family bonds that also celebrates the winemaking culture of France's beautiful Burgundy region, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Bad Samaritan ★1/2

Sony, 110 min., R, DVD: \$17.99, Blu-ray: \$19.99



Scottish actor David Tennant (best known as a former Doctor Who) stars as mega-wealthy, psychopathic Cale Erendreich, who gets his jollies by kidnapping and torturing women. In a flashback sequence, viewers witness a childhood trauma with a wild horse which,

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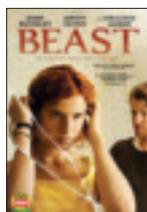
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supposedly, serves to explain his sadistic fetish for bridles and bondage. Struggling Irish photographer Sean Falco (Robert Sheehan) and his partner, Derek Sandoval (Carlito Olivero), work as valet parkers at a restaurant in Portland, OR. Or at least, that's their cover: actually, they're small-time burglars. When an affluent customer arrives for dinner, one keeps an eye on the patron while the other uses the car's GPS to find the owner's home and rob it of small-but-valuable items they can quickly re-sell, returning the car to the restaurant as its unsuspecting owner pays his check. Complications arise when Cale leaves his ostentatious Maserati in their hands. While exploring his minimalist mansion, Sean finds Katie (Kerry Condon), a chained captive who has been gagged and beaten. Sean calls the police and FBI with an anonymous tip, but they arrive and find nothing, since Cale—thanks to his high-tech surveillance equipment—is onto Sean. Part of his revenge involves downloading and texting a semi-nude photo of Sean's girlfriend (Jacqueline Byers), which causes her to dump him. Working from a shallow screenplay that veers into torture porn territory, director Dean Devlin's *Bad Samaritan* is a disappointing semi-coherent thriller. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

Beast ★★★

Lionsgate, 106 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$21.99, Sept. 4



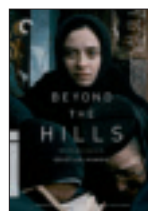
An unlikely romance plays out against a background of violence in Michael Pearce's feature debut—set on the isle of Jersey in the Channel Islands—which is anchored by fierce lead performances from Jessie Buckley and Johnny Flynn as Moll and Pascal, youngsters from very different backgrounds whose intense relationship veers toward tragedy. Moll seems completely under the thumb of her imperious, class-conscious mother (Geraldine James), whose rigid control stems from a brutal reprisal that Moll delivered against a bully at school. Moll rebels by taking up with Pascal, a brooding but charismatic petty criminal. Pascal is also a suspect in a series of murders of young women on the island, but that only fuels the girl's fascination, to the extent that she even provides him with a false alibi for the night of the latest killing. But Moll begins to have doubts. Some of the dialogue is leaden, and the narrative is sometimes unnecessarily opaque, but the remarkable performances make for a compelling portrait of two troubled outsiders struggling against the demands of a rigid society in this dark, twisted, engrossing film. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Beyond the Hills ★★★

Criterion, 152 min., in Romanian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Originally released in 2012, Romanian

director Cristian Mungiu's *Beyond the Hills* revolves around two girls coming of age in rural Romania: Alina (Cristina Flutur) is adrift in life and doesn't know what to do with herself other than flee to Germany. Her friend Voichita (Cosmina Stratan) is also uncertain of the future that she wants, so she joins a local convent, where she falls under the tutelage of a fiery priest who exudes a menacingly otherworldly air. Voichita finds the solitude of the nunnery soothing, while Alina can only think of running away from any kind of life of confinement. Mungiu's pacing is—as one might expect in a movie that concerns convent life—somewhat measured, but as dark secrets begin to surface, the drama picks up and poor Voichita gets caught up in what turns out to be a nightmare. *Beyond the Hills* effectively explores the yearning for escape from a futile life under the broken promises of a post-Ceausescu free society, but it also has something slightly disturbing to say about the inevitable return of faith to a post-Communist Romania. Recommended. (M. Sandlin)



Blue Desert ★1/2

IndiePix, 94 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



A baffling, patience-taxing, oddball sci-fi movie that makes little sense, Brazilian filmmaker Eder Santos's *Blue Desert* centers on a young man named Ele (Odilon Esteves) who is unmoored in time, space, and reality at a distant point in the future. Yearning for transcendence, Ele appears each day on a flight that takes him wherever he's going (though he has no say in the matter). Appearing alone in a desert, Ele hopes that he can achieve a lofty spirituality, but he invariably crosses paths with an older man who is determined to spray-paint the desert blue. Elsewhere, Ele appears at a dance-club party where his lack of practice communicating with others is challenged by meeting Alma (Maria Luísa Mendonça), who may not be any more real than anything else in this meandering, chilly movie. If *Blue Desert* is intended to make a provocative impact through its surrealist collision of dreamlike images and ideas, it falls far short of the mark. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)

Book Club ★★★

Paramount, 103 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



A poignant rom-com aimed at older adults, *Book Club* is set in suburban Santa Monica, CA, where four friends meet regularly to sip wine, nibble

canapés, and discuss their lives as they relate to a chosen book. Years ago, the women began with Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*; now they're into E.L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Each woman represents a particular stage of romantic life: Jane Fonda's sexy, vivacious Vivian is a wealthy, workaholic hotelier who has avoided emotional commitment—until she is suddenly tracked down by an old flame (Don Johnson). Candice Bergen's Sharon is an acerbic federal judge who hasn't had a relationship since her divorce 18 years ago. But now that her ex (Ed Begley Jr.) has a decades-younger fiancée (Mircea Monroe), Sharon is reluctantly risking dinner with Internet dates (Richard Dreyfuss, Wallace Shawn). Recently widowed after 40 years of marriage, Diane Keaton's skittish Diane is fending off grown helicopter daughters (Alicia Silverstone, Katie Aselton) who want her to move near them in Scottsdale, AZ. On a plane, she meets Mitchell (Andy García), a suave pilot who asks her out. And Mary Steenburgen's Carol is a successful chef/restaurantier whose once-sparky marriage to recently retired Bruce (Craig T. Nelson) has gone stale. Working from a naughty-but-nice screenplay, co-writer/director Bill Holderman interweaves the ladies' stories while evoking nostalgia as Keaton revives her androgynous *Annie Hall* wardrobe, Steenburgen does a *Melvin and Howard* tap dance, and Fonda wears thigh-high *Klute* boots. Sweetly saucy, it's a senior feel-good chick-flick. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Borg vs. McEnroe ★★★

Virgil, 107 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Although the casting choices for 1980s tennis titans Bjorn Borg (Sverrir Gudnason) and John McEnroe (Shia LeBeouf) aren't optimal, Danish director Janus Metz's bio-pic is surprisingly successful in conveying both the odd psychology of these two rivals and the raw physicality of their famously excruciating match at the 1980 Wimbledon finals. Metz certainly plays up the media perception of McEnroe as a hothead and Borg as a gentlemanly four-time Wimbledon champion, but the film pushes past the good guy vs. bad guy veneer to observe some interesting psychological truths about both. Borg could have easily become a braying hothead like McEnroe, but he learned to transform his rage and turn it inward, using Zen-like ritual to cope with the pressure of the spotlight. Conversely, the tantrum-throwing McEnroe, played with limited believability by LeBeouf (an actor who is controversial in his own right), was not as unhinged as he seemed: as Borg finds out, McEnroe's fits are actually psychological weaponry used to achieve focus and power. Couple the smart insights with the compelling action choreography

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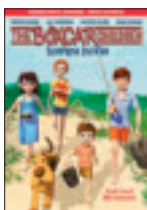
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of the tennis matches and this is well worth watching. Recommended. (M. Sandlin).

The Boxcar Children: Surprise Island ★★

Shout! Kids, 82 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$22.99

An animated update and sequel to the 2014 feature *The Boxcar Children* (an animated revisiting of the original book series launched in 1924), *The Boxcar Children: Surprise Island* finds the four Alden siblings invited at the end of the school year to spend the summer with their loving grandfather (voiced by Martin Sheen) on a small but imposing island owned by the Alden family. The children quickly take to adventure, turning a barn into an attractive abode, exploring the craggy island, fishing and clamming, and even getting trapped in a cave when the high tide comes in (holy Thai soccer team!). And there's a mystery involving a young fellow known as "Joe," who lives and works on the island, and sees to the well-being of the kids. Overall, this is a fine family film, featuring exquisite background visuals and a particularly joyous soundtrack. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Bye Bye Germany ★★

Film Movement, 102 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Set in Frankfurt in 1946 following the close of World War II, this is the droll story of a group of Jewish survivors in a U.N. "displaced persons" camp who decide to sell high-end "dowry" linens to raise enough money to emigrate to America. Led by David Bermann (Moritz Bleibtreu), whose family's once-eloquent linen emporium was ravaged by the Nazis, they become savvy peddlers. "It's an art," David explains. "Anyone can solicit. It's the sales pitch, the show that counts. Your customers should basically kneel down and beg to buy from you." Working with other survivors, David is remarkably successful. But then he's summoned by U.S. Army Intelligence Investigator Sara Simon (Antje Traue), who is suspicious about how he got preferential treatment in the concentration camp when his parents and brothers were killed at Auschwitz. Was he, perhaps, a Nazi collaborator? Not exactly. Overheard telling a joke, Baumann was summoned by the commandant to embark on a bizarre assignment. Since Hitler was scheduled to meet with Mussolini, who was known as a jovial storyteller, Bauman was sent to Berlin to teach the Führer how to tell a joke. As the interrogation continues, it becomes obvious that while Baumann served as a reluctant court jester in the death camp, he actually had other plans in mind. Adapted from the



first two books of German-Swiss novelist Michel Bergmann's 2010-13 *Teilacher* trilogy, *Bye Bye Germany* is skillfully directed by Sam Garbarski, blending comedy with tragedy while revealing the backstories not only of David but also of his hawkier comrades, who note, "We're the Jewish revenge." Bittersweet and picaresque, this offbeat Holocaust film is recommended. (S. Granger)

A Ciambra ★★

MPI, 119 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Jonas Carpignano's second feature is a sequel to *Mediterranea* (VL-7/16), his documentary-style portrait of African refugees whose dangerous journey to a supposedly better life landed them in southern Italy. A chief character was proud young Burkinese Aviya (Koudous Seihon), who has now become a dealer in stolen goods. One of his suppliers is Pio Amato, a 14-year-old from a large Roma family residing in Ciambra, which is an impoverished neighborhood in Gioia Tauro, the Calabrian village near Aviya's refugee camp. *A Ciambra* tells the fictionalized coming-of-age story of Pio, who played himself in *Mediterranea*. When his father and older brother are sent to jail for stealing electricity, Pio is determined to become the man of the house—despite the protests of his mother—and he engages in increasingly dangerous activities to bring in money. Eventually, Pio is faced with a demand that he betray Aviya, who has always been kind to him, and that choice will mark his future path. Amato is a natural onscreen whose performance is achingly poignant, and the members of his large, boisterous family are equally compelling. *A Ciambra* is heavily indebted to the Italian neo-realist school but adds to the grim depiction of ordinary life a touch of poetry, particularly in dreamlike scenes showing the past of Pio's doddering grandfather. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Daphne & Velma ★★1/2

Warner, 75 min., G, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.99

This live-action prequel to the beloved *Scooby-Doo* animated series follows young versions of Mystery Inc.'s female members Daphne (Sarah Jeffery) and Velma (Sarah Gilman). Online friends with an appreciation of the paranormal, the glam-ish, confident Daphne—who has lived all around the world—is thrilled to tell the nerdier, reticent Velma that she will soon be attending the latter's school and they can be BFFs in real-life. After a bit of a kerfuffle over Velma's worries about Daphne immediately being accepted in the popular crowd, the movie gets down to the nitty-gritty: what

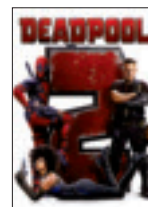


mysterious force is luring their classmates into misty, creepily-lit secret-locker passageways that leave them acting weird after they resurface? A 'tween-friendly fluff film co-produced by *High School Musical* star Ashley Tisdale, *Daphne & Velma* doesn't really emulate the kitsch of the long-running Scooby stories, so it could have been about any two teen girls solving a crime. But due to the popularity of the franchise, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (J. Williams-Wood)

Deadpool 2 ★★

Fox, 119 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

In this loud, funny, and subversive sequel, foul-mouthed, facially disfigured, yet indestructible anti-hero Wade Wilson (Ryan Reynolds)—aka Deadpool—is madly in love with Vanessa (Morena Baccarin) and the couple are thinking of having a baby when tragedy strikes, kicking off an inevitable course of vengeance. Dressed in red-and-black spandex, Wade battles the villainous, time-traveling cyborg Cable (Josh Brolin) while assembling his X-force crew, who include Colossus (Stefan Kapicic), Weasel (T.J. Miller), Blind Al (Leslie Uggams), Dopinder (Karan Soni), and Negasonic Teenage Warhead (Brianna Hildebrand), while also adding sarcastic Domino (Zazie Beetz), a newcomer whose gift is being extremely lucky. Plus, he's determined to protect Russell (Julian Dennison), a troubled, fire-fisted mutant teenager who views Wade as a surrogate father. Director David Leitch maintains the action comedy's irreverent tone, stressing the "f-word," which here stands for "family," along with dozens of pop culture-based references (such as a running joke that the song "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?" from *Frozen* sounds exactly like "Papa, Can You Hear Me?" from *Yentl*). Of course, there are also lots of gruesome decapitations and severed limbs, along with self-aware star cameos, including Wolverine (Hugh Jackman). A smarmy and snarky superhero saga, this is recommended. (S. Granger)



The Desert Bride ★★

Strand, 78 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Sept. 4

Everyone has had the experience of being thwarted during a simple effort to get somewhere. In this Argentinian drama, a middle-aged nurse named Teresa (Paulina Garcia) endures such an unnerving crisis, beginning with the moment her long-distance bus ride breaks down, up through her subsequent misadventure with a traveling salesman called El Gringo (Claudio Rissi). Unceremoniously laid off from her longtime job as a maid and former nanny



to a Buenos Aires family, Teresa is on her way to a new domestic position in another town. As viewers witness in often painful flashbacks, she was treated dismissively by the lady of her former house, and the child she helped raise is now a grown man whose feelings about Teresa seem stifled as she leaves. Sad and disoriented, Teresa loses her bag of meager possessions in El Gringo's truck, and she is compelled to accompany him as he retraces his steps to remote shops where he might have left it with his deliveries. Although guarded and laconic, Teresa slowly opens up to El Gringo. Directors Cecilia Atán and Valeria Pivato beautifully collaborate with Garcia in portraying the brief blossoming of an invisible woman whose passion is under wraps. And the film is a visual thrill, as the directors counterintuitively tell this intimate story in large part through wide-open master shots placing Teresa—who could not look lonelier or more lost—at great distances from the camera. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Disobedience ★★1/2

Universal, 115 min., R, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

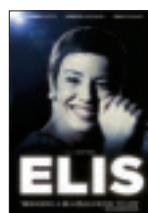
Chilean director Sebastián Lelio, whose transgender drama *A Fantastic Woman* won the Oscar this year for Best Foreign Language Film, adapted Naomi Alderman's 2006 novel as his first English-language film. Set in Hendon, the north London suburb where Alderman—a former Orthodox Jew—grew up, the story begins with elderly Rav Krushka (Anton Lesser) giving what will be his last sermon, defining free will as a divine gift. After he dies, his long-estranged daughter, New York avant-garde photographer Ronit (Rachel Weisz), rushes home, but within the local insular and devoutly religious patriarchy she is treated with courteous but obvious contempt. Ronit openly smokes, doesn't cover her head, and rails against "institutional obligation." Greeting her where they are sitting shiva is Rabbi Dovid (Alessandro Nivola), her father's disciple/surrogate son, who is soon to be chosen as her father's successor. To her astonishment, Ronit discovers that Dovid is married to her closest friend—and furtive teenage lover—Esti (Rachel McAdams). Their lesbian relationship is immediately rekindled, culminating in an afternoon of anguish and erotic ecstasy, after which—predictably—their secret is discovered. The two Rachels deliver sympathetically realistic performances and Nivola's restrained anguish is palpable, but while the film puts a spotlight on the austere manners and mores of the close-knit, cloistered Hasidic community, it also suffers from a somewhat overly simplistic and melodramatic portrayal of sadly repressed and oppressed women. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



Elis ★★★

MVD, 110 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$14.99

A fascinating and illuminating bio-pic about superstar Brazilian singer Elis Regina, *Elis* delves into the personal, professional, and political aspects of the late artist's life. Considered by many Brazilians to have been the nation's best singer, Regina is played by Andréia Horta, who is superb in the role. A driven but restless spirit eager to explore during the 1960s-'70s post-bossa nova era of popular music, Regina faces numerous obstacles and humiliations, from sexism in the music industry, to a philandering first husband, to threats from Brazil's military dictatorship. Director Hugo Prata brings a brisk energy to the film, underscoring the sense of a life rushing to an early finale (Regina died at age 36). Of particular interest is Regina's gradual embrace of political resistance to dictators and inequality, and adoption of other progressive causes—a nice counterbalance to the way she was forced earlier to cooperate with Brazil's repressive government. A solid portrait of a complex Brazilian idol, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)



The Endless ★★★

Well Go USA, 111 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Although made on a budget that would probably fail to cover the catering costs on most Hollywood sci-fi epics, this supernatural thriller by co-directors Aaron Moorhead and Justin Benson (who also scripted) delivers more suspense and surprises than similar fare. The pair also star as brothers named Aaron and Justin, who escaped what they describe as a "UFO death cult" based in the California wilds years earlier and have since been living a hand-to-mouth existence in Los Angeles. When they receive a videotape from a pretty member of the group describing preparations for a rapture-like exit called the Ascension, Aaron begs the skeptical Justin to return for a brief visit, where they find their old comrades not only welcoming but virtually unchanged despite the passage of time. From that point, the plot takes off in varied directions, revolving around intimations of a monster in a nearby lake, reports of hikers who have disappeared in the woods, and a weird test involving a struggle to control a rope that appears to disappear into the sky. Ultimately, time loops are added to the equation as the brothers try to escape



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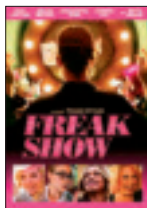
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again. While the complications grow a bit excessive, and the visual effects are hardly cutting-edge, Moorhead and Benson use their meager resources cunningly, and entice solid performances from the cast. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Freak Show ★★1/2

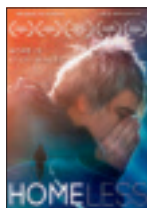
Shout! Factory, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray: \$22.99



Actress-producer Trudie Styler makes her fiction feature directorial debut with this rather messy but sporadically entertaining teen comedy. Alex Lawther is terrific as young Billy Bloom, a gender-bending dandy and artistic spirit who is transferred from the protective, ebullient world of his larger-than-life, alcoholic mother (Bette Midler) to a more red-state traditional climate with his father (Larry Pine). Making no concessions to the Wrangler jeans and T-shirt look of his peers at a new school, Billy arrives every day dressed as if he had raided Lady Gaga's closet. Billy is abused by girls and boys alike (some of the latter beat him so badly he ends up hospitalized in a coma), as well as by a hostile gym coach (John McEnroe). The narrative eventually gels around Billy's unlikely friendship with his school's football hero (Ian Nelson), who harbors his own secret interest in the arts (he wants to be a painter). But that relationship becomes strained when Billy decides to run for homecoming queen, which has less to do with being a diva than with being a symbol for other kids who are staying quiet about their own sexual identities. *Freak Show* would have benefited from tighter editing and focus (and it would have been nice to see more of Midler and a few other supporting players), but overall this is an engaging film with a solid message about tolerance and acceptance. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Homeless ★★

Dreamscape, 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Oct. 23



This tearjerker drama begins with a promising premise: 18-year-old Gosh (pronounced "Josh") is without a home following the death of his grandmother, who took him in while his father awaits unlikely parole from prison. Keeping his head down at a shelter, Gosh (Michael McDowell in a lost puppy performance) spends his days trying to navigate his changed circumstances, availing himself of library services, looking for work (with not much of a chance, given his reduced hygiene), and scrounging dollars to take a long bus ride to see his father. In scattered moments, Gosh recalls playing guitar in a band, and he briefly evades the sympathetic attention of an older homeless man who represents for Gosh an

unwanted destiny. But *Homeless* begins to falter when Gosh's ill fortunes plateau and every effort to change his life is undercut. Despite a chapter in the film where Gosh gets a little help from strangers, the script by co-writer and director Clay Riley Hassler mostly turns shapeless and monotonous. Optional. (T. Keogh)

Hooked ★

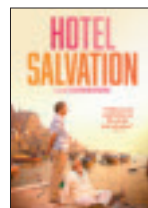
Breaking Glass, 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



An ambitious but weak melodrama, *Hooked* tells the story of a young gay hustler named Jack (Conor Donnelly), who turns tricks to make ends meet for him and his boyfriend Tom (Sean Ormond). The pair have plans for a future, and Jack is not above taking advantage of any situation that will further their goals, such as robbing clients (much to Jack's eventual peril). While Jack has a certain exuberant energy and calculation that evokes Huckleberry Finn, he is more compelling in theory than actuality: the script by writer-director Max Emerson is so weak that the character's potential as a complex, charismatic figure is undercut. The story turns when Jack and Tom meet Ken (Terrance Murphy), a married businessman who decides to take Jack under his wing and bring him along on a business trip. Jack, of course, sees right through Ken's attempt to be a mentor with no sexual agenda, and when things heat up, several complications arise. *Hooked* suffers from numerous drawbacks: a self-defeating cheesiness about comic moments (one of Jack's clients wants him to pretend to be a nursing baby), the appearance of convenient devices (a handgun in a drawer), and a strange timidity about the squalor of freelance prostitution. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)

Hotel Salvation ★★★

Film Movement, 100 min., in Hindi w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Filmmaker Shubhashish Bhutiani's well-intentioned film offers some fresh insights into the mundane realities of existence (and non-existence) with its tentative gallows humor meditation on death and dying. *Hotel Salvation* is centered on aging schoolmaster Daya (Lalit Behl), who convinces his son Rajiv (Adil Hussain) that it is time for dad to shuffle off this mortal coil. Rajiv accompanies Daya to the titular hospice-cum-hotel, situated in the holy city of Varansi. The oddball conceit here is that you only get 15 days to die and thus be graced by holy salvation; if you fail to croak during that time, you have to rebook under a different name. Featuring fantastically dreamy cinematography by Michael McSweeney and David Huwiler, *Hotel Salvation* follows Daya's

philosophical laments about being fed up with the world and wanting to pass on to the next one as soon as possible. Recommended. (M. Sandlin)

How to Talk to Girls at Parties ★1/2

Lionsgate, 103 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$21.99



Filmmaker John Cameron Mitchell's collaboration with author Neil Gaiman is a period coming-of-age tale with sci-fi trappings that is less glam extravaganza than an irritatingly outrageous bomb. Mitchell has expanded Gaiman's enigmatic award-winning 2006 short story into a clumsy parable of the battle between individuality and conformity, told with no wit and a very heavy hand. Set in 1977, the story focuses on a trio of London kids addicted to the new punk scene who crash an after-hours bash—thrown by a local known as Queen Boadicea (Nicole Kidman)—where they encounter an odd group of youngsters dressed in brightly colored, skintight latex outfits who are engaging in bizarre synchronized dances. It turns out that this is not some crazy cult but rather alien travelers, who move about the universe investigating other species. The reason has something to do with a decreasing birth rate and population—both of which might be related to their reputed habit of consuming their offspring. One of the earthlings, Enn (Alex Sharp), meets alien Zan (Elle Fanning), who fascinates him not just with her ethereal beauty but also her strangely affected conversation. Enn introduces Zan to the joys of his planet's unregulated society, and when she returns from the experience in a pregnant state, her fellow aliens decide to go back to their world with changes in mind. This is a muddled mess that strives to become an instant cult classic but fails miserably, although it certainly will qualify as a good candidate for *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Human Flow ★★★

Amazon, 140 min., PG-13, DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.99



Dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei employs his celebrity here to call attention to the global refugee crisis in this visually imposing epic documentary. Director Weiwei and his large crew (including a dozen cinematographers) visit 20-plus countries to convey the magnitude of the crisis in terms of both the estimated 65 million men, women, and children fleeing war, famine, and political repression, and the numerous areas affected, from Africa and the Middle East to Asia. While officials are given the opportunity to comment on the extent of the tragedy, the emphasis is on the displaced, who are seen here in numerable



When twelve-year-old Pedro accidentally kills another boy on the streets of Caracas, his father decides to flee the city with him in an attempt to protect their family from retribution.

LA FAMILIA (AVAILABLE 10/2)

Drama, Latin American

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

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

UPC: 859686006758



Egon Schiele (Noah Saavedra) finds inspiration in beautiful women, but the outbreak of World War I threatens his artistic pursuits and leads to the betrayal of his one and only true love.

EGON SCHIELE: DEATH AND THE MAIDEN (AVAILABLE 10/9)

Art, History, Austrian, Biopic

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

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

UPC: 859686006734



Newly restored in HD, Asia Argento's daring, semi-autobiographical 2001 directorial feature debut has once again sparked controversy in the wake of the #MeToo movement.

SCARLET DIVA (AVAILABLE 9/25)

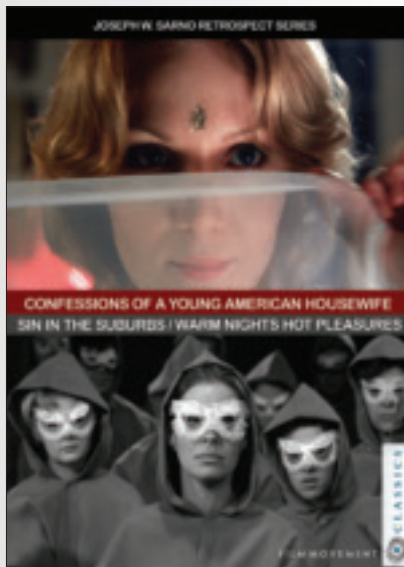
Italian, Drama, Women's Studies

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Erotic auteur Joseph W. Sarno explores the dark side of the American dream in the groundbreaking *Sin in the Suburbs* along with two other seminal films newly restored in HD.

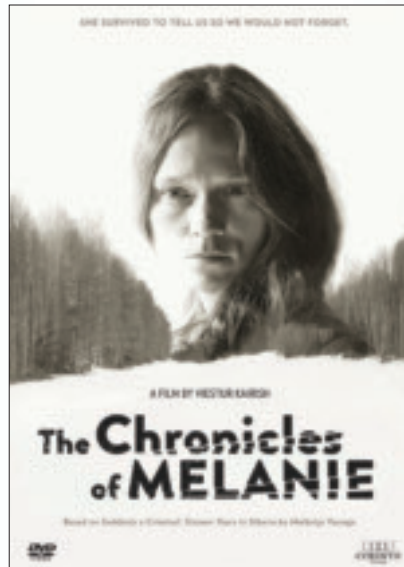
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Based on a true story. Melanie and her young son are separated from her husband and sent to a Siberian prison camp as part of the Soviet mass deportation of Latvian citizens in 1941.

THE CHRONICLES OF MELANIE (AVAILABLE 9/25)

WWII, History, Russian, Biopic

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

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UPC: 896137001474



The life of a middle-aged sheep herder becomes threatened when he refuses to sell his land to construction developers and the surrounding land owners grow increasingly hostile.

THE SHEPHERD (AVAILABLE 9/25)

Drama, Spanish

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

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

UPC: 896137001481



scenarios: rescued from boats in the Mediterranean and taken to Italian relocation centers, being placed in Jordanian camps, swimming ashore on Greek islands, and trying to survive in makeshift enclaves in Eastern Europe or on the French coast. The stories they tell are heartbreaking: one man tearfully describes how nearly a third of his family members died along the way. Weiwei interacts with the refugees, commiserating as a displaced person himself, and his artist's eye is very much apparent in carefully composed and elegantly shot images. Especially notable are sequences of refugees marching in long lines under official supervision, shot from an angle far above in what might be called a divine perspective. *Human Flow* is arguably too beautiful for its subject, but it effectively conveys the size and urgency of today's refugee problem. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

I Dream in Another Language ★★★

FilmRise, 101 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95

Mexican director Ernesto Contreras's Sundance award-winner follows university researcher Martín (Fernando Álvarez Rebeil), who travels to a remote village to record and register Zikril, an indigenous language in danger of extinction. Martín discovers that only two Zikril speakers survive, and there is a significant problem: Isauro (José Manuel Poncelis) and Evaristo (Eligio Meléndez) are elderly men who had a falling out over a woman nearly 50 years ago and have refused to speak to each other ever since. Flashbacks detail the circumstances that led to the dissolution of the men's friendship, and there is a subplot regarding a budding romance between Martín and Evaristo's granddaughter (Fátima Molina), who teaches an English instructional show on a local radio station. *I Dream in Another Language* deals with heady themes, from the ephemeral state of culture, to the lingering wounds of betrayal, to the power of language (even a dying tongue). And while the romantic elements—especially Martín's unlikely foray into affairs of the heart—are sometimes clumsy, the strong performances by Poncelis and Meléndez as old foes (coupled with the beautiful cinematography by Tonatiuh Martínez) more than compensate. Recommended. (P. Hall)

In Harmony ★★★

Icarus, 90 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99

Loosely based on the life of equestrian stuntman Bernard Sachsé, Denis Dercourt's film stars Albert Dupontel as Marc



Guermont, who suffers a devastating spinal injury while filming a scene with his horse. Rendered paraplegic and confined to a wheelchair, Guermont is pressured to accept a one-time payment by insurance adjuster Florence Kernel (Cécile de France). He refuses, considering the amount inadequate, and Florence, who comes to believe that her company is trying to cheat him, suggests he consult her lawyer friend. The two gradually develop a romantic relationship—although she is married—and they both become determined to take charge of their lives, with Marc aiming to ride again, and Florence wanting to return to the career she abandoned as a concert pianist. There is unquestionably a hint of formula here, but Dercourt's approach is refreshingly unsentimental, and the stars give nuanced and committed performances—Dupontel actually did his own stunts, and de France mastered enough fingering to play a portion of a Liszt étude. The two bring genuine feeling to what could easily have degenerated into a crudely maudlin exercise (cue Hollywood remake). So while undoubtedly designed to be uplifting, *In Harmony* retains a sense of straightforward honesty that seems characteristically French. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

In Syria ★★★

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

A harrowing, sometimes hard-to-watch drama set in the confines of a middle-class apartment in war-torn Damascus, *In Syria* reflects the contemporary horror facing ordinary Syrian civilians living under the daily threat of bombs and bullets. Hiam Abbass gives a complex, mesmerizing performance as Oum Yazan, a tough matriarch caring for her children, wizened father-in-law, an unrelated teen, a housemaid, and a young couple with a newborn baby, while her husband is out somewhere in his capacity as a medic or anti-government insurgent. Writer-director Philippe Van Leeuw masterfully conjures an atmosphere of imminent, dangerous possibilities, where ordinary tasks such as preparing food take on a dark urgency, water is scarce, and knocks on the front door create moments of suspense and dread. When the father of that baby slips out into the street to prepare for his family's nocturnal escape from the city, he meets a fate that will subsequently be kept secret from his wife (Diamand Bou Abboud), who in turn will experience her own hell before the day is through. Van Leeuw puts the viewer through some tough watching, but the real tragedy of *In Syria* is that this is just another day of trying to survive for these characters. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Inflame ★★1/2

FilmRise, 94 min., in Turkish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95

With an echo of Roman Polanski's classic *Repulsion*, this Turkish film centers on a young woman who retreats from a rapidly changing society into her own home, where hallucinations and paranoia are rife. Hasret (Algi Eke) works as a video editor in an Istanbul television news station. When Turkish president Erdogan's crackdown on free speech and the press commences, Hasret is pressured to broadcast pro-government propaganda. When it becomes too much, she retreats into her apartment, where the growing tyranny outside and visible destruction of her historic neighborhood (which is officially due for rebuilding) are causing her to panic. Hasret feels the walls burning with heat, is plagued by auditory hallucinations, and begins obsessing over the 20-year-old death of her artist parents in a car crash, drawing parallels between their fate and the recent rise of oppression and censorship under Erdogan's tightening grip. Filmmaker Ceylan Özgün Özçelik's feature debut has a fine premise, but the central conceit is difficult to sustain for a full movie without some redundancy and a thinning out of the main themes. Still, Özçelik is a director to watch. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



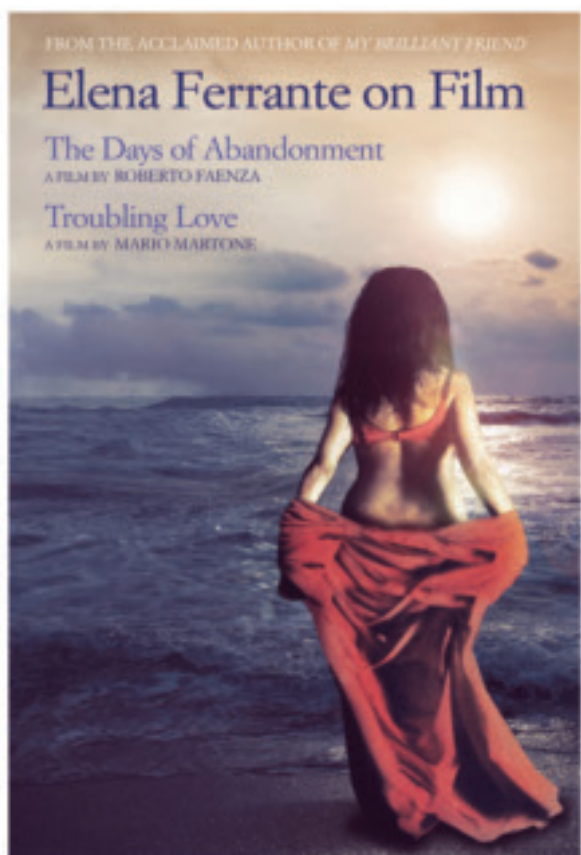
Ismael's Ghosts ★★★

Magnolia, 134 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.99

French filmmaker Arnaud Desplechin's *Ismael's Ghosts* is ostensibly the story of a filmmaker named Ismael Vuillard (Mathieu Amalric), whose personal and artistic lives are both thrown off track by the sudden reappearance of his former wife (Marion Cotillard)—who disappeared without a word for 20 years. The narrative jumps abruptly back and forth in time and between biography, fiction, and dreams, blurring the line between the lives of its characters and the creative re-imagining of them through Ismael's new film about his estranged brother (Louis Garrel). Wife and brother are Ismael's ghosts and nightmares, afflicting him in manic visions that appear to stem from sleeplessness, drinking, and even filmmaking itself. *Ismael's Ghosts* is a fragmented and sometimes confusing film, but it is also an impassioned drama about powerful emotions—a raw, funny, angry, and loving tale with rich, complex characters and relationships, as well as an interesting perspective on storytelling as both artistic endeavor and personal psychological work. Likely to appeal to fans of challenging and



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playful foreign films, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

John From ★★1/2

Altered Innocence, 99 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$21.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Although this Portuguese indie feature gets some good performances out of its young cast, it is ultimately a bit of a somnambulant affair that doesn't quite succeed as the coming-of-age comedy it is clearly supposed to be in its portrait of adolescent teenage escape from modern suburban banality. *John From* centers on Rita (Julia Palha) and Sara (Clara Riedenstein), two teens bored out of their minds in the bleak, nondescript outskirts of Lisbon, who struggle to find creative ways to make life interesting, which at first means attending a lot of predictable teeny-bopper parties. But when Rita, trolling the Internet one night, stumbles upon an exhibition on Melanesian natives, she seems to undergo a complete transformation, finding solace in a primitivist paradise of the mind, which shields her from everyday quotidian existence. Director João Nicolau can't seem to get the film's tonalities right: the comedic aspirations are too underconfident to make for a full-blown teen comedy, but there aren't enough compelling emotional and personal conflicts here to make this work as a drama either. Still, Nicolau's heart is in the right place in this uneven film. A strong optional purchase. (M. Sandlin)

Journey's End ★★1/2

Cinedigm, 108 min., R, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$19.95



R.C. Sherriff's 1928 play about British soldiers who perished in the trenches of World War I was first filmed in 1930. Filmmaker Saul Dibb's new adaptation demonstrates that it is no mere period piece: after nearly a century, this story of men awaiting almost certain death on the Western front continues to convey the terrible human cost of war. Set in northern France in March 1918, the narrative is seen through the eyes of green Second Lieutenant Jimmy Raleigh (Asa Butterfield), who asked to be posted to the dangerous locale in order to serve under Captain Denis Stanhope (Sam Claflin), his onetime idol at school and prospective brother-in-law. Much changed by his experience in the field, Stanhope is not at all pleased to see Raleigh, who reminds him of his former life, so Raleigh instead finds solace from Stanhope's kindly second-in-command (Paul Bettany), a mild-mannered teacher. Intelligence indicates that a long-expected German assault is imminent, and the company has been ordered not only to undertake a mission across no-man's land to confirm,

but also to hold its ground as long as possible, without hope of reinforcement. Sherriff's play had obvious relevance in its day, but its portrayal of how ordinary soldiers can be treated as expendable in the pursuit of national policy remains pointedly topical in our age of global conflict, and Dibb has given us a remarkably faithful adaptation, aided by a uniformly excellent cast. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Keep the Change ★★★

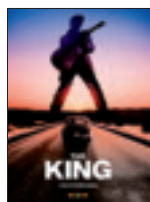
Kino Lorber, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



In *Keep the Change*, the main characters are autistic adults with learning disabilities, played by non-professional actors who are autistic, but writer-director Rachel Israel never hypes or exploits the casting decision in this pleasant romantic comedy. David (Brandon Polansky) is the grown son of a wealthy Manhattan couple who control his life and fret for his future. After telling an off-color joke (something he tends to do without considering consequences) to a police officer, David is ordered by a judge to attend a Jewish community center offering group support for people who are autistic. Resistant to participating, a standoff-ish David is assigned to partner with Sarah (Samantha Elisofon) on an assignment to visit the Brooklyn Bridge. Sarah is like an adorable freight train of positivity and sincerity, but she is also painfully anxious and vulnerable. Eventually, the two become a couple, to the dismay of other group members and David's parents. Generally speaking, the typical rom-com arc of love/breakup/makeup is at play here, but Israel and actors Polansky and Elisofon are subtle and effective at depicting what warts-and-all mutual acceptance looks like. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

The King ★★

Oscilloscope, 107 min., R, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Oct. 2



Eugene Jarecki's cinematic essay serves up the provocative notion that the life and death of Elvis Presley can serve as a fitting metaphor for the original promise and sad decline of America. Jarecki presents this argument via a road trip in a vintage Rolls Royce once owned by Presley, as the director and his film crew drive through the places that marked the trajectory of the singer's life, from his birthplace in Tupelo, MS, to Memphis (where he was discovered), New York (where he made his mark on TV), and Las Vegas (where he became a staple in his later years). Archival footage fills in other major points in Presley's career, including his stint in the army and his years churning out terrible movies in Hollywood. Jarecki invites a parade of musicians into the car's back seat

and has conversations with ordinary folk at the various stops, while adding to the mix observations about the King and recent American history from a host of celebrities and commentators including Alec Baldwin, James Carville, Ethan Hawke, Van Jones, Dan Rather, Mike Myers, Chuck D, Greil Marcus, and David Simon. The conclusion he draws is that Elvis's rise and fall mirrors the arc of the American Dream. Whether viewers will be swayed by that argument is debatable, but *The King* has something to appeal to everyone, be it the biographical material, musical performances, reverential recollections, or sociopolitical analysis. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Lean on Pete ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 122 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$21.99



Andrew Haigh's film about a boy and the horse he bonds with during a difficult time is by no means Disney-like. *Lean on Pete* is an over-the-hill race horse that 15-year old Charley (Charlie Plummer) cares for after being hired by gruff owner Del (Steve Buscemi) at a small track in Portland, OR. A lonely lad just arrived in town with his loving but irresponsible father (Travis Fimmel), Charley develops an emotional attachment to the animal despite being warned by a jockey (Chloe Sevigny) to keep his distance. When his father dies unexpectedly and Del decides to sell Pete for slaughter, Charley impulsively takes off with the horse on a trek to Wyoming to find his aunt, who he vaguely remembers as the only person who showed him kindness when he was a kid. The trip is depressing, albeit picaresque: desperately short of money, Charley at one point is threatened with jail when he tries to eat and run at a diner, and he also briefly works with a painting crew, only to have his earnings stolen by an unscrupulous druggie (Steve Zahn)—prompting the boy to take uncharacteristically violent action. Plummer delivers an excellent performance that captures every nuance of Charley's emotional journey in this insightful if also harrowing portrait of adolescent turmoil. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Life of the Party ★★

Warner, 105 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99



Actress/producer/co-writer Melissa McCarthy collaborated with her husband/director Ben Falcone on this flaccid, cliché-riddled mom-com, set at (fictional) Decatur University. The story begins with Deanna (McCarthy) and her husband, Dan (Matt Walsh), dropping off their daughter Maddie (Molly Gordon) at her sorority house for her senior year. Leaving

the campus, Dan tells Deanna he wants a divorce; he's having an affair with a real-estate agent (Julie Bowen) who has already put the couple's house on the market. After an Uber driver (Falcone) totes her to the home of her parents (Jacki Weaver, Stephen Root), stunned yet spunky Deanna decides to return to college to get the archeology degree she was pursuing before she dropped out during her senior year for marriage and motherhood. While Maddie's understandably a bit dismayed, her sorority sisters adore clueless-but-kind Deanna. One is called Coma Girl (Gillian Jacobs) because she was hospitalized for eight years, and Deanna's BFF (Maya Rudolph) swills wine coolers on the racquetball court. Naturally, there are a couple of mocking Mean Girls (Debby Ryan, Yani Simone), as well as Deanna's mysteriously agoraphobic, goth-y roommate (Heidi Gardner), but what's most surprising is Deanna's hot-to-trot romance with a sweet, wine-loving frat boy named Jack (Luke Benward), which leads to an unexpectedly outrageous twist. McCarthy has made other films with Falcone (*Tammy, The Boss*), but her brassy, bawdy comedy has been far more effective under the guidance of someone experienced, such as Paul Feig (*Bridesmaids, Spy, The Heat, Ghostbusters*). Optional. (S. Granger)

Little Pink House ★★1/2
Samuel Goldwyn, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

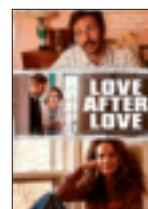
David faces off against Goliath in another fact-based tale of an ordinary person fighting powerful interests, this time over the issue of eminent domain. Courtney Moorehead Balaker's film dramatizes the events surrounding a legal case that ended in a controversial 5-4 U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2005. In 1997, Susette Kelo (Catherine Keener), a divorced paramedic in economically-distressed New London, CT, purchased a rundown house with a lovely waterfront view and fixed it up, painting it a bright shade of pink. She also made friends with the locals, including a romance with a handsome handyman (Callum Keith Rennie). But her newfound paradise was jeopardized when politicians initiated an urban renewal project to make the waterfront an attractive acquisition for a big company, entrusting its execution to Charlotte Wells (Jeanne Tripplehorn). The initial step would use the legal option of eminent domain—the right of a government or its agent to expropriate private property for public use, with payment of compensation—to clear the area of private homes, including Kelo's. Refusing to take the



loss lying down, Kelo spearheaded a grassroots effort to block the property seizures, which attracted the attention of an activist law firm personified by idealistic young attorney Scott Bullock (Giacomo Baessato). The ensuing series of hearings led to the Supreme Court decision, in which the liberal and conservative wings of the bench ruled in an unexpected way. While Balaker's film has its heart in the right place, it also fails to rise much beyond issue-oriented movie-of-the-week quality—raising an important legal issue, but in a highly formulaic fashion. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Love After Love ★★1/2
MPI, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

With its soft-edged 16mm cinematography and spare piano score, Russell Harbaugh's directorial debut looks like (and feels like) a low-budget studio film from the 1970s. *Love After Love* serves up an elliptical tale about an upstate New York family grappling with love and loss. Suzanne (Andie MacDowell) works in a college theater department, while her son, Nicholas (Chris O'Dowd), is employed at a publishing house. Nicholas is in a rocky



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relationship with his co-worker, Rebecca (Juliet Rylance), while Suzanne is caring for a husband dying from an undisclosed illness (possibly ALS). Nick's brother, Chris (James Adomian), a standup comedian with a drinking problem, describes his sibling as "the good one," but they all have their faults. Harbaugh eschews narrative transitions, which initially proves disorienting—for instance, he doesn't depict Nick's breakup with Rebecca; shortly after his father's funeral, Nick simply shows up with Emilie (Dree Hemingway), a woman he was having an affair with. As Nick and Emilie make wedding plans, Suzanne attempts to move on. She works, redecorates, and readjusts to life as a single woman. Harbaugh has an adept touch with actors, but the film's lack of humor eventually becomes a liability: this is a dour bunch of well-heeled folks. And it's not that their problems aren't real, but that they waste an inordinate amount of time expressing disappointment in and disapproval of each other. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

The Mimic ★★1/2

Well Go USA, 100 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.99



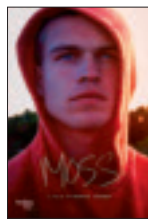
This South Korean ghost story from filmmaker Huh Jung draws its premise from a Korean myth about a tiger that mimics human voices to lure its victims into the forest, but the film definitely goes its own way from there. Hee-yeon (Yum Jung-ah), still grieving over the unsolved disappearance of her son, moves from the city to her rural childhood home with her husband and daughter to care for her ailing mother. Nearby, an old bricked-up cave has been disturbed, releasing a scared and apparently abused little girl and an ancient evil spirit, which may be after the girl or using her to get to others. When Hee-yeon takes the girl in, a demonic shaman enters the family's lives. There are some interesting dimensions to *The Mimic*, which features a number of familiar South Korean horror movie conventions (from the creepy little girl who appears to be taking the place of the couple's daughter, to animals sensing supernatural evil), but the film also takes a while to get past the set-up and exposition before ultimately paying off with an impressive third act. The director favors atmosphere and eeriness over scares and spectacle, and the lost little girl becomes a more complex figure than she at first appears. While it isn't particularly inventive or unique, this is still a satisfying Asian horror film with a creepy sense of dread. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Moss ★★

Breaking Glass, 81 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

A well-intended drama that might have

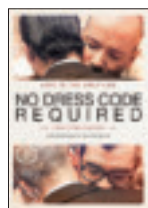
worked a little better on a slow simmer instead of a full boil, *Moss* is an overwrought, noisy film set in the wilds of North Carolina, where the title character (Mitchell Slaggert) has just turned 18 and is feeling an urgent need to break away from the isolation of the home he shares with his widower father (Billy Ray Suggs). The two seem to be in perpetual conflict, driven in part by a tragic legacy: the death of Moss's mother during his birth. Moss sees his father as a broken, compromised man, weak and reduced to making a living selling the driftwood sculptures he carves. On this milestone birthday, Moss rebels against his father's order to deliver medicine to Moss's grandmother, opting instead to row a boat along a river, where he discovers a mysterious, beautiful, 30-year-old woman named Mary (Christine Marzano) camping alone and on some unspecified journey of her own. At this point, the fairy-tale tropes underlying this rite-of-passage story—the trip to grandma's house; Moss's timely, Oedipal encounter with Mary—become both obvious and preposterous. Optional. (T. Keogh)



No Dress Code Required

★★★

Strand, 92 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



What does it look like when one state refuses to abide by a Supreme Court ruling? The alternately charming and shocking documentary *No Dress Code Required* chronicles the legal havoc generated by the real-life story of a same-sex couple in Baja California (which is a state in Mexico). Victor and Fernando, who have been together for a decade and are partners in a hair salon that caters to a number of about-to-be brides, want to get married. Mexico's Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage some time ago, so the hugely likeable protagonists in this tale don't expect a problem. But Baja—and the city of Mexicali, where Victor and Fernando live—refuses to allow the ceremony on religious grounds. While the men could travel to Mexico City to be wed, they choose to stand their ground on home turf, enlisting a pair of crusading attorneys who are determined to end discrimination against gay marriage. The result is an agonizingly protracted conflict with Baja and Mexicali authorities, who keep throwing absurd hurdles in the path of Victor and Fernando (at one point even accusing the pair of dementia). Filmmaker Cristina Herrera Borquez balances the legal battle with a warm portrait of her subjects, whose dignity and patience through the long slog is admirable. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Oh Lucy! ★★★

Film Movement, 96 min., in English & Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



"Lucy" is the American name adopted by Setsuko (Shinobu Terajima), a middle-aged office worker in Tokyo mired in a dispiriting job, when she agrees to take over English lessons from her free-spirited niece Mika (Shioli Kutsuna). Lucy/Setsuko falls for her handsome teacher John (Josh Hartnett), who conducts unconventional lessons out of a tawdry room in a seedy love hotel. When John runs off with Mika to California, Setsuko follows, accompanied by her estranged, sharp-tongued sister, where she discovers that John is actually a deadbeat dad on the verge of being evicted from his cheap apartment. The film opens with a subway suicide witnessed firsthand by Setsuko, who is so miserable she barely flinches, a scene that sets the tone for this film about one woman whose impossible crush on a younger man inspires her to impulsively leave her oppressive life to reach out for a fantasy that can never be. Making her feature debut, filmmaker Atsuko Hirayanagi has her repressed and lonely heroine open up to new experiences and celebrates her courage as she gains confidence and redefines who she is, for better and for worse. Kôji Yakusho costars as a widower in the English class and Megan Mullally and Reiko Aylesworth have small roles in the American scenes. A film about small triumphs that should appeal to fans of offbeat character studies, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

On Chesil Beach

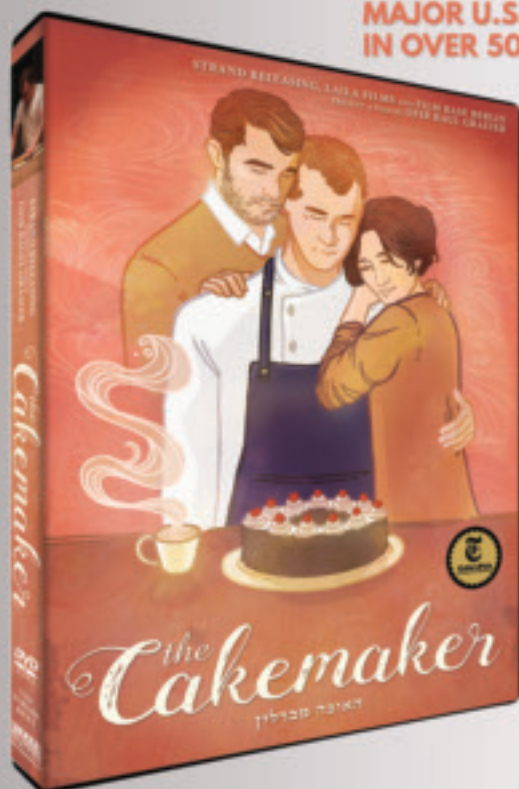
★★★1/2

Universal, 111 min., R, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



A honeymoon goes dreadfully wrong in filmmaker Dominic Cooper's adaptation of Ian McEwan's 2007 novella, which tells the elegant, heart-breaking tale of a love affair that blossoms during a time of sexual repression—the early 1960s in Britain—and collapses in recrimination after the wedding. The newlyweds are Florence (Saoirse Ronan) and Edward (Billy Howle), university students from very different backgrounds. Her family is upper middle class, sophisticated, and urban, while he has had a troubled rural upbringing—his mother (Anne-Marie Duff) suffers from brain damage caused by a long-ago accident. Nevertheless, the two awkward youngsters become friends, and the friendship grows into romance—albeit restrained and decorous, governed by the rules of the day. Both are sexually inexperienced, Florence more so than Edward; she is a virgin, and her fear of disappointing him is profound. Both are nervous in their honeymoon suite at a shabbily genteel hotel on the

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105 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In English, Hebrew and German with English subtitles

THE DESERT BRIDE

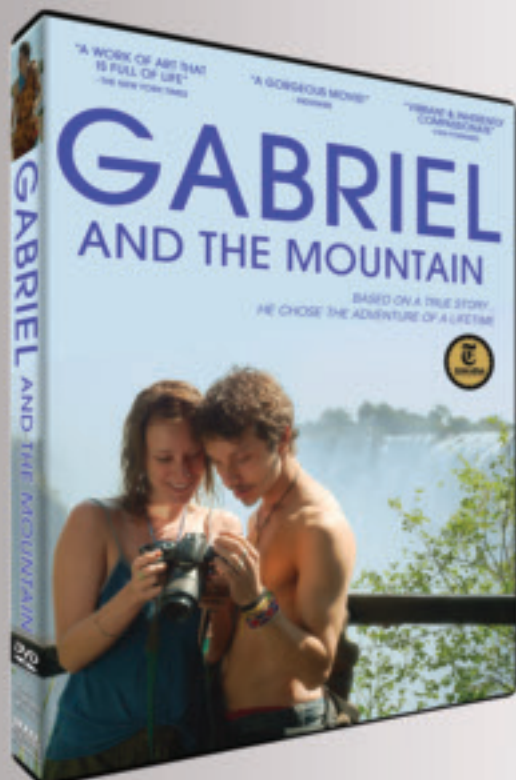
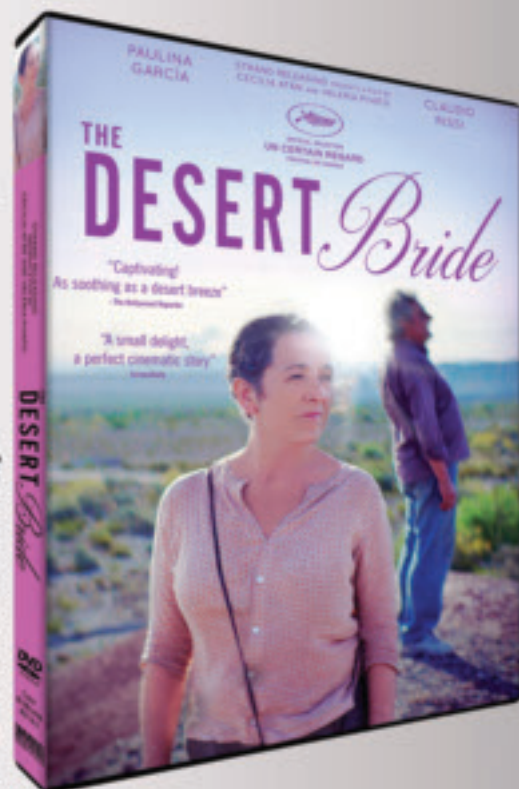
"Captivating!" -The Hollywood Reporter

In this enchanted fairy tale, 54-year-old Teresa (Paulina Garcia of Gloria) has worked for decades as a maid in Buenos Aires. When her job abruptly ends, she is forced to take a job in the distant town of San Juan. Although uncomfortable with traveling, she embarks on a journey through the desert. At her first stop, an unexpected incident leads her to cross paths with El Gringo, a traveling salesman who allows her to discover the romantic world she left behind.

Street date: **Sept 4, 2018** | SRP: \$27.99

DVD #: 3714-2 | UPC: 7 12267 37142 3

78 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In Spanish with English subtitles



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DVD # 3716-2 | UPC 7 12267 37162 4

131 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In Portuguese, English and French with English subtitles

THE MISANDRISTS

From iconic filmmaker Bruce LaBruce!

When the radical feminist terrorist group Female Liberation Army takes in an injured male leftist, it becomes a secret that could tear them apart. Balancing sharp social commentary and salacious popcom entertainment, it's as fun to watch as it is to dissect.

Street date: **Oct 2, 2018** | SRP: \$19.99

DVD #: 3813-2 | UPC: 7 12267 38132 6

91 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated



coast, and when they finally embrace in bed, disaster strikes. A long, difficult conversation follows on the beach that proves to be even more catastrophic. All of this plays out with a degree of painful precision that is often cringe-inducing but also deeply moving. *On Chesil Beach* will strike some as almost incomprehensibly reserved, but as a portrait of a reality in the not-so-distant past, it is exquisite. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

On the Beach at Night Alone ★★1/2

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



The films of South Korean filmmaker Hong Sang-soo have a minimalist quality and a wry emotional candor, often exploring the complicated and mysterious relationships between men and women in conversations over food and drink. *On the Beach at Night Alone*, one of three films released by Hong in 2017, is titled after a poem by Walt Whitman, but the inspiration comes from real life: the public scandal of an affair between director Hong, a married man, and actress Kim Min-hee, who here stars as Young-hee, an aimless actress nursing her wounds from her recent breakup with a married filmmaker. The film feels somewhat aimless, beginning in Hamburg, Germany, where Young visits a recently-divorced friend, and then returning to South Korea, where Young runs into old friends in the seaside vacation town of Gangneung. Much alcohol is consumed and the actress does indeed find herself on the beach alone at times. But without context the movie can seem a little abstract and compared to Hong's previous efforts this has less humor and narrative playfulness. But it's also more raw and emotional than his earlier films, especially in the confrontational finale. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

Operation Red Sea

★★★

Well Go USA, 139 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



Inspired by the real-life 2015 evacuation of Chinese citizens and foreign nationals by the PLA Navy Marine Corps from Yemen, Dante Lam's 2017 military action thriller became one of the highest-grossing Chinese films of all time. Shifting the story to a fictional North African country where rebels join forces with radical Islamic terrorists, this film follows a formula right out of American military spectacles, with an elite unit headed up by Captain Yang (Zhang Yi) sent into the middle of the fighting to deal with terrorists who are determined to take foreign hostages

for their own nefarious ends. Complicating the mission is an illegal shipment of nuclear material that the terrorists are pursuing and a sandstorm that whips up during a tank battle. The characters are largely interchangeable—given rudimentary personalities and hard to differentiate in the heat of battle under the matching uniforms and haircuts—but they are secondary to the impressive set pieces by action movie veteran Lam. You could substitute the American military without changing a thing (here, the Chinese are the enemies of the Islamic revolution), from the armed terrorists behind every window as the convoy rolls through the city, to the crack Chinese sniper taking on his terrorist counterpart. The violent action is almost non-stop, with an unending supply of soldiers, supplies, and complications, all furiously edited. Likely to appeal to fans of military action spectacle, this is recommended. (S. Axmayer)

The Outsider ★★★

Icarus, 117 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99



Filmmaker Christophe Barratier's spellbinding drama centers on the rise and ruin of Jérôme Kerviel (Arthur Dupont), the French financial trader who was convicted of generating 4.9 billion euros in losses for Société Générale in 2008. Based on Kerviel's 2010 autobiography *L'engrenage*, the film is heavily skewed towards making him a sympathetic figure rather than a rogue trader. Here, Kerviel is a mild-mannered young man from a working-class family in Brittany who quickly adapts to the wild and seemingly reckless world of Société Générale's Paris headquarters, where financial transactions were handled with a sense of recklessness and daring. Outside of trading, the male staff behave like overaged frat boys. Kerviel quickly learns from his sketchy superiors how to conceal trades, but his trading eventually spins dangerously out of control and he winds up creating covert market positions that reach approximately 50 billion euros. As Kerviel, Dupont turns on the charisma full-blast and the screenplay gives him a love interest with a pretty co-worker (Sabrina Ouazani), although viewers are unlikely to be convinced that Kerviel was a victim. But *The Outsider* is entertaining, while also serving up an effective warning on the dangers of unregulated financial service practices. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Overboard ★★

Lionsgate, 112 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

In the original 1987 screwball comedy, Goldie Hawn played a snobbish, spoiled heiress who hires carpenter/widower Kurt Russell to remodel a closet on her yacht—and then

rudely refuses to pay the bill.

Later that night, after she falls overboard and develops amnesia, Russell claims that she's his wife and the mother of his four boys. Now, in a gender flip, Latin American superstar Eugenio Derbez is Leonardo Montenegro, a billionaire Mexican playboy whose über-yacht is docked in Elk Cove, OR. When Kate Sullivan (Anna Faris), a single mom working several jobs while studying for a nursing degree, is dispatched to steam-clean his carpet, an unpleasant confrontation ensues. When Leonardo falls into the water, hits his head, and develops amnesia, Kate's boss (Eva Longoria) encourages her to get revenge by pretending that Leonardo is her husband and the father of her three daughters. Which is not difficult since Leonardo's greedy sister Magdalena (Cecilia Suárez), who hopes to gain control of the family business, concocts a story that her brother was devoured by sharks. Kate brings Leonardo home to help around the house and work as a day laborer in construction. And, of course, once cast in the role of an ordinary man, Leonardo evolves emotionally and connects with Kate's kids. About a third of sitcom-writer-turned director Rob Greenberg's remake is in Spanish with Hispanic pop culture references that may resonate with Latino audiences. Unfortunately, unlike Russell and Hawn, there is no chemistry between Derbez and Faris, which ultimately leaves viewers over-bored. Optional. (S. Granger)



Pickings ★★1/2

Dark Passage, 102 min., R, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray: \$25.99



Style triumphs over substance in Usher Morgan's weird combination of neo-noir thriller and spaghetti Western. Morgan, who wrote, produced, directed, and edited the movie, here demonstrates that he has mastered every flamboyant trick of the trade: indulging in peculiar camera angles, occasionally inserting animated sequences, and even keeping one figure in black-and-white to contrast with the lurid surrounding color scheme. Morgan also shifts back and forth chronologically to tell a fairly simple tale about a woman who, after witnessing her husband's murder, leaves her southern hometown to run a bar in Michigan, only to be confronted by a local gang threatening her business—and her family. Enraged at the thought of having her world upended a second time, she decides to respond to violence with violence. Nothing in *Pickings*—which is the name of the bar—is subtle. The lead performances—from Elyse Price as matriarch Jo Lee-Haywood, Katie Vincent as her daughter Scarlet, and Joel Bernard as “Uncle Boone,” a Clint Eastwood-style gunslinger—are wildly

over-the-top, as are those of the large supporting cast, often to embarrassing effect. The narrative is punctuated by snippets of down-home songs from the bar's guitarist, while a background score composed by Vincent in the style of Ennio Morricone is ladled gleefully over the action. *Pickings* is far from a good movie, but the strange mash-up of genres, pointlessly extravagant technique, and numerous nods to Leone, Tarantino, and the Coen brothers make it a fascinating oddity. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Play the Devil ★★1/2

Breaking Glass, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

A Jamaican teen named Gregory (Petrice Jones) is caught in a web of familial expectations driven by the failures of his addict father and hot-tempered, ne'er-do-well brother. Gregory's loving grandmother, the family matriarch, counts on her grandson to amount to something with a scholarship to medical school. When he has a one-night stand with a girl, his grandmother treats it as a major betrayal of a scripted, straight-and-narrow destiny. But despite Gregory's resignation to a planned existence, he harbors secret wishes of his own, especially a desire to take photographs. When his spirited performance in a pagan-like rite during Carnival draws the attention of the predatory, wealthy businessman James (Gareth Jenkins), Gregory finds himself receiving the sort of generous, benevolent attention he craves from a father figure. But when it becomes clear that James is interested in a sexual conquest, Gregory is simultaneously repulsed and drawn to unanticipated possibilities. Up to this point, *Play the Devil* serves up an interesting dance of sexual ambivalence set against powerful family pressures. But once Gregory becomes hostile to James's attentions, the film loses steam and heads toward a predictable ending. Still, if filmmaker Maria Govan falls short on sustained drama, she's very good at capturing the textures of given moments, from the ways male friends communicate to the mad pitch of Carnival festivities. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

RBG ★★★

Magnolia, 98 min., PG, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Gloria Steinem calls her "the closest thing to a superhero that I know," suggesting why diminutive Ruth Bader Ginsburg has become an icon. As the second woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court—after Sandra Day O'Connor—Justice Ginsburg has become an unlikely trendsetter. With rapper Dessa's "The Bullpen" playing over glimpses of Ginsburg exercising (accompanied by disparaging



quotes from her right-wing critics), this documentary profile illuminates why RBG is one of our best and brightest legal eagles. When Ginsburg entered Cornell University, there were four men for every woman undergraduate. There she met her future husband, Marty, who became a New York tax lawyer and was her staunchest supporter until he died, in 2010. At Harvard Law School in the mid-1950s, Ginsburg was one of nine women in a class of more than 500 men (at a dinner for the first-year women, the dean asked each why she was taking a seat that could be occupied by a man). When RBG argued her first case at the Supreme Court—1973's *Frontiero v. Richardson*—she addressed men who did not acknowledge or even understand gender-based discrimination. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter put her on the federal bench, and President Bill Clinton appointed her as the 107th Supreme Court Justice in 1993. Directors Betsy West and Julie Cohen intercut archival material with informative interviews and public appearances. A two-time cancer survivor, RBG forged a firm friendship with her right-wing foil, the late Antonin Scalia, and she laughed at Kate McKinnon's parody on TV's *Saturday Night Live*. An engaging and informative overview of the life and career of this notable Supreme Court justice, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

The Rider ★★1/2

Sony, 103 min., R, DVD: \$25.99

Chinese-born writer-director Chloé Zhao obviously feels a deep affinity for America's heartland, introducing intriguing, offbeat Native American characters in this evocative, empathetic, elegiac, contemporary Western set on the desolate, poverty-stricken Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. *The Rider* tells the melancholy story of Sioux cowboy Brady Jandreau—playing a version of himself as Brady Blackburn. After a near-death rodeo injury leaves him with a metal plate in his head, neurological seizures in his hand, and under a doctor's order never to ride again, stoic Brady must decide what to do with his life, being deprived not only of his one true passion but also of the family's primary source of income. Living in a rented trailer, Brady's taciturn, alcoholic/gambler dad Wayne (Tim Jandreau) has no money, and his ebullient little sister Lilly (Lilly Jandreau) suffers from a birth defect which has limited her intellectual capabilities. Brady's mom died of cancer years earlier. Adding to Brady's dilemma, his best friend Lane (Lane Scott) is institutionalized with severe disabilities from his own rodeo injuries (the pair watch rodeo videos together for hours). Determined to help Lane, who is unable to speak, Brady devises a physical therapy exercise, hoisting his buddy onto a saddle, so he can hold onto



the reins on an imaginary horseback ride. Horses are and have been Brady's life; to risk another head injury could be fatal, but that's all Brady knows. The actors are all non-professional, portraying fictionalized versions of themselves in this fine docudrama. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

Satellite Girl and Milk Cow ★★★

Shout! Factory, 81 min., not rated, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$22.99

A whimsical romantic fantasy, this South Korean animated feature is as strange as the title suggests. There is indeed a satellite that crashes to Earth and is transformed into a girl with rocket feet, a missile-shooting arm, and a dying battery that requires constant recharging. And there is a walking, talking Holstein milk cow that was a musician who was changed into a bovine after being dumped by his girlfriend. There is also a roll of toilet paper that is the reincarnation of the ancient wizard Merlin, a giant ambulatory Franklin stove incinerating the broken-hearted, and a black-market organ thief using magic to hunt the sudden spate of human cows for their livers. Don't expect any explanation for any of this while an unlikely love story plays out, as the curious satellite is smitten by the love songs of the morose, moping cow. This feature debut by Chang Hyung-yun is full of creative detail and goofy humor, and while the animation lacks the visual sophistication of Japan's Studio Ghibli (let alone the big-budget American CGI spectacles from Pixar), it is a charming and fun film. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Seagull ★★1/2

Sony, 99 min., PG-13, DVD: \$25.99, Sept. 25

Tony Award-winning theater director Michael Mayer's adaptation of Anton Chekhov's classic 1896 play focuses on the summer residents of an idyllic lakeside estate located about 50 miles from Moscow. Annette Bening dazzles as aging Irina Arkadina, a narcissistic diva who arrives at the country dacha of her elderly, ailing brother Sorin (Brian Dennehy), bringing along celebrated short-story writer Boris Trigorin (Corey Stoll), who loves fishing. Meanwhile, hapless schoolteacher Medvedenko (Michael Zegen) pursues the estate manager's daughter Masha (Elisabeth Moss), an aspiring actress who is in love with the penniless young playwright Konstantin Treplyov (Billy Howle), who desires manipulative Nina Zarechnaya (Saoirse Ronan), a teenage neighbor who fancies Trigorin, with the latter ostensibly sleeping with Treplyov's elitist mother. Got that? Plus, there's Masha's mother, Paulina Andreyevna (Mare Winning-



ham), and Dr. Dorn (Jon Tenney), who serves as a compassionate observer. Not surprisingly, a melancholy mood reigns supreme, while much vodka is consumed (plus there's a failed suicide attempt and a seagull crashes to earth). The film re-arranges some pivotal Chekhov dialogue, diluting and distracting from some of the narrative's comedic impact, while upping the pace and increasing the tension. Esteemed director Sidney Lumet didn't fare as well with his 1968 screen version, starring Simone Signoret, James Mason, and Vanessa Redgrave. But this new adaptation is also flawed, although the performances are superb. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Sheikh Jackson ★★★

MVD, 93 min., in Arabic w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$14.99

An oddball winner, *Sheikh Jackson* was Egypt's official entry in this year's Academy Awards' foreign film category. Set in 2009, filmmaker Amr Salama's eccentric gem centers on a joyless, strict Muslim cleric named Sheikh Khaled Hani (Ahmad El-Fishawi), who sleeps under his bed (as a reminder that death can happen, at any time) and condemns the Beyonce videos his young daughter watches, but has a reckoning after the news of Michael Jackson's death. It seems that years before Hani turned into a pillar of conservative religious values (he demands that his wife be fully covered when she's outside), he found personal liberation in the 1980s as a major fan of Jackson's, even wearing his hair and dressing like the late King of Pop. Hani's Jackson obsession during adolescence also drew him to a girl who still haunts him decades later, and it spurred the cruelty of his father after Hani's mother died. Jackson's death brings to the fore several unresolved experiences of pain and loss, after which Hani begins to ease up on his tightly-wound demeanor and lose some certainty in doctrinal faith. A female therapist (who refuses to wear a scarf) enters the picture, but the most interesting evidence of Hani's crisis is in a dream that recreates one of Jackson's iconic music videos. The tonal mix here can be uneven (intense drama, extreme goofiness), but this is ultimately an engaging character study. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Siberia ★1/2

Lionsgate, 104 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$21.99, Sept. 18

The career revival that Keanu Reeves kickstarted with the *John Wick* movies comes to an abrupt halt in director Matthew Ross's dreary tale of chicanery set in the Russian diamond trade.



Reeves stars as Lucas Hill, who arrives in St. Petersburg to complete a deal to sell rare blue diamonds to Russian mobster Boris (Pasha D. Lychnikoff). Unfortunately, his partner—who is supposed to have the stones—has disappeared, forcing Hill to travel to Siberia to try to retrieve them. Here he runs afoul of some loutish locals, only to be rescued by Katya (Ana Ularu), a bartender who quickly falls into bed with Hill. But there is still that unfinished business with Boris, so a fearful Hill enlists the help of a big-time South African dealer interested in acquiring the diamonds himself. And to add a bit of confusion, there is an intervention by corrupt Russian government agents. *Siberia* rouses itself for a climactic gun battle in the snow, but for most of its running-time the film is a murky, tedious trek through uninteresting territory with the perpetually morose Reeves as an uncharismatic travelling companion. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Summer 1993 ★★★

Oscilloscope, 96 min., in Catalan w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Sept. 18

So often the first reflex with a child who has endured a major loss is to shield him or her from pain. That's more or less what happens to 6-year-old Frida (Laia Artigas), whose father died and mother is dying in a hospital that Frida is kept away from. Frida is full of unanswered questions that she isn't ready to identify let alone seek clarity about. Frida is sent from her Barcelona home to live with an aunt, uncle, and young cousin on a huge plot of land—with thick and beautiful-if-spooky woods—in the Spanish countryside. Here, Frida very slowly picks up hints about the cause of her mom's death. Disoriented and fearing further abandonment, Frida sometimes acts out in impulsive, angry ways, although she is not nearly as sociopathic as her aunt (Bruna Cusi) believes her to be. Writer-director Carla Simón is a gifted storyteller who is able to convey a lot even in such prosaic scenes as washing a dress, climbing trees, and indulging in a popsicle treat (with one in each hand). Sometimes families break apart and new, stronger configurations arise, and that is the evolutionary process deftly charted in this fine semi-autobiographical film. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Superfly ★★

Sony, 116 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99, Sept. 11

One has to wonder why music-video auteur Director X—aka Julien Christian Lutz—decided to remake Gordon Parks Jr.'s gritty 1972 blaxploitation



classic. It had to be the music, but how could he improve on the funky Curtis Mayfield soundtrack that served as a kind of Greek chorus? According to Canadian-born Director X, he was inspired by hip-hop star Future, one of the originators of the Atlanta sound, who enlists help from Miguel, Khalid, and Lil Wayne. Moving the setting from Harlem to Atlanta, the action-crime-thriller revolves around Youngblood Priest (Trevor Jackson), a savvy coke dealer with a neck tattoo and pompadour, who wants out of supplying drugs, noting "no car can outrun fate." Priest's ruthless rivals, known as the Snow Patrol, are headed by Q (Big Bank Black), whose sociopathic protégé Juju (Kaalaa "K.R." Walker) tries to gun him down. Priest has two live-in girlfriends: sophisticated Georgia (Lex Scott Davis) and younger Cynthia (Andrea Londo). Chasing one "last score" so he can retire, Priest turns to his mentor, martial-artist Scatter (Michael Kenneth Williams), but when that doesn't work, Priest and his hard-working partner (Jason Mitchell) drive across the border to connect with a Mexican drug cartel manager (Esai Morales). In a subplot, Priest is also being exploited by a couple of corrupt police officers (Brian F. Durkin, Jennifer Morrison), leading to a satirical sting effort involving Outkast rapper/songwriter Big Boi as Atlanta's mayor, who is running for re-election. Along with the obvious objectification of women, *Superfly* serves up a superficial, formulaic gangsta story. Optional. (S. Granger)

A Taste of Phobia ★

Artsploitation, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Most anthology movies are hit-and-miss affairs, but this horror compilation is composed entirely of misses, 14 micro-budgeted shorts that offer few genuine scares, although some are certain to cause a measure of disgust. The linking device here is that each short reflects a particular phobia—some commonplace, such as mysophobia (a fear of germs), and others more unusual, like parthenophobia (a fear of virgins). One ("Nyctophobia," fear of the night) comes from Nigeria, but the rest are Italian (six), British (four), or American (three). Regardless of country of origin, the common element here is mediocrity: in many cases the narrative is crushingly obvious (a man with a bad cold who fears taking medicine is poisoned when he finally chugs the cough syrup), and hyperkinetic editing and jagged camera angles are overused in a desperate attempt to generate chills. Some segments are marginally better than others, but the worst is certainly Jason Impey's "Coprophobia" (fear of feces), in which a man wrestles with a combative lump of excrement for a few minutes. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



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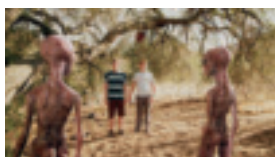
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(French) Invited to present his first feature film in Normandy, a young director has no idea this film tour is about to change his life. From wild stampedes to woeful screenings, from trawler trips to drunken evenings, he ends up finding inspiration in this unlikely town at the end of the earth.

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(Italian) In this merry movie of matrimony, happily engaged Antonio brings his fiancé Paulo to the exquisite old Italian village of his birth to meet his headstrong parents and reveal his sexuality. He soon sets out on a quest to make a city founded on religious tradition understand that love is love.

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Tehran Taboo ★★★

Kino Lorber, 94 min., in Farsi w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Ali Soozandeh, an Iranian-born filmmaker in Germany, uses rotoscope animation (essentially painting over live-action footage) in this film about the contradictions and hypocrisies of life in modern urban Iran. *Tehran Taboo* focuses on the stories of a handful of characters: Pari, a woman who works as a prostitute to support her mute son while her husband is in prison; Sara, a professional woman in an oppressive marriage and the early stages of a pregnancy she doesn't want; and Babek, a young musician who has a one-night stand with a girl who claims that she was a virgin and needs surgery to restore her maidenhead or her husband-to-be will kill them both. Through these tales, Soozandeh paints a portrait of a culture in which women have no rights (Pari's husband refuses to give her a divorce and she has no legal recourse) and where officials who enforce Islamic law are quick to indulge in the behavior for which they punish others. While it may sound salacious or exploitive, the film features nuanced characters in complex relationships, while also taking a serious look at the lives of the poor and disenfranchised. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Three-Way Wedding ★1/2

Film Movement, 100 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

A silly, obnoxious chamber drama full of scene-chewing performances, Jacques Doillon's *The Three-Way Wedding* finds perversely narcissistic playwright August (Pascal Greggory) at home when his ex-wife Harriet (Julie Depardieu)—a stage actress who found success performing in August's works—comes around for discussions about a new work. Harriet is accompanied by her lover Theo (Louis Garrel), a fellow actor who is both excited and ambivalent about auditioning for August. With strong hints that the divorced couple had a passionately kinky love life (and both still feel that compulsion), the lines are quickly blurred between old and new relationships. Adding to the confusion is August's pending romance with a much younger assistant working out of his house. While all of this feels like the groundwork for one of the rare comedies by Ingmar Bergman, Doillon makes every scene and line of dialogue ludicrously pregnant with opaque meaning. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)



Truth or Dare ★1/2

Universal, 100 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98

This silly movie about a possessed version

of the titular party game—here, participants die if they refuse to play or follow the rules—focuses on a group of California friends who go to Mexico for spring break. Squeaky-clean Olivia (Lucy Hale), who has been enticed into ditching her plans to work for Habitat for Humanity by her flighty roommate Markie (Violett Beane), is joined by Markie's handsome boyfriend Lucas (Tyler Posey), and a second couple—cynical premed Tyson (Nolan Gerard Funk) and his girlfriend Penelope (Sophia Ali)—as well as Brad (Hayden Szeto), a gay kid keeping his sexuality a secret from his macho cop dad. On their last night south of the border, they encounter thoroughly obnoxious classmate Ronnie (Sam Lerner) and a stranger named Carter (Landon Liboiron), who takes the group to an abandoned mission church for a late-night bash and initiates a game of Truth or Dare. And then Ronnie bolts, announcing that he has saved himself by foisting the cursed game on his fellow students, who must play indefinitely for the controlling demon's pleasure—until they either die or pass it on to others. The film then follows everyone back to the States, where those who a) refuse to play, b) lie instead of telling the truth, or c) fail to complete a dare, all die gruesomely. Naturally, the survivors will eventually return to Mexico to try to end the curse, leading to the most frightening development of all: a threatened sequel. Both boring and dumb, this is not recommended. (F. Swietek)



Uncle Drew ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 103 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Sept. 25

NBA All-Star Kyrie Irving comes to the rescue in this amusing senior citizen comedy, a spin-off of viral Pepsi ads in which the Boston Celtics point guard plays a grumpy, geriatric character. The set-up introduces basketball fanatic Dax (Lil Rey Howery), who has always wanted the neighborhood team that he coaches to win the \$100,000 cash prize in Harlem's "Rucker Classic" tournament. But then his longtime rival (Nick Kroll) not only poaches his streetball squad but also his materialistic girlfriend (Tiffany Haddish). Having already spent his life savings on the registration fee, Dax convinces legendary Uncle Drew (Irving) and his septuagenarian buddies—Big Fella (Shaquille O'Neal), Preacher (Chris Webber), wheelchair-bound Boots (Nate Robinson), and legally-blind Lights (Reggie Miller)—to return to the court one last time. Not surprisingly, the seemingly decrepit but surprisingly agile geezers outplay the "rappity-hippity-hop" youngbloods. Produced by ESPN in partnership with Pepsi and Nike,

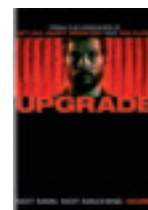


this cliché-cluttered underdog story unevenly directed by Charles Stone III has its heart in the right place with messages about teamwork and taking risks to achieve your goals (as Uncle Drew says: "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."). Retired WNBA star Lisa Leslie appears as Preacher's irate wife. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Upgrade ★★

Universal, 100 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

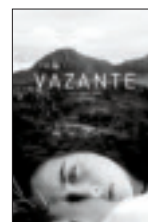
Writer-director Leigh Whannel's *Upgrade* is a grisly, gruesome, dystopian sci-fi tale that serves up a low-budget revenge saga. One evening when automobile mechanic Grey Trace (Logan Marshall-Green) takes his tech-exec wife Asha (Melanie Vallejo) to visit a reclusive client—billionaire inventor Eron (Harrison Gilbertson)—Asha's self-driving car goes awry, after which she is killed by a gang in a brutal attack that also leaves Grey a quadriplegic. Grief-stricken and severely depressed, Grey is suicidal—until Eron offers an experimental "biomechanical modification" (to be inserted into his spinal cord) known as STEM, an artificial intelligence entity (voiced by Simon Maiden in a formal monotone that resembles HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*). STEM enables Grey not only to regain control of his body but also to experience extraordinary physical prowess. "Do not get overconfident, Grey," STEM warns. Keeping his new mobility a secret from the detective (Betty Gabriel) investigating his case, Grey becomes a vigilante, determined to find the hoodlums and wreak vengeance. A schlocky techno thriller, this is an optional purchase. (S. Granger)



Vazante ★★1/2

Music Box, 117 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Visually spellbinding but also meandering and overlong, filmmaker Daniela Thomas's period piece is set in the titular area, a remote region of southeastern Brazil, in 1821, shortly after the country won independence from Portugal. Antonio (Adriano Carvalho) runs a faltering diamond mine acquired by marriage. His gloom intensifies when his wife dies in childbirth (along with their newborn son), leaving him living with his senile mother-in-law, his housekeeper and steward, and his compliant slaves, one of whom serves as his occasional companion in bed. Antonio decides to marry Beatriz (Luana Nastas), the young daughter of his brother-in-law Bartholomeu (Roberto Audio), but after the wedding she takes up secretly with slave Feliciano's (Jai Baptista) son Virgilio (Vinicius Dos Anjos). This nar-



rative thread plays rather like a Greek tragedy transposed to the New World, but Thomas adds other strands to the tapestry: one involves a freedman named Jeremias (Fabricio Boliveira), who Antonio hires to turn his land into a farm while training his slaves in agricultural work; another centers on Lider (Toumani Kouyaté), a surly rebel among a group of recently-arrived African slaves, who attempts an escape; and a third deals with Bartholomeu fending off his wife's demands that he stand up to Antonio and take some of the family property back. Thomas's attempt to juggle all of these elements results in a frustrating lack of focus in this slowly-paced film. But she does create a compelling sense of time and place as well as a brooding atmosphere, delivered in stunning black-and-white cinematography. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Wall ★★★½

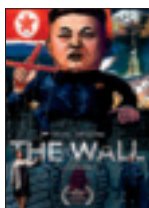
Dreamscape, 73 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Irish photojournalist-filmmaker David Kinsella intended to make a conventional documentary about life in North Korea, but when the authorities insisted on controlling the shoot to present a false portrait of a socialist paradise he altered his plan, crafting a fictionalized tale in which three Protestant Irish boys—with one, played by Corey McKinley, representing the young Kinsella himself—engage in soccer beside a tall wall that divides them from hated Catholic kids who are playing their own game. The boys are startled by the sudden appearance of Yung Hee (Yuna Shin), a poetess who tells them about her life in North Korea. Featuring the earlier footage shot by Kinsella in North Korea, along with dreamlike flashbacks and surrealist animation, Yung recalls idyllic times spent with her grandfather, her indoctrination into the regime's cultish idolization of the leader, her remittance to a labor camp when her verse failed to please government judges, and her eventual escape. Yung's testimony leads young David to question his animosity toward the children on the other side of the wall. Mixing gritty naturalism with hallucinatory hyperrealism, *The Wall* features a bold mix of styles, imaginatively and powerfully conveying its messages about tolerance and the dangers of ideology taken to a brutal extreme. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

West of the Jordan River ★★★

Kino Lorber, 84 min., in Hebrew, Arabic & English w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Israeli director Amos Gitai's 2017 documentary is



subtitled "Field Diary Revisited," pointing back to his 1982 nonfiction film *Field Diary*, which proved to be so controversial that Gitai was forced to leave his homeland for a decade. Like that earlier effort, this follow-up is essentially a road trip through the occupied West Bank, with special emphasis on the city of Hebron, where Gitai talks to people about current conditions and their hopes and dreams for the future. Periodically, he also inserts excerpts from talking-head interviews with journalists and politicians regarding the Israeli occupation, which run the gamut of opinion—from demands that it end to defenses of the current policy of expanding settlements and building walls. Some of the conversations are rancorous, while others—like one in which a Palestinian boy cheerfully maintains his wish to become a martyr in jihad against Israel despite Gitai's insistence that life is better than death—are deeply sad. Interviews with a group of disillusioned Israeli veterans and with members of a support group for Israeli and Palestinian mothers who have lost children in the conflict point toward a yearning for reconciliation. Gitai signals his own rueful attitude about the possibility of progress by bookending the film with excerpts from a 1994 interview with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the soldier-turned-statesman who initiated the peace process and insisted it would not be derailed (Rabin was assassinated the following year). Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Woman Walks Ahead ★★★

Lionsgate, 102 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$21.99

In the 1880s, wealthy, widowed artist Catherine Weldon (Jessica Chastain) traveled by train from New York to the Lakota Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the Dakota Territory to paint a portrait of Chief Sitting Bull, the last surviving Sioux warrior from the defeat of Lt. Col. George Custer almost 15 years earlier. Dubbed an "Eastern agitator," Weldon's unwelcome arrival on the frontier is mocked by Col. Silas Grave (Sam Rockwell), and she is ordered to leave by Fort Yates's dismissive commanding officer (Ciarán Hinds). Helped by a sympathetic Lakota lawman (Chaske Spencer), defiant Weldon walks through the open prairie, finding depressed Chief Sitting Bull (Michael Greyeyes) digging potatoes in his garden. Although he demands compensation and the pair verbally spar for a while, proud Sitting Bull eventually agrees to pose, while Weldon becomes embroiled in his struggle to retain Lakota land rights. Surprisingly, they are assisted by the arrival of the U.S. Cavalry's Gen. Cook (Bill Camp), who has insidious reasons to encourage the assembled tribes to oppose the proposed Allotment Act—a gesture of defiance that ultimately led to the



1890 Sioux massacre at Wounded Knee. Inspired by Eileen Pollack's 2002 book *Woman Walking Ahead: In Search of Catherine Weldon and Sitting Bull*, this loosely adapted historical biographical film directed by Susanna White is recommended. (S. Granger)

You Were Never Really Here ★★★

Lionsgate, 90 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99

Although Lynne Ramsay's film is about a hit-man, it is totally unlike the usual hardboiled thriller. Loosely adapted from the titular 2013 novella by Jonathan Ames, the story finds its protagonist caught up in a political conspiracy—which is admittedly a standard trope—but Ramsay gives it a defiantly idiosyncratic spin. Joe (Joaquin Phoenix) is no fast-moving action hero but rather a lumbering, bearded bear of a man whose preferred weapon is a hammer, which he wields with grim ferocity. Joe is also a devoted son who cares—in between jobs—for his elderly, infirm mother. He's haunted by memories—depicted in hallucinatory visual montages—of childhood abuse and traumatic wartime experiences, personal demons that lead him to concentrate on a particular kind of mission: eliminating those involved in the sex trade and helping girls who have been seduced or kidnapped. Joe's latest assignment involves rescuing the daughter of a prominent politician and terminating those responsible with extreme brutality. But he ends up in the crosshairs of the powerful men behind the trafficking, even as he descends into madness. Ramsay's attempt to transform a piece of glorified pulp into art is visually striking and Phoenix's performance is mesmerizing, but the film remains a sterile exercise that will leave many viewers unmoved—whether to sympathy, revulsion, or anger. A film that has split critics, this is a prime example of style over substance. Optional. (F. Swietek)



You Will Be Mine ★★★

Film Movement, 100 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Timing is everything. Classical piano student Marie (Judith Davis) is learning how to be both expressive and poised while playing at a famous conservatory when she enters into a mad, disruptive relationship with her roommate Odile (Fabienne Babe). The two drift into a sexual experience one night that sparks a volatile possessiveness by Odile, which not only complicates Marie's competitive performances with her fellow piano students but also a promising romance with a male pianist. Odile and Marie fall out repeatedly, but the former has a way of closing off possible escapes before Marie can get out. Filmmaker Sophie Laloy's



French drama *You Will Be Mine* takes a page from the 1992 American thriller *Single White Female*, but it is more psychologically complex and mysterious, as the relationship between the two women bends towards mutual craziness. And Laloy excels at visually using the apartment layout as a fight or flight labyrinth. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Zama ★★½

Strand, 115 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Blu-ray: \$32.99

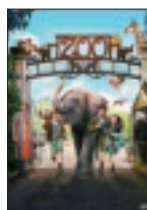
Based on the titular 1956 novel by Antonio di Benedetto, this offbeat period piece—set during the height of Spain's imperial powers in the 18th century—centers on Diego de Zama (Daniel Giménez Cacho), an amoral functionary for the Crown and former war hero who is now serving in an unrewarding administrative capacity for his government in the colonial wilds of South America near what is now Paraguay. Zama has become an outmoded cog caught up in the malfunctioning machinery of the Spanish Empire. Although he has no particular belief in anything other than a hope to return to his family in Buenos Aires one day, he still must help to subdue and control the local indigenous tribes who refuse to recognize Spanish dominance. Renowned director Lucrecia Martel's *Zama* exudes a seedy elegance, as the claustrophobic environs of de Zama's post creates a quiet maelstrom of tense, unrequited sexual desire and creepy fetishism (de Zama is, among other things, a known voyeur who enjoys stealing peeks at unclothed native women). And *Zama* delivers a twisted sort of *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* fatalism in how it slowly grooms its protagonist for a final comeuppance that seems wholly appropriate but not necessarily predictable. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)



Zoo ★★★

Samuel Goldwyn Films, 96 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99

Based on a true story, director Colin McElvor's heartwarming family film centers on the efforts of rebellious 12-year-old Tom Hall (Art Parkinson) and his friends to save a baby elephant named Buster during 1941 air raids on Northern Ireland. After Tom's veterinarian father leaves to fight in WWII, Tom continues to visit the Belfast Zoo every day. While he's fond of all the animals, Tom quickly develops a special bond with Buster. When Germany starts bombing the countryside, civil defense authorities determine that, if they escaped, the predatory animals could be a threat to the community, so the military preemptively puts 33 down (shots are heard but not seen). Fearing the beloved pachyderm could be next, Tom and his



friend Jane (Emily Flain) devise a plan to save Buster, but they will need the strength of the school bully, Pete (Ian O'Reilly). Eccentric Denise Austin (Penelope Wilton) provides a walled-in backyard in which to hide Buster. Costarring Toby Jones as a strict, by-the-books security guard, this feel-good tale is recommended. (S. Granger)

Classic Films

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer ★★½

Kino, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Filmmaker Norman Taurog's 1938 classic adaptation of Mark Twain's beloved 1876 novel covers all of the major scenes from the book as it follows the (mis)adventures of young Tom Sawyer (Tommy Kelly), who is fond of skipping school, playing with frogs, and new classmate Becky Thatcher (Ann Gillis). Living with his frequently exasperated Aunt Polly (May Robson) and constantly being ratted out by his smarmy, smirking half-brother Sid (a perfect David Holt—no kid ever begged more for a baked confection to the face), Tom regularly finds himself in troubles minor (such as the famous fence-whitewashing episode) and major (witnessing a murder). Wooing Becky by day and joining up with pal Huckleberry Finn (Jackie Moran) on nocturnal outings, Tom eventually winds up in court accusing Injun Joe (Victor Jory) of a murder, and later meets Joe in a suspenseful climax while lost in caves with Becky. One of the best versions of this oft-filmed tale—presented here in its original 1.33:1 aspect ratio with a Technicolor image that is bit soft but overall reasonably vibrant—the David O. Selznick production *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* remains a great family film. Including both the original full-length version and an abridged 77-minute 1954 reissue, this is highly recommended. (R. Pitman)



The Ancient Law (Das alte Gesetz) ★★★½

Flicker Alley, 135 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

This 1923 silent drama offers fascinating insight into how the Weimar-era German film industry viewed its Jewish population. Set in the mid-19th-century, the story follows the journey of Baruch, the son of a Galician shtetl rabbi, who defies his father's wishes and pursues a job as a theater actor. Through a quick series of admittedly too-convenient circumstances, he becomes the protégé of the Austrian archduchess and a star of the Vienna stage. But Baruch's assimilation into



secular society is tested when the archduchess falls in love with him. Director E.A. Dupont explores the uneasy relationship between Christians and Jews, with deeply sympathetic performances by Ernst Deutsch as the conflicted Baruch, Avrom Morewski as his old-school father, and a subtle Henry Porten as the obsessed, taboo-breaking archduchess. The original German negative was lost, and this reconstruction was created from five disparate nitrate prints released in foreign markets. Presented with two musical accompaniments—an ensemble score by Donald Sosin and Alicia Svigals, and an orchestral score by French composer Philippe Schoeller—extras include a featurette on the restoration, a surviving excerpt from a 1923 documentary on Weimar Germany's cinema, a photo gallery, and a booklet with essays. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

The Big Country ★★★½

Kino Lorber, 166 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Gregory Peck stars as sea captain James McKay, who follows his love, Patricia Terrill (Carroll Baker), to her family cattle ranch in Texas and lands in the middle of a range war between his fiancée's cattle baron father Maj. Henry Terrill (Charles Bickford)—who still wears his military rank like a badge of authority—and a scruffy family of desert rats led by Rufus Hannassey (Burl Ives). Although McKay has traded the endless oceans for the open prairie, he navigates the latter with the same tools and self-reliance he used at sea, while also befriending his fiancée's best friend, Julie Maragon (Jean Simmons), a schoolmistress who shares his pacifist philosophy and determination to keep the peace between the sparring families. Charlton Heston is Bickford's loyal foreman, who carries an unrequited torch for Patricia, and Chuck Connors is Hannassey's bullying son. Oscar-winning director William Wyler helms this sprawling Western epic with poise, polish, and old-fashioned Hollywood professionalism. Peck displays stiff sincerity as the noble hero, but the supporting cast steals the show, especially Ives (in an Oscar-winning performance) as the crusty white trash patriarch whose sense of honor is stronger than his sense of family—a man who is more honest than Bickford's moneyed robber baron. Backed by Jerome Moross's rousing score, this newly remastered edition features extras including audio commentary by film historian Sir Christopher Frayling, the 1986 *American Masters* documentary *Directed by William Wyler*, interviews, an archival behind-the-scenes featurette, and image galleries. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



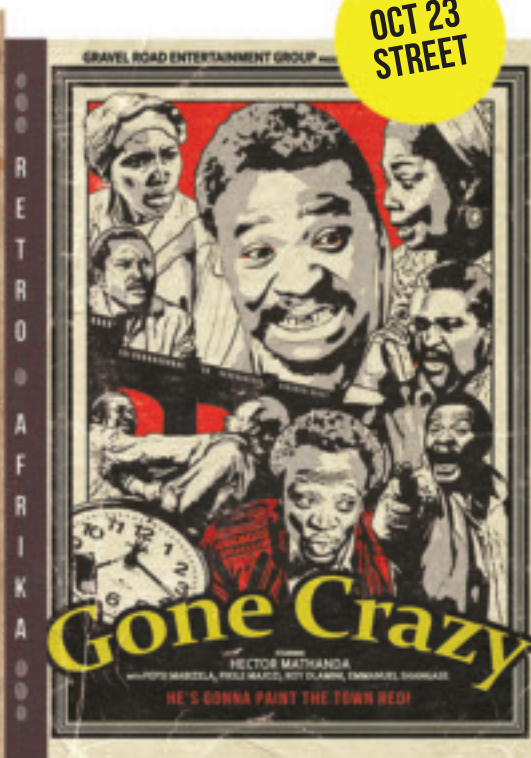
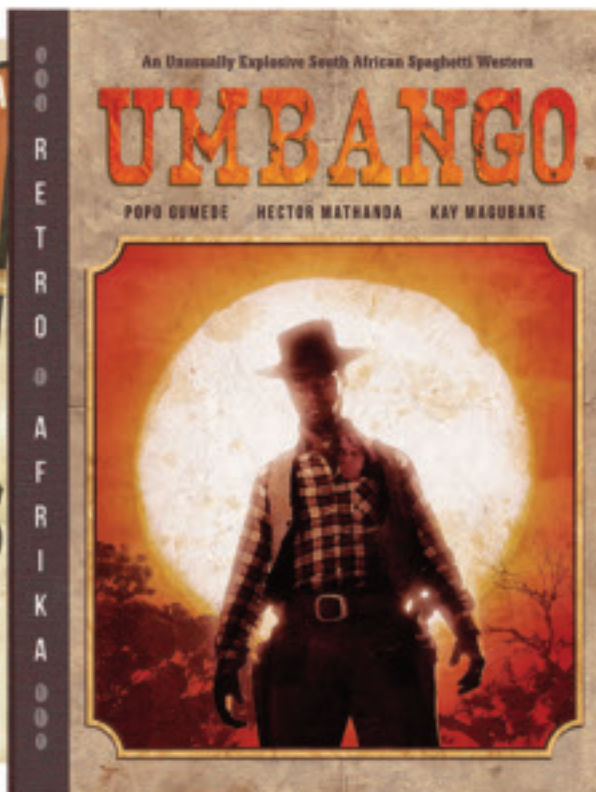


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A well-executed jewelry store heist finds two amateur thugs on the run from the cops. They desperately stash their loot in some shrubs in the boonies, before getting caught and thrown in jail. Fast forward to two teenage boys who find a bounty of hidden diamonds upon a camping expedition! Meanwhile, the two thugs make a daring escape, and pick up the trail of their loot and the boys.

UMBANGO

UPC: 845637002757 SRP: \$19.95

In the wild west of KwaZulu-Natal, two friends accused of murder prepare to fight back against a powerful, ruthless businessman bent on revenging his dead brother. When the innocent friends learn of a gang out for their blood, they prepare to stand their ground the old-fashioned way. A final gun fight showdown in their five-horse frontier town brings the action to a head; blood will be spilt.

GONE CRAZY

UPC: 845637002771 SRP: \$19.95

A psychopath seeking revenge on a small town mayor steals a mega-bomb from a local research facility: part one of his convoluted plan to blow up the dam and drown the town. Two police inspectors, working different angles of the case, team up to rescue a kidnapped professor and stop the madman in the tracks of his evil scheme. The clock is ticking in this lo-fi romp...

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Cold Turkey ★★½

Olive, 102 min., PG-13, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Norman Lear's sharp-toothed 1971 comedy broadside swipe at Nixon-era American values (originally released with a PG rating, and upgraded to PG-13) is set in a recession-hit Iowa town called Eagle Rock, whose mayor (Vincent Gardenia) enlists a charismatic local priest (Dick Van Dyke) to spearhead a revitalization that will be made possible if the town wins a self-promoting contest by a cigarette giant to award millions to any community that can quit smoking for a month. The great cast—best known for their TV work—includes Bob Newhart, Tom Poston, Jean Stapleton, Barnard Hughes, Paul Benedict, and Judith Lowery, who all go through the agonies of nicotine withdrawal and gnawing greed (meanwhile, the classic radio-comedy team of Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding play multiple roles as the entire electronic media covering the escalating circus). Certain elements are badly dated—zingers about Walter Cronkite, hippies, and the Maidenform Bra ad campaign—but Randy Newman's musical score is wonderful, and the film succeeds as a fine example of Watergate-era satire, created before Lear's *All in the Family* made him a household name. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



The Complete Sartana

★★★

Arrow, 5 discs, 466 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$99.99

There was a lot more to the spaghetti Western than just Sergio Leone and Clint Eastwood, as demonstrated by this fine compilation of the five "official" movies featuring one of the Man With No Name's many imitators: a mysterious black-clothed gunslinger called Sartana (other movies using the name were unauthorized knock-offs). Sartana is played in all but one of the films—released between 1968–70—by Gianni Garko (George Hilton took the role in the third film, 1970's *Sartana's Here...Trade Your Pistol for a Coffin*), and all but the first were directed by Giuliano Carnimeo under the name Anthony Ascott (1968's *If You Meet Sartana...Pray for Your Death* was helmed by Gianfranco Parolini, credited as Frank Kramer). Over the course of the series, Sartana evolves from a slick gunman to an avenging angel of sorts (in 1969's *I Am Sartana, Your Angel of Death*), and his weapons become increasingly exotic: he begins with a trick derringer, but in the final entry, *Light the Fuse...Sartana Is Coming* (1970), he not only plays an organ that turns into a machine gun, but is accompanied by a little robot (looking a bit like a mini-R2-D2) that not only fires bullets but also sets off explosions. Throughout the series, Sartana



confronts corrupt officials and townspeople (in the first film Klaus Kinski plays a deadly gang leader) and leaves piles of corpses in his wake. But while acting on the side of good he also has mercenary motives, making him an intriguingly enigmatic figure. The *Sartana* movies might not be Leone-quality classics, but this set will certainly be appreciated by fans of spaghetti Westerns. Extras include audio commentaries, cast and crew interviews, a video essay by critic Jonathan Bygraves, and photo galleries. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Curse of the Cat People ★★½

Shout! Factory, 70 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.99

The success of the original 1942 *Cat People*—a shadowy psychological horror film simmering with sexual repression—prompted RKO to request a sequel from producer Val Lewton. His solution was surprising and inventive: a psychological drama with a child's perspective and a ghost story twist, centered on Amy (Ann Carter), the dreamy young daughter of the hero (Kent Smith) of the original film. Schoolgirl Amy is constantly lost in her imagination, so much distracted by butterflies and stories of magic that she is shunned by other children. Left alone, she befriends the aged widow of the "haunted" manor in the neighborhood and conjures up a magical friend: the ghost of Irena (Simone Simon, from the first film), who is presented as a benevolent spirit looking after a dreamy girl. More modern fairy tale than horror film, *The Curse of the Cat People* was a box-office flop, perhaps because audiences expected more psychological horror rather than delicate fantasy, but this is a tender tale of childhood innocence with poetic images created on a B-movie budget by first-time feature filmmakers Gunther von Fritsch and Robert Wise. Extras include separate audio commentaries by film historians Steve Haberman and Greg Mank, the featurette "Lewton's Muse: The Dark Eyes of Simone Simon," an audio interview with actress Carter, and a stills gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Dietrich & Von Sternberg in Hollywood ★★★★★

Criterion, 6 discs, 542 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$124.99

When Josef von Sternberg returned to America after directing *The Blue Angel* (1930) in Germany, he brought with him a new discovery: Marlene Dietrich, who he featured in six lavish, lush productions that brought Hollywood art and craft to stories of sexuality and power with exotic overtones and fetishistic undercurrents. Dietrich made her American debut as a sultry cabaret singer opposite Gary Cooper in *Morocco* (1930), a French For-

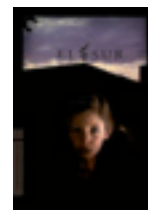


eign Legion melodrama that dressed Dietrich in a man's tuxedo and earned Oscar nominations for both Dietrich and director von Sternberg. And she played a Mata Hari-like spy in *Dishonored* (1931), sent to seduce Russian officer Victor McLaglen, and starred as a nightclub entertainer in *Blonde Venus* (1932) who battles her jealous husband (Herbert Marshall) for custody of their child. Dietrich and von Sternberg's greatest collaborations are arguably *Shanghai Express* (1932), starring Dietrich as a high-class prostitute on a train carrying civilian evacuees from war-torn Peking, and *The Scarlet Empress* (1934), with Dietrich as Russia's Catherine the Great. Less an historical epic than a self-aware creation of expressionist decadence, *The Scarlet Empress* was a commercial flop, as was the pair's last collaboration *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935), a beautiful but narratively austere melodrama. Taken together, these films combine ornate set design, delicate lighting, and a battery of hanging nets, smoke, and cross-hatched slats to create a dense visual canvas while addressing issues of sexuality and power through both imagery and melodramatic narratives. Von Sternberg was able to conjure up a unique kind of glamour that has never been replicated by any other director. All six films are newly remastered and are accompanied by a wide array of extras, including new and archival documentaries and featurettes on Dietrich and von Sternberg, new and archival interviews with film historians and experts, a video essay by critics Cristina Álvarez López and Adrian Martin, a Lux Radio Theatre adaptation of *Morocco* featuring Dietrich and Clark Gable, the song "If It Isn't Pain" (removed by censors from *The Devil Is a Woman*), and an 80-page book with essays. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Axmaker)

El Sur ★★½

Criterion, 94 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Ten years after releasing his lovely and tender 1973 debut *The Spirit of the Beehive*, director Victor Erice made his second feature, based on a novella by Adelaida García Morales that was published in 1985. Set in 1957 Spain, 1983's *El Sur* is narrated by the adult Estrella, who recalls her father Agustín (Omero Antonutti), a doctor with special "powers" that he channels—like a medium or a water diviner—using a pendulum on a chain to find water under the earth. Eight-year-old Estrella (Sonsoles Aranguren) idolizes her father, a loving enigma estranged from his own parents (his father supported the Fascists), who spends much of his time locked away in the attic performing experiments. But Agustín changes after seeing an actress named Irene Ríos (Aurore Clément)—a mystery woman



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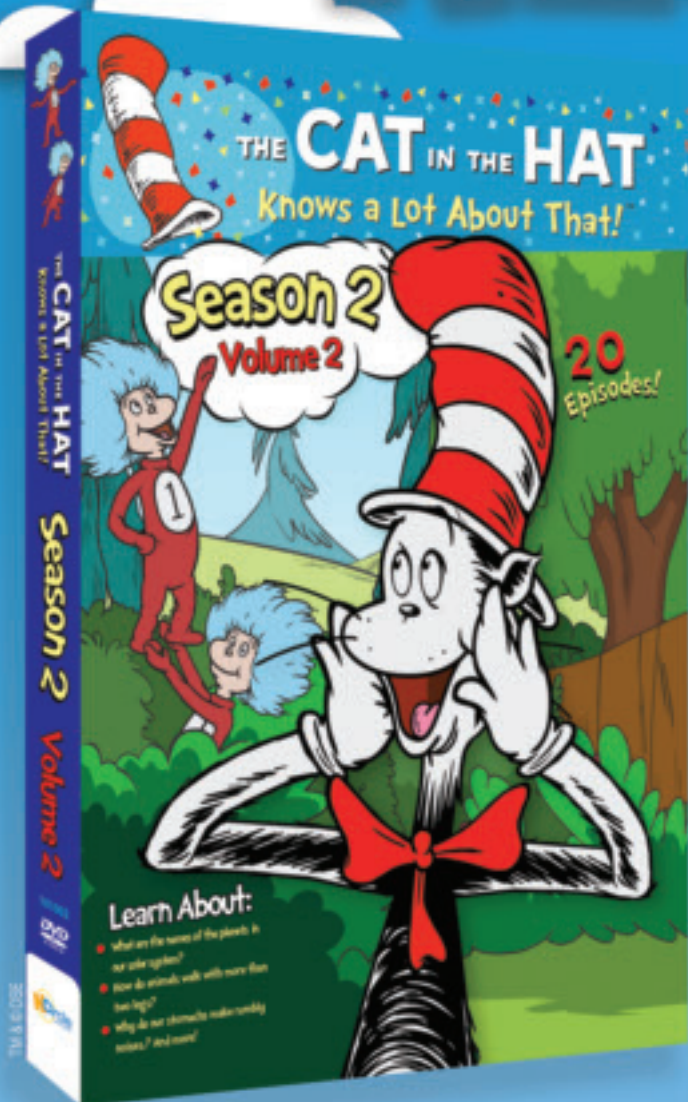
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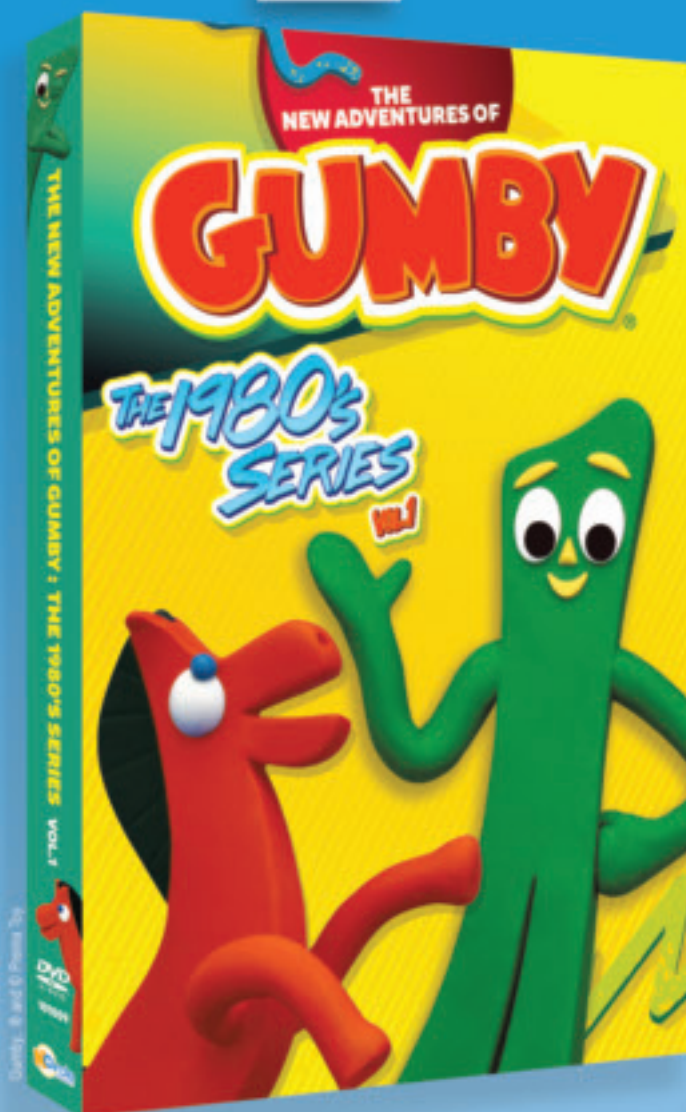
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from his past—in a movie melodrama. He begins to disappear at night and starts drinking until he becomes completely withdrawn, while Estrella's mother (Lola Cardona) takes to bed because of her "condition," leaving Estrella disillusioned with the parents she once adored. Part memory film and part reconstruction of childhood by a grown woman trying to make sense of her guarded parents and family mysteries, *El Sur* is a film of delicate images—a beautiful and intimate movie about storytelling, growing up, and coming to terms with the failures of family. Extras on this Criterion edition include a "making-of" featurette, a 2003 interview with Erice, a 1996 TV show episode with critics discussing *El Sur*, Morales's original novella, and an essay by critic Elvira Lindo. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Female Trouble ★★1/2

Criterion, 97 min., NC-17, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99



This 1974 feature by cult filmmaker and self-proclaimed "Pope of Trash" John Waters is a perverse satire of "good girl gone bad" drive-in melodramas, starring his longtime collaborator Divine (the screen name of the drag persona created by Harris Glenn Milstead) at her most gleefully outrageous. Divine plays teenage brat Dawn Davenport, a high school girl who runs away from home and into a life of wanton hedonism all because she didn't get cha-cha heels for Christmas. During the course of the film she is molested by a sleazy motorcycle thug (also played by Divine), gives birth to an unwanted daughter (Mink Stole), variously works as a go-go dancer, cat burglar, and underground model, and turns herself into an unlikely fashion statement in an apocalyptic fashion show. Divine cuts loose in a wild, eye-rolling performance as a demented diva who locks her mother-in-law in a giant birdcage and massacres the opening night audience of her nightclub act. One of the most extreme films from a director famed for redefining the borders of bad taste, this aggressively offensive movie is presented with a 4K restoration from original 16mm elements in this Criterion edition that features extras including a 2004 audio commentary by Waters, new and archival cast and crew interviews, deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes footage, and an essay by film critic Ed Halter. A strong optional purchase for more adventurous collections. (S. Axmaker)

Frank & Eva ★★1/2

Cult Epics, 97 min., in Dutch w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

Dating from 1973, the second of Suriname-Dutch writer-director Pim de la Parra's so-called artsploitation films now seems more intriguing than shocking. Although

it contains some nudity and—for its time—fairly explicit sex scenes, *Frank & Eva* is essentially a portrait of an inveterate womanizer named Frank (Hugo Metsers) who repeatedly cheats on his long-suffering girlfriend Eva (Willeke van Ammelrooy). She tolerates his wild misbehavior until she informs Frank that she is pregnant, and the latter—claiming that she is trying to trick him into embracing the kind of family life he has always avoided—angrily abandons her to move in permanently with a younger woman (Sylvia Kristel) he has been sleeping with on the side. In response Eva takes up with their mutual friend, a more stable guy who has nonetheless long been Frank's pal and enabler. Acting as the voice of experience is Max (Lex Goudsmit), an elderly, ailing bon vivant who ruminates about past mistakes and warns Frank that he too could wind up alone and regretful. So while the overall plot accounts for the film's reputation as a freewheeling sex romp, it also ultimately serves—despite its cynical sense of humor (as, for example, in Frank's periodic phony suicide attempts)—as a cautionary tale about the cheekily rule-breaking conduct that it appears to celebrate. Extras include audio commentary by the director, a featurette on sex in Dutch cinema, and photo galleries. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Greaser's Palace ★★

Doppelganger, 91 min., R, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Underground filmmaker Robert Downey (father of actor Robert Downey Jr.) went big with this 1972 counterculture Western satire, a surreal retelling of the story of Christ set on the lawless frontier of the 19th-century American West, filled with tasteless gags and outhouse humor. Allan Arbus stars as "Jessy," who parachutes onto the prairie in a 1940s-style zoot suit complete with brightly-colored tie, wide-brimmed hat, and vaudeville gloves, proclaiming "I'm on my way to Jerusalem to be an actor-singer-dancer." Along the way, Jessy heals the lame, raises the dead, walks on water, and then gets his big break performing a boogie woogie song and dance at Greaser's Palace, a saloon run by the despotic (and constipated) Seaweedhead Greaser (Albert Henderson). The film also features Toni Basil as a topless Indian maiden who wanders through the film (providing gratuitous nudity), and Hervé Villechaise as a sex-maddened dwarf with a transvestite "wife" (Stan Gottlieb), and it ends—spoiler alert for those completely unfamiliar with Christianity—with Jessy being crucified in the desert. Downey made this aggressively offensive, self-indulgent Christ parable on a budget of \$1 million, and it was panned by

the critics and bombed with audiences. Still, it is considered a minor cult film, although there is little intelligence behind the parody and it still feels like a failed attempt to simply shock. Extras include an archival video interview with Downey conducted by writer Rudy Wurlitzer, and liner notes by the late Jonathan Demme. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

The Great Silence

★★★1/2

Film Movement, 105 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



A 1968 spaghetti Western set in the winter snows of a mountain frontier town, *The Great Silence* is one of the best—if also bleakest—Italian Westerns ever made, yet it was rarely seen until its 2018 restoration and re-release. Directed by Sergio Corbucci, the film stars the great French actor Jean-Louis Trintignant as a mute gunslinger known as Silence, a mercenary who has come to the isolated town of Snow Hill. Klaus Kinski costars as the savage bounty hunter and gang leader Tigero, who hunts down starving outlaws hiding in the hills and terrorizes the town trapped by the winter snows. Hero and villain aren't so clear cut here: both play everything by the letter of the unforgiving frontier law, with master gunman Silence provoking his opponents to draw first and Tigero refusing to give Silence an excuse to shoot. Kinski delivers one of his most engaging performances and Trintignant brings real enigma to his role, part suffering savior and part cunning mercenary. Frank Wolff is affable as a moral but ineffectual sheriff with no love of bounty killers and Vonetta McGee makes her film debut as a widow out for revenge. This smart film subverts expectations right up to the brutal ending. Extras include an introduction by filmmaker Alex Cox, the 1968 documentary *Western, Italian Style*, two alternate endings, and a booklet with an essay by film critic Simon Abrams. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Gun Crazy ★★1/2

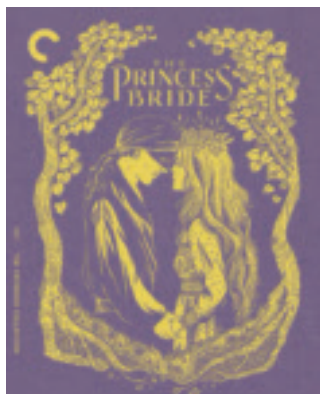
Warner, 87 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



John Dall is reformed juvenile delinquent turned gentle marksman Bart Tare and Peggy Cummins is Annie Laurie Starr, a sexy sideshow markswoman in a cheap travelling carnival in this exhilarating 1950 film noir from director Joseph H. Lewis. Bart is obsessed with guns but at heart is a sensitive guy who takes up a life of crime in order to hang on to Annie, who wants money and doesn't care how she gets it (but she's no mere femme fatale; her passion for Bart is genuine). Lewis turns this thriller about criminal lovers on the run into an explosive and passionate mix, stirring



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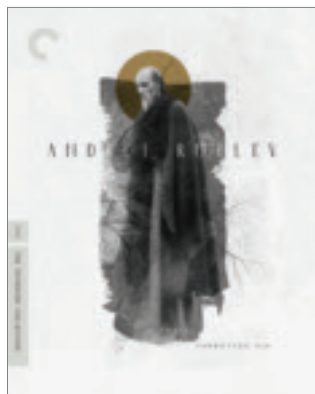
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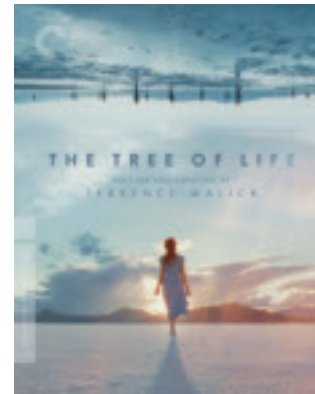
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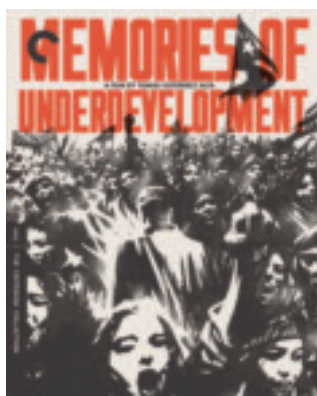
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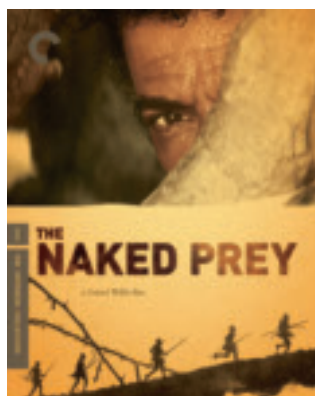
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together sex, guns, love, and violence into a proto-*Bonnie and Clyde*. Mixing documentary-like realism with bravura style and expressionist exaggeration, Lewis creates one riveting set piece after another on a starved budget, filming a heist and subsequent high-speed getaway in a single long take without ever leaving the back seat of the car. But what fuels the film is the smoldering passion that burns through the screen as the couple's doomed romance careens out of control down the highway to hell. Blacklisted screenwriter Dalton Trumbo co-wrote the script under the name Millard Kaufman and a young Russ Tamblyn plays the boyhood Bart in the opening scene. Bowing on Blu-ray in a newly remastered transfer from the 2013 restoration, extras include audio commentary by critic and film noir specialist Glenn Erickson, and the 2006 documentary *Film Noir: Bringing Darkness to Light*. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

King of Hearts ★★★

Cohen, 102 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$25.99

Although somewhat dated, Philippe de Broca's 1966 cult classic farce still packs a memorable anti-war punch in its justly-acclaimed final scenes. Set in the French countryside during World War I, the film stars Alan Bates as Scottish soldier Charles Plumpick, who works with messenger pigeons. Due to a name mix-up, Plumpick is mistakenly chosen to disarm a bomb set by nearby German forces in a village where the locals have wisely fled—all except for the inmates of a lunatic asylum who are now free to roam the streets, donning various colorful work costumes and assuming civilian and military positions for which they are no doubt supremely unqualified. Plumpick desperately tries to find the bomb and save the people, but the latter are far more interested in playing dress-up and have crowned Plumpick as the King of Hearts—a role as leader of the insane that Plumpick gradually comes to prefer over the insanity of war. Geneviève Bujold costars as a tutu-wearing innocent who becomes Plumpick's love interest. The silly antics of the inmates eventually grow somewhat precious and tiresome but the film is redeemed by a powerful ending. Extras include audio commentary by film critic Wade Major, and interviews with Bujold and cinematographer Pierre Lhomme. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Manila in the Claws of Light ★★★1/2

Criterion, 126 min., in Tagalog w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99

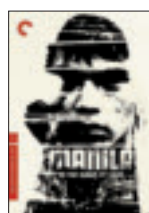
Widely considered the finest Filipino film ever made, and regularly included in best films lists, Lino Brocka's brutally raw 1975 melodrama is set against the background of

a capital mired in economic distress and social upheaval under the Marcos dictatorship. Julio (Rafael Roco, Jr.), a young man from a provincial fishing village, has come to Manila in search of his sweetheart Ligaya (Hilda Koronel), who was lured from her hometown with the promise of a high-paying job but was instead forced into prostitution. Julio only learns of this after struggling to survive by taking first a bone-breaking construction job under a cruel boss who cheats workers out of a portion of their wages, and then a humiliating position in the male sex trade. Eventually he finds Ligaya and prepares to take her home, but a twofold tragedy intervenes, closing the film with a famous freeze frame. *Manila in the Claws of Light* is a strange hybrid: on one hand, it presents an uncompromising depiction of the squalor of the city and its impoverished underclass that is reminiscent of Italian neo-realism; on the other, gauzy flashbacks to the idyllic countryside romance of Julio and Ligaya have the look of glossy TV commercials. Still, it stands in stark contrast to the general run of Filipino movies of the era, which were mainly either dumb adventures or sappy soap operas, and it still carries a strong emotional punch. Digitally restored for this fine Criterion edition, extras include a short introduction by Martin Scorsese, Christian Blackwood's 1987 feature-length documentary profile *Signed: Lino Brocka*, a 1975 "making-of" featurette, a new interview with filmmaker and critic Tony Rayns, and a booklet with an essay by film scholar José B. Capino. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Moon Child ★★★

Cult Epics, 120 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.95

A mix of fantasy, supernatural thriller, and surreal odyssey, this fantasia from Spanish filmmaker Agustí Villaronga follows the odyssey of a bullied orphan with telekinetic powers who is brought to a research center harboring children and adults with similar abilities. Enrique Saldana, who plays the curious orphan David—with wide eyes and an agape mouth—wears an expression of perpetual anxiety. After David discovers that the scientific facility is run by a cabal of ruthless occultists who are plotting to bring the fabled "Moon Child" into the world and are willing to sacrifice their test subjects in the process, he runs off with other targets to find sanctuary in Africa. Lisa Gerrard (of the cult band Dead Can Dance, which also provides the dreamy soundtrack) plays Georgina, the alcoholic, dimwitted young woman impregnated with



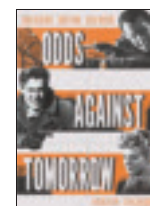
the Moon Child, and Maribel Martín costars as an agent torn between serving the cause and protecting David as she tracks him to Africa, where he is taken in by a local tribe. Inspired by the 1923 novel *Moonchild* by notorious occultist Aleister Crowley, this largely forgotten cult movie takes viewers on a surreal journey filled with beautiful and mysterious imagery (including dramatic shots of the moon as David unleashes his power). Extras include an interview with the director, isolated score tracks by Dead Can Dance, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Odds Against Tomorrow

★★★

Olive, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Robert Wise approaches a classic film noir premise—a team of volatile criminals gather for a heist that goes fatally awry—with a modern style and a story that turns on the poison of hate, anger, and racism. Harry Belafonte—who developed this 1959 project based on the titular 1957 novel by William P. McGivern—gets top billing as Johnny, a jazz musician, divorced father of a young daughter, and gambling addict in debt to the mob. Robert Ryan is Earle, a resentful, hot-tempered war veteran and ex-con with a history of violence and a deep-seated bigotry. Ed Begley is the disgraced ex-cop who masterminds a bank heist in a small town and recruits the two initially resistant men. Wise brings a modernist look to the film with austere imagery and a style that favors close, intimate shots that foreground the intensity of the characters' emotions and conflicts. The score by John Lewis (of The Modern Jazz Quartet) combines classical and jazz approaches for an unconventional soundtrack that enhances the tension. The social commentary here is hardly subtle, but this is an intense crime drama with vivid performances and terrific supporting turns by Shelley Winters and Gloria Grahame. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)



Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) during September and October for DVD/Blu-ray-specific comments added to the video movies reviewed here, as well as new reviews of current and classic films, including: *Adrift*, *Damsel*, *The First Purge*, *First Reformed*, *Hearts Beat Loud*, *Hereditary*, *The House of Tomorrow*, *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*, *Oceans 8*, *Show Dogs*, *Solo*, *Tag*, *The Woman in the Window*, and much more!

Black Lightning: The Complete First Season

★★★

Warner, 544 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99



Based on a comic book created in the 1970s, *Black Lightning* features the first African American superhero from the DC Comics universe to headline a live-action TV show and is the newest addition to CW's expanding superhero line-up. As developed by producers and showrunners Salim Akil and Mara Brock Akil, this is also an urban comic book thriller that uses the format to explore the black experience in contemporary America. Cress Williams stars as Jefferson Pierce, a dedicated and passionate high school principal in a predominantly black neighborhood—and father of two adult girls—who has the power to harness and control electricity. Pierce gave up being Black Lightning after it cost him his marriage but he dons the costume again when a rogue drug dealer kidnaps his daughters (who begin to manifest their own powers) and he battles the threat of a lethal new drug that is traced back to a government conspiracy with echoes of the notorious Tuskegee experiment. The series brings race, social justice, and the responsibilities of family and community together with colorful action and it is currently the only show to feature a superhero approaching middle-age. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2018 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, a 2017 Comic-Con panel, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Dear Murderer: Series 1

★★★

RLJ, 2 discs, 233 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



Mark Mitchinson stars as real-life New Zealand lawyer Mike Bungay—a controversial barrister who defied the staid tradition of the legal profession in a high-profile career that was marked by courtroom theatrics and a self-destructive private life—in this witty and entertaining five-part 2017 series based on the titular 1997 book by Ronda Bungay (who married Mike in 1983). The show follows Bungay from his troubled working-class origins in England to his unconventional introduction to law school (apparently chosen by coin toss), and on to his rise to fame when he defended the first and (to date) only man accused of espionage in New Zealand, in 1975. Mitchinson brings to Bungay a mix of scrappy underdog defiance and professional confidence—the rebel lawyer taking on the establishment with legal acumen and flamboyant tactics. Bungay is captivating and entertaining, but also completely self-absorbed, an alcoholic constantly getting into scraps, flagrantly

cheating on his wives and lovers, and brazenly thumbing his nose at the legal system that made his career (for instance, Bungay registered his car in the name of his dog to avoid parking and speeding tickets). The series ends midway through his career (and before his marriage to Ronda), leaving the door open for a second series. Likely to appeal to fans of offbeat British and Australian crime dramas, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Delicious: Series 2

★★★1/2

RLJ, 187 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99



This second season of the British comic drama about two ex-wives of a celebrity chef teaming up to run a restaurant finds Gina (Dawn French), a respected chef in her own right, and Sam (Emilia Fox), a talented manager and businesswoman, clashing as they try to save the resort built by the late Leo (Iain Glen). The operation was saved from bankruptcy last season by an influx of hidden cash left by Leo, but tax inspectors are looking into suspicious finances while the two women struggle to overcome personal conflicts. Meanwhile, Sam's son (Ruairi O'Connor) is romantically interested in Gina's daughter (Teresa Benelli), who is also his stepdaughter, and Gina's estranged father (Franco Nero)—a charming con-man who abandoned Gina years before—returns. And Adam (Aaron Anthony), a handsome and gifted young chef, joins the staff, bringing with him a secret that adds even more conflict to the overheated kitchen. As in the opening season, the ghost of Leo periodically appears to the living and provides narration and plummy observations on life and death. All in all, there is plenty of melodrama and lots of plot twists (some surprising, others not) in this lively drama featuring a streak of dark humor and soap opera emotions. Not all of it is convincing (Gina's renewed romance with an old boyfriend lacks passion, and the affair between Adam and Sam leaves a bad taste), but the family drama is strong and the gorgeous location (a small tourist village in Cornwall) makes for a lovely backdrop. Presenting all four episodes from the 2017-18 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a photo gallery. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Detectorists: Season 3

★★★★1/2

RLJ, 2 discs, 179 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



A most unassuming British comedy, this low-key series about the lives of best friends and fellow metal detector enthusiasts Andy (series writer and creator Mackenzie Crook) and Lance (Toby Jones) is also one of the warmest and most

rewarding comedies on TV. This season begins with the pair's favorite open field on the verge of being closed to create a solar farm, leaving them only a few weeks to search for Roman artifacts they are sure lay buried under the sod. Meanwhile, Andy and his wife Becky (Rachael Stirling) move in with her mother (Diana Rigg) as they struggle to save for a home of their own, and Lance begins dating a co-worker (Rebecca Callard) while his grown daughter upsets his quiet life when she moves into his spare room. Their forays into the fields with metal detectors are their passion and the series celebrates the multitudinous benefits brought by their hobby: not just the opportunity to follow dreams of finding treasure, but also the connection to history, the quiet pleasure of the countryside, bonding over a shared passion, and sharing that love with a community of like-minded characters who have their own eccentricities. The lessons of karma and generosity are genuine and satisfying in this gentle comedy of big dreams and small pleasures. Compiling all six episodes from the 2017 third season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and cast interviews. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

East West 101: Series 2

★★★

RLJ, 2 discs, 378 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



The second season of the Australian cop drama centered on Zane Malik (Don Hany), a devout Muslim on the major crime squad in an ethnically diverse area of Sydney in the post-9/11 world, opens with the bombing of a delivery van of a printing business that has ties to white nationalists. The government suspects Muslim terrorists and assigns a national security agent (Gerald Lepkowski) to the investigation, who remains with the task force even after they trace the crime to the Russian mob. Malik, who clashes with the agent's anti-immigrant leanings, is sent undercover, where he finds links to human trafficking and sex slaves. Meanwhile, the team is faced with white nationalist attacks on the Muslim population, including the brutal torture of a schoolboy kidnapped in response to the bombing (which the public still assumes was the work of an Islamic extremist terrorist), and Zane's partner Sonny Koa (Aaron Fa'aoso), a native Pacific Islander, reaches out to help fellow locals avoid getting caught up in gangs and crime. The series gives squad commander Wright (Susie Porter) a larger dramatic role, although Koa remains an underused supporting character in this otherwise well-made show that tackles familiar themes such as the toll of police work on personal lives, along with racism, white nationalism, and extreme tactics used to prevent undocumented refugees from reaching Australia. *East West 101* is

grittier than the usual British and Australian cop drama. Compiling all seven episodes from the 2009 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Girlfriends: Series 1

★★★

RLJ, 2 discs, 294 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



Although the title and likable cast—Zoë Wanamaker, Phyllis Logan, and Miranda Richardson—might suggest a genial comedy, writer Kay Mellor's British series is, despite some farcical elements, essentially a drama. The three stars play old friends who come together to support one another when each faces a crisis. As Linda (Logan) and her husband Micky (Steve Evets) are enjoying an anniversary cruise, he disappears overboard, and she is accused of having pushed him. Even if she is exonerated, Linda may still face penury if Micky's death is ruled a suicide and his insurance fails to pay. Meanwhile, Gail (Wanamaker) is not only dealing with a recent divorce but also the return of her ne'er-do-well son Tom (Matthew Lewis) from prison and having to care for his little boy. And Sue (Richardson) has just been fired as an editor at a glossy fashion magazine by her boss (and married long-time lover) John (Anthony Head), who she considers suing. The mystery of what happened to Micky is the major arc running through the series, but other narrative threads involve various children of the central characters. The sharpness of Mellor's dialogue and the enthusiasm of the cast make even the most implausible plot turns here palatable. Compiling all six episodes from the 2018 first season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a cast panel at a Television Critics Association event. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Hostages: Season 1

★★★

Kino Lorber, 2 discs, 385 min., in Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



This Israeli suspense series premiered almost simultaneously with a CBS-aided English-language adaptation in 2013 (the American version was cancelled after a single season). The premise is that a group of four masked home invaders take the Danon family captive: parents Eya (Micha Celektar) and Yael (Ayelet Zurer), daughter Noa (Dar Zuzovsky), and son Assaf (Yoav Rotman). The quartet have a single demand: Yael, a surgeon tasked with operating on the prime minister, must ensure he dies during the procedure. The reason why is withheld until late in the series, but viewers learn early that the intruders' leader is an Israeli counter-terrorist officer. Yael manages to delay the operation,

but that merely prolongs the family's ordeal, and subplots proliferate. Assaf repeatedly tries to escape, and Noa's soldier boyfriend infiltrates the house in an effort to rescue her. Eya, a school headmaster, is deeply in debt to some unsavory people, who are now demanding that he pay up. And, inevitably, as the situation drags on, disputes arise among the hostage-takers. *Hostages* is a well-acted series, but in order to stretch the story the writers resort to twists that are increasingly implausible; still, the strengths here generally outweigh the weaknesses. Compiling all 10 episodes from the first season, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

I'm Dying Up Here: Season One

★★★1/2

Paramount, 3 discs, 581 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



Set in the standup comedy scene of the early 1970s—when Richard Pryor was pushing the envelope as a rising star and a spot on *The Tonight Show* could launch a career—this Showtime original series serves up a mix of comedy and drama centered on the dreams and frustrations of struggling young comics in Los Angeles. Melissa Leo stars as Goldie, owner and manager of the reigning comedy club on the Sunset Strip, and Ari Graynor is Cassie Feder, a female comedian (favored by Goldie) working in a culture dominated by males. The rest of the cast is dominated by angry, aggressive, self-involved young (and not-so-young) men in a show that takes on drug addiction, self-destructive behavior, and how the high of performing is its own drug. Clark Duke and Michael Angarano are the most interesting figures in this guy's club, playing hopefuls who arrive from Boston with no money, and RJ Cyler stands out as a young black comic who tackles race and other incendiary subjects. The series is based on the titular 2009 book by William Knoedelseder and Goldie is a fictionalized version of Mitzi Shore, the matriarch of the Sunset Strip club The Comedy Store, which launched the careers of numerous comedians. The period setting is fun and the standup comedy is well-done but the dramatic scenes fall into cliché and Leo tends to overplay her role as the tough Jewish businesswoman in a chauvinist world. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2018 first season, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

Maximilian and Marie de Bourgogne

★★★

Kino Lorber, 2 discs, 290 min., in German & French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Austrian national pride is at the center of filmmaker Andreas Prochaska's opulent six-part 2016 miniseries about the strategy leading up to the marriage of Maximilian

(Jannis Niewöhner), son of German Emperor Frederick III, to Mary (Christa Thérét), the new duchess of Burgundy, in 1477. Their union paved the way for the rise of the house of Hapsburg, which would hold power in the Empire until World War



I. At the time Frederick was a weak ruler, poor and threatened by the Hungarians, the Ottoman Turks, and internal dissension, while Burgundy was about to be swallowed up by the wily French monarch, Louis XI, who was supported by the region's well-to-do burghers. With the acquisition of Burgundy's riches, however, Maximilian was able to expand his Empire to the west by staving off French conquest while stabilizing its eastern frontier. The series covers the machinations at all three courts in 1477 (a brief postscript shows Mary's death in a hunting accident five years later), but does so in a markedly romantic fashion, portraying the relationship between Maximilian and Mary as love at first sight, and presenting Maximilian as an almost perfect chivalric knight (apart from a tendency to recklessness) who overcomes every obstacle (a bout with the plague, assassination attempts) in his quest for glory. Niewöhner and Thérét make an attractive couple, the locations are well chosen, and the supporting cast is strong. Fans of period romance loosely based on history will likely enjoy this. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Menace and Murder: A Lynda La Plante Collection

★★★1/2

RLJ, 5 discs, 720 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99



Combining three vintage British TV programs from the pen of the writer best known for *Prime Suspect*, this anthology proves to be a mixed bag. The best of the trio is *Mind Games*, a 2001 feature-length telefilm starring Fiona Shaw as a former nun now working as a police profiler, who takes on the case of a serial killer murdering middle-aged women in their own homes. Although the denouement is almost incredibly complex, Shaw's committed performance endows the plot with a genuine human dimension. The four-part miniseries *Killer Net* (1998) is comically dated in its depiction of Internet activity, but the tale of a group of college students—including a young Paul Bettany—who make the mistake of playing a malevolent video game remains creepily effective. The weakest offering is also the longest, *Supply and Demand*, which began as a 1997 telefilm about British agents foiling a drug-smuggling operation, and was expanded the following year into a six-part miniseries with Miriam Margolyes starring as the head of the undercover team. Divided into three two-episode

arcs, the first one, "Raw Recruit," centers on another drug-smuggling ring, but the second, "Golden Goose," focuses on unsavory activities at a notorious London club, and the third, "Blood Ties"—easily the most interesting of the bunch—features Richard Johnson as a British defector who returns from exile in Russia for reasons that the team must unravel. *Supply and Demand* is essentially a series of procedurals filled with rather dull sequences of suspects' movements being tracked via surveillance cameras; it's understandable why, despite Margolyes's presence, the series was cancelled after a single season. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Orange Is the New Black: Season 5 ★★★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 725 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$34.99



While previous seasons of *Orange Is the New Black*—one of Netflix's signature original shows—have taken place over a few weeks or months, the fifth season unspools over three days as the inmates of Litchfield Women's Correctional Facility riot and take over the prison. In the fourth season, the prison was pushed by an aggressive new head of guards toward maximum security behavior and turned into a pressure cooker by overcrowding, and the situation explodes when the women finally fight back against the increasingly brutal treatment by the guards. But here the sudden freedom from guards, routine, and rules becomes an invitation for many to give into their worst impulses. There is little unity and a lot of conflict among the ladies, with many sabotaging the efforts of Taystee (Danielle Brooks) to negotiate for better conditions and more humane treatment. And there is even an element of tragedy as Crazy Eyes (Uzo Aduba) goes off her meds and careens into manic reactions to the chaos. Piper (Taylor Schilling), once the central figure of the show, is just another self-absorbed bystander here until she's finally roused into meaningful action. Entertaining, engaging, and often riveting, the popular *Orange Is the New Black* maintains its high-quality writing and storytelling, mixing dark comedy and dramatic conflict, along with some acute observations on the corrosive effects of prison life. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2017 fifth season, extras include episode commentaries, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a gag reel. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Striking Out: Series 2 ★★★★★

RLJ, 2 discs, 327 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



The second season of this colorful Irish legal drama starring Amy Huberman as Tara Rafferty—a young

solicitor who left a powerful Dublin law firm and her cheating fiancé Eric (Rory Keenan) to strike out on her own—opens with Tara kicked out of her office, her street smart assistant Ray (Emmet Byrne) in jail, and her go-to private detective Meg (Fiona O'Shaughnessy) betraying her to her former boss, Richard Dunbar (Paul Antony-Barber), who happens to be Eric's father. Tara finds new space with George Cusack (Maria Doyle Kennedy), a veteran independent solicitor who reluctantly rents to Tara's chaotic practice but finds Tara's private life and legal cases getting tangled up with her own. Tara takes on cases involving child custody, a messy divorce, and a nun suing her former convent for breach of contract, while her mentor Vincent (Neil Morrissey) works on a high-level corruption case. The second season continues to pit Tara against her old firm in individual cases, while she uncovers evidence of sinister schemes and cover-ups that lead directly back to Dunbar. The uneasy alliances, shady deals, and Tara's own tricky balance between seeking justice and crossing legal lines gives this light drama a bit of grit but it's the characters who make the show. Compiling all six episodes from the 2018 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, a panel discussion from a Television Critics Association event, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Tunnel—Vengeance: The Complete Third Season ★★★★★1/2

PBS, 2 discs, 300 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$49.99



The final season of this British-French crime drama, adapted from the 2011 Swedish-Danish series *Bron/Broen*, ends on a very dark, but satisfying note. The convoluted plot—involving such hot-button contemporary issues as the immigration crisis, human trafficking, and British withdrawal from the European Union—begins with a fishing boat arriving in flames on the coast of Kent, carrying three Syrian children and a smuggler with his tongue savagely cut out. The situation grows even more grave when the refugees are later found in the beds of three English children, who have mysteriously disappeared. Simultaneously, a horde of rats is unleashed in the Channel Tunnel, severely injuring a French maintenance worker, an incident that is eventually tied to an Internet upload that implies a modern Pied Piper is at work. The trans-Channel nature of the puzzle throws gruff British detective Karl Roebuck (Stephen Dillane) and his French counterpart Elise Wasserman (Clémence Poésy) together again, but their relationship is clearly strained: Karl has left his wife, and Elise has not only been demoted but is still obsessing over an old case involving a boy's disappearance that she believes she bungled—resulting in the imprisonment of an innocent man. All of these

plot threads are eventually tied up, but not before the introduction of further unsettling elements, including police corruption, the fate of children lost in the Bosnian war of the '90s, and an actual *danse macabre*—leading to a literally explosive conclusion. *Vengeance* is a thoroughly engrossing final chapter in a series that began well and has only improved. Compiling all six episodes from the 2017-18 third and final season, extras include a "making-of" featurette. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Will & Grace: The Revival, Season One

★★★

Universal, 2 discs, 336 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Eleven years after the original run of the sitcom *Will & Grace*, the cast and creators reunited for a revival that puts everyone back where they started: interior decorator Grace (Debra Messing) is once again single and rooming with best friend Will (Eric McCormack), a lawyer in a New York law firm; unsuccessful actor Jack (Sean Hayes) is still living across the hall; and Karen (Megan Mullally) remains rich and thoughtless, working for Grace because she has nothing else to do. The original series was groundbreaking for putting gay characters and love lives on equal footing with the conventionally straight characters within the conventions of smart-aleck sitcoms built around sex-obsessed singles, ridiculous situations, nasty cracks, and witty rejoinders. The revival delivers more of the same, from the spot-on timing and raunchy sexual euphemisms to the self-involved characters getting into ridiculous fights and making up with sentimental confessions. But it's also something of a time-capsule as the show itself—despite a series of Trump jokes—seems trapped back in the sensibility of the 2000s. Director James Burrows, the sitcom legend who directed every episode of the original series, is back and the chemistry is intact, but much of the humor is mean-spirited. Still, the revival was a hit for NBC—gleefully embraced by fans of the original series—and it features return appearances by Harry Connick Jr., Molly Shannon, Bobby Cannavale, Alec Baldwin, and others. Presenting all 16 episodes from the 2017-18 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a gag reel. Recommended, overall. (S. Axmaker)

VideoLibrarianOnline

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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

Lots & Lots of Animal Stories for Kids! Vol. 5: Donkeys ★★★

(2017) 30 min. DVD: \$12.95 (\$14.95 w/PPR). Marshall Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-936134-72-1.

In this latest entry in the *Lots & Lots of Animal Stories for Kids!* series, a group of children learn about the history of donkeys and their close cousin, the mule. In a classroom filled with primary colors, Miss Danni Donkey—who wears a bright red dress and has donkey ears and a tail—tells her young charges how much she enjoys reading, as she dons a pair of large red glasses, and sings a song about how glasses help her read. Miss Danni talks about the roles that donkeys have played from Egyptian times to the late 1800s in America, telling stories that combine simple computer animation, original music, and songs. In the first tale, a donkey named Cleopatra is dragging a large stone meant for use in building a pyramid when a Broadway song helps her escape in her mind to Park Avenue. In Athens, a donkey is squishing grapes to make wine when a lively tune encourages faster and faster stomping. Miss Danni also tells the kids that the first mule appeared in America in 1785 as a Spanish gift (literally named "Royal Gift"), and that pack mules were employed during the Gold Rush; less nervous than horses, pack mules also helped pull firetrucks and played a major role in the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. A fun educational title, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (T. Root)

Lots & Lots of Learning Fun! All About Trains ★★★

(2018) 40 min. DVD: \$14.95 (\$19.95 w/PPR). Marshall Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-936134-38-0.

"Carl the Conductor" and anthropomorphic trains with names like "Frankie Freight" provide corny banter for this addition to the extensive *Lots & Lots* children's series. Backed by relevant clips (featuring more animation than actual trains), *All About Trains* uses diagrams to explore the ways that different trains work and drive—including various parts and functions—and discusses topics including speed, horn blast combinations and signals, markings and signs, and types of cars (freight, passenger, caboose, etc.). Noting that "trains are an important part of everyone's life," this would likely appeal to railroad aficionados in the target group of ages 6-12. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

A Midsummer Night's Dream ★★½

(2018) 16 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-52009-251-5.

Another collaboration between illustrator Roberto Itrace and author Luke Daniel Paiva adapting the Bard of Avon's plays for younger viewers (see *Much Ado About Nothing* in VL-7/18), the vibrantly-colored, iconographic-animated *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is set in the cutesy-animal-inhabited lush locale of the enchanted Fairy Wood. Compacting the plot of four somewhat mismatched lovers, a bickering royal fairy couple, and the mischievous sprite Puck, this abbreviated adaptation is very busy, packed with almost *Where's Waldo?*-ish details, along with asides explaining key vocabulary terms such as "star-crossed" and "betrothed." Extras include a read-along option and a featurette on Shakespeare. A strong optional purchase. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Miguel's Brave Knight ★★★

(2018) 23 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-97490-266-8.

This iconographic-animated adaptation

of the 2017 children's book featuring illustrations by Raúl Colón and short vignette poems by Margarita Engle tells a fictionalized version of *Don Quixote* author Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's upbringing. Narrated by Thom Rivera and featuring a strumming guitar soundtrack, the segments include "Happiness," "Stories" (in which young Miguel acts out plays in his "fanciful world of brave deeds"), and "Hunger," touching on the family's troubles when Miguel's shifty gambling father is sent to debtor's prison and his mother loses "furniture, silverware...hope." The boy's imagination is depicted through images of adventure populated with knights, giants, and dragons, and he is dismayed when books designated as evil are burned. Finally, in "A New Life," an older Cervantes is published in a book with "pages shaped like open doorways." Featuring a read-along option, extras include author's, illustrator, historical, and biographical notes segments. Serving up a poignant imagining of the young life of a literary icon, this is recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Nature Cat: Onward + Pondward!

★★★

(2018) 90 min. DVD: \$14.99. PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0450-6.

When his human family goes off to school and work every morning, Nature Cat does not sit idly by a window all day. Nope, he dons a Robin Hood-like outfit and meets up with pals Hal (an exuberant dog), Squeeks (an enthusiastic mouse), and Daisy (a curious, buck-toothed bunny). Together, they explore the environment in their neighborhood, and make a lot of friends along the way. This seven-episode compilation from the PBS-aided animated series kicks off with "Welcome to Vernal Pond," in which the gang meets Fern, a salamander looking for a place to lay her eggs in a seasonal (i.e., temporary) pond that is already occupied by other newborn critters. "Swamp Thing" is a funny episode in which Nature Cat becomes more of a 'fraidy cat due

Dazzle Ships ★★★★★½

(2018) 25 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-97490-167-8.

Subtitled "World War I and the Art of Confusion," this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2017 picture book by author Chris Barton and illustrator Victo Ngai combines majestic music with jaunty narration by Johnny Heller to explore a little-known slice of history from the Great War. In an effort to thwart German *Unterseeboots* (aka U-boats) from taking down ships, British marine painter and Royal Navy patroller Norman Wilkinson came up with the suggestion to camouflage vessels, using a variety of patterns, shapes, and colors designed to confuse submarine officers about the direction and speed of vessels—which led to the enemy wasting torpedoes. Termed the "dazzle" approach, the method was employed on over 4,000 ships, which allowed cargo ships to keep the Brits supplied. Featuring a read-along option, as well as author's and illustrator notes and a historical timeline, this intriguing true war story is highly recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



to rumors that a swamp monster is nearby (it turns out to be completely harmless). "There's Gold in Them Thar Hills" finds Squeeks discovering a gold nugget in a stream, prompting the others (and a villainous neighbor cat) to go looking for more (incidentally, viewers can learn the right way to pan for gold watching this episode). And "Earth Day Every Day" explores the tragedy of plastic refuse in our waters and on land, while also demonstrating—through the efforts of Nature Cat and pals—what can be done about it. An entertaining, environmentally-minded treat for younger viewers—featuring the voices of *Saturday Night Live* current and former cast members Kate McKinnon, Kenan Thompson, Bobby Moynihan, and Taran Killam—this is recommended. Aud: K, P. (T. Keogh)

The New Big Plane Trip ★★½

(2017) 44 min. DVD: \$24.99. Little Mammoth Media (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 1-929294-10-7.

An up-to-date revamp of *The Big Plane Trip* (VL-3/95), this thorough exploration of air travel offers passenger's eye views of the details involved in flying from Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson airport to Heathrow in London. From the ticket counter to the landing runway, *The New Big Plane Trip* takes young viewers onto a Boeing 767-300, where on-the-job commentary from professionals covers topics including fueling, operations control, checklists for pilots, and more. Also including interesting tidbits that go behind-the-scenes of luggage handling, meals (in business class, so things are especially fancy), and flight attendant training, bonus features include a kid's tour of London. Serving up a fine primer on the ins and outs of plane travel that may ease some trepidation for young first-time fliers, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes: T.K.O. ★★½

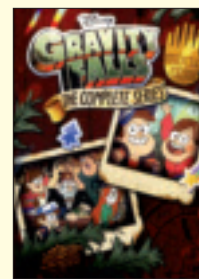
(2018) 220 min. DVD: \$14.98. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Boy protagonist K.O.'s antics in the surreal backdrop of Lakewood Plaza Turbo are at the center of this 19-episode compilation from the Cartoon Network original series. Flying cars and dinosaurs aren't the weirdest thing in this futuristic city featuring townspeople (read: monsters, talking robots, anthropomorphic fruit and veggie people) who are often heroic and spend much time protecting the area from the evil Lord Boxman and his henchmen. "Let's Be Heroes" finds K.O. wanting to learn how to be a hero and hone his power level after seeing his fitness dojo mom Carol's old friend and bodega owner Mr. Gar—a powerful hero himself whose face is on trading cards. In "Let's Be Friends," teen worker pals—human Enid and laid-back alien Rad—help save their new buddy K.O. from trouble at the Boxmore factory and score him

Gravity Falls: The Complete Series ★★½

(2016) 7 discs. 900 min. DVD: \$59.99, Blu-ray: \$99.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

This Disney XD-aired animated comedy about two 13-year-old city kids—Dipper Pines (voiced by Jason Ritter) and his twin sister Mabel (Kristen Schaal)—sent to stay with their weird Grunkle (short for Great Uncle) Stan in the rural Oregon town of Gravity Falls plays like a mix of *X-Files* weirdness and *Rick and Morty* wacky humor for kids. Stan (voiced by series creator Alex Hirsch) runs "The Mystery Shack," a tourist trap filled with strange creatures and weird magic, and Dipper makes it his mission to get evidence of the fantastical things he discovers during their stay, from a race of magical dwarves and a giant lake monster to ghosts, demons, unicorns, prehistoric creatures, secret rooms and passages, curses, and charms. Linda Cardellini voices 15-year-old Wendy, a part-time employee Dipper crushes on, and Hirsch also voices the odd but devoted handyman Soos and various recurring characters in the vast community. *Gravity Falls*—which ran for two seasons spread from 2012-16—is a funny and clever show, with wild humor and well-written young characters, winning two Emmy awards. Compiling all 40 episodes, extras include cast and crew episode commentary tracks, the feature-length retrospective documentary *One Crazy Summer*, a featurette on the finale, deleted scenes, bonus shorts, and promos. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (S. Axmaker)



a job. The animation sports wacky touches and jump cuts featuring various styles, while the humor is tongue-in-cheek (trusting K.O. mistakenly confides in Boxman's "daughter," saying "Thanks for the help, ominous stranger! You're the best!"). Also including a "Plazalympics" competition event episode, the double-length special "T.K.O.," and "Parents Day," centering on Enid's out-of-the-ordinary family life, this zany series is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Rusty Rivets ★★★

(2016) 97 min. DVD: \$14.99. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This compilation of episodes from the titular Nickelodeon animated series for kids centers on Rusty Rivets, a boy inventor with a crew of amusing robots and a gal pal named Ruby, who all work together to solve big problems. The first episode, "Rusty's Rex Rescue," is a cute story about a child who gets trapped on a tall tower of tires, prompting Rusty and Ruby to build a robotic Tyrannosaurus Rex with a puppyish disposition. After rescuing the youngster in distress, the "Robosaurus" wants to play fetch with enormous machine parts. In "Rusty's Penguin Problem," a group of penguins intended for a zoo are accidentally delivered to Rusty. Compounding the crisis is the fact that a bridge leading to the zoo is broken on a day that is scorching hot and dangerous for the arctic birds. "Ruby Rocks" finds Rusty's sidekick battling stage fright before her turn performing at an outdoor festival. And "Rusty Marks the Spot" involves a treasure map and a succession of riddles leading to glittering rewards. While it's a shame that Ruby is a supporting character and not an equal to Rusty (as a duo, the pair would

have been role models for girls and boys alike), the messages about teamwork here are solid. Compiling eight episodes, extras include a bonus episode of *PAW Patrol*. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Splash and Bubbles: One Big Ocean ★★★

(2018) 75 min. DVD: \$6.99. PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0458-2.

Created by the Jim Henson Company, this computer-animated PBS Kids-aired series centers on a mixed group of ocean creatures who share adventures and learn about the interdependence of life beneath the waves. Friends Splash, Bubbles, Ripple, and Dunk generally stay close to home, but when they meet a young sea turtle named Scoot, the group decides to escort him to a faraway coral reef in the four-episode tale "One Big Ocean." Here, Splash and friends not only discover the vastness of the ocean but also learn about its unified environment. Along the way, they help clean a reef with a fish that does that job naturally, and they travel along with a pod of whales. The message that ocean life is not some random collection of living things but rather a whole ecosystem requiring care and deserving respect comes through loud and clear for young viewers in this bright and appealing show. Also including the episodes "The Greatest Treasure of All" and "Kelp Forest Keepers" (in which our fishy heroes help rejuvenate kelp growth), this is recommended. Aud: K, P. (T. Keogh)

The Water Princess ★★★

(2018) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-33824-3-529.

This animated adaptation of author Susan

Verde and illustrator Peter H. Reynolds's 2016 picture book serves up a slice-of-life portrait based on the childhood of model and advocate Georgie Badiel. Narrator Yetide Badaki provides the voice of young "princess" Georgie, who in her imagination rules over her Burkina Faso village where she can "make the tall grass sway when I dance" and play games with wild dogs. The biggest hardship for the girl is the daily early-morning miles-long trek she takes with her mom and other females in the community to retrieve precious water, which must be used sparingly. Backed by a score from Michael Bacon, this adaptation of the ALA Notable Book also features a read-along option and an interview with Badiel that touches on her life ("I was a lazy child," she giggles, who wanted to sleep in) and goals for bringing clean water and sanitation to her homeland. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Heaven is a Traffic Jam on the 405

★★★

(2017) 40 min. DVD: \$325. Grasshopper Film. PPR.

Filmmaker Frank Stiefel's Oscar-winning documentary draws no conclusions about the therapeutic value of art, but it does illustrate how one woman uses art to process her life experiences. Mindy Alper struggles to keep the demons of mental illness at bay. To function properly, she takes several pills a day for anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder—as well as several others to alleviate side effects. Stiefel uses animated sequences and in-camera effects to depict Alper's social-anxiety-generated visions. Although Alper speaks with her mother often, they had a strained relationship when she was younger, beginning after the birth of her younger brother (from that point onward, her mother refused to touch her). And though her late father would eventually admit that he was proud of her, she spent her childhood living in fear that she would never live up to his expectations. Over the years, Alper has experienced suicidal thoughts, hospitalization, and shock treatment, along the way losing her ability to put words together. Although she has since regained that ability, she speaks in a careful, halting manner. She credits her therapist for helping her to "grow up," and her art instructor acknowledges the therapeutic value of her artistic practice, which includes pen and ink drawings, watercolor paintings, and papier mâché busts. The pieces that Alper works on during the film end up in a gallery show that is met with a warm, well attended reception. Whether or not art has saved Alper's life, it has certainly made it easier to bear. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Femmessy)



Borderline ★★★

(2016) 88 min. DVD: \$125; public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Regina is a foul-mouthed New Yorker with Borderline Personality Disorder (BDP). She's intelligent, judgmental, and quick to anger. At times she even tries to direct this documentary by filmmaker Rebbie Ratner, which alternates between color sequences with her 45-year-old subject and black-and-white segments with psychiatrists. Dr. John Gunderson notes that interpersonal relationships are particularly difficult for people with BDP since they can be overly-involved one day and casually dismissive the next. Regina is currently unemployed, a regular occurrence due to her combative attitude. After the dissolution of a 12-year relationship with a woman with whom she shares canine custody, she's also looking for love using dating apps. In her past, she would cut herself. Now, she's addicted to cosmetic procedures—like Botox—that she can't really afford. She also attends therapy sessions and takes several mood-altering medications. Although she acknowledges having a drinking problem, she believes that regular alcohol usage increases her meds' effectiveness. According to Dr. Mary Zanarini, BPD strikes men and women at roughly equal rates, but it is more closely associated with women because they are more likely to seek help. During the film, Regina goes on a date, plays volleyball, and travels to Virginia to meet with Gunderson along with Barbara, another person with BPD who Regina treats with withering disdain. Gunderson confirms Regina's disorder, but also believes that she has the tools to keep it in check, and by film's end Regina is working with a specialist to better manage her symptoms. Regina isn't always the most pleasant company, but those who witness her story will come away with a better understanding of her debilitating psychological disorder. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Femmessy)

In Pursuit of Silence ★★★

(2016) 81 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$395 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$34.95 (\$445 w/PPR.). The Cinema Guild. DRA. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-7815-1556-4.

Patrick Shen's documentary, based on the titular 2010 book by George Prochnik (who also serves as an interviewee here), argues that in a world of almost constant commotion and noise, silence should be valued as a means of securing mental and physical health. Shen does not ignore the spiritual dimension, visiting both a Trappist monastery in Iowa and a Buddhist temple in Japan to highlight religious traditions that view silence as a route to a higher plane. The film also periodically returns to Greg Hindy, a young man who has chosen to walk coast-to-coast under a vow of silence, expressing his thoughts in written form to the camera along the way. And it captures the sheer beauty of solitude visually, via images of quiet parks and empty landscapes. But the focus here is on the physiological effects of excessive noise, which can cause not just stress but also—as demonstrated in one case study of a school located beside train tracks—an actual decline in cognitive ability and concentration. Modern recognition of the power of silence to rejuvenate both soul and body is encapsulated in Shen's repeated references to composer John Cage, who wrote cacophonous pieces for a variety of instruments, but in 1952 premiered 4'33, in which a pianist simply made no sound for 4½ minutes. Originally greeted with derision, it has since become a widely-"performed" piece (suitable for any combination of instruments), and is treated with seriousness, even

reverence. Cage's 4'33 expresses the power of silence, as does Shen's film. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Mile Marker ★★★

(2018) 93 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$250 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Korey Rowe, a veteran of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, travels cross-country to talk with old buddies about problems they face in trying to reintegrate into civilian society, while also interviewing medical specialists about the very real obstacles posed by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The backdrop to Rowe's trip is not just the general statistic that 22 veterans commit suicide every day, but also the death of his erstwhile comrade-in-arms Jesse Snider, who lost his struggle with PTSD in 2014, fatally overdosing on opioids. The men here recall Snider's troubling story as well as their own tales involving difficulties accessing Veterans Administration resources, overuse of prescribed medication, and the lure of criminal activity—particularly in the drug trade. Although the film includes footage of the men's service in combat, the bulk of the material consists of interviews conducted by Rowe, along with his own on-the-road observations, and insights from experts on PTSD, including from a Vietnam veteran who himself still suffers from the condition while serving as a counselor for soldiers returning from more recent conflicts. A major argument throughout is that the beneficial effect of medical marijuana in smoothing the transi-

tion of veterans deserves much more serious consideration, especially given the dangerous side effects of other drugs. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Jesus: Countdown to Calvary ★★★

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0465-0.

In Jesus's time, Jerusalem was a remote outpost of the Roman Empire. With troops stretched so thin, the Romans—who valued stability above all else—had to rule by collaboration; in this case, with a Jewish figurehead leader and Jewish high priests. Passover was a time of festivities, but also of tension, and it was into this mixed atmosphere that Jesus, in the last week of his life, came to Jerusalem with his disciples. Hugh Bonneville hosts this PBS-aired documentary by filmmaker Gerry Hoban on the fateful week between Palm Sunday, when Jesus entered the city as a hero, and Friday, the day of the Crucifixion. The Roman governor Pontius Pilate, who usually resided at a coastal garrison, traveled to Jerusalem to make sure order was maintained. Rome viewed any talk of the kingdom of Heaven or a Messiah as an attack on Rome. At the same time, the high priests resented Jesus's assertion that Jewish temple moneychangers were cheating in the house of God. Jesus and his radical talk constituted a threat that needed to be dealt with in a way that did not inflame the population. The documentary considers the controversial role of the disciple Judas Iscariot. Was he a greedy betrayer, or simply carrying out Jesus's plan and divine mission (much attention is given here to the phrase "handing over" of Jesus,

which was done under the cover of darkness outside the city)? Was Pilate a reluctant, weak judge, or a cruel, vindictive, and spiteful leader? As Bonneville notes, the lasting legacy of Calvary is the vicious accusation that Jews were "Christ killers," which led to centuries of anti-Semitic persecutions. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Jesus: Dead and Buried? ★★★

(2018) 47 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

Was there a historical Jesus? If so, did he in fact die while nailed to a cross? Why was he often referred to as the "Lamb of God," and what did that have to do with the Last Supper? These questions and many more—including several concerning Christ's return from the dead and ascension to Heaven—are addressed here. Hosted by Luke Waldo, the documentary *Jesus: Dead and Buried?*—filmed in Israel and the U.K.—examines both the archeological and written recorded evidence of a historical Jesus, dismissing conspiracy theories that a lookalike substitute was brutally crucified and that the post-Crucifixion Jesus had not actually died. The "Lamb of God" simile is placed squarely in Jewish tradition, while the consecration of bread and wine at the Last Supper is also explained in this engaging documentary. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Torchlighters: The Adoniram and Ann Judson Story ★★★

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

As inspiring stories of Christian missionaries go, it's hard to beat the waves of adversity faced by 18th-19th century Protestant missionaries Adoniram and Ann Judson—the first to be sent abroad from America—who

married at a young age and resolved to teach the Gospel in Burma (now Myanmar). The Massachusetts couple said goodbye to their families (evangelists traveling that far were not likely to return for a visit in those days) and arrived in Burma to discover a very undeveloped country with a proud, easily-ruffled king. The Judsons lost a baby during the ship's passage to Burma, and then a second one after seven months (in all, three children would die, leaving them childless). The Judsons suffered immeasurably from disease, arrest, and brutality, but were able to fulfill their mission (Myanmar is currently home to the third largest population of Baptist Christians worldwide, and the Judsons' Burmese translation of the Bible continues to be used there). Directed by Robert Fernandez, this inspiring animated documentary portrait of an early Christian missionary couple is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

Bullets on the Border ★★★

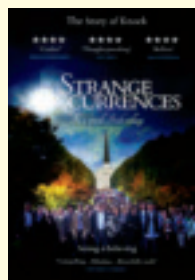
(2018) 82 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

The policies and procedures governing the use of force by American border control agents in their contact with Mexican nationals are examined by director Charlie Minn through a consideration of three specific cases that resulted in a death. In 2010, Sergio Hernandez Guereca was shot by agent Jesus Mesa Jr., who claimed the teen was among a group transferring something over the border in Juarez and throwing rocks at him, although surveillance footage shows the boy hiding behind a pillar until he was struck. The second incident involved José Rodríguez, who in 2012 was shot by agent Lonnie Swartz from a bridge as the young man was walking along a border street in Nogales (Swartz also claimed that he was being targeted by rocks). The lawyers for both victims' families dispute the justification behind the shootings, as do witnesses, and the remarks from Guereca's father and Rodríguez's mother are heartbreaking. But while Swartz is being prosecuted as a result of popular protests, Mesa has been protected through legal technicalities. In the third case, from 2013—presented in the form of a dramatic re-enactment without testimony—Cruz Velázquez, who had been hired to smuggle two bottles of liquid meth, was induced to drink some by interrogators, who then failed to get Velázquez medical aid before he died (his family received an out-of-court settlement from the U.S. government). Minn's film clearly suggests that the rules covering agents' use of deadly force should be re-examined and that the government should be more cooperative in seeing justice is done in these kinds of cases. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Strange Occurrences in a Small Irish Village ★★★

(2016) 90 min. DVD: \$23.99. DRA. Janson Media (avail. from Midwest Tape).

The title of this wry, engaging documentary stems from an 1879 newspaper headline referring to mysterious events that allegedly took place in the tiny village of Knock, Ireland, where 15 residents claimed to see holy apparitions. Filmmaker Aoife Kelleher begins by letting contemporary descendants of the venerated witnesses tell the tale of that special day (which was certified by the Catholic Church as a genuine miracle), after which she goes beyond the lore to examine life in Knock, including the arrangement of holy water for visitors to the apparition site, a visit to a tourist-trap shop that sells little statues of Jesus and other biblical trinkets, and testimonies from those who claim to have been cured of disease and affliction. Most intriguing are the efforts of savvy priest Fr. Richard Gibbons, who has successfully advocated for Knock's targeted growth—e.g., building a small airport—as a tourist town. Enlisting such heavy-hitters as an American cardinal to galvanize the community, Gibbons is intent on leveraging the old story in order to bring the world to Knock. Kelleher allows the people and the details to speak for themselves, never becoming satirical but rather approaching the material with lightly bemused affection. Extras include additional scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



Democracy Road ★★½

(2016) 60 min. In Dutch, English & Burmese w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR.

Director Turid Rogne looks at the return of the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) to Myanmar in 2015 following more than 20 years of exile in Norway. With Myanmar moving from a military dictatorship to a democracy, DVB's reporters and producers were hopeful they could re-establish an independent news channel within the country. *Democracy Road* follows DVB editor-in-chief Aye Chan Naing and reporter Than Win Htut as they meet with government officials and ordinary folks to detail the challenges the country faces during this tumultuous transition period. An ambitious DVB production called *Our Nation, Our Land* gives voice to Myanmar's rural population, who were mostly silent during the years of government-controlled media. However, the old dictatorship is not entirely willing to cede control, and the DVB team faces both minor annoyances and major hurdles in regaining their former position. Offering an inspiring portrait of intelligent and dedicated journalists who are serious about their craft and willing to risk their lives to present the news, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Gang Crackdown ★★★

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0436-0.

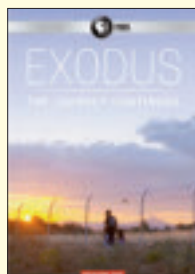
In recent years a violent gang known as MS-13 has appeared in the United States, whose members are often unaccompanied

minors coming from El Salvador and Honduras. Many have found a home on New York's Long Island and have been accused of a series of gruesome murders, some 25 since 2016. Filmmaker Marcela Gaviria's PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary looks at America's catch-up efforts to deal with this violent gang, comprised of 200-300 members, with many others in cliques. MS-13 not only pressures juveniles to join the gang, but also harasses friends and families, sometimes violently, often in the form of dismemberment, with assaults using machetes. Schools are "ground zero" for recruiting efforts, with nearby isolated woods being ideal spots to cloak activities. Many of those affected are illegal immigrants, who are reluctant to approach possibly unsympathetic police and other authorities. President Trump has fanned the flames of alarm about the danger posed by illegals, ordering "Operation Matador," a roundup of suspected MS-13 members. Making a gang sign, wearing insignia, sporting tattoos, or even having something scrawled in a school notebook can be enough for detention. Some youths may not be members, but are nevertheless subjected to solitary confinement, jailed far away from home or any support system, where they are surrounded by an alien culture and language differences (leading to increased suicide attempts). Featuring interviews with Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, among others, this is a timely, fair-minded treatment of a hot immigration topic that presents no easy solutions. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Exodus: The Journey Continues ★★½

(2018) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0435-3.

One and a half million refugees have fled to the West in recent years, escaping war, terrorism, and poverty. At the same time, fearful nations have erected razor-wire fences and fortified borders, leaving many refugees in limbo. Filmmaker James Bluemel's PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary finds scores of displaced persons living in tents, ramshackle houses, even in an abandoned rail yard (in some cases, children have spent their entire lives in a camp). Refugees have left everything behind in Syria, Iraq, and sub-Saharan Africa, pursuing a dream of freedom, only to endure conditions worse than in their former lives—but risking death if they were to return. They resort to crossing borders and countries to seek a haven but are spurned in many cases as "fake refugees" (one family has walked across half of Europe). The film shows migrants so desperate that they stiffen their resolve and courage with alcohol and weed before storming a border fence, hoping that their numbers will get them across. In one instance, a family can only afford to send the pregnant mother on a flight to Germany (so her child can be considered a German citizen); reluctant to be separated, the woman is actually relieved when she is stopped by airport authorities. For many, it's a long, grueling, and uncertain process to be granted political asylum. *Exodus* is full of poignant images (happy endings are rare), but while the documentary might have benefited from interviews with government officials and hostile or welcoming citizens, the stories told by the refugees (in their hesitant way) are quite eloquent, as they struggle to try to understand why the big wide world can't find a small place for them, a place of peace and safety. Sure to arouse strong reactions and debate, this timely documentary is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



A Good American ★★½

(2016) 100 min. DVD: \$50 (\$125 w/PPR); public libraries; \$295 w/PPR; colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. Closed captioned.

Whether the 9/11 attacks could have been prevented if U.S. intelligence services had been using the best data-collection system available is the provocative question raised by Friedrich Moser's documentary about Bill Binney, a National Security Agency analyst and mathematical wiz who during the 1990s was successfully developing a program called ThinThread, which was designed to identify significant connections from the mountains of material flooding into the agency every day. The argument made by Binney, a soft-spoken man in a wheelchair—as well as other colleagues interviewed—is that Binney's digitally-based system would have isolated connections among the hijackers from the metadata that might have allowed the agency to foil their plot. But his project was eliminated in 2000 by NSA director Michael Hayden in favor of an inferior, analog-based system called Trailblazer because, according to Binney, Hayden and another agency official had a financial interest in the company developing it. Binney further emphasizes that ThinThread included privacy protocols that would have prevented the widespread collection of metadata on average American citizens (which caused a scandal about U.S. intelligence operations). Moser's film is admittedly one-sided, relying entirely on assertions by Binney and his supportive colleagues, while also employing dramatic re-enactments and throbbing music to give an atmosphere of pervasive corruption. But while it cannot be considered conclusive, neither does it descend to the category of rabid conspiracy-theorizing, and it certainly raises questions worth pondering. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Gun Shop ★★½

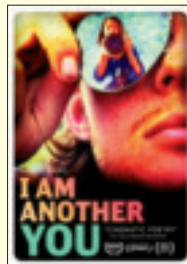
(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$39.95. DRA. Film Ideas. PPR. Closed captioned.

John Douglas's documentary, originally broadcast on the *Cutting Edge* series on Britain's Channel 4, aims to offer insights on American gun culture. The focus is on the Freedom Firearms gun shop in Battle Creek, MI, where store owner Joel Fulton greets the start of each new business day by declaring "Sun's up, guns up!" Fulton advocates for responsible gun ownership and has conducted classes on weapons usage over the last 14 years. The store's patrons and staff talk about why they own guns. One man, whose teenage daughter was badly injured in a local mass shooting, fails to see the value of strict gun control, commenting that "the most unhelpful argument out there is take away all the guns." Another woman enrolls her 9-year-old in shooting lessons—she was the victim of an armed carjacking, which explains her interest in gun ownership. While the film tries to be

I Am Another You ★★★1/2

(2017) 81 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from most distributors).

In *I Am Another You*, Chinese émigré filmmaker Nanfu Wang breathes new life into the human-interest/observational documentary genre. Wang's film begins on a whim in Miami after she meets a charismatic drifter named Dylan, a well-spoken twentysomething transient whose adventures Wang feels compelled to follow, even if it means eating out of trash cans and sleeping rough in solidarity. Wang begins to get frustrated with Dylan, however, when she witnesses certain troubling aspects in her subject that suggest a kind of privilege only available to someone intentionally homeless. She begins doubting Dylan's sincerity about the high-minded antisocial life he is leading, wondering whether he is a principled noble tramp, or just a drunken bum who can't handle real-world responsibilities. Wang eventually abandons Dylan but her obsession lingers, so she travels to Dylan's home state of Utah to seek out his conservative Mormon family. What's most fascinating about this film is Wang's changing perceptions of Dylan throughout. Wang's portrait of Dylan's family—his dad is a Dudley-Do-Right cop and his brother an icy classical pianist—gives viewers an overwhelming sense of the stiflingly prohibitive and restrictive atmosphere that shaped Dylan's desire to take a different path in life. But it is during this latter stage of events that Wang uncovers another, more disturbing, possibility for Dylan's choices in life. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin).



respectful of its subjects, it also gives a somewhat dubious impression that the majority of the store's patrons have a dangerously naïve view of the value of gun ownership and a paranoid belief in the government's alleged interest in voiding the Second Amendment. Still, while this is unlikely to change minds on either side of the gun debate, its hot-button topic timeliness makes it a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Long Shadow ★★★

(2018) 84 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

The Long Shadow presents a history of slavery and racism in America in the form of a personal journey of discovery by director Frances Causey, who also serves as narrator. As a white child growing up in the South, Causey was proud of her ancestor Edmund Pendleton, a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1774 and a supporter of independence. Causey later learned that Pendleton had also proposed the modification excluding slaves from the provisions of the Virginia Declaration of Rights in 1776, and by the time she reached college, she concluded that she was benefitting from a system of white privilege that functioned as a sort of American apartheid. After a stint at CNN, Causey became a filmmaker, focusing on the continuing struggle for African American equality in the United States. Animated by the injustices revealed in the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, Causey here sketches out what she describes as systemic racism in America, which began with the introduction of slavery in the colonial period, was codified in our founding documents (and later legislation

and court decisions), and—despite the Civil Rights movement—persists to the present day, growing increasingly blatant in recent years. Combining an excellent selection of archival materials with new interviews, Causey presents an eloquent argument regarding a persistent flaw in America's democratic dream. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Many Loves One Heart: Stories of Courage and Resilience ★★★

(2017) 18 min. DVD: \$69: high schools & public libraries; \$149: colleges & universities. DRA. Good Docs (avail. from www.gooddocs.net). PPR.

For all the strides that the LGBT community has made throughout the world, Jamaica remains one of the least hospitable towards their presence. Filmmaker Sarah Feinbloom's short documentary focuses on individuals who represent signs of change. As cultural studies professor Carolyn Cooper explains, "Jamaica is a fundamentalist Christian society, and people take the Book of Deuteronomy literally." Like its former colonial ruler, the country outlawed homosexuality (in Jamaica, it is known as the Buggery Law), even though Britain began the process of decriminalization in 1967. Spice, a sex worker, grew up with a father who dismissed him, saying "the boy is acting like a girl," and making him sleep in a chicken coop. For years, he struggled with suicidal thoughts and now lives on the streets, where he has had to learn how to protect himself. For people like Spice, no state support exists, and the police force is notoriously unsympathetic. Fortunately, some of these institutions are starting to evolve. Mo Rowe, a trans man, is among the police force's first openly LGBT members; he has a girlfriend and looks forward to marrying and

raising a family. Father Sean Major-Campbell, a 25-year advocate for individuals with HIV and AIDS, welcomes LGBT members to his services (he caused a scandal when he washed the feet of a lesbian couple in 2014). And Dane Lewis—who leads the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals, and Gays (J-FLAG)—provides assistance and support to young people like Spice. As he says, "The fight for emancipation is in our blood," a hopeful signal that better days lie ahead. An inspiring short documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Pennhurst ★★★

(2018) 88 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

In 1968, NBC News ran a harrowing investigative series on the Pennhurst State School and Hospital, founded in 1908 outside Philadelphia, PA. Fifty years later, filmmaker Jodie Alexandra Taylor's new documentary looks back at longstanding controversies surrounding the institution, particularly over chronic, dehumanizing practices that went on for almost 80 years. At Pennhurst, the mentally challenged and otherwise disabled were, reportedly, stored as in a warehouse, neglected and restrained for long periods for no reason other than staff convenience. What *Pennhurst* discovers through interviewing surviving staff members and former patients (Pennhurst closed down in 1987) is that during its latter years Pennhurst showed some improvement as conditions and policies were at least somewhat modernized, but by all accounts the mammoth facility was always woefully understaffed. Patient needs were ignored, cruelty was common, and an industrial approach to basic care was the brutal norm. Family members recall the pain and guilt of surrendering a loved one to Pennhurst, one-time patients talk about surviving the haranguing and harshness of care staff, and former doctors lament the substandard treatment of the patient population, although a few past caretakers also describe some innovations that they introduced to help patients feel useful and worthy. An emotional roller coaster that sadly reminds viewers of how society often treats the disabled by segregating them from the rest of the world, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Pride Denied: Homonationalism & the Future of Queer Politics ★★★

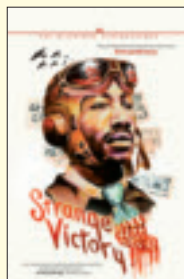
(2016) 61 min. DVD: \$34.95 (\$150 w/PPR): public libraries; \$280: community colleges; \$350: colleges & universities. DRA. Media Education Foundation. PPR. ISBN: 1-944024-01-8.

Kami Chisholm's documentary casts a critical eye at Toronto's WorldPride event. Activists and historians here offer a history of the gay rights movement, including moments from America's timeline, such as the landmark 1969 Stonewall riots. Just as

Strange Victory ★★½

(1948) 71 min. DVD: \$34.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95. Milestone/Oscilloscope (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-933920-956-5 (dvd), 978-1-933920-96-2 (blu-ray).

An American self-critique presented in a compelling documentary style similar to the Russian school of colliding images, Leo Hurwitz's 1948 *Strange Victory* serves up a lightning-paced argument that Americans shed their own blood to defeat a genocidal strongman in World War II only to come back to anti-Semitic and anti-black business as usual in the U.S. It's hard to describe the experience of watching *Strange Victory*, which draws upon loads of Nazi propaganda footage, newsreels, American-made hate materials, and original images to put forth its thesis that discrimination and violence toward particular groups are practically a common denominator in the human race. Hurwitz's rapid-fire edits featuring incendiary material capture the filmmaker's passion and rage toward American hypocrisy. And on the quirky side, a long middle section concerns babies and new mothers; it's like a composer suddenly changing the key in a piece of music to open up an unexpected, mysterious world. Hurwitz—a pioneering documentarian, CBS producer, and blacklisted left-winger—was an interesting figure, and his *Strange Victory* paints a portrait of post-WWII American Fascist tendencies that feels quite relevant today. The copious extras include Hurwitz's 1964 epilogue to *Strange Victory* celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights movement, an excerpt from Ingela Romare's 1992 documentary *On Time, Art, Love, and Trees: A Meeting with Leo T. Hurwitz*, an interview with producer Barney Rosset, and six bonus short films featuring Hurwitz as a cinematographer (including *Pie in the Sky*, starring Elia Kazan). Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



Stonewall birthed a movement in the United States, 1981's bathhouse raids in Canada had a similar effect. Various pride parades followed, leading up to WorldPride, which came to Toronto in 2014. Community activist Prabha Khosla found the early parades empowering, but she sees WorldPride as a commercialized event that prioritizes capitalism. For instance, since Trojan acts as an official sponsor, instructors providing information about safe sex practices must distribute their condoms. Instead of promoting radical ideas, American Studies professor Christina Hanhardt describes WorldPride as "conservative and normative." Members of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid are particularly concerned about "pinkwashing," whereby Israel promotes itself as an LGBT-friendly tourist destination while engaging in human rights abuses against Palestinians. Although initially welcome to participate in WorldPride, the group faced a brief ban in 2010 until public outcry led to their reinstatement. Sex workers and trans people also testify about the ways in which WorldPride has left them feeling disenfranchised. While Chisholm is looking at a specific event, the broader implications are clear: corporatization involving marginalized communities runs the risk of trivializing real issues and concerns. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Recovering Paradise ★★½

(2017) 72 min. DVD: \$39.95; public libraries & high schools; \$250: colleges & universities (study guide included). EPF Media. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-933724-53-9.

Not everyone in the unnerving documen-

tary *Recovering Paradise* is still alive by film's end, which is not intended to be a spoiler, but rather a hint of the terrible stakes at play in this grim work of journalism. Filmed in rural Mexico, the narrative centers on an uprising of indigenous farmers who were chased off their properties and out of their communities years before by narco-outlaws and drug cartels. Now, with the passage of time and increasing frustration over lack of official intervention, these ordinary folks have decided to meet up at rallies and arm themselves for a battle to retake what is theirs. The camera follows the actions of several leaders in the fight, including a farmer who hasn't seen his house in years, a woman who worries about being alone while cooking for the rebels, and various elders who inspire others at their own peril. Directors José Arteaga and Rafael Camacho don't shirk from the action when it becomes terrifying and bloody: sudden gunfights, along with the torture and murders of several rebels, are all part of the price to pay while seeking justice. A rugged film with a compelling you-are-there look and feel, this powerful documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Reluctant Radical ★★½

(2018) 77 min. DVD: \$50 (\$125 w/PPR); public libraries; \$295 w/PPR; colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. Closed captioned.

Ken Ward is a figure in the global-warming controversy who refuses to be a mere concerned bystander. Ward's background work includes Ralph Nader's public-interest research groups and Greenpeace. Shocked

and stupefied at the lack of action against the fossil fuel industry, Ward—in the name of protecting future generations—participates in "monkey wrench" sabotage and public protests (sometimes alone, sometimes with cohorts) that border on trespassing. Ultimately, this divorced single father winds up in a Washington state courtroom, financially depleted by legal fees (albeit supported by his son and girlfriend), but unapologetic. Ward also insinuates that he is being blackballed in the activist-advocacy employment field and thus has no recourse but to break the law. Another filmmaker might have questioned some of Ward's actions tied to his all-consuming fear of a warmer planet, but producer-director Lindsey Grayzel is clearly on the same team (she was also arrested along with Ward in a protest). In a crowded field of big-picture climate-change documentaries, this title focuses on the determination of individual activists more than arguments regarding science. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Spanish Exile: A Story of the Lost Generation ★★½

(2017) 74 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$200. Yo Creo Content (avail. from www.spanishexile.eu/en). PPR.

Rubén Hornillo's film is a cinematic essay in which he discusses the plight of millions of young Spaniards who have migrated to other countries due to lack of opportunity in Spain following the worldwide economic crash of 2008. An expatriate himself, Hornillo integrates his own story—shown via home movies, dramatic re-enactments, and occasional animation—into interviews that he conducts with analysts back in Spain and others who have gone abroad (Hornillo himself ultimately landed in Los Angeles, where he studied film). The premise here is that the word "exile" is properly applied not only to political refugees but also to those who leave because of governmental policies that fail to deal with high unemployment. Hornillo devotes much of his narrative to Spanish politics, offering a rather strident chronological survey of the struggle between the center-conservative People's Party—whose austerity-based approach has, in his view, exacerbated Spain's problems by favoring the wealthy—and the liberal (or radical) Podemos Party, which Hornillo and most of his friends prefer but are often prevented from casting ballots for due to draconian requirements regarding expatriate voting. The Spanish political discussion tends to be generally more compelling than Hornillo's very detailed coverage of the myriad troubles that he and his girlfriend have had to overcome in California. Although meant to illuminate the larger subject, this personal material ultimately distracts. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Troll Inc. ★★1/2

(2018) 80 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Trolling is an Internet age phenomenon—often part of a click-based web economy that thrives on eyeballs—which can be based on fake news, outrageous conspiracy theories, and sometimes outright hate speech and lies. The hero (or anti-hero) of George Russell's documentary is "Weev," an alias used by Andrew Auernheimer, a proud and profane self-described "trickster" who delights in offending people. Trolling thrives in the cynical, post-truth, post-9/11 world, in which people feel a deep dissatisfaction, but haven't figured out what to do about it. Weev, who identifies as being part Jewish, also says he is a white supremacist, and is seen here throwing out Nazi salutes. He wants to constantly ratchet up rhetoric, take people out of their comfort zone, and gross them out. Weev claims that there is a distinction between trolling and bullying, and indeed many troll activities are cloaked in official-sounding titles. Weev attracted the attention of federal authorities when he hacked the AT&T website, publishing thousands of e-mails on Gawker, which landed him in a minimum-security federal prison for a couple years before his conviction was overturned and he was released. Defenders describe all of this as a dueling vision of Internet freedom vs. government/corporate control of a monetized web. Meanwhile, Weev, who has moved his base operations outside the United States, remains unrepentant. While somewhat scattershot, this provocative documentary on a timely topic should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

What Doesn't Kill Me: Domestic Violence and the Battle for Custody ★★★

(2017) 81 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

In a country in which one out of four women experiences domestic abuse, mothers may have it the worst of all. Director Rachel Meyrick profiles several subjects, concentrating primarily on 86-year-old Charlotta Harrison, who lives in Oklahoma. As an opening title notes, "In America today, it is more likely for a judge to award custody of children to an abusive father than a protective mother." Charlotta put up with her husband's abuse for 40 years in order to protect their son, Brian. After Fred struck her and threatened worse in a grocery store, she decided she had had enough. By then, Brian was an adult, but the other women in this film lost custody when they sought divorces from their abusive husbands. Aleah, who lives in New York, says, "Every day I wake up with a crushed heart when I think about my son." According to Barry Goldstein, a retired attorney, "It's a standard abuser tactic to go after custody as a way to regain control over their victims." Tammy, who lives in Virginia, sees her son

only 30 days a year, even though she was his primary caregiver before she and her law enforcement officer husband divorced. Joan Meier, a professor of clinical law, believes that gender bias is to blame; her research has found that family court judges are more likely to believe fathers seeking custody over mothers alleging abuse (in addition, fathers often have better resources for legal representation). Charlotta now volunteers for a local shelter, while Tammy belongs to a group that advocates on behalf of abused mothers. An eye-opening, infuriating documentary on a systemic injustice that is long overdue for reform, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Wrong Light ★★★

(2017) 78 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-7815-1558-0.

Co-directors Josie Swantek Heitz and Dave Adams got more than they were expecting when they set out to profile a Thai crusader dedicated to combating sex trafficking. Mickey Choothesa solicits donations for COSA (Children's Organization of Southeast Asia), which he founded. Unlike government-run organizations, COSA doesn't seek to prosecute parents, but rather to help victims return to civilian life. Choothesa says he served as a 17-year combat photographer in various conflicts, including Desert Storm, and after returning to Thailand, he launched his second career by extracting trafficked girls from brothels on the border with Burma. Most of the COSA inhabitants hail from the hill tribes of Northern Thailand, and the directors use animated sequences to depict the lives of two in particular: COSA's website explains that 17-year-old Fon's mother and 16-year-old Eye's aunt sold them into sex slavery. During the course of filming, Eye

runs for president of her 10th-grade class, and the girls appear to be doing well, but when Choothesa asks Fon's mother about the sale of her daughter, she denies that it happened. He writes off her denial to saving face and fear of judgment, but the filmmakers uncover evidence that Choothesa fabricated the claims of trafficking, interviewing former volunteers, a managing director, and the girls themselves. What they discover is a man who has lied about almost everything, including his photography career. After the revelation, the filmmakers continue tracking the story as Choothesa evicts the girls who spoke to them. What started out as a film about sex trafficking, ends up being about fraud—one more way that the poor are vulnerable to craven opportunists who see them more as meal tickets than human beings. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

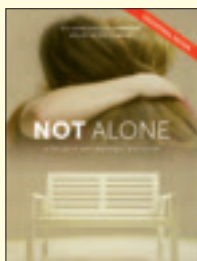
TEEN ISSUES

Broken Lines: A Story of Addiction

★★1/2

(2018) 32 min. DVD: \$149.95 (study guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-105-6.

Director Peter Scheer's guidance documentary centers on Austin Guerra, a NJ-based young man whose ADHD, Tourette's syndrome, and chronic anxiety are cited as reasons for his getting into drugs. Opening with home movies and comments from family and friends—alternatively characterizing Guerra as a "free bird" or simply "out of control"—*Broken Lines* recalls Guerra's volatile childhood tantrums (such as kicking his mom's seat so she couldn't drive), pain from Tourette tics, and battles with his younger sister. Guerra himself talks about selling drugs



Not Alone ★★★

(2016) 50 min. DVD: \$95; high schools & public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities (discussion guide included). DRA. Ro*co Films Educational. Closed captioned.

The inspiration for this documentary came about in 2011 when then-teenager Jacqueline Monettha learned of the suicide of her best friend—a tragedy that was magnified when five other students from her school took their lives within the course of a year. Co-directed by Monettha and Kiki Goshay, *Not Alone* follows Monettha as she interviews nine teens from the California Bay Area who considered suicide when they felt unable to cope with the problems in their lives. The kids detail their respective issues, including dealing with bullying (both in-person and through social media), peer pressure, and low self-esteem. One young man talks about how his sexual orientation resulted in constant harassment, while a young woman of mixed race with a plus-size physique was forced to endure the double-barreled bullying of racial slurs and body shaming. While teens will likely relate more to the film because it does not bring in parents, teachers, counselors, or any adult authority figure to offer input or advice, this could give the incorrect impression that kids were somehow able to solve their own problems with little or no adult help. Still, *Not Alone*—presented in both its full length and a 30-minute abridged version—would serve well as a discussion starter on teen suicide. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

out of the family home, a stint in rehab, and the painful aftereffects of an August 2010 car accident he caused by thrill-seeking driving at 100 mph. Although the program features some heavy-handed and mawkish vignettes (including Guerra trudging down the yellow lines of a street to the song "We're Going to Be Friends"), Guerra's story has a redemptive ending, with his return to college, mending of fences with family and friends, and newfound career goals in the mental health industry. A strong optional purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Warning Signs of Addiction ★★1/2

(2017) 30 min. DVD: \$64.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

A tearful participant laments "I don't know why I do this to myself...you just become so lost" in this addition to the *Teens in Treatment* series. Unfortunately, the young people and adults—who may be speaking in a professional capacity—interviewed here are not identified onscreen, so the commentary on gateway substances such as nicotine and alcohol, triggers to addiction (including family and peer pressure, depression, hereditary predisposition, and low self-esteem), and personal stories tend to run together, with added clips and vignettes reflecting party and drug culture. Still, the topics covered on addiction are solid, including relevant questions ("Have you ever gotten into a car with someone intoxicated?" "Do you have blackouts?" "Are your family and friends concerned?"), physiological effects on the brain and body, and steps for recovery and treatment. A strong optional purchase. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

EDUCATION

2e2: Teaching the Twice Exceptional

★★★

(2018) 77 min. DVD: \$29.95: individuals; \$150: public libraries; \$300: colleges & universities. *Child of Giants* (dist. by 2e: Twice Exceptional). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-7321304-0-1.

As in his previous documentary, *2e: Twice Exceptional* (VL Online-7/15), director Thomas Ropelewski defines 2e individuals as those who are intellectually gifted or highly talented and have some form of learning difference or disability. Most of the subjects in his follow-up, which centers on the Bridges Academy in Studio City, CA, are high-functioning teen and pre-teen students on the autism spectrum. Throughout the film, kids try to explain how their brains work. Jake, a 10th grader, sighs, "That's a tricky question. Sometimes I'm not sure what's going on in there." For Jake, who wears contractor-grade noise-canceling headphones, it's easier to write than speak, which made his early years difficult. As his mother notes, Jake's previous school wasn't accustomed to smart kids with

special needs. Sam, on the other hand, is a gregarious kid who excels at woodworking and other creative endeavors. Sam has trouble reading and maintaining friendships but says that woodworking makes him feel calm. At Bridges, teachers spend time getting to know their students before turning to classwork by way of ice breakers and team-building activities. Pilar Muñoz, who teaches Spanish, believes that it's important to keep the kids engaged and help them manage stress by letting them know it's okay to make mistakes. Science teacher Sean Kangataran feels that "there's no such thing as an average student," and that individually-tailored curriculums will produce the best outcome. Aside from standard subjects, the students at Bridges also step outside the classroom to raise chickens and restore cars. It's clear that Bridges Academy isn't your average school—and a shame that there aren't more like it. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

LAW & CRIME

Beyond the Wall ★★1/2

(2016) 74 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmakers Jenny Phillips and Bestor Cram deliver a raw and provocative study of former and current convicts struggling to rebuild their lives after incarceration in this documentary set in the depressed Massachusetts localities of Lawrence and Lowell. Each man finds a different route to redemption and reinvention. Louie Diaz works with prisoners as a substance abuse counselor and re-entry specialist, helping convicts to achieve sobriety and avoid recidivism. However, his criminal background often prevents him from

going further in his professional ambitions. Another former prisoner, Billy Cabrera, starts a new life as the owner of a barbershop, offering free haircuts and a resource center for released prisoners. And Jesus Ruiz is preparing to return to freedom but faces financial and personal pressures that seem to overwhelm him. Shot over a four-year period, *Beyond the Wall* takes an in-depth look at the emotional difficulties and societal pressures placed upon these men as they try to reset their lives. While criticizing the criminal justice system for its failure to properly prepare the men for their return to the wider world, the filmmakers also make it clear that the men are responsible for their choices and decisions, which carry consequences. Often disturbing but ultimately moving, this trenchant portrait of life after prison is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Biology & Chemistry: The Science of Forensics ★★★

(2016) 11 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

This addition to the *Show Me Science Advanced* series looks at the fundamentals of forensic science. Citing popular TV shows and advancements in crime scene investigations, *The Science of Forensics* delves into the history of forensics, which dates back as far as 500 B.C. to fingerprinting by the ancient Chinese, and it includes the first autopsy after the death of Julius Caesar, Henry Goddard's 1835 Scotland Yard bullet comparison, chemist James Marsh's arsenic testing, and Nobel Prize-winning biologist Karl Landsteiner's categorization of blood types. The program



The Family I Had ★★1/2

(2017) 80 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Katie Green and Carlye Rubin's documentary, which aired on Investigation Discovery, tells the story of an incomprehensible tragedy. The focus is on Charity Lee, a restaurant worker in Abilene, TX, whose life was shattered in February 2007. While Lee was working a night shift on Super Bowl Sunday at her Buffalo Wild Wings job, she received a telephone call from the police informing her that her 13-year-old son Paris had choked and stabbed his 4-year-old sister Ella to death. This was not the

first time that violence destroyed Lee's family: when she was a child, her father was murdered and her mother was arrested under suspicion of being behind the crime. Paris, who has a 141 IQ, initially claimed that his sister was demonically possessed, but later admitted that he had also considered killing his mother. Lee, who maintains a strained relationship with her mother, had another child after Ella's death. Paris, who is incarcerated, will be eligible for parole in 2027, and Lee—who is still in touch with him—worries about how he will react to a new half-sister. Both Lee and Paris are remarkably articulate in their interviews, detailing the horror of the past while voicing apprehension over what the future will bring. A provocative and often disturbing portrait of grief and suffering, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

also looks at various contemporary forensics methods—including DNA and PCR (polymerase chain reaction) analysis—as well as jobs related to forensics, such as psychologist, pathologist, nurse, and positions in local government. Offering a fast-paced peek into a “rewarding” science with constant innovations on the horizon, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Earth Seasoned: #Gap Year ★★★

(2017) 75 min. DVD: \$350. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-941545-98-X.

Filmmaker Molly Kreuzman’s inspiring documentary chronicles the experiences of Tori Davis, a special needs teenager with ADD, who decides to take a gap year before going to college. Tori joins four other young women for a year’s stay in the Oregon Cascade Range mountains. Led by two instructors, the Caretaker Program gives teenagers a chance to live semi-primitively for four seasons in the forest—minus the conveniences and technology of today’s society—in order to connect with nature, detoxify from modern-day stresses, and learn self-reliance. During the fall, the young women build a fire using friction and cook their own meals, working together as a team while adjusting to isolated living. Using only hand tools—axes, hacksaws—the women design and construct a winter shelter by chopping down trees, binding logs together with cord, and mixing mud plaster by hand that is then applied to bark and other forest materials to form a roof. With less work during the short days of winter, Tori enjoys sledding, reading, and writing in her journal. As spring approaches, Tori learns about tracking and spends time alone meditating, listening to the sounds of nature, and observing wildlife. While Tori had trouble remembering information and keeping friends at high school, she credits her gap year experience with helping her to gain self-confidence, establish trust and friendships, and find her own place in a group—all of which help to make her life easier in college. An interesting look at the benefits of a back-to-nature program for modern youth, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Root)

The Earth’s Furies: Earthquakes ★★★

(2017) 52 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39; public libraries; \$89; high schools; \$150; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. SDH captioned.

The good news, supposedly, is that a lot of earthquakes means planet Earth is pretty healthy, jostling tectonic plates and sending waves of energy through whatever lies beneath the planet’s crust in any particular place: solid rock (best-case scenario for people on top) or loose sand or landfill (not so good). The difference is made clear in filmmaker Franck Gombert’s partly French-language (with English subtitles)

Earthquakes—an entry in the six-part *The Earth’s Furies* series—which centers mostly on historic and pending earthquakes in Western Europe and Eurasia. The complex conditions that cause earthquakes are examined, along with the reasons why some areas (such as Haiti) have suffered immeasurably from the same force that did less damage elsewhere. Trying to pinpoint the next Big One is the Holy Grail of seismology, although some believe that incalculable destruction will occur within a couple of centuries in Turkey. *Earthquakes* offers a solid mix of information, disaster footage, and speculation on one of Earth’s most destructive forces. Other titles in the series include *Avalanches* and *Lightning*. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Earth’s Furies: Volcanic Eruptions

★★★

(2017) 52 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39; public libraries; \$89; high schools; \$150; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. SDH captioned.

As if we don’t have enough to worry about, sometime in the next 10,000 years, planet Earth will witness a super-volcano that could very well end all life. Fortunately, the top 10 most likely volcanoes to become global murderers are under constant surveillance. But with Kilauea pouring lava over streets and homes on Hawaii’s Big Island, and memories lingering of Iceland’s catastrophic 2010 volcano putting the brakes on air travel, the documentary *Volcanic Eruptions*—an entry in the six-part *The Earth’s Furies* series—also serves as a reminder that we all live on a dynamic planet whose geological changes are far from finished. Directed by Franck Gombert, the film looks at the “Ring of Fire” that surrounds the Pacific Ocean with one long tunnel of magma, as well as famous eruptions in South America, Indonesia, and Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean. Besides telling viewers the difference between an “effusive” volcano (spewing lava) and one that blows up like a bomb, *Volcanic Eruptions* also features weirdly fascinating information about secondary effects of volcanic ash on jet engines and the bones of sheep. This offers a timely look at one of nature’s more catastrophic phenomena in an age of accelerated disasters due to climate change. Other titles in the series include *Mega Fires* and *Tornadoes*. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

Prediction by the Numbers ★★★1/2

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0433-9.

Filmmaker Daniel McCabe’s PBS-aided NOVA documentary examines the hit-and-miss pursuit of forecasting. Strangely, the proliferation of digital technology has failed to bring a greater degree of scientific accuracy to predicting the proverbial sure-bet. One of the most obvious examples of prediction is found in the synergy between casino gam-



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Sex, Lies and Butterflies ★★★1/2

(2018) 53 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0477-3 (dvd), 978-1-5317-0478-0 (blu-ray).

Actor Paul Giamatti narrates filmmaker Ann Johnson Prum's PBS-aided *Nature* documentary on butterflies and their evolutionary ancestors, moths. Obviously, there is visual splendor (in the grass, in the air, in the flowers) in the closeup cinematography, but the film complements the beauty of the insects with good biology, albeit often of the Believe-It-Or-Not variety. Moths, according to cutting-edge research, actually emit a sort of "jamming" frequency to trick the sonar of their chief predators, bats. A certain Peruvian butterfly peacefully co-exists—both as a caterpillar and as an adult—with voracious ants who otherwise eat and fight everything in their path. The "painted lady" butterfly makes a generations-spanning high-altitude migration from Africa to northern Europe and back. And other butterflies (or their larva) generate natural toxins—or mimic species that do—in order to avoid becoming a meal. Sure to appeal to lovers of *Lepidoptera*, this informative and gorgeous nature documentary is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)



bling and mathematics, first considered by the 16th-century Italian mathematician Giannicolo Cardano. The most famous forecaster featured here is Billy Beane, whose use of analytics in running the Oakland A's baseball team revolutionized the sport, as chronicled in both the book and film *Moneyball*. Beane is a joyful raconteur, whose explanations of statistics could encourage viewers to dive deeper into mathematical research. Indeed, *Prediction by the Numbers* tackles the subject with such a sense of enthusiasm that examinations of the mathematical theories of 17th-century Blaise Pascal and 18th-century Thomas Bayes come across not as arid academic topics but rather wondrous. On the more serious side, the film poses important questions about the impact of big data on forecasting and what that might mean for a wider society that puts too much faith in forecasting's abilities. A fascinating, offbeat documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Tipping Point ★★★

(2017) 26 min. DVD: \$79: public libraries & high schools; \$149: colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Aided by his parents, 14-year-old Dylan D'Haeze directed this short documentary—part of the *Kids Can Save the Planet* series—designed to introduce young people to the concept of climate change. Although most of the speakers are adults, a few well-spoken kids—such as Charley Peebler from Heirs to Our Oceans—also contribute to the commentary. D'Haeze starts by talking about the processes, such as coal-burning, that pump carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. As he notes, people use fossil fuels for almost everything we do, from heating homes to driving cars. Oil extraction, however, produces methane, which is even more harmful. As more of these types of contaminants enter the atmosphere, Earth's temperature rises, creating catastrophe in the ocean's ecosystem as coral degradation adversely affects

dependent marine life. Melting arctic ice has also caused ocean levels to rise, contributing to an increase in heatwaves and hurricanes. George Tsiattalos, founder of Everything Connects, notes that we are approaching the tipping point at which human-made damage becomes irreversible. When D'Haeze visits government websites to learn more about climate change, he finds that the Environmental Protection Agency, under President Trump, has removed data that previous administrations shared freely (D'Haeze also mentions EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who has since resigned under a cloud of scandal). Scientists such as Max Holmes find Trump's description of climate change as "a hoax" especially irksome—a false belief that benefits the fossil fuel industry while everyone else loses. D'Haeze concludes with a list of ways that kids can help fight climate change. This is an informative documentary that may spur young viewers to think and act. Other titles in the series include *Everything Connects* and *Plastic Is Forever*. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (K. Fennessy)

Water Makes Us Wet ★★★

(2017) 80 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). DRA. Juno Films.

In this naughty-wink-titled follow-up to *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* (VL-9/15), U.C. Santa Cruz professor Beth Stephens and former sex worker Annie Sprinkle bring a humorous flamboyance to their claim to be eco-lovers of Earth's ecosystem—in this particular case, water. The lesbian couple filmmakers serve up lots of footage of like-minded folks—artists, oracles, teachers—in various colorful rituals that have a cheeky edge but are also deeply serious about what we are all doing with the world's water (including wasting, destroying, and giving it to Nestle to market in bottles). Stephens and Sprinkle tour California's western coast to check out the infrastructure of water management—crystal-clear creeks overseen by officials, watersheds, and waste

treatment centers—but also find despoiled rivers where nothing can live. Along the way, they talk to the people who are working to take care of and protect water. At times, the brassy Stephens and Sprinkle—urinating on the side of a road, stopping for hamburgers, or swimming in the nude—look like stars in a John Waters version of an environmental treatise, but no one can say that watching the ecological content here feels like homework. A wacky public service documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

HEALTH & FITNESS

4 Wheel Bob ★★★

(2018) 56 min. DVD: \$99.95: high schools & public libraries; \$269: colleges & universities. Tritone Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Without stooping to sentimentality, filmmaker Tal Skloot's PBS-aided documentary profiles a remarkable athlete-activist who refuses to let his handicap prevent him from having an active life. California's Bob Coomber lost the use of his legs due to complications from Type-1 diabetes. Nonetheless, even with the risk of insulin shock, he persists in hiking difficult trails in a rugged wheelchair (returning to the Kearsarge Pass in the Sierra Nevada with the dogged persistence of Ahab chasing Moby Dick). Bob also takes part in local councils and advisory boards. Along with its stereotype-busting portrait, the film gingerly raises issues of how society as a whole views the disabled (or even the beyond-middle-aged), as the resilient Coomber finds himself unable to gain employment—not even sedentary work in the IT field—and must turn to prolific freelance writing to have an income. DVD extras include bonus scenes, with Coomber participating in a marathon. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Delay, Deny, Hope You Die ★★★

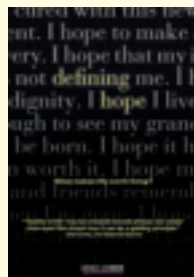
(2018) 52 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$250 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Tens of thousands of enlisted men and women sent to Iraq and Afghanistan following 9/11 have been exposed on a daily basis to lethal gases emanating from so-called "burn pits" spread across both war zones. These deep dump sites have been filled with everything from jet fuel to paint, human waste, chemicals, trash, and body parts. Enormous black plumes are seen rising non-stop from these toxic areas in close proximity to military bases. In Gregory W. Lovett's shocking documentary, veterans describe chronic health issues faced while on active duty: burning eyes, respiratory problems, skin rashes (one vet recalls being endlessly coated in ash). It's no surprise that many veterans who lived through that exposure are terribly ill today, suffering from debilitating cancers or

Defining Hope ★★½

(2017) 77 min. DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Carolyn Jones's *Defining Hope* focuses on hospice and palliative care, detailing the work of two nurses, Diane Ryan of Calvary Hospital in the Bronx and Gilbert Oakley of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, and their commitment to treating patients in the final weeks of life. Ryan, a cancer survivor herself, is especially sensitive to maintaining patient dignity while also recognizing the burdens that failing bodies undergo. While many of the patients are elderly—including a charming and still-alert 95-year-old man regularly visited at home by Oakley—the film also follows a teen girl who is facing the potential for permanent memory loss with a planned brain tumor surgery. At a time when many documentaries on healthcare focus on the business side of the industry or on problems and scandals resulting from inadequate care, it is refreshing to witness a positive portrait of dedicated professionals who clearly have their patients' best interests in mind. *Defining Hope* is a sensitive, mature documentary about life, death, and human kindness. Extras include additional interviews and scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)



other ravages. Because no studies were done correlating the burn pits with human health concerns, no scientific evidence links the two, which allows the U.S. Department of Defense and Veterans Administration to ignore claims of illness resulting from burn pit exposure. Some of the doctors and other experts interviewed here liken the situation to the U.S. government's decades-long denial that Agent Orange—a toxic chemical defoliant used by America in Vietnam—caused grievous harm to soldiers (and the Vietnamese people). The burn pits turn out to be the handiwork of KBR, a notorious subsidiary of Halliburton, which was awarded millions in government contracts to perform practical tasks in war areas. The documentary persuasively claims that KBR was paid to dispose of refuse in Iraq and Afghanistan, and did so as cheaply as possible, leaving the costs of related healthcare to others. A maddening exposé, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Do No Harm: The Opioid Epidemic

★★★

(2018) 90 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$299 w/PPR). Media Policy Center.

Actor Ed Harris narrates filmmaker Harry Wiland's straightforward but impassioned documentary about how big pharma in its promotion of opioid formulations as safe treatments for chronic pain induced doctors to prescribe medications that were in fact addictive, thereby creating a "man-made epidemic" that has brought agony to users and their families—not only from overuse of prescription drugs but also as a gateway to heroin addiction. Produced by the Media Policy Center, *Do No Harm* argues that the drug makers must be held responsible for their gross misconduct, and points a finger particularly at Purdue Pharma, whose aggressive marketing of OxyContin has become a sym-

bol of the manufacturers' malfeasance, while also applauding the efforts of officials such as Kentucky Attorney General Andy Beshear, who brought suit against the company. The film also gives voice to grieving parents who struggle to persuade state legislatures to enact laws that will make it easier for relatives and friends of addicts to intervene and compel institutionalization for treatment. Also discussed here is Purdue's international arm Mundipharma, which is following the example set by Big Tobacco: namely, as health concerns squeeze the American market, sell dangerous products to the rest of the world to bolster the bottom line, regardless of the consequences to people in foreign countries. The seriousness of the opioid epidemic in the United States is beyond dispute, and Wiland does an admirable job of outlining its various facets in this timely documentary. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Genetically Modified Children ★★½

(2018) 54 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.95. Cinema Libre Studio (avail. from most distributors).

The harmful impact of agrochemicals on Argentina's impoverished tobacco farmers and their families is the subject of Juliette Igier and Stephanie Lebrun's impassioned documentary. The directors first travel the countryside from north to south, visiting growers who have been using herbicides containing glyphosate since 1996, when the government authorized the employment of genetically-modified organisms on the basis of research provided by chemical giant Monsanto—which was pushing adoption of its product Roundup. They report that many families who used Roundup and Bayer's pesticide Confidor now have children with serious birth defects (three boys who suffer from horrifying conditions are profiled). They further suggest that Philip Morris, virtually

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the sole purchaser of crops from the region, is complicit in the chemical companies' operations. The narrative then turns to those who are attempting to put political pressure on the government to outlaw the use of agrochemicals and bring legal action on companies that failed to provide accurate information on potential side effects. Interviewees include doctors and journalists collecting evidence of the toxic impact on the population and environment, lawyers who bring suit on behalf of victims, and mothers who have lost children to illnesses they blame on carcinogenic chemicals. *Genetically Modified Children* makes no pretense of objectivity, but it does present an emotionally powerful case, especially by introducing viewers to families devastated by corporations that activists persuasively claim are more concerned with profit than safety. Although technically rudimentary, the documentary is topical, especially since lawsuits against Monsanto are also underway in U.S. courts over the effects of Roundup. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

A Leaf of Faith ★★★

(2018) 87 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

The latest documentary by former bodybuilder Chris Bell—who took on steroid abuse in *Bigger, Stronger, Faster** (VL-9/08)—is timely, given that the opioid epidemic, which encompasses both the overuse of prescribed medications and heroin addiction, has reached crisis proportions in the U.S. *A Leaf of Faith* examines a natural substance called kratom, which is harvested from an abundant plant in Southeast Asia. Kratom leaves have been used for hundreds if not thousands of years as a pain reliever with few apparent ill effects, according to a regional researcher interviewed by Bell—as well as brewed into tea, which suggests it might be both a safer alternative for treatment of chronic pain, and a means of weaning addicts from opioids (the testimony presented in favor of kratom is largely anecdotal). Bell celebrates a 2016 victory in obstructing threatened FDA action

(which was prompted in part by spokespeople for natural supplements already on the market) to place kratom on its list of controlled substances. But he also includes—although without much emphasis—claims that kratom has potentially serious side effects, including death, and while favorable comments are made by several doctors, most of the scientists and physicians interviewed argue that more clinical testing is needed before its use should be officially allowed (it should be noted that this year the FDA issued a warning against kratom's use for any purpose). An interesting contribution to the continuing debate on how to address the opioid crisis, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

A Skin So Soft ★★★

(2018) 94 min. In French & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99. Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Denis Côté's French documentary serves up a non-narrative observatory look at beefcake men and women bodybuilders flexing their pecs and endlessly eating, exercising, and talking about their training regimens, following these grunting musclebound subjects in seemingly indiscriminate fashion. While viewers might wonder what drives them to become Schwarzeneggerian hulks, the film makes no attempt to delve into any motivations or aspirations. All of the bodybuilders have their own personal rituals and approaches to the art of being outrageously muscular: some have personal trainers (or are trainers themselves) and practically live inside cross-training facilities and gyms of some sort. One of the film's subjects pulls 18-wheeler trucks in stunt shows and is a low-level wrestler on the French circuit. Another is a Zen therapist of some kind, shown performing what looks like reiki on his clients. But other than the oddball visual aspects of the film—namely the posing, flexing silent giants—there's no David Attenborough here to authoritatively guide viewers through the curious animalistic behaviors found in this puzzling habitat. Extras include a bonus short film by the director. Optional. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)

Stumped ★★★

(2017) 72 min. DVD: \$129: high schools & public libraries; \$349: colleges & universities. DRA. Good Docs (avail. from www.gooddocs.net). PPR. Closed captioned.

Will Lautzenheiser, the engaging subject of Robin Berghaus's documentary, has had to reinvent his life after the partial loss of his limbs. In 2011, after moving from Boston to teach film at Montana State University, Lautzenheiser experienced leg pain that led to a staph infection, sepsis, and organ failure before amputations of his arms and legs saved his life. He credits his twin brother, Chris, and boyfriend, Angel, for supporting him through his hospital stay and beyond. Through rehabilitation, Lautzenheiser learns how to do everything all over again, such as writing to his niece using a prosthetic hand. Before amputation, he used to walk everywhere; now he alternates between a wheelchair and prosthetic legs. In his off hours, he works on short films, photography projects, and comedy routines with his friend, Steve, who also serves as a personal assistant. Just as it seems as if he's growing accustomed to his changed body, Lautzenheiser looks into arm transplant surgery. More than anything, he says, he longs for independence. After a year of testing, he begins the wait for a donor. Transplant specialist Dr. Matthew Carty emphasizes that the operation will entail a lifelong commitment to rehabilitation and immunosuppressant drugs that have significant side effects. Once donor arms become available, Berghaus films the steps from surgery to aftercare, incorporating material from an NPR segment on his subject's journey. Berghaus lets Lautzenheiser, who is alternatively philosophical and realistic, set the tone, which helps her documentary avoid the "inspiration porn" territory in which the disability defines the human being. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Survival Guide for Pain-Free Living

★★★★1/2

(2018) 4 discs. 110 min. DVD: \$29.99 (\$59.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0379-0.

Longtime yoga instructor Peggy Cappy and neuromuscular therapist Lee Albert combine their talents in this four-disc collection featuring a wide variety of exercises designed to relieve pain. Cappy uses a chair at times, Albert does the moves without aids, and participant Linda demonstrates while mostly sitting down in the separate programs "The Basics," with an emphasis on the importance of stretching and mountain poses; "Lower Body," presenting gentle circling segments for back, hips, legs, knees, and feet; "Upper Body," focusing on head, neck, shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand care; and "Preventing Pain," with attention to lumbar support issues. Featuring very gentle, relaxed workouts (some using blocks or pillows), this excellent exercise series also includes a bonus

Tai Chi Fit: 24 Form ★★★★★1/2

(2018) 120 min. DVD: \$29.95. YMAA Publication Center. ISBN: 978-1-59439-611-3.

Situated in front of ocean waves and scenic trees in Oahu, Hawaii, master teacher David-Dorian Ross here demonstrates 24 tai chi exercises, encouraging viewers to take their time, be attentive to breathing, and enjoy the slow flowing movements. Aimed at both beginners and those with some experience, *Tai Chi Fit: 24 Form* is divided into sections that include a short warm-up, a routine featuring all of the forms, four separate workouts designed to teach each form, and a cool down. Ross describes each form as he performs it, and he is accompanied by C. J. McPhee, who provides backup examples of the moves. Peaceful Hawaiian-tinged instrumental background music helps foster the slow and relaxed movements. An excellent guide to these ancient Chinese exercises that are beneficial to health and well-being, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Root)



NEW RELEASES



DOGS OF DEMOCRACY

A documentary about the stray dogs of Athens and the people who take care of them. The film explores how the dogs have become a symbol of hope for the people and for the anti-austerity movement. A universal story about love and loyalty and what we might learn from animals. Directed by Mary Zournazi. 57 minutes.

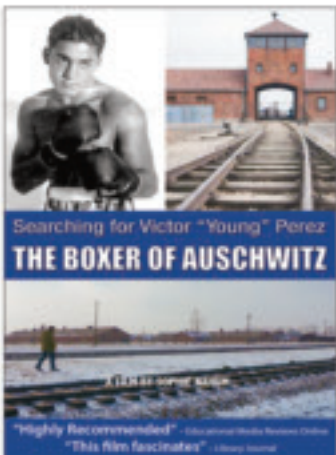
Best Documentary 2017 Imagine This Women's International Film Festival



ASCENT OF EVIL: The Story of Mein Kampf

In the autobiographical book written by Adolf Hitler while imprisoned following his 1923 failed coup attempt, Hitler outlined his political ideology and goals. Yet much of the history of this 720-page, two-volume book is now forgotten. Using historical footage, photographs and interviews, Ascent of Evil plunges deep into the book's dark secrets and reveals how it came to be written. Directed by Frédéric Monteil. 52 minutes.

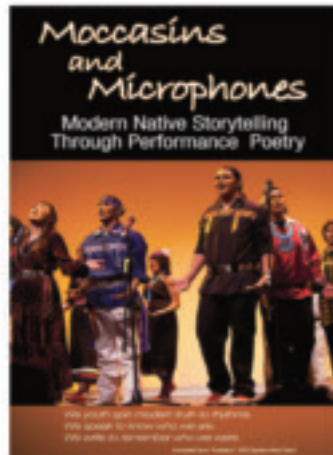
"Highly Recommended"
- Library Journal



SEARCHING FOR VICTOR "YOUNG" PEREZ: The Boxer of Auschwitz

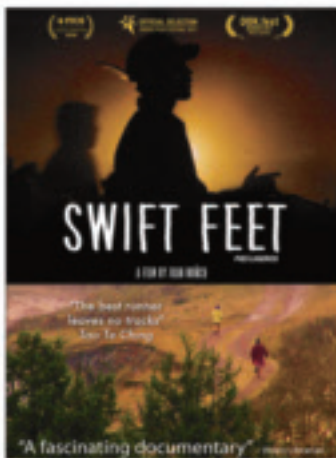
The forgotten story of Victor Perez, who rose to great fame in 1931 as the youngest world champion in boxing history – only to be deported to Auschwitz, where he was forced to box in the amusement of the guards. Through interviews with the last people who knew Perez, this documentary discovers the fate of this heroic figure. Directed by Sophie Nahum. 52 minutes.

"This film fascinates"
- Library Journal



MOCCASINS AND MICROPHONES: Modern Native Storytelling through Performance Poetry

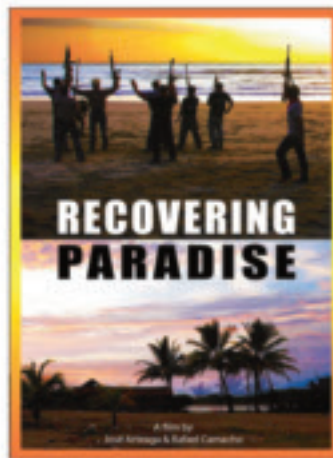
Established in 1890, the Santa Fe Indian High School educates Native American children from Southwestern tribes. The SFIS Spoken Word Team travels are documented, as the high school students prepare and present a theater production of their finest poems woven with traditional and contemporary song and dance. Directed by Jason Jaacks. 44 minutes.



SWIFT FEET

For the Tarahumara, running is not only the best mode of travel, it is an important cultural tradition. Running in long colorful shirts and sandals made out of rubber tires, they regularly compete in rarijipari, running races that can last days and extend over a hundred miles. Yet, the Tarahumara culture is threatened by the encroachment of modern civilization. Directed by Juan Carlos Núñez. 76 minutes.

"A fascinating documentary..."
- Video Librarian



RECOVERING PARADISE

In Mexico, Santa Maria Ostula suffered great violence from organized crime. A group of Ostula's citizens reclaimed some of the land that organized crime had taken and founded the town of Xayakalan, but, the violence continued. A large group of citizens returned with armed self-defense groups. Now able to defend themselves, the community reclaimed their land and began reconstruction of their village. Directed by José Arteaga and Rafael Camacho. 72 minutes.

Best Documentary
- 2017 International Festival of Indigenous Cinema

COMING SOON!

GOING THE DISTANCE: JOURNEYS OF RECOVERY

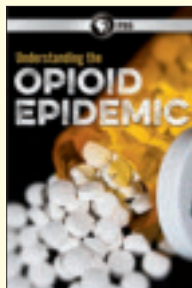
Directed by David L. Brown. This documentary tells the personal stories of 4 survivors of traumatic brain injury. A U.S. Marine, a college co-ed, a pre-med student and a six-year old reveal their personal stories of devastation, heroism and hope. An inspiring portrait of their journeys of recovery. 60 minutes.

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Understanding the Opioid Epidemic ★★½

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0419-3.

Opioid drug abuse is one of the leading causes of death under 50, cutting across all age groups, races, and both sexes throughout America. According to filmmaker John Grant's PBS-aired documentary, narrated by William Fichtner, this pain killer "hijacks the brain" and can take over one's life. Prescribed by mostly well-meaning doctors (over 240 million prescriptions are written each year), opioids can start users on a slippery downhill slope that ultimately leads addicts to seek out cheaper street alternatives such as heroin and fentanyl. Many become hooked on pain medications following an accident or surgery, with more aggressive treatments encouraged by profit-minded pharmaceutical companies. West Virginia has been particularly hard hit, affecting both schools and the larger communities. Nationally, opioid abuse has racked up costs of 75 billion dollars, affecting healthcare insurers on both ends—treatment for a patient's pain, followed by treatment to wean patients off the drugs. Patients and doctors interviewed here note that addiction is a chronic disease, and that recovery is a long and difficult road with frequent relapses, especially since the attached stigma dissuades many sufferers from finding help. Opioid addiction has no cure, only a "daily reprieve," aided by education, prevention, and early identification. The documentary concludes that it is a national "disease of denial," and that we are all potentially one accident away from being hooked. An informative, timely, and valuable film, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



"Survival Guide" featurette on managing day-to-day pain. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Tai Chi Fusion Fire ★★★

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$29.95. YMAA Publication Center. ISBN: 978-1-59439-563-5.

Host and instructor David-Dorian Ross is featured in this latest addition to his "Taiji-fit" series that kicks off with a melodramatic drum-backed tiki torch demonstration. Ross describes the *Fire* program as a blend of tai chi and kung fu that taken in combination provides a more intense cardio workout. Performing before an ocean backdrop, Ross presents a warm-up, two workouts, and a cool-down segment, with moves including "catch and embrace the moon," "sinking the chi," and "mongoose running across grass," along with martial arts punches and kicks. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Evolution of Organic ★★½

(2017) 86 min. DVD: \$350. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-941545-94-7.

The rise of the organic-produce industry in America (which in this telling is restricted almost exclusively and myopically to California) may not sound like a scintillating topic, but habitual Whole Foods shoppers will appreciate filmmaker Mark Kitchell's ploughing up of the hidden history in which agriculture met the counterculture. The disillusionment of 1960s youth (including Vietnam veterans) with corporate factory-farm techniques and

deadly pesticides (as exposed by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*) led quasi-hippie rebels to grow and harvest food that was chemical-free. Narrated by Frances McDormand, *Evolution of Organic* features interviewees including author Julie Guthman and others who recall that the first-timers had no idea what they were doing, making up organic methods as they went along. Original crops, some admit, were misshapen, sparse, and costly. Still, as cancer scares spread throughout the buying public, the organic/natural designation started to really matter to worried '80s consumers. Meanwhile, organic-committed farmers sharpened their financial acumen along with their cultivation techniques, and trendy chefs such as Sibella Kraus put a hipster stamp on organic ingredients (particularly in salads). Sure to appeal to health-conscious foodies, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Our Blood Is Wine ★★★

(2018) 78 min. In English & Georgian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95. Music Box Films (avail. from most distributors).

France may be the country most famous for wine today, but the origins of winemaking can be traced back some 8,000 years to the Caucasian fields of the former Soviet republic of Georgia. In her likable documentary (shot entirely on an iPhone 6), director Emily Railsback—accompanied by Jeremy Quinn, a sommelier from Chicago—traverses the countryside to investigate and celebrate the revival of small scale (one might say artisanal) wine production after seven decades that saw Communist authorities effectively eradicating hundreds of grape varieties in order to create large, state-controlled vineyards that

mass-produced generic wine for sale. Now, some wine enthusiasts are returning to the old ways, using huge clay pots called qvevri, in which the grape slurry is stored underground for six months before the pots are unsealed and the resultant wine ladled out for tasting. Railsback follows the process from the artful fashioning of the qvevri—which must be kept in the kiln for up to a week—to their burial in a dark cellar (accompanied by religious ritual), to opening after fermentation, and consumption in subsequent communal feasts, where the singing of traditional songs adds to the enjoyment of the new vintage. Along the way, Railsback visits with archaeologists, skilled qvevri-makers, and farmers who have dedicated themselves to recovering nearly-extinct grape varieties in order to make the distinctive wines of their forefathers. At times a bit scattershot, *Our Blood Is Wine* is also as charmingly homemade as the wines that Railsback and Quinn enthusiastically drink during their journey. Extras include deleted scenes, traditional Georgian songs, and a sketch and poster art gallery. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

BEAUTY & FASHION

Straight/Curve: Redefining Body Image ★★★

(2017) 82 min. DVD: \$95: high schools & public libraries; \$350 w/PPR: colleges & universities (discussion guide included). DRA. Ro*co Films Educational. Closed captioned.

Jenny McQuaile's documentary is an extension of Anastasia Garcia's *Straight/Curve: Fashion Reimagined* photo exhibit, using the photo shoot as a framing device to explore the fashion industry as a driver for the ways that people—especially teenage girls—think about body image. According to data provided by the Girl Scouts of America, 60% of American girls compare themselves to fashion models, which leads to self-esteem issues that increase sharply between the ages of 13 and 17. Claire Mysko, chief executive officer of the National Eating Disorders Association, notes that no direct correlation exists between ultra-thinness and health—or even happiness—but that is the message being sent by the fashion industry. Schools, the media, and other entities bolster that message through an excessive focus on weight and body mass index. Garcia's shoot takes place in the wake of New York's "Fashion Week" with models that are more diverse than the industry standard in terms of size and ethnicity. McQuaile interviews some, including Iskra Lawrence, who decided to stop dieting and embrace her shape, and Philomena Kwao, a British model of Ghanaian descent who must constantly explain to observers that she isn't African American (as if that is the only way to be black in the Western world).

She also interviews students, nutritionists, marketing consultants, and fashion designers such as Christian Siriano, who is famed for his attentiveness to all body types. Of his celebrity clients—from Ariana Grande to Oprah—he says, “They’re all beautiful in their own way.” And that inclusive statement could also serve as the tagline for this encouraging documentary. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (K. Fennessy)

COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

AlphaGo ★★★

(2017) 90 min. DVD: \$95. high schools & public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities (discussion guide included). DRA. Ro*co Films Educational. Closed captioned.

In order to fully appreciate Greg Kohs's documentary, it helps to have some understanding of the ancient Chinese board game Go, a strategic game played on a 19-by-19 line grid using black and white stones. Mastering the game is no mean feat for human players, but Kohs's film follows an effort by the Google-owned DeepMind Company to create an artificial intelligence (AI) program called AlphaGo that will enable a computer to gain international dominance as a Go player. The challenges of translating Go's complexity into an AI brain offers fascinating insights into the work of the computer programmers faced with this daunting task. Former European champion player Fan Hui is recruited in 2015 for a five-game tournament against the AlphaGo program and loses all of his matches, but a 2016 match in Seoul against South Korean champion Lee Sedol ended with AlphaGo winning four of five matchups (Lee's sole victory against the computer reaffirmed that AI technology was fallible). *AlphaGo* serves up a winning celebration of technological genius, although the game itself is not exactly cinematically compelling (fortunately, however, the editing mercifully speeds up the action here). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Dream Big: Engineering Our World ★★★

(2017) 2 discs. 42 min. DVD: \$19.99, 4K/Blu-ray Combo: \$29.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Adopting an attitude of aw-shucks wonderment, Jeff Bridges narrates Greg McGillivray's big-screen IMAX inspirational tribute to the past triumphs and present dreams of civil engineers. *Dream Big* begins with footage of children constructing with toy blocks, and it suggests that the creative impulse has given rise to numerous marvels over the centuries, ranging from the Great Wall of China to the International Space Station and other modern skyscrapers and bridges. The documentary argues that such

extraordinary achievements are just the most notable examples of every engineer's drive to find effective answers to the practical difficulties encountered in building, and it spotlights the efforts of one young professional to design structures better able to withstand earthquakes, and another who heads a non-profit devoted to finding ways to construct much-needed footbridges in remote areas where the topography is especially dangerous. Also spotlighted are a Phoenix high school class that built an underwater robot that performed well in a California competition, and a Mississippi team that beat MIT rivals in a solar car challenge in Australia. Filmed in the IMAX format, this loses something on the small screen, but the images remain impressive in this semi-promo documentary produced in partnership with the American Society of Civil Engineers. Extras include an educator's guide, educational shorts, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and “Fun Facts” clips. Recommended. Aud: I, J, H, P. (F. Swietek)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

Backyard Sports ★★★

(2018) 55 min. DVD: \$24.95. Youth Sports Club. PPR.

Drawing from earlier releases, Coach Marty Schupak's wide-ranging *Backyard Sports* serves up a series of brief drills aimed at helping kids become comfortable with the fundamentals of pitching and catching a baseball, controlling a basketball and soccer ball, playing golf and lacrosse, and more. The approach here is to break down essentials into bite-size bits of skill-building, progressing logically through increasing challenges. Of all the sports discussed here, baseball comes across as the most ap-

pealing, at least in terms of the playfulness of drills. Want to teach a little kid about swinging a bat at a moving target? Give her a fat plastic bat and blow soap bubbles at her. Want to work up to catching a ball in a glove? Start with the bottom half of a plastic milk jug (catching tennis balls like rain in a cup). Little tricks with chalk, footwork, neckties (yes, neckties) and more will help turn novices into confident players in several sports. Recommended. Aud: E, I, J, P. (T. Keogh)

The Cage Fighter ★★★1/2

(2018) 81 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Media Group (avail. from most distributors).

Joe Carman, a 40-year-old husband and father who works as a boilermaker for the Washington State Ferries system, has a loving, affectionate relationship with his family. But as viewers quickly learn in this remarkably revealing documentary, Joe also has a dark secret: he is addicted to mixed martial arts cage fighting. When he tells his wife (who has health issues) that he's going out for a run at night, Joe is actually heading for some fight club, where he can pummel somebody and get pummeled back. It doesn't take long for his spouse and children to see what's going on behind their backs. In fact, they've all been down this road before, with Joe repeatedly promising to stop fighting. But he can't. The thing that drives him toward the cage at the expense of everything else slowly becomes clearer, especially during the final minutes, which are rich with folly and irony. But before that, filmmaker Jeff Unay—who had extraordinary access over a three-year-plus period—captures naked moments of heartbreak, despair, confusion, and anger. An epic tale of one man who could lose it all while chasing a mirage, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



Coach Jake ★★★1/2

(2018) 82 min. DVD: \$19.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Ian Phillips's documentary profiles Martin Jacobson, a soccer coach who guided Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Manhattan to a record 17 citywide championships. Jacobson's triumph is a story of victory against amazing odds: when he arrived in 1994, the school had a poor reputation for athletics and an even worse reputation for academic achievement. It also didn't help to be a soccer coach at a school without a soccer field. Working with a student body primarily consisting of immigrant youth from Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, Jacobson brought structure and discipline to his players' lives, both on the field and outside of the game. Jacobson's success became wider known thanks to a 2007 *New York Times* feature that detailed how he had helped several players get housing, green cards, and scholarships. *Coach Jake* also deals frankly with Jacobson's personal struggle: a recovered heroin addict, he is now living with the Hepatitis C virus and cirrhosis of the liver. While the film certainly sports a feel-good vibe, it does not sugarcoat the stories of Jacobson and his players, who are presented as complex individuals facing a multitude of challenges. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Workers Cup ★★1/2

(2018) 92 min. DVD: \$69.95 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors in October). PPR.

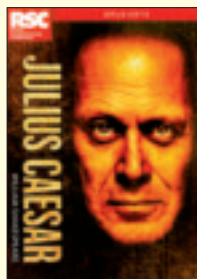
The 2022 FIFA World Cup is scheduled to be held in Qatar—a tiny but fabulously wealthy Persian Gulf state—which has already begun building facilities to host the tournament with its expected multitudes of fans. The construction workers are not Qatari, of course, but migrants (mostly from Africa and East Asia) who after being lured to the project by recruiters making false promises concerning pay and working conditions find themselves living in cramped dormitory-like quarters as virtually indentured servants. In order to boost morale—and ostensibly show a degree of “social responsibility”—the people in charge of the operation decide to sponsor a soccer tournament, fielding teams of workers from the various companies that have been contracted to manage the construction projects. Adam Sobel’s documentary follows one such team representing the Gulf Construction Company (GCC) as it trains and competes in a series of games leading to the championship match, focusing on five players—from Ghana, Nepal, Kenya, and India—as well as an Indian from the company’s middle management who serves as the team manager. Sobel examines their hopes and disappointments as each tells his story, with team captain Kenneth (who dreams of parlaying his play into a soccer career), emerging as an especially touching figure. By the close, viewers may be left with the sad realization that the tournament is just another form of exploitation, not just of the players, but also the co-workers who cheer them on in the name of company loyalty. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

THE ARTS

Cinema Novo ★★★

(2016) 92 min. In Portuguese & French w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.98 (\$348 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (available from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The title of Eryk Rocha’s documentary refers to a movement among Brazilian filmmakers during the 1960s and ’70s that reflected the country’s political upheavals and the dire conditions in which ordinary people lived, but also did so with distinctive stylistic freedom and energy. The period was marked by military rule following a 1964 coup, along with continuing economic distress exacerbated by governmental austerity programs that failed to stem growing national debt. Reflecting popular discontent, *cinema novo* became increasingly radical in the social views it espoused as the years wore on. Rocha, the son of Glauber Rocha, one of the



Julius Caesar ★★1/2

(2017) 163 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Directed by Angus Jackson, this 2017 Royal Shakespeare Company mounting of the Bard’s historical drama about political machinations in the late Roman Republic is a straightforward, energetic production. Andrew Woodall is an imperious, bellicose Caesar; Martin Hutson a febrile, reckless Cassius; Alex Waldmann a calculating but nervous Brutus; and James Corrigan a rough but shrewd Mark Antony. The supporting cast is strong as well, and the spare sets are complemented by traditional toga-and-breastplate costuming. The droning of Mira Calix’s background music is occasionally intrusive, the battle sequences are of course small-scaled, and some of the comic bits tend to fall flat. Overall, however, this is a dependably traditional production in which the verse is articulated with admirable clarity—a major strength in a play that contains some of the Bard’s most memorable lines. Extras include an audio commentary by Jackson, cast interviews, a brief lecture on Caesar’s place in history by the redoubtable Mary Beard, and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

movement’s most influential directors, does not here offer a conventional introduction to the movement; instead he serves up montages of clips from individual films (often not identified), which are juxtaposed with excerpts from archival interviews of directors like his father and Nelson Pereira dos Santos, as well as their collaborators, such as cinematographer Mário Carneiro, who elucidate the philosophy behind the movement. The result is an impressionistic overview rather than a chronological survey, which will appeal more to those who are already familiar with *cinema novo* rather than newcomers. Nonetheless, this is obviously a labor of love, and on its own terms is extremely well-researched and edited. Extras include a booklet with a helpful contextual essay by Randal Johnson and Robert Stam. Recommended, particularly for film history collections. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Hamlet ★★1/2

(2018) 192 min. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Sarah Frankcom’s 2014 staging at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, England, offered a bare-bones, modern dress, multicultural interpretation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* that included gender reassignment in a few key roles. This experiment works brilliantly when Polonius becomes Polonia, creating a remarkably uncomfortable tension between Katie West’s unstrung Ophelia and Gillian Bevan as her scheming parent since the now-mother-daughter duel further enflames the already strained relationship. And the updating features an imaginative sight gag, as Polonia grants her departing son Laertes (played by black actor Ashley Zhangazha) a credit card to cover the expenses of his schooling. Still, the key element to this interpretation is the casting of Maxine Peake as Hamlet, who is visually fetching with her androgynous haircut and wardrobe but tends to look about her surroundings with a

Popeye-style scowl and spits out text in shrill line readings. Her poor command of the role is especially obvious when confronted with John Shrapnel’s full-throttle fury as the Ghost—his gut-punch take on the character is a true highlight (Shrapnel does double-duty as Claudius, where he is equally innovative, in an often-thankless part). Still, if this *Hamlet* doesn’t always hit the mark, it surely deserves credit for daring to be different. A strong optional purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Sidemen: Long Road to Glory ★★★

(2017) 80 min. DVD: \$24.95. Once & For All (avail. from www.sidemenfilm.com).

Three legendary blues musicians receive their due in Scott Rosenbaum’s affectionate documentary. Pianist Pinetop Perkins and drummer Willie “Big Eyes” Smith—who both won a shared Emmy in 2011—played with Muddy Waters, while guitarist Hubert Sumlin accompanied Howlin’ Wolf. Rosenbaum combines performance footage with interviews of his subjects, animated sequences, narration by Marc Maron, and testimonials from musical disciples such as Derek Trucks, who has played with Sumlin; Bonnie Raitt, who has performed with Perkins and Smith; and Johnny Winter, who produced Waters’s comeback album, *Hard Again*. Perkins, who was born in Mississippi in 1913 and left home at 16, joined forces with Sonny Boy Williamson, and by 1969 was part of Waters’s band. Sumlin, born in Mississippi in 1931, saw Howlin’ Wolf play at a young age, and he recalls, “I was determined to be with that guy.” In 1954, he got the call to join Wolf in Chicago. Smith, born in Arkansas in 1936, moved to Chicago when he was 17, where he met Waters, with whom he would play for decades. Through these associations, the trio of sidemen went on to inspire British acts who built their rock ‘n’ roll bands on a blues foundation, such as the Rolling Stones, whose cover of Wolf’s “Little Red Rooster” topped

the charts. Jimi Hendrix, who claimed Sumlin as an influence, covered Wolf's "Killing Floor," which Sumlin performs in the film (the two also played together). Rosenbaum's film shines a valuable light on significant contributors to widely celebrated works who didn't always receive the credit they deserved (all three musicians passed away in 2011). Extras include a deleted scene and a bonus performance by blues musician Robert Randolph. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

After Auschwitz ★★ ★ 1/2

(2018) 88 min. DVD: \$69.95 (\$325 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). *Passion River* (avail. from most distributors in October). PPR.

Filmmaker Jon Kean's documentary focuses on six women who survived the Auschwitz concentration camp in their late teens and early 20s. While their liberation from Nazi imprisonment was miraculous, their return to postwar European life was plagued with tragedy and problems: families perished during the war, homes and possessions were lost, and the dawning of the Cold War brought new hardship to Eastern Europe. The women eventually left for America and were amazed by the prosperity and generosity of their new homeland. All began remarkable new lives (one woman would become nanny to actor Ricardo Montalban's children), but postwar America was eager to move on, and the women encountered few people who were interested in learning about their experiences. By the late 1970s, however, attitudes changed, as numerous films and TV productions appeared that dealt with the Holocaust, and the women were sought out as public speakers and consulted on projects related to Holocaust history. Kean, who also focused on the Holocaust in his 2009 documentary *Swimming in Auschwitz* (VL-9/09), here serves up a fine tribute to the human spirit, along with a reminder of the importance of never allowing this most heinous of tragedies to slip away into half-forgotten history. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Great Escape at Dunkirk ★★ ★ 1/2

(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0294-6.

Aired on PBS's NOVA series, filmmaker John Hayes Fisher's documentary retraces the extraordinary events of May 1940, when hundreds of thousands of Allied troops trapped on the beaches of Dunkirk, France, were rescued by a combination of Royal Navy vessels and an armada of private boats. As years went by, the Dunkirk evacuation took on mythic proportions, culminating in Christopher Nolan's 2017 epic *Dunkirk*. *Great Escape at Dunkirk* seeks to correct many inaccuracies that have clouded the story of

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the evacuation, most notably the incorrect assertion that the Royal Air Force (RAF) did not offer protection to the stranded soldiers facing Luftwaffe bombing. The excavation of a recently discovered wreck of a Spitfire jet is used here to strengthen the claims of RAF heroism during this campaign. Also included is coverage of the work of archeologists, divers, and historians in locating the remains of ships, airplanes, and personal effects of the men involved in this endeavor. Drawing on newly declassified information, the film offers a fresh new look at a seminal moment in World War II history. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Hitler's Hollywood ★★1/2

(2018) 105 min. In English & German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

For most Americans, the cinema of Nazi-era Germany consists primarily of the propaganda epics of Leni Riefenstahl and a few hideous anti-Semitic productions. But German films made between 1933 and 1945 were diverse in content, ranging from lavish musicals to mild melodramas to historic extravaganzas. Rüdiger Suchsland, who documented German cinema from 1919 to 1933 in the acclaimed nonfiction film *From Caligari to Hitler* (VL-11/15), considers the Nazi-era output in this fascinating yet somewhat frustrating presentation. Nazi censorship policies limited certain offerings—most notably feminist dramas and, oddly, science-fiction—while the defection of Jewish and Hitler-hating Christian artists resulted in a noticeable creativity void (the few comedies of the era were truly dreadful). Also, there were heavy-handed themes throughout these

films, including the nobility of death, the favoritism of teamwork over individualism, and the glorification of nationalist fervor. Still, some surprises could be found: a young pre-Hollywood Ingrid Bergman appeared in the 1938 trifle *The Four Companions*, while G.W. Pabst, who was unable to emigrate, helmed the 1943 drama *Paracelsus*, which included a bizarre interpretative dance sequence designed to symbolize the coming of the 16th-century post-Black Death plague in Germany. Considering the scope of the subject, Suchsland is here only able to share bits and pieces of narrative film segments, with very little newsreel footage, and no animation from the period. And in the narration by German actor Udo Kier, heavily accented line readings often sound phonetic (the film also has a German voiceover option). Still, this is overall a compelling follow-up to Suchsland's earlier film. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Nothing Is Forgotten ★★★

(2017) 61 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR.

Moroccan-born journalist Zineb El Rhazoui was in Morocco when 12 of her colleagues died in the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre. In Vincent Coen and Guillaume Vandenberghe's documentary, shot over several years, she comes across as an intelligent, quick-witted woman who doesn't care what anybody thinks of her: she smokes, drinks, swears, and speaks freely at all times. Although she finds Islam fascinating, she describes herself as a Moroccan atheist. In 2011, when an Islamist government comes to power in Morocco, she doesn't feel there is a place for her anymore, and in 2012, she takes a job at the political magazine *Charlie Hebdo*

in Paris, where she feels she can be herself and pursue her passion. But the magazine's satirical jabs at the more extreme elements of Islam are met with fierce resistance, including protests, death threats, and the firebombing of their offices. After the horrific shooting in 2015, Rhazoui says she felt dazed, although she still takes part in the citywide demonstration against the attack. Afterward, she moves to a safe house and receives police protection due to threats on her life. When she becomes pregnant, Rhazoui has to figure out whether the life she is living is sustainable for a child (the filmmakers provide no information about the father, possibly for his protection). During the course of filming, terrorist attacks also take place at Paris's Bataclan during a concert and at a Bastille Day celebration in Nice. Whether or not Rhazoui will remain at *Charlie Hebdo* is still a question at film's end, but it's clear she will continue to speak out against the roots and results of terrorism. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Subversives ★★★

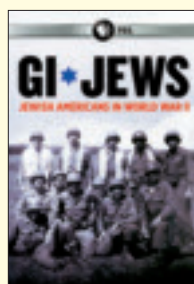
(2018) 70 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$349. DRA. Juno Films. PPR.

Filmmaker Miles Roston's documentary *The Subversives* takes viewers back to the 20th century when the U.S. selectively supported right-wing military dictatorships in global hot spots under the banner of fighting global Communism. Older viewers will certainly recall the hell that much of Central and South America descended into following coups that toppled democratically elected leaders, leading to the torture, murder, and disappearances of hundreds of thousands of people. The film centers on the work of a United Nations maverick, Theo van Boven, who led investigations into human rights abuses with vigor, determined to unearth the truth no matter who it upset. Beginning in 1977, van Boven (an elderly interviewee here) embarked on numerous human rights inquiries, traveling to Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, and elsewhere, playing things down a bit by labeling his commission an innocuous-sounding "working group." Still, he was accused of being a Communist, often upset U.S. officials, and rattled the U.N. top brass. The film presents a powerful history lesson, combining archival footage together with interviews of survivors who have no idea where loved ones vanished. As human rights abuses continue in the 21st century—most recently in the Trump administration's forced separation of children from parents illegally crossing the U.S. border—this is a timely documentary about a sadly perennial issue. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

GI Jews: Jewish Americans in World War II ★★★★★

(2018) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0307-3.

Filmmaker Lisa Ades's PBS-aired documentary centers on the 550,000 Jewish-Americans who served in the nation's military during World War II, men and women who faced two concurrent battles: one against the Axis powers seeking to destroy the global Jewish population, and the other against home-front anti-Semitism. The film's focus on the latter struggle is especially powerful, as many Jews in service were subjected to such ugliness for the first time in their lives while in the service of their country. Incredibly, many anti-Semites of the era openly questioned the patriotism of the Jewish population and wondered if they had the physical capacity to serve in combat. *GI Jews* features interviews with several veterans who became prominent figures in the postwar years, including Henry Kissinger, Mel Brooks, and Carl Reiner—the latter is especially funny, recalling a Southern soldier who assumed that all Jews knew each other and asked the New York-born Reiner if he knew a Jewish grocer named Goldfarb from Shreveport, LA. The film also looks at the perils Jewish soldiers confronted when fighting in Europe, recounting the heroism of Master Sgt. Roddie Edmonds in his defiance of a German prisoner-of-war camp commander's orders to identify the Jewish soldiers in his ranks. *GI Jews* is a compelling and timely documentary about fighting against prejudice while in the pursuit of liberty. Extras include extended interviews with Reiner and Brooks. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. Editor's Choice. (P. Hall)



Syria: Children at War ★★1/2

(2017) 52 min. DVD: \$225. DRA. Film Ideas. PPR. Closed captioned.

The Syrian Civil War is in its seventh year and shows no signs of ending. Considering

Spying on the Royals ★★½

(2016) 100 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0474-2.

In December 1936, England was upended when the newly crowned King Edward abdicated to marry the American divorcee Wallis Warfield Simpson. Prior to that, the aging, ailing King George had regarded the relationship with alarm, feeling that the then-Prince of Wales had acquired the “worst American habits” of consuming cocktails and going to nightclubs. When the prince went on a spending spree, buying jewels and furs, the king—convinced the prince had a “schoolboy crush gone mad”—ordered an investigation. Drawing on recently opened files, filmmaker Paul Elston’s PBS-aired documentary examines this unique probe. Detectives believed that Simpson’s husband was an ambitious “bouncer” who was using Edward, and that his wife was a gold digger. When the king died in early 1936, the stakes increased. Initially, the prince and his lover were fairly discreet, but gradually authorities feared that a royal scandal was in the making, as the couple met others with a “hedonistic lifestyle.” When Edward later abdicated and turned his throne over to his deeply reluctant brother, the whole matter became a security concern, especially when the couple displayed Nazi sympathies: visiting Germany, meeting propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, and sharing tea with Hitler. To get rid of the ex-king, Churchill pressured him to accept the position of Governor of the Bahamas, a lonely outpost of empire. Edward resented this comedown, and he even lobbied against America’s entry into WWII, although British authorities eventually concluded the couple were merely a pair of “arch beachcombers” and “frivolous chancers.” The documentary, which features dramatic re-enactments, spins a fascinating tale of phone taps, spies, secrets, and coded messages, unearthed after three quarters of a century. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



that the U.S. media has no interest in sending its cameras to the frontlines, this documentary and others such as *Last Men in Aleppo* (VL-1/18)—capturing the carnage and suffering that takes place in Syria—are the only way that people can witness the war up-close. Filmmaker Yuri Maldavsky focuses his camera on a family in Aleppo living in the section of the city under rebel control. Maintaining a family in a war zone is an uncommon challenge, to be certain, and this one faces complex questions regarding whether to actively participate in the fight against the national army. And, of course, there is the question of what kind of emotional damage is being done to the children in this hostile landscape. Maldavsky provides a riveting look at a seemingly ordinary household in the extraordinarily violent environment created by despotic Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

BIOGRAPHY

Carry Me Home: A Remember America Film ★★★

(2018) 23 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

Actress Karen Abercrombie is mesmerizing here as the 19th-century former slave Harriet Tubman, who is seen during the period when she orchestrated, at considerable personal peril, the escapes of over 300 slaves through the Underground Railroad. *Carry Me Home*

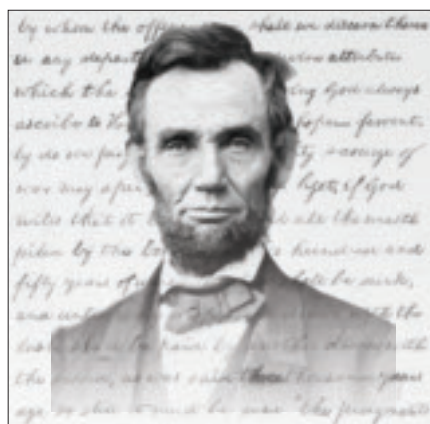
is a short drama centering on the fact-based 1860 flight of Maria Ennals (Lindsey Aerial Grimble), her husband Stephen (Joel Ashur), and their newborn baby. A visually powerful film that captures the casual cruelty of slave treatment with horrifying details tucked into the backgrounds of various scenes, the film recreates the experience of the Underground Railroad, with Tubman contacting white abolitionists who shelter fleeing slaves in their homes before the fugitives are able to move on at night. Writer-director Josh Henry emphasizes the harsh physical conditions that escaped slaves (and Tubman herself) endured on these runs (terrified for her child’s safety, Maria sometimes balks at Tubman’s commands, which include having to wade waist-level through a freezing river with the infant in her arms). The ongoing tensions, close-calls, and secret-agent action effectively bring viewers into the courageous work of the remarkable Tubman. Recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Chinese Lives of Uli Sigg ★★★

(2016) 93 min. In English, German & Mandarin w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.98 (\$348 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (available from most distributors).

Uli Sigg is recognized as the owner of the largest private collection of modern Chinese art in the world. Sigg first went to China as a representative of the Schindler Group to conduct the company’s business operations during the country’s opening to the West in the 1980s. In 1995, Sigg was appointed as the Swiss ambassador to China,

North Korea, and Manchuria, serving in the post until 1998. During those two decades he assiduously accumulated works by local artists, often displaying them in the embassy, and in 1997 he established an awards program recognizing outstanding contemporary Chinese artists (at a time when many were suspect in official circles). In 2012, Sigg donated nearly 1,500 items from his collection to the M+, a museum being built in Hong Kong. Michael Schindhelm’s documentary provides an overview of Sigg’s extraordinary life, combining archival footage with extended interviews of Sigg, as well as recollections by some of the most notable artists whose works Sigg collected, including Fang Lijun, Wang Guangyi, Cao Chong’en, Cao Fei, and the renowned Ai Weiwei. Less an introduction to the artworks than a consideration of the relationship between the artist and society, the film also offers an incisive portrait of a farsighted, sophisticated man whose comments on meetings with governmental officials such as Deng Xiaoping will fascinate those interested in the recent transformation of China into a global power. Extras include private footage of Sigg’s time in China during the 1980s, and a promotional video for the Chinese Contemporary Art Award program. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



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Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars ★★½

(2018) 159 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$21.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Eric Clapton, the dean of rock guitarists, deserves a thorough, insightful documentary about his influences, achievements, and the pivotal chapters in his artistic life. Unfortunately, director Lili Fini Zanuck's *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars* is not quite that film, although there is particular merit in its overview of the master's early years. Viewers meet Clapton as a nondescript boy who signals nothing of greatness ahead, and they follow his emerging passion for blues guitar and relentless efforts to play the music of Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Albert King, and many more. After a trial with one band, Clapton anchored the outstanding Yardbirds, a group in the forefront of the 1960s blues scene in London. But he was a restless soul too dedicated to the blues to cross over to the Yardbirds' drift toward pop, and he bolted to join John Mayall's rootsy ensemble. The film does a decent if impressionistic job of laying out what came next: the Olympian heights of power trio Cream, the mysterious beauty of Blind Faith's music, and the epic brilliance of the Derek and the Dominos album *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*. But the film is equally interested in the more sensational, oft-told story about Clapton falling in love with friend George Harrison's wife, Pattie Boyd (the subject of both Harrison's Beatles hit "Something," and Clapton's "Layla"). Indeed, that complicated affair had a big impact on Clapton's creativity as well as his emotional sanity, but *12 Bars* comes perilously close to simply wallowing in this love triangle story. Similarly, the accidental death of Clapton's young son is treated here in more maudlin than illuminating fashion regarding Clapton's subsequent well-being. And the film glides right past a long period in the mid-to-late '70s when Clapton was producing mellower material. On the plus side, there is much to enjoy in the tales of Clapton's friendships with fellow guitar wizards Jimi Hendrix and Duane Allman. Extras include a featurette with a conversation between Zanuck, Clapton, and musician Jools Holland. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Mankiller: Activist, Feminist, Cherokee Chief ★★★

(2018) 57 min. DVD: \$129; high schools & public libraries; \$349; colleges & universities. DRA. Good Docs (avail. from www.gooddocs.net). PPR. Closed captioned.

Wilma Mankiller, (1945-2010) the subject of filmmaker Valerie Red-Horse Mohl's PBS-aired documentary, was the first female leader of the Cherokee Nation. She spent her early years in Oklahoma before going to California as a result of the Indian Relo-



Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes—Feeling Heart

★★★★

(2017) 118 min. DVD: \$24.95; individuals; \$49.95; public libraries & high schools; \$295; colleges & universities. California Newsreel. PPR. SDH captioned.

Aired on PBS's *American Masters* series, filmmaker Tracy Heather Strain's biographical documentary chronicles the remarkable life of Lorraine Hansberry, a black writer/artist, profound thinker, social activist, and compassionate individual. Hansberry grew up on the south side of Chicago following the first World War. Watching her father's struggles to use the legal system to improve conditions for black Americans affected her thinking, and she chose writing as her own way to fight for racial and social justice. After two years of college, Hansberry moved to Harlem, joined the Communist Party, and worked for the *Freedom* newspaper—editing, writing, and collaborating with other activists in the 1950s. She married a Jewish man from her Youth League and resettled in Greenwich Village, where she turned to playwriting and wrote *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), which centered on a black family in Chicago trying to achieve the American Dream. The play won the New York Drama Critics Award and became an instant success on Broadway—starring Sidney Poitier and Ruby Dee, who also appeared in the acclaimed 1961 film version. Hansberry continued to work on other plays but grew ill in 1963. Although she wanted to take a more active role in the growing Civil Rights movement, she was able to write the text for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's album *The Movement*. Hansberry was only 34 when she passed away in 1965. Interviewees including Poitier and Harry Belafonte pay tribute to Hansberry's passion for justice and her artistic ability to capture the experience of black life in mid-20th-century racially-divided America. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Root)

cation Act. While living in San Francisco's Hunters Point projects, she associated with members of the Black Panther Party and the National Farm Workers Association, which led to her participation in the Native American occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969, a "watershed moment," as she describes it in an archival interview. When her husband attempted to curtail her activist efforts, the pair divorced, and she returned to Oklahoma with her daughters. Jay Hannah, former secretary treasurer of the Cherokee Nation, describes it as a matriarchal clan. In their mythology, the Sun is female and the Moon is male, but during the 20 years that Mankiller lived in the Bay Area, the patriarchy had taken over. Once she began to work on behalf of the Cherokee people, Mankiller set out to improve their economic fortunes, starting with a volunteer project that brought running water to a community. After the Cherokee Nation's chief left to take a government position, Mankiller, his second in command, took charge, and then ran for reelection (along the way, she also remarried). All the while, she faced resistance from tribal members who did not believe a woman could lead them, but she persisted and under her leadership, education, jobs, and healthcare became priorities. Mohl also looks at her subject's health challenges, including a near-lethal car accident, kidney failure, lymphoma, and the cancer that claimed her life. A worthy testament to an admirable woman, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

My Letter to the World ★★★

(2018) 81 min. DVD: \$29.95. Music Box Films (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Filmmaker Solon Papadopoulos's documentary about the life and work of 19th-century American poet Emily Dickinson builds on *A Quiet Passion* (VL-9/17), Terence Davies's recent biographical drama starring Cynthia Nixon. *My Letter to the World* not only includes clips from the film to complement archival materials, but also often inserts excerpts from Dickinson's verse read by Nixon. But most of the film is given over to commentary by Dickinson scholars, who offer various perspectives on her personal relationships and frequently divergent analyses of her work (as well as very different views on the poet's idiosyncratic punctuation). The documentary also periodically visits a museum where Dickinson-related artifacts are housed, one of the most interesting being a daguerreotype that some have argued shows the poet in middle-age—which, if true, would be a remarkable addition to the record, since the only authenticated photograph of Dickinson hails from much earlier. This is a fine introduction to a writer who, although reclusive and virtually unknown during her lifetime, is now recognized as an important figure in American literature, a writer whose highly innovative style has been a major influence on modern poetry. Extras include a selection of Dickinson's poems read by Nixon and Davies. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

To Auschwitz and Back: The Joe Engel Story ★★½

(2017) 47 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). DRA. Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

When he moved to Charleston, SC, after barely surviving the Holocaust, Polish Jew Joe Engel, born in 1927, opened a dry-cleaning business and never spoke in detail about his experiences in the Warsaw Ghetto and the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Upon retiring, however, Engel made it his mission to educate as many people as possible about what the Nazis wrought and how—still to his amazement—no one could stop it. Filmmaker Ron Small draws on archival footage capturing Nazi atrocities in this documentary that tells one more valuable story about an innocent victim's personal nightmare. Engel's sharp memories of barely lasting through acts of utter sadism (including being left outside in freezing weather after cold water was poured over him), and his daring escape and subsequent work with the Resistance, are both dispiriting and inspiring. Speaking calmly but firmly, Engel notes that not a day has gone by when he doesn't think about the parents and family he never saw again—or the youth that was stolen from him. A powerful portrait, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)



The Rise and Fall of the Brown Buffalo

★★★½

(2018) 57 min. DVD: \$24.99; individuals, \$250; institutions. City Projects. PPR.

In this atypical PBS-aired documentary, filmmaker Phillip Rodriguez employs artifice, f-words, and fourth-wall-breaking to rediscover a Latino activist/literary figure who is largely unknown today. Oscar Zeta Acosta was a flamboyantly reckless attorney who appears in a sidekick role in Hunter S. Thompson's 1972 alt-journalism classic *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* disguised as "Dr. Gonzo," a "300-pound Samoan." The racial retouching irked the real Acosta, a Mexican-American lawyer who attempted to embrace the spotlight in the tumultuous early 1970s as a Chicano revolutionary, although he was never really accepted by the political street-guerillas he sought to champion. Having a contentious relationship with Thompson, Acosta wrote two books himself before literally vanishing into obscurity—hence interview-portrayals here by actors (Jesse Celedon as Acosta, Jeff Harms as Thompson), with similar impersonations of friends, ex-wives, and cronies, living and dead. The result is not only a clever *Citizen Kane*-type composite portrait of a complex, fallible figure in identity politics, but also a more successful transliteration of gonzo journalism than Terry Gilliam's 1998 film adaptation of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Extras include audio podcasts in which Acosta's sister makes the literary-conspiracy claim that Acosta deserves co-authorship credit for Thompson's bestseller, and that Thompson snidely confessed as much. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Wait for Your Laugh ★★½

(2017) 82 min. DVD: \$19.95. Samuel Goldwyn Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

For many viewers of a certain age, Rose Marie is best remembered as the wisecracking

comedy writer on *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and as the earthy, self-deprecating panelist on *Hollywood Squares*. But she actually began her career in the 1920s at the age of 3 as a singer and spent decades as a headliner in vaudeville, radio, nightclubs, and television. Jason Wise's documentary focuses on Rose Marie's long and often tumultuous career, with Rose Marie (who died shortly after the film's premiere) speaking frankly about the colorful and controversial people she encountered. The most fascinating highlights involve her relationship with organized crime lords: Al Capone invited her to his Chicago home, while Bugsy Siegel credited her with the successful launch of his Flamingo resort in Las Vegas. Rose Marie speaks lovingly about her marriage to trumpeter Bobby Guy, noting that they needed to elope to avoid the wrath of her too-protective father. The majority of her recollections are vibrant and positive, although she is uncharacteristically sour in recalling her experiences in the Broadway and film versions of *Top Banana* and with her costar Phil Silvers. Featuring interviews with Van Dyke, Carl Reiner, and Peter Marshall, along with archival footage (as well as clips from Rose Marie's home movies), this is a wonderful tribute to an old-school icon. Extras include audio commentary by Wise, a "making-of" featurette, deleted scenes, and a Q&A with the cast. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.video librarian.com) for more reviews during September and October, including: *Antarctica: In the Footsteps of the Emperor*, *Black Hole Apocalypse*, *Caviar Dreams*, *Connect*, *End of Life*, *Free CeCe!*, *Love the Sinner*, *Maynard*, *Old Dog*, *Scanning the Pyramids*, *Scream for Me Sarajevo*, *Survivors Guide to Prison*, and much more!

Series Update

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

Kino Lorber's **The Emma & Lachy Show** (50 min., DVD: \$14.99)

features Emma Watkins and Lachy Gillespie—married members of the acclaimed Australian children's entertainers The Wiggles—in a new musical production. See review of *The Wiggles: Go Santa Go!* in VL-11/17.



Nickelodeon and Paramount Home Media Distribution have released **Nella the Princess Knight: Royal Quests** (94 min., DVD: \$12.99, Target exclusive), featuring the titular princess knight and friends in episodes including "Sir Coach's Knightly Trading Card" and "Royalicious Plumberry." See review of *Nella the Princess Knight* in VL-3/18.

PBS Home Video's latest entry in the animated series based on the children's books by Marc Brown is **Arthur: D.W. and the Beastly Birthday** (70 min., DVD: \$6.99), which centers on aardvark Arthur's little sister's birthday. See review of *Arthur: Big Brother Binky* in VL-5/08.

Newly available from Shout! Factory is **Super Sentai—Mirai Sentai Time-ranger: The Complete Series** (1,200 min., DVD: 8 discs, \$59.98), the 2000-01 latest set from the Japanese tokusatsu precursor to the popular *Power Rangers* action franchise, following members of the 30th-century-era Time Protection Department as they travel back in time. See review of *Super Sentai—Ninja Sentai Kakuranger: The Complete Series* in VL-7/16.

A&E and Lionsgate have released executive producer Leonardo DiCaprio's **The Men Who Built America: Frontiersmen** (329 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99), a 2018



History-aired docuseries that explores the evolution of the American Dream with depictions of influential figures such as Daniel Boone, Tecumseh, and Lewis & Clark. See review of *The Men Who Built America* in VL-7/13.

Atom: The Beginning—The Complete Collection

★★
(2017) 2 discs. 300 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Astro Boy, the robot superhero who became the first anime superstar, emerged full-blown from the brain of Osamu Tezuka, who created the seminal manga in 1951, followed by the beloved TV series in 1963. The original Japanese version of the character, however, was called Mighty Atom, and this new series based on a 2014 manga by Tetsuro Kasahara, serves as a prequel. The story follows the efforts of university students Hiroshi and Umataro to fashion a robot strong enough to win competitive battles against other robots, but also capable of experiencing human emotion. The result is an android they call A106, or “Six” for short, who is steadily improved over the course of the series to be able to intervene heroically when threats arise. Hiroshi is presented as kindly and soft-hearted, while Umataro is arrogant and ambitious, and there are a couple of likable female characters: Motoko, a fellow student infatuated with Hiroshi, and Hiroshi’s shy little sister Ran, who is drawn to Six. For most of the narrative arc, however, Six remains pretty much a blank, and the animation is little more than adequate. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a Blu-ray edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-14, this is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Grimoire of Zero: Complete Collection

★★1/2
(2017) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Adapted by Tetsuo Hirakawa from Kakeru Kobashiri’s light novel manga, *Grimoire of Zero* is set in a quasi-medieval world of witchcraft and sorcery, where the “Beastfallen”—half-human, half-animal—who were created by witches to serve as their soldiers are hunted. One such is the Mercenary, a massive figure who looks like a giant white tiger but walks on two legs, speaks, and longs to be fully human. The Mercenary is saved from bounty hunters by Zero, a diminutive witch who offers him a bargain: if he will protect her as she searches for the grimoire—a book of magical knowledge that could be used in very dangerous ways—she will make him human in return. The two are joined in their quest by Albus, a young boy interested in magical knowledge who harbors a major secret, and Holdem, a wolf Beastfallen dedicated to protecting the granddaughter of the great witch Sorena, who was unjustly killed by men. The heroes face a grim opponent in Thirteen, a stern male witch who manipulates human communi-

ties into executing his enemies and is also after the grimoire. While the characters are intriguing—with particularly good chemistry between Zero and the Mercenary—some of their personality quirks are silly, and the series is hampered by slow pacing, animation that is more utilitarian than imaginative, and plot twists that feel forced. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Hand Shakers ★1/2

(2017) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Action anime series involving competitive fighting often feature fairly ridiculous premises, but few are quite as incredible as the plot of *Hand Shakers*. Invited to a scientific institute, young Tazuna finds mute, white-haired girl Koyori sleeping; when he approaches, she awakens and grabs his hand, after which a researcher named Makihara informs the boy that if he lets go, she will die. Tazuna and Koyori have become Hand Shakers, destined to battle similar teams with special abilities in an alternate reality called Ziggurat, all for the right to be granted a wish by God (although it is later suggested that some players desire to challenge, or even kill, God). As the narrative progresses, Team Gear (so-called after Tazuna’s mechanical aptitude) faces off against five other teams, although except for Koyori anyone killed or wounded in Ziggurat will be returned to life and health after coming back to the real world. Why Koyori differs from the other players will be revealed in time, as will the dark motivations of some ancillary characters. Marred by oddly garish animation, *Hand Shakers* is as visually unattractive as it is narratively peculiar. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include a bonus OVA episode. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Interviews with Monster Girls: The Complete Series ★★★

(2017) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).

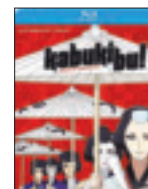


An intelligent, dialogue-laden classroom comedy, *Interviews with Monster Girls* belongs to that subgenre of anime comedy-fantasies that demystify supernatural creatures by putting them in quotidian settings. In a world where paranormal beings are commonly accepted minorities in society, one high school has several of these “demi-humans” enrolled as schoolgirls, including a young Queen Elsa-like snow maiden, a vampire (who receives govern-

ment-issued blood), and a “Dullahan” from Irish folklore, who carries her head separated from her body. Thoughtful teacher Tetsuo Takahashi takes a special interest in the young ladies, mentoring them and studying their individual physical and emotional needs. Faculty member Miss Sato is also a “demi”—specifically a succubus concealing super-powered erotic allure beneath a frumpy tracksuit, and she is fearful of expressing her attraction to Tetsuo. Based on a popular manga series, this engaging show places farcical emphasis on character development rather than action, slapstick hijinks, or special effects. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2017 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Kabukibu! Complete Collection ★★★1/2

(2017) 2 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray: \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



The renowned all-female anime collective CLAMP contributed designs to this adaptation of a serialized novel series set in a modern Japanese high school. Kurogo is a fan of the ancient, highly ritualized art of kabuki theatre. He doggedly charts a student kabuki club, staffed with such eccentrics as a preening teen rocker (said to be the illegitimate son of a vagabond kabuki actor), as they try to popularize kabuki with radical stagings and updates of the archaic scripts. Meanwhile, Kurogo hopes to win approval from classmate Jin, a bona fide kabuki talent whose family has performed for generations, but whose pride and perfectionism make him disdain the “amateur” club. This pleasant comedy-drama has abundant helpings of Japanese historical and cultural references, with iconic folk-figures like Benkei and Yoshitsune respectfully invoked. Shochiku, a real-life theatre-film troupe that is well over a century old, is credited here for kabuki-scene quality control. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a Blu-ray edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-14, extras include an epilogue OVA episode. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Love and Lies: Complete Collection ★★

(2017) 2 discs. 300 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Based on a *shojo* manga by Musawo Tsumugi, this anime series is built around a strange premise: in order to combat a falling birth rate, the government has initiated a program to assign every 16-year-old a marital partner based on compatibility tests. Although Yukari Nejima has long been infatuated with his lovely classmate Misaki

Takasaki and finally works up enough courage to confess his feelings, he is officially partnered with petite Ririna Sanada. Rather than becoming rivals, however, Misaki and Ririna are soon the best of friends, and Ririna encourages Misaki's relationship with Yukari so that Ririna can learn about true love. As this odd triangle develops, Yukari's best friend also becomes involved, ultimately advising Yukari to follow his heart. While the basic idea behind *Love and Lies* is promising, it is not developed in any particularly interesting fashion; rather than examining the ramifications of bucking the system and putting the characters into some degree of jeopardy to create suspense, the series simply repeats the same beats over and over again, gradually reaching a blandly romantic finale that offers no real resolution. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a Blu-ray edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-14, this is optional, at best. (F. Swietek)

Magic of Stella ★★1/2

(2016) 2 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray: \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Anime has regularly depicted video games and players, usually falling back on the narrative gimmick of turning gameplay into a sort of total-immersion virtual-reality environment. *Magic of Stella* goes the opposite route, verging on the mundane as it shows a high school "doujin" club of females determined to design their own games—particularly a role-playing adventure about an ailing princess named Stella. Shy first-year student Tamaki joins the game-building SNS Club but she constantly worries about not being a good enough artist to measure up, and a deadline is approaching to enter the "Magic of Stella" game in a contest. The highlight is a funny bit when a dialogue box addresses the heroines as a spirit-muse, in what is mostly a talky saga of teamwork and creative rivalries. The characterizations tilt towards the whiny side—even by the hand-wringing standards of the *shojo* genre—but the overall approach here is uplifting, if also rather innocuous. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2016 in a Blu-ray edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

The Tibetan Dog ★★★

(2011) 90 min. Blu-ray: \$29.98. Maiden Japan (avail. from most distributors).



After city-dwelling young Tenzin's mother dies, the boy is sent to live with his seemingly loveless father in the snowy hills of Tibet in this 2011 anime feature. As the only doctor in the region, Tenzin's dad is frequently absent, leaving the youngster to fend for himself as a shepherd

facing scowling bears, wolf packs, and wild dogs. To the rescue comes a huge, free-roaming golden mastiff who is seemingly unafraid of facing any predators. Tenzin befriends this stray pooch, who is often vilified by others, including a local bandit who blames the dog for killing his brother. But when a series of violent attacks on whole villages come under investigation, the dog is subject to further scrutiny, although the evidence points to something much worse. An engaging boy-and-his-dog story with a deeply felt subplot about Tenzin's failure to receive his father's love, filmmaker Masayuki Kojima's *The Tibetan Dog* features mesmerizing visuals of life in a remote, icy corner of the world. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Touken Ranbu:

Hanamaru ★★1/2

(2016) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



While based on a video game, the plentiful dialogue references to Japanese history and folkloric characters here somewhat distinguishes this anime series from so many others about young "sentai" teams of warriors. In the year 2205 (which, at least in confined settings, does not look particularly different from today), an unseen "Master" has given human form to the most famous swords in Japan's feudal past (wielded by mythic heroes such as Minamoto no Yoshitsune and Oda Nobunga). The result is a team of eager young fighters with different temperaments (one constantly rues that he is not based on the original sword, just a copy of it), who embark on missions to various eras to fight against a "History Retrograde Army" that is trying to rewrite the outcomes of famous clan battles and duels (with monsters). Even with a premise promising loads of action, there is just as much—if not more—non-violent comedy-drama and lengthy talk (even musical-style) about divided loyalties, longing for "old times," the living swords' contrasting personalities, and—of course—who gets to do the chores around the compound. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-PG, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Urara Meirocho: The Complete Collection

★★1/2

(2017) 2 discs. 300 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. Blu-ray: \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



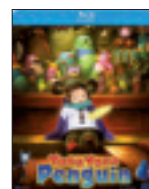
Fortunetelling is the subject of this fitfully entertaining, lighthearted *shojo*-oriented fantasy set in the town of Meirocho, which

features an entire marketplace of seers and soothsayers (overwhelmingly female) called "Uraras," and where teen girls constantly arrive hoping to learn divination as a career. A quartet of besties form around eccentric newcomer Chiya, a girl left behind by her mother in the woods. Having grown up in nature, Chiya lacks some social graces but appears to be a natural mystic with an affinity for the spirits and supernatural beings who occasionally accompany the girls' wobbly necromancy attempts. Some real-life fortunetelling lore is shown (as well as skin, in ongoing fan-service cheesecake), as the aspiring clairvoyants go through their coursework, with the overarching storyline occasionally returning to the low-intensity mystery about the true whereabouts of Chiya's missing mom. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2017 in a Blu-ray edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Yona Yona Penguin

★★★

(2009) 85 min. Blu-ray: \$29.99. Maiden Japan (avail. from most distributors).



Released in theaters in 2009 as a 3D anime feature, *Yona Yona Penguin* centers on a feisty little girl named Coco who wears a coat with its sleeves sewn up, resembling penguin wings. Refusing to take guff from other kids who tease her about penguins being flightless, Coco is noticed for her spunk and resemblance to a penguin. And she seems to match a prediction that such a bird will prove to be a brave heroine who will defeat the evil Bukka-boo and his army of demons. With an assist from some new friends—including a goblin and an angel—Coco is ready to try the impossible. With bright and pleasing visuals and a host of likable allies, this should appeal to kids, who will love seeing one of their own take on the baddies. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-G, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

A Classic Reboot

Nearly 30 years after its original release, an anime classic is rebooted. Fans will once again board the beloved Space Battleship Yamamoto in *Star Blazers 2199, Part One* (Funimation, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 4 discs, \$64.99), which compiles the first 13 episodes of this 2013 futuristic series that follows the crew of the Yamamoto as they embark upon a dangerous mission to save humankind, fighting off the threat of the intergalactic superpower known as the Gamilas, while also dealing with internal conflicts and dangerous cosmic phenomena.



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Arminio ★★½

(2017) 168 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$46.99, Blu-ray: \$41.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



George Frideric Handel's 1736 opera is presented in an opulent and stirring production from the 2017 Handel Festival in Karlsruhe, Germany. Inspired by the Germanic leader Arminius's defeat of the Roman forces of Publius Quinctilius Varus in 9 A.D., the production features an 18th-century costume and set design that suggests the decline and fall of the aristocracy in the French Revolution, complete with a guillotine that is not for mere decorative purposes. The opera's human drama—the intrafamilial difficulties involving Arminio, his wife Tusnelda, and their family—is framed against a greater struggle brought about by the invading Romans under the leadership of the general Varo. With Arminio imprisoned by the Romans, Varo sets his sights on Tusnelda while Arminio's traitorous father-in-law Segeste conspires with the Roman occupiers. Although many Handel scholars consider *Arminio* to be among his lesser works, this production receives an energetic boost thanks to the excellent performances by countertenor Max Emaneul Cencic as the heroic Arminio and American soprano Lauren Snouffer as his beloved Tusnelda. Their charisma and vocal power create theatrical alchemy, turning a somewhat predictable story into a compelling and enchanting work of imagination. Presented in DTS 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Benvenuto Cellini ★★½

(2015) 180 min. In French w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Naxos (avail. from most distributors).



Premiering in Paris in 1838, Hector Berlioz's first opera was a failure and has rarely been performed since. This 2015 production mounted by the Dutch National Opera is directed with enormous panache by Monty Python alumnus, animator, screenwriter, and filmmaker Terry Gilliam. In his hands, the stage (and at times the aisles) of the Stopera in Amsterdam is not only full of grandiose sets and colorful costumes but also positively exploding with activity. The effect is sometimes visually overwhelming, but it complements a score that brims with drama, bombast, and florid vocal demands. Mark Elder leads the Rotterdam Philharmonic in a vibrant reading that avoids the raucousness Berlioz sometimes invites, and the cast is outstanding. Tenor John Osborn brings a ringing tone to the titular sculptor who schemes to carry off his lover, Teresa (Mariangela Sicilia), during the Roman

carnival, although her papal treasurer father, Balducci (Maurizio Muraro), wants to marry her off to Cellini's rival, Fieramosca (Laurent Naouri). In the ensuing melee, Cellini kills Fieramosca's friend Pompeo (André Morsch), but Pope Clement VII (Orlin Anastassov) will grant a pardon—and reward him with Teresa's hand—if he finishes casting a huge bronze statue of Perseus. Valery Gergiev's rival version from Salzburg (VL-9/11) is also well sung and conducted, but Gilliam's staging—while undoubtedly gaudy—better reflects the 16th-century setting than Gergiev's strangely futuristic visuals. Presented in DTS 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Così Fan Tutte ★★½

(2016) 184 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Jan Philipp Gloger's 2016 staging of Mozart's opera at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden begins at the end, with an overture accompanied by curtain calls by performers from a "traditional" staging of the piece. Then the real singers mount the stage from the audience in modern dress, and the classic story begins, telling the tale of two men prompted by an older friend to test their fiancées' fidelity by donning disguises to romance each other's betrothed. Gloger's purpose is to emphasize the comedy's relevance across the centuries, but the gimmick comes across as ham-fisted. Fortunately, the overall excellence of what follows makes up for that initial stumble, although the deliberate artificiality of the settings (including the Garden of Eden!) continues to wink at the absurdity of the plot. While a few of the best-known arias are taken quite slowly, conductor Semyon Bychkov's account of the delicious score mostly zips along, and the orchestra plays beautifully. The vocalism is also first-rate, with tenor Daniel Behle (Ferrando) and soprano Corinne Winters (Fiordiligi) doing especially ravishing work, while mezzo Angela Brower (Dorabella) and baritone Alessio Arduini (Guglielmo) are not far behind. Bass Johannes Martin Kränzle as Don Alfonso, the manipulative arranger of the deception (who anachronistically keeps his 18th-century garb), and soprano Sabina Puértolas as Despina, the maid (here a cynical girl-about-town) Alfonso enlists as his confederate, are also fine. This is a defiantly unconventional *Così*, and sometimes too clever by half, but ultimately one of the better versions of the opera available on disc. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a brief introduction to the opera, a behind-the-scenes featurette with set designer Ben Baur, and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Das Land des Lächelns ★★½

(2017) 103 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$39.99. Accentus Music (avail. from most distributors).



Apart from *The Merry Widow* (1905), the operettas of Franz Lehár are essentially much ignored today, outside of the occasional provincial production, so this 2017 mounting of *The Land of Smiles* (1929) by the Zurich Opera is rather remarkable for its very existence, let alone its opulence. Set in 1912, the piece tells the bittersweet tale of Chinese prince Sou-Chong and an Austrian countess named Lisa, who meet in Vienna, fall in love, marry, and go to China, where Lisa is unable to accommodate herself to the culture and decides to return to Europe. A secondary romance between Sou-Chong's sister Mi and Viennese diplomat Count Gustav also ends unhappily. The title derives from the prince's decision to let his beloved depart, smiling despite his loss—supposedly meant to illustrate the Chinese way of dealing with misfortune. Dominated by a magnificent spiral staircase, the set is imposing and the costumes are gorgeous. Fabio Luisi leads the company orchestra in an affectionate performance of the score, and the chorus is excellent. Of the soloists, Piotr Beczala stands out as Sou-Chong, handling every demand of the role written for tenor Richard Tauber with aplomb—including its most famous number, the so-called *Tauberleid* "Dein ist mein ganzes Herz." And if Julia Kleiter occasionally sounds a bit strained as Lisa, she is generally a fine partner, while Rebeca Olvera and Spencer Lang add humor as the secondary lovers. Although hardly the equal of *The Merry Widow*, this opera has its moments, and lovers of Viennese schmaltz will appreciate the effort that has gone into this revival. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Il Borgomastro di Saardam ★★½

(2017) 108 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Dynamic (dist. by Naxos of America).



Gaetano Donizetti's rarely performed 1827 light comic opera receives its world premiere video recording in this invigorating 2017 production staged at the Festival Donizetti Opera in Bergamo, Italy. The slight tale of mistaken identities and secret romances finds the Russian Tsar Peter the Great working incognito in a shipyard in the Dutch city of Saardam, where he plans to learn about shipbuilding in order to enhance his kingdom's naval power. Alongside him is Pietro Flimann, a deserter from the Russian

military who is in love with Marietta, a woman whose legal guardian is the mayor of the city. The arrival of a visiting sultan in search of the disguised tsar creates confusion, with the mayor mistaking the jittery Flimann for the monarch. And when Peter receives word of a revolt at home, he needs to bring his Dutch adventure to a close and tie up the loose romantic ends. The plot is, admittedly, very silly, but the vigorous performances by Giorgio Caoduro as the confident Peter, Juan Francisco Gateli as the anything-but-confident Flimann, and Andrea Concetti (buried under theatrical makeup) as the elderly and bumbling mayor help to float the farcical shenanigans, while the house orchestra plays solidly under the baton of Roberto Rizzi Brignoli. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Il Vologeso ★★★

(2015) 183 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.99. Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



Niccolò Jommelli (1714-1774) was one of the pre-eminent composers of his day (over 50 of his estimated 80 operas survive). Although some of his works are comic pieces, he specialized in *opere serie* like *Il Vologeso*, which was first performed at the Ludwigsburg palace of his patron in 1766 and is here presented in a 2015 production from the Staatsoper in Stuttgart (the duchy's 18th-century capital). Written to a libretto that was also used by many other composers, the tale focuses on the titular Persian king (Sophie Marilley), who has supposedly fallen in battle against the Roman general Lucio Vero (Sebastian Kohlhepp), a man in love with Vologeso's intended, Berenice (Ana Durlovski). But of course Vologeso is still alive, and after he and Berenice recognize one another, Lucio futilely tries to persuade her to choose him over her beloved. His lovestruck efforts are complicated, however, by the sudden arrival of his own betrothed, Lucilla (Helene Schneiderman), daughter of the emperor Marco Aurelio. She and Senator Flavio (Catriona Smith) are determined to convince Lucio to forget Berenice. This plot, which makes a hash of history, is told in typical *opera seria* fashion through a series of florid arias with only a few ensembles. But Jommelli was a fine craftsman, and while the numbers are formulaic, they are also unfailingly elegant. So too is the vocalism of Marilley, Kohlhepp, and Durlovski (Schneiderman and Smith are a mite wobbly). With sets and costumes that cleverly combine modern and classical touches, the production is anchored by the modestly-sized Staatsorchester Stuttgart, which is stylishly conducted by veteran Gabriele Ferro. Presented in DTS 5.1 and PCM stereo, this operatic rarity is recommended. (F. Swietek)

La Campana Sommersa

★★★★1/2

(2016) 140 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



While Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) is best known for his orchestral works, he also composed several pieces for the stage, although none are now regularly performed. That makes this 2016 mounting of his 1927 fairy-tale opera *The Sunken Bell* from the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari an unusual and welcome event, since it boasts attractive music presented within an impressive production. The story revolves around a bell-maker named Enrico, whose latest creation is submerged in a lake by a prankish faun. Moved by his grief, beautiful water spirit Rautendelein enters the real world to console Enrico, who in turn falls in love with her, leaves his wife Magda, and repairs to the forest to build a pagan temple. Only when he hears of Magda's suicide does he return home, and on his own deathbed he prays to kiss Rautendelein one more time. Based on a play by Gerhart Hauptmann, the plot recalls Dvorák's better-known *Rusalka*, while the score combines the richness of Richard Strauss with the voluptuous orchestration that Respighi learned from his mentor Rimsky-Korsakov (there are no immediately memorable tunes, but the level of craftsmanship is consistently high). The Cagliari company does this rarity proud, with veteran Donato Renzetti eliciting sensual and vigorous playing from the orchestra. The soloists—led by Angelo Villari (Enrico) and Valentina Farcas (Rautendelein)—might not have world-class voices, but they deliver committed performances, and the sets and elaborate costumes hew to the old-fashioned fairyland specifics of the story (video projections are also effectively employed). Presented in DTS 5.1 and PCM stereo, this most worthwhile unearthing of a neglected opera is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Lucio Silla ★★★

(2017) 180 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



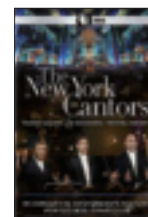
The second home video release of Mozart's youthful, rarely performed *opera seria* to appear in recent months, this solid 2017 production from the Teatro Real in Madrid does not quite match the 2015 mounting from Milan's La Scala (VL-5/18). The plot focuses on the machinations of the title character—Roman dictator Lucio Silla (Kurt Streit)—to woo the beautiful Giunia (Patricia Petibon), whose intended, Cecilio (Silvia Tro Santafé), has reportedly died in exile. But Cecilio is very much alive and has actually re-

turned to Rome to assassinate Silla, while the dictator's sister Celia (María José Moreno) and her lover Cinna (Inga Kalna) are also plotting against Silla. In the end, Silla suddenly turns somewhat implausibly benevolent, forgiving everyone and allowing the happy couples to wed. Ivor Bolton conducts smartly, but without the verve of Milan's Marc Minkowski, and the singing, while good, is a shade inferior as well (even Kalna, repeating her role as Cinna, is not quite as impressive here). A few textual differences are found between the two productions, such as the restoration of the role of Silla's friend Aufidio (Kenneth Tarver), which was cut at La Scala, but the major contrast is visual: Marshall Pynkoski's Milan staging, in 18th-century style, was classically elegant, while director Claus Guth here strives for a heavily dramatic tone, reflected in a huge modernist set and stark costumes. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this staging—while not equal to the slightly superior Milan production—is still recommended. (F. Swietek)

The New York Cantors

★★★

(2018) 55 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0468-1.



In the tradition of the famous Three Tenors, a trio of New York-based cantors—Yaakov Lemmer of the Lincoln Square Synagogue, Azi Schwartz of the Park Avenue Synagogue, and Netanel Hershtik of the Hampton Synagogue—have joined forces to offer concerts of sacred songs and more secular pieces. In this PBS-aired concert recorded at Amsterdam's 17th-century Sephardic Portuguese Synagogue in December 2017, the singers are backed by Jules van Hessen's orchestra and chorus. The 12-song setlist ranges from Shabbat songs like "Kol nidre" to traditional Jewish pieces such as "Ose shalom," with an occasional side trip to contemporary melodies (Josh Groban's "The Bells of New York City" and Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Close Every Door"), giving each of the cantors the opportunity to shine as a soloist while also displaying their ability to harmonize as a group. In honor of the location, a medley of Sephardic songs is included (with helpful subtitles). The setting is beautiful and the performances are exceptional (the men's voices have distinctive timbres, but each is remarkably clear and supple). Presented in stereo, extras include two bonus songs. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Nijinsky: A Ballet by John Neumeier

★★★★1/2

(2017) 135 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$31.99, Blu-ray: \$41.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

With all due respect to more recent lumi-

naries like Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov, Vaslav Nijinsky remains the icon of male ballet dancers. During his career with Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (1909-13), his fame surpassed that of the most renowned ballerinas, with his virtuosity and choreographic innovation making him an international superstar. By 1919, however, Nijinsky was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and was periodically institutionalized for the last 30 years of his life. *Nijinsky*, choreographed for the Hamburg Ballet by artistic director John Neumeier in 2000, is an impressionistic reverie on the dancer's life. In the first act, which is set during a final performance before a small audience as his mind was deteriorating, Nijinsky (Alexandre Riabko) recalls his most memorable roles—Harlequin and Le Spectre de la Rose (danced by Alexandr Trusch), the Golden Slave and the Faun (Marc Jubete) and Petrushka (Lloyd Riggins)—as he dances to music by Chopin, Schumann, and Rimsky-Korsakov. Hovering over the proceedings is the figure of Diaghilev (Ivan Urban), who was Nijinsky's lover until the dancer wed Romola (Carolina Agüero), causing a rupture between the men (Nijinsky has ecstatic duets with both). The second act, set to more brutal music by Shostakovich, connects Nijinsky's radical choreography of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* with the horrors of World War I and the dancer's unhappy family history, particularly the insanity of his brother Stanislav (Aleix Martínez). Neumeier weaves all of this into a deeply expressive whole in this uniformly superb performance filmed at the Hamburg State Opera in 2017. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray edition) and PCM stereo, extras include an interview with Neumeier. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Norah Jones: Live at Ronnie Scott's ★★★

(2017) 90 min. DVD: \$15.98, Blu-ray: \$20.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Pop/jazz chanteuse Norah Jones comes full circle in this return-to-roots concert filmed in 2017 at London's Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club. Backed by Christopher Thomas on various bass instruments and Brian Blade on drums, Jones displays her considerable chops on vocals and piano in a 16-song set dominated by cuts from her 2016 release *Day Breaks* (including the bonus track "Burn," Jones plays 10 of the album's 12 songs), an album that found her once again mining the jazz vein that launched her career in 2002's *Come Away with Me*. In very brief remarks to the audience, Jones apologizes for not looking their way (she is clearly a bit uncomfortable in this

intimate club setting), but she holds them in thrall with her smoky vocals on fine renditions of "Day Breaks," "Don't Be Denied," a rousing "Flipside," and "Carry On," while authoritatively tickling the ivories on the dazzling Duke Ellington instrumental "Fleurette Africaine." The sparse dip into her pop/rock/country back catalog features stripped-down versions of "After the Fall," "Out on the Road," and "Little Broken Hearts," and she delights the attendees near concert's end with her early breakout hit "Don't Know Why." This being a mostly jazz-inflected concert, there are a few wonderful unscripted moments, the most entertaining being when Thomas gives up using a bow on standup bass in favor of his fingers and the band starts over on "Night-ingle." Presented in DTS-5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, other extras include an interview with Jones. Sure to appeal to fans of Jones's jazz work, this is recommended. (R. Pitman)

Rolling Stones: No Security—San Jose '99 ★★★

(1999) 118 min. DVD: \$24.98 (audio CDs included), Blu-ray: \$29.98 (audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Another year, another vintage Stones concert from one of the oldest and seemingly most documented bands in rock 'n' roll history. Filmed at the San Jose Arena in 1999 (not in widescreen, unfortunately), the bad boys of British rock—Mick Jagger (mostly vocals, some guitar), Keith Richards (mostly guitar, some vocals), Ronnie Wood (guitar), and Charlie Watts (drums)—are backed by one of their all-time-best line-ups, including Darryl Jones on bass, Chuck Leavell on keyboards, the late and great Bobby Keys on sax, Blondie Chaplin on percussion, and Lisa Fischer on backup vocals. Sadly, Fischer's signature song "Gimme Shelter" is not part of the generous 20-song setlist, although there are plenty of other hits here: "Jumpin' Jack Flash," "Honky Tonk Women," "Paint It Black," "Start Me Up," "Tumbling Dice," "Brown Sugar," and the standard closer "Sympathy for the Devil." This is a mature, supremely confident, very efficient Stones concert, featuring the *de rigueur* B-stage breakout mini-set of three songs: "Route 66," "Get Off of My Cloud" (a rousing blast from the past during which a pair of black panties sail on to the stage), and a 12-minute "Midnight Rambler." Of course, there is the usual price to pay of having to hear Richards sing "You Got the Silver" (plus—adding insult to injury—"Before They Make Me Run"), but overall this is prime Stones in their well-oiled arena-rock-machine form, masterfully playing both their instruments and the audience. Presented in DTS-5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD,

and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this solid entry from the *Rolling Stones from the Vault* series also features two audio CDs capturing the entire concert. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Tommy Shaw: Sing for the Day! ★★1/2

(2016) 82 min. Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Styx singer-guitarist-songwriter Tommy Shaw joins the Cleveland-based Contemporary Youth Orchestra (CYO)—ebulliently conducted by Liza Grossman—for a 12-song set (plus an overture) in 2015 before a modestly-sized audience (mainly comprised, one suspects, of CYO parents). Seated in front of the orchestra and accompanied by musical director Will Evankovich on guitar, Shaw alternates between acoustic and electric guitar on several Shaw-penned Styx classic rock hits, including "Crystal Ball" (with a never-recorded last verse), "Fooling Yourself," "Man in the Wilderness," "Renegade" (featuring former CYO violinist Lavinia Pavlish), and "Blue Collar Man." Only serious fans will be familiar with the less-well-known Shaw solo career songs ("Girls with Guns," "Diamond") and tunes from his stint with Damn Yankees (featuring—cough, cough—Ted Nugent). Sexagenarian Shaw's voice is in fine form and he is backed with spirited if not always technically impressive playing by the CYO, whose members' facial expressions range from wondrous to decidedly grim. While this ultimately does not feel like a Styx concert, some fans will still appreciate. Many a young American male during the '70s was drawn to Shaw's angst-ridden what-is-my-place-in-the-world? lyrics (such as the line "sometimes it makes no sense at all" from "Man in the Wilderness"). Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include four bonus songs performed to a photo montage. A strong optional purchase. (R. Pitman)

Rolling Stone Tribute

Directed by Oscar-winner Alex Gibney and Emmy-winner Blair Foster, *Rolling Stone: Stories from the Edge* (DVD: 2 discs, \$26.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.95) will bow on September 11 from Shout! Factory and HBO Documentary Films. Narrated by Jeff Daniels, the six-part special tribute to the 50th anniversary of the celebrated magazine *Rolling Stone* features music by a wide array of artists, including The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Tina Turner, Janis Joplin, John Lennon, The Sex Pistols, Ice-T, The Clash, and Fleetwood Mac.



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The Other News

When *Video Librarian* first began publication, the news arrived by mail. Pony Express. Just kidding, but it was definitely snail mail (emphasis on snail). This was 1986, long before the advent of e-mail press release blasts and the research-world-at-one's-fingertips Internet. Back in 1997 when we launched the original version of the *Video Librarian* website, relevant news was posted—like all of the other content on the site—every two weeks, and that model stayed in place until... cough...this year.

Although admittedly a wee bit slow to evolve online, we finally bit the modern-day bullet in late February of this year with a complete overhaul of the website, during which we added a bunch of new features—including digital copies of full issues for *Video Librarian Plus!* subscribers.

One of my favorite new enhancements is the way we now handle the posting of “news briefs.” Thanks to the WordPress platform, we were able to transform the news briefs section into a running blog that could be updated on the fly, which allows us to share interesting and exciting announcements regarding upcoming DVD and Blu-ray re-

leases shortly after receiving press releases (within an hour, *Video Librarian* announced Criterion’s scheduled November 20, 2018, release of the mammoth 30-disc boxed set *Ingmar Bergman’s Cinema*, a comprehensive centennial celebration collecting all of the Swedish master’s most important films).

We made a conscious decision when setting up our news briefs blog that we would avoid most announcements about contemporary movies being released to home video (the latest Melissa McCarthy comedy or Liam Neeson stop-taking-my-family-members thriller), as any number of websites cover these kinds of releases *ad infinitum*. Instead, we wanted to concentrate on documentaries, classic films, notable TV shows, and librarian-specific industry news.

On the documentary front, many of these titles are DVD-only releases, including—looking over past posts—Sony’s three-hour *Elvis Presley: The Searcher* biographical profile; First Run Features’ *The People Speak*, inspired by Howard Zinn’s books *A People’s History of the United States* (1980) and *Voices of a People’s History of the United States* (2004); PBS’s *FRONTLINE: UN Sex Abuse Scandal*, an investigation into the more than 1,700 allegations recorded over the past 15 years by the United Nations of instances of sexual abuse by its peacekeepers in conflict zones

around the world; and Kino Lorber and Zeitgeist Films’ *Forbidden Films: The Hidden Legacy of Nazi Film*, which re-examines the propaganda films created by the German film industry under the Third Reich.

It is this other news—which generally receives far less coverage—that is most interesting and rewarding to share with our readers. And the news brief section is now free to all visitors.

All of us here have our own favorite websites that we visit for news and reference, ranging from IMDB.com to Hollywood Bitchslap. One of my go-to places is Blu-ray.com, which features a lot of useful technical information about disc releases (the one drawback of Blu-ray.com—apparent in the title itself—is the absence of any coverage of DVD releases). We hope you will add VL (www.videolibrarian.com) to your website favorites and we look forward to bringing you more exciting news (none of it fake).

Randy Pitman



INDIEPIX FILMS

“Brunet has an extraordinary sensitivity, a choice of style that does not sacrifice rigor.” – Fabrizio Tassi, Cineforum

LA MADRE, EL HIJO Y LA ABUELA

UPC: 845637002740 SRP: \$24.95

Twenty-seven year-old Cristóbal returns, camera in hand, to his native town of Chaitén, after it's been destroyed by a volcanic eruption. Searching for his childhood home, amidst ruins, he meets Ana, a strong-willed woman whose sick elderly mother María refuses to leave town in order to seek treatment. As events unfold, these three friends form an unlikely bond and become the lost family that Cristóbal sought to recover with his photography. **LA MADRE, EL HIJO Y LA ABUELA** seeks to perpetuate time, keeping intimate day-to-day conversations and family moments alive, to cheat time and death.

AVAILABLE THROUGH AEC, BAKER & TAYLOR, INGRAM ENTERTAINMENT, MIDWEST TAPE, AMAZON AND WHEREVER FINE FILMS ARE SOLD. PPR/DSL/NON-THEATRICAL LICENSING AVAILABLE THRU SOUNDVIEW MEDIA PARTNERS.

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AFTER AUSCHWITZ

One War Ends. Another Begins.

"Profound."

The New York Times

"Stands out as **one of the most upbeat Holocaust documentaries** ever."

- *MovieNation*

"A **powerful testament** to individual humanity emerging from inhuman horrors."



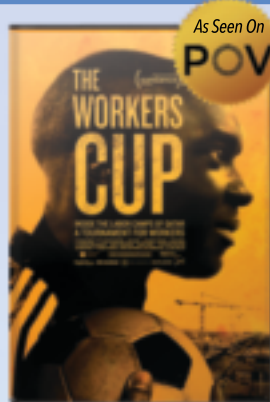
After Auschwitz is a "Post-Holocaust" documentary that follows six extraordinary women, capturing what it means to move from tragedy and trauma towards life.

These women all moved to LA, married, raised children and became "Americans" but they never truly found a place to call home. What makes the story so much more fascinating is how these women saw, interpreted and interacted with the changing face of America in the second half of the 20th century.

In watching the struggles of survival, the audience feels a searing connection to our current political climate, as history teaches us the vital role humanity plays in our hopes for greater understanding and compassion. These powerful women serve as our guides on an unbelievable journey, sometimes celebratory, sometimes heartbreaking but always inspiring.

Please inquire about the award-winning prequel, *Swimming In Auschwitz*.

Holocaust Studies | Jewish Studies | Women's Studies | Contemporary History
82 min. | UPC: 602573752517 | SRP: \$69.95 | PPR: \$325.00 | Closed Captioned
Available Exclusively to Libraries



THE WORKERS CUP

Inside the Labor Camps of Qatar, A Tournament For Workers



Opening Night Film at Sundance Film Festival

"Remarkable Inside Access"



Endorsed by staff of the
Human Rights Watch and
Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

The Workers Cup is set inside the labor camps of Qatar, where the World Cup is being built on the backs of 1.6 million migrant workers.

The film follows a team of laborers living a real-life version of fantasy football. By day they sweat to build the World Cup; by night they compete in a "workers welfare" football tournament, playing in the same stadiums that will one day host the world's greatest players.

We join one team of men from Nepal, India, Ghana, and Kenya whose only common ground is their love for football. Each match offers them a momentary escape from the homesickness and isolation they endure as the lowest class in the world's richest country.

Documentary | Labor Law | International Studies | Political Science | Sociology | Sports
82 min. | UPC: 602573752500 | SRP: \$69.95 | PPR: \$325.00 | Closed Captioned
Available Exclusively to Libraries



ISLAND SOLDIER

A Remote Pacific Island. An Army Recruiter's Paradise.



"The very personal impact of historical and economic forces comes through with a **powerful** melancholy."



"The case of Micronesia's relationship to the U.S. is a fascinating one, and *Island Soldier* does a fine job **bringing it to light.**"

- *Toronto Film Scene*

Through an intricate weave of the personal journeys undertaken by Pacific Islander soldiers, the film illustrates a larger story of a remote region whose interests are caught in the ever-changing tides of international politics.

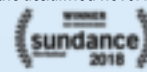
Island Soldier asks challenging questions while offering viewers a unique perspective on a globalized world. Who are these virtually unknown foreign soldiers fighting America's wars? What does it mean for the United States to use, and practically discard, foreign citizens from their military? What happens to Micronesian veterans, and their families, when they return home and cannot access their benefits (healthcare, treatment for PTSD, loans, etc)? What is the future of these islands that exist at the mercy of foreign superpowers and strategic military interests?

Documentary | American Studies | Political Science | Military Science | Civil Rights
86 min. | UPC: 602573752593 | SRP: \$59.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Captioned
Available Exclusively to Libraries



WE THE ANIMALS

Based on the acclaimed novel by Justin Torres



"this year's *Moonlight*..."

Critic's Pick. Utterly Timeless."



This movie is **gorgeous.**"



"Mesmerizing and dream-like, captures the feel of the novel with **uncanny precision.**"



Three boys tear through their rural New York hometown, in the midst of their young parents' volatile love that makes and unmakes the family many times over. While Manny and Joel grow into versions of their loving and unpredictable father, Ma seeks to keep her youngest, Jonah, in the cocoon of home. More sensitive and conscious than his older siblings, Jonah increasingly embraces an imagined world all his own.

With a screenplay by Dan Kitrosser and Jeremiah Zagar based on the celebrated Justin Torres novel, *We the Animals* is a visceral coming-of-age story propelled by layered performances from its astounding cast - including three talented, young first-time actors - and stunning animated sequences which bring Jonah's torn inner world to life. Drawing from his documentary background, director Jeremiah Zagar creates an immersive portrait of working class family life and brotherhood.

Narrative | Drama | Family Studies | Early Childhood Development | LGBT
94 min. | UPC: 889845942702 | SRP: \$24.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Captioned

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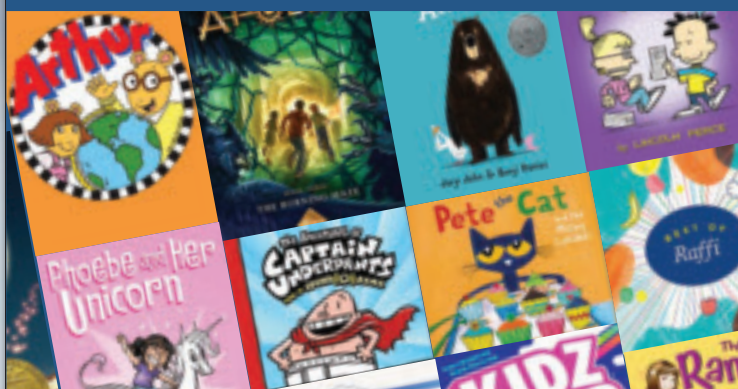
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Best Practices for Children's and Young Adult Collection Development



**Thursday, September 27th
at 2:00 P.M. EDT**

**Tips, tricks, and trends in
physical and digital Children's &
Young Adult collections.**

Highlights in Patron Engagement Using hoopla



**Thursday, October 4th
at 2:00 P.M. EDT**

**We'll share best practices and
examples for how libraries are
leveraging the power of digital to
engage their communities.**