

May-June 2018

Video Librarian

VOL. 33 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 3



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Scene & heard

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Quest ★★★★★
 (2017) 105 min. DVD:
 \$24.95. *First Run*
Features (avail. from most
 distributors).



Shot over a period of eight years from 2008-16—the duration of the Obama administration—*Quest* follows North Philadelphia's Rainey family, a hardworking African American household living in an impoverished community that has a heavy-handed police presence. In this tightknit neighborhood comprised of relatives and lifelong friends, the Raineys—headed up by Christopher “Quest” Rainey and his wife Christine’s (simply called “Ma”)—daily face a strong possibility that a stray bullet from a gang shooting will accidentally kill someone they know. But this isn’t a film about the conditions in which less-fortunate Americans live; nor is it one that objectifies the Raineys or anyone else as victims. Filmmaker Jonathan Olshefski knows that viewers have seen those kinds of stories over and over and feel helpless because nothing changes. *Quest* does not directly delve into the underlying social issues; instead it captures the life and resilience of the Raineys as they work multiple jobs, help their community, deal with son William’s brain cancer and daughter Patricia’s bullet wound from gunfire a block away. *Quest* goes beyond the surface

of life without ever succumbing to the manipulations of reality television, in the end making us care about some very good people. A phenomenal documentary, this is highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.**
 Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Editor’s Note



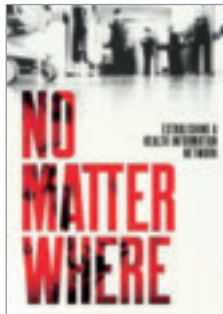
Although it took a little longer than we anticipated, the *Video Librarian* (www.videoliberalian.com) website revamp was completed at the end of February and is now fully operational. In a major difference from the earlier site—which was updated on a bi-weekly basis—the new site will partially update weekly and sometimes daily with just announced news. For more comments about the web reboot, check out the “Final Frame” editorial on page 74. We hope you enjoy the changes and look forward to hearing your comments.

Cover Photo: *Quest* cover photo courtesy of First Run Features

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“*An important topic that deserves widespread attention. RECOMMENDED”**
– Video Librarian



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NO MATTER WHERE: THE HEALTHCARE DOCUMENTARY

USHERING IN A NEW ERA IN HEALTHCARE

An estimated 200,000 people die from medical errors in American hospitals annually.

A National Healthcare Information Exchange is an ongoing infrastructural challenge for the U.S.

“No Matter Where” explores the complexities of the issues that have to be addressed from the politics and technology to the adoption of practice by participants along the informational path.

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 - MedCity News

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“Bowling for Columbine,” John Waters’s “Female Trouble,” and Ingmar Bergman’s “The Virgin Spring” Headline Criterion Collection’s June Slate

Criterion has announced its upcoming June slate. Arriving June 12 is Lino Brocka’s searing 1975 Tagalog-language urban melodrama *Manila in the Claws of Light* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), about a young fisherman from a provincial village who arrives in the capital on a quest to track down his missing girlfriend. Coming June 19 is Víctor Erice’s haunting 1983 Spanish masterpiece *El Sur* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), adapted from a novella by Adelaida García Morales about a young girl captivated by her doctor father and his mysterious past. Also on June 19, look for Michael Moore’s Oscar-winning 2002 documentary *Bowling for Columbine* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.95), a perennially relevant documentary on gun control in the wake of the Columbine High School massacre in 1999. Coming on June 26 is John Waters’s outrageous 1974 melodrama *Female Trouble* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), starring Divine as a teenage nightmare whose egomaniacal impulses land her in the electric chair. Finally, on June 26 also look for Ingmar Bergman’s 1960 Swedish Best Foreign Language Oscar-winner *The Virgin Spring* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), a harrowing tale centering on the murder of a virgin and her father’s (Max von Sydow) ruthless pursuit of vengeance.

Masterpiece Adaptation of “Little Women” Coming May 22 from PBS Distribution

PBS Distribution has announced the upcoming release of *Masterpiece: Little Women* (DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99), slated for May 22. This latest adaptation of the 1868 Louisa May Alcott classic follows the four March sisters on their journey from childhood to adulthood while their father is away at war. Under the guidance of their mother Marmee (Emily Watson), the girls navigate what it means to be a young woman: from gender roles to sibling rivalry, first love, loss, and marriage. Also featuring Angela Lansbury as the cantankerous and wealthy Aunt March, Michael Gambon as benevolent neighbor Mr. Laurence, and Jonah Hauer-King as a charming boy next door, the miniseries stars Maya Hawke as the willful and adventurous Jo; Willa Fitzgerald as the eldest and most virtuous, Meg; Annes Elwy as the shy sister,

Beth; and Kathryn Newton as Amy, the youngest of the family. The beloved *Little Women* remains a stirring celebration of family as much as it is a recognition of the challenges of growing up and forging an individual identity.



“Troll Inc.” Documentary Available May 22 from Virgil Films

Coming from deep within computer programming culture, Internet trolls are ticked off and using the click-bait obsessed mass media to propel their movement into the mainstream, including influencing presidential elections and manipulating journalists. Directed by George Russell, *Troll Inc.* (DVD: \$19.99), slated for release on May 22 from Virgil Films, was made possible due to attorney access to DOJ documents via the Freedom of Information Act. This timely documentary features interviews with prosecuted whistleblower and notorious Internet troll Andrew Auernheimer and his legion of cultural saboteurs, who are attempting to overthrow civilization one meme at a time.

Kino Lorber’s Digital Premiere of “Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth with Bill Moyers”

Kino Lorber has digitally debuted the acclaimed 1988 PBS series *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth with Bill Moyers* on all major digital services, including iTunes, Amazon, Vimeo, and on Kino Lorber’s own Alive Mind Cinema website and at www.PowerOfMyth.net. A home media edition of the series, with expanded special features, is planned for release later this year. Originally broadcast less than a year after Joseph Campbell’s passing, the six-part series features a conversation between mythologist Joseph Campbell and journalist Bill Moyers, discussing the importance of myths and storytelling, and the impact they have on our lives. Each segment focuses on a different aspect of the mythologies, characters, and themes central to world cultures and religions. Individual episodes include “The Hero’s Adventure,” “The Message of the Myth,” “The First Storytellers,” “Sacrifice and Bliss,” “Love and the Goddess,” and “Masks of Eternity.”



PBS | Educational Media

PBS Titles Your Patrons Will Love!



LITTLE WOMEN

Follow the March sisters—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy—on their journey from childhood to adulthood. Under the guidance of their mother Marmee (Emily Watson), they navigate what it means to be a young woman: from gender roles to sibling rivalry, first love, loss, and marriage. Based on the beloved novel by Louisa May Alcott, this story is as relevant and engaging today as it was on its original publication in 1868.



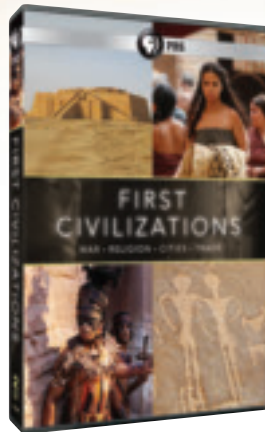
PINKAMAGINE IT!

If there's one thing Pinkalicious loves most, it's the color pink! When Pinkalicious wakes up to discover her whole body has suddenly turned pink, she soon learns that it is possible to have too much of a good thing. Plus five more pinkatastic adventures—Pinkalicious and her brother Peter build a fairy house to attract the springtime fairies, invent their very own robot named Robotta, and lots more!



MAN IN AN ORANGE SHIRT

Two love stories set 60 years apart are linked by a secret that echoes through generations, from a forbidden relationship impossible during WWII, contrasted with a present-day romance that is nearly derailed by the 1940s tale with which it is deeply intertwined. From novelist Patrick Gale, this is a tender, powerful film sure to spark conversation about outdated attitudes and equal rights.



FIRST CIVILIZATIONS

Having lived as mobile foragers for 99% of our time on Earth, how and why did humans set out on the road to civilization? How did they create villages, towns, cities and states, and establish the blueprint for the modern world? Explore the seedbed civilizations of Mesoamerica, the Middle East, and the Indus Valley in this global story. Episodes include *War*, *Religion*, *Cities*, and *Trade*.

MEMORIAL DAY TITLES



Find these and other DVDs at [Teacher.Shop.PBS.org](https://www.teacher.shop.pbs.org).

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SERIES

Think of fake news as a disease. Without knowing how to identify and stop its spread, information literacy is at risk.

The new *How to Recognize Fake News* video series from Motion Masters—available through Infobase’s streaming video resources—equips viewers with tools to spot the stories and images that are false, biased, altered, or slanted, even those shared by trusted friends or family members. Easy tips to detect and check fake news will help students and researchers learn how to avoid being duped and to be less quick to click until they know what’s real and what’s not.

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Books Into Movies

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

Coming in May

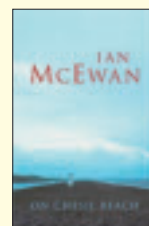
The Family Business (May 11) is based on Carl Weber’s 2012 book. Directed by Trey Haley, the crime drama stars Ernie Hudson, Valarie Pettiford, and Armand Assante.



The Seagull (May 11) is based on Anton Chekhov’s 1895 play. Set around conflicts that erupt during vacations at a country estate, filmmaker Michael Mayer’s drama stars Annette Bening, Saoirse Ronan, Elisabeth Moss, and Corey Stoll.

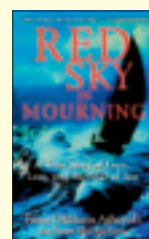


On Chesil Beach (May 18) is based on the Booker Prize-nominated 2007 novella by Ian McEwan. Directed by Dominic Cooke, the domestic drama stars Saoirse Ronan, Billy Howle, and Emily Watson.



Coming in June

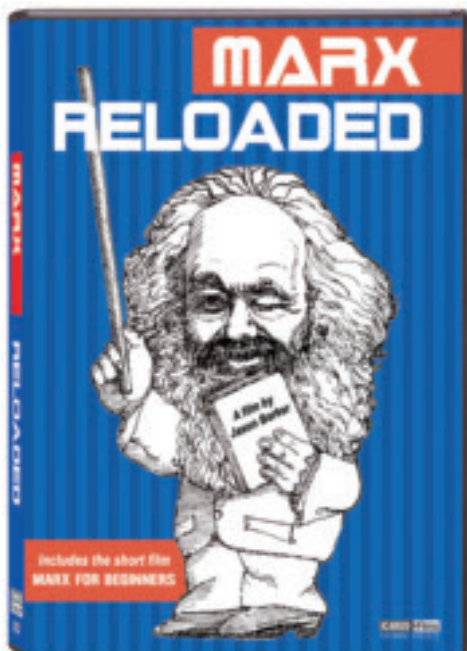
Adrift (June 1) is based on the 1998 memoir *Red Sky in Mourning: A True Story of Love, Loss, and Survival at Sea* by Tami Oldham Ashcraft and co-writer Susea McGearhart. Adapted from the real 1983 story of Oldham and her fiancé, who were caught in a hurricane, Baltasar Kormákur’s romantic drama stars Shailene Woodley and Sam Claflin.



Leave No Trace (June 29) is adapted from Peter Rock’s 2009 novel *My Abandonment*. Directed by Debra Granik, the drama stars Ben Foster, Thomasin McKenzie, and Jeff Kober.



MARX RELOADED



"LIVELY!"
 —Time Out

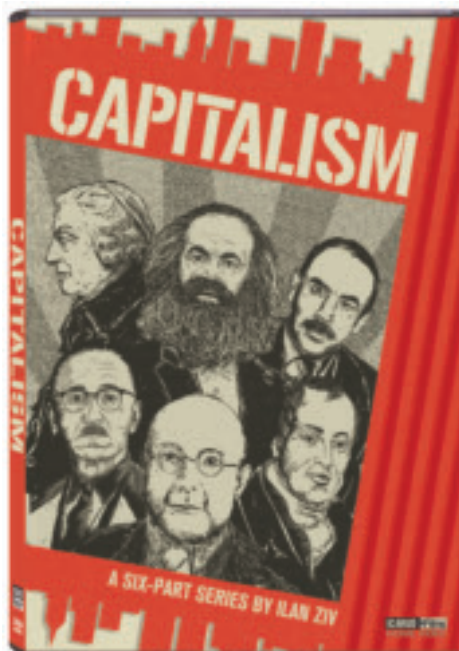
A cultural documentary that examines the relevance of German socialist philosopher Karl Marx's ideas for understanding the global economic crisis.

Featuring
 Antonio Negri and
 Slavoj Zizek!

**"A roll call of some
 of the heavy-
 weights in Marxist
 philosophy."**
 —Socialist Review

MARX RELOADED • A film by Jason Barker • An Icarus Films Release
 2011 • 52 min • Color • in English • Not Rated • Closed Captioned
 UPC # 8-54565-00234-0 • SRP: \$24.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

CAPITALISM: A SIX-PART SERIES



"MASTERLY!"
 —La Vie

Filmed over two years in 22 countries, CAPITALISM is an ambitious and accessible six-part documentary series that looks at the ideas and social forces that have shaped the capitalist world.

Featuring
 Noam Chomsky and
 Thomas Piketty!

**"Highly
 recommended!"**
 —Educational Media
 Reviews Online

CAPITALISM: A SIX-PART SERIES • A film by Ilan Ziv • An Icarus Films Release
 2014 • 6 x 52 min • Color • in English • Not Rated • Closed Captioned
 UPC # 8-54565-00233-3 • SRP: \$39.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

THE OUTSIDER



"ENTERTAINING!"
 —The Hollywood
 Reporter

Tells the true story of France's greatest financial scandal and the young trader who was held responsible.

**"Slick, full of
 energy, and
 cracks along
 at a fine pace."**
 —French Cinema Review

DISTRIB FILMS US

THE OUTSIDER • A film by Christophe Barratier • From Distrib Films
 2016 • 117 min • Color • in French w/English subtitles • Not Rated
 UPC # 8-54565-00241-8 • SRP: \$26.98
AVAILABLE JUNE 5

SIX FILMS BY NIKOLAUS GEYRHALTER



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 —Village Voice

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

Video Games

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

Available Now

Penny-Punching Princess (NIS America, Switch: \$39.99, Rated: T). In this third-person retro-looking action game, players collect money to bribe enemies to fight for them, activate deadly traps with their dough, and—when all else fails—engage in battle themselves as they take on the mighty Dragoloan family in order to reclaim their kingdom.



April 29—May 6

Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: E). In this new-to-Switch sequel to the rebooted *Donkey Kong Country* franchise of third-person side-scrolling platformers, Dixie Kong and Cranky Kong join the adventure on a mission to take back Donkey Kong Island.

May 7—May 12

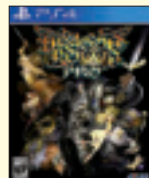
Conan Exiles (Maximum, PS4/XOne: \$49.99, Rated: M). In this first-person/third-person action survival game set in the world of *Conan the Barbarian*, players start with nothing but their bare hands to forge the legacy of their clan, building homes, gigantic fortresses, and entire cities as they wage war using swords, bows, and siege weapons against enemies.

Warhammer 40,000: Inquisitor—Martyr (Maximum, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person overhead action-RPG set in the grim future of the 41st millennium, players take on heretics, mutants, treacherous xenos, and the daemons of the Chaos Gods.



May 13—May 19

Dragon's Crown Pro (Atlus, PS4: \$49.99, Rated: T). In this upgraded edition (featuring multiplayer options) of the side-scrolling medieval fantasy-action RPG, players engage in lots of dungeon crawling while facing epic boss fights.

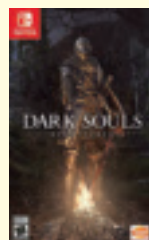


Hyrule Warriors: Definitive Edition (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this ultimate edition of the *Dynasty Warriors/The Legend of Zelda* third-person action fighting title, players will be tasked with mowing down entire legions of enemies as Link, Zelda, Midna, and others perform over-the-top crowd-clearing moves.

State of Decay 2 (Microsoft, XOne: \$29.99, Rated: M). In this third-person open-world zombie survival game the dead have risen and civilization has fallen and not even the military was able to stop the zombies, so now it's up to the player to gather survivors and build a community in a post-apocalyptic world where every decision matters.

May 20—May 26

Dark Souls Remastered (Bandai Namco, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: M). Remastered in high-definition, this critically-acclaimed and genre-defining third-person action-adventure game takes players back to Lordran to face massive bosses in extremely demanding battles.



Detroit: Become Human (Quantic Dream, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person narrative-driven game about androids set in the near-future metropolis of Detroit, players will co-write the story through the actions of several protagonists.

Space Hulk: Deathwing (Focus, PS4: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this first-person action game, players step into the boots of an elite Space Marine Terminator of the Deathwing who is engaging in a desperate battle against Genestealers within the claustrophobic confines of a Space Hulk, all while gaining new skills and powerful equipment during perilous missions.

Tennis World Tour (Big Ben, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). In this

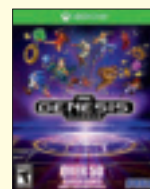
tennis simulation game, players brandish the rackets of the 30 best tennis players in the world on 18 different courts with five different surfaces as they experience a career worthy of a professional.

May 27—June 2

Harvest Moon: Light of Hope (Natsume, PS4/Switch: \$39.99, Rated: RP). In this third-person simulation game, players must help rebuild the town and save the lighthouse, along the way growing crops, tending livestock, and gathering materials.

Owlboy (SOEDESCO, PS4/Switch: \$29.99, Rated: E10+). In this story-driven side-scrolling platform-adventure game, players embark on a journey through monster-infested ruins, where they have unexpected encounters and discover well-kept secrets.

SEGA Genesis Classics (Sega, PS4/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: T). Featuring over 50 classic SEGA Genesis titles—including *Altered Beast*, *Golden Axe*, *Phantasy Star II*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, and *Streets of Rage*—this compilation adds new features such as instant saves and the ability to rewind slip-ups.



Street Fighter: 30th Anniversary Collection (Capcom, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: T). A celebration of the 30th anniversary of the iconic *Street Fighter* franchise, this fighting game package features 12 classic arcade titles.

June 3—June 9

BlazBlue: Cross Tag Battle (Arc System Works, PS4/Switch: \$49.99, Rated: RP). This latest entry in the beloved *BlazBlue* 2D fighting franchise crosses universes with fan favorite characters from *BlazBlue*, *Persona*, and the popular web series *RWBY*.

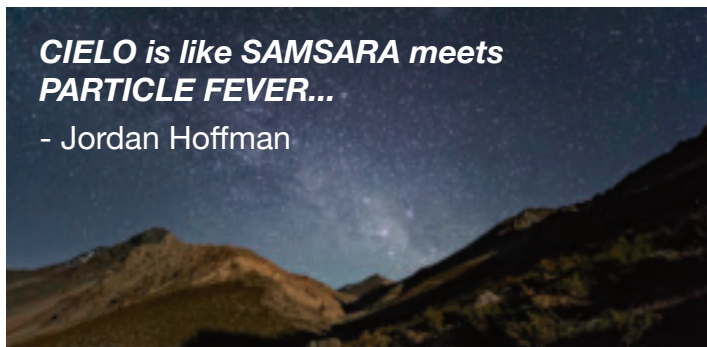
Onrush (Codemasters, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). This new racing game catapults players into the heart of the action, as they chase down vehicles across vibrant, multi-layered landscapes to perform extravagant takedowns.



Vampyr (Focus, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). Set in 1918 London, this third-person action-RPG game puts players

*CIELO is like SAMSARA meets
PARTICLE FEVER...*

- Jordan Hoffman



CIELO

CIELO is a cinematic reverie on the crazy beauty of the night sky, as experienced in the Atacama Desert, Chile, one of the best places on our planet to explore and contemplate its splendour. Directed by Alison McAlpine In English, Spanish, French, 78 minutes



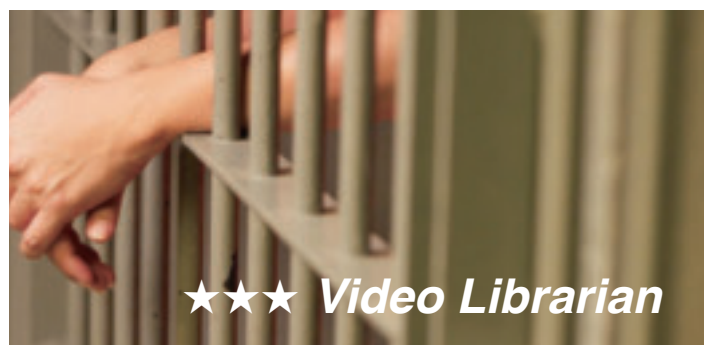
WAITHIRA

WAITHIRA explores the director's intimate history and its intersections with forgotten Kenyan history, pop culture and the diaspora. The film thus seeks to investigate how our known, unknown and imagined past impacts our lives. Directed by Eva Munyiri In English and Kikuyu, 71 minutes



THE LAST REFUGEES

The fate of refugees to the US has been the subject of media headlines since Trump's implementation of his highly contested travel ban. This documentary follows the Kalajis, one of the last families from Syria to enter the United States, as they adjust to their new life in Philadelphia. Directed by Tanaz Eshaghian. In Arabic and English, 40 minutes



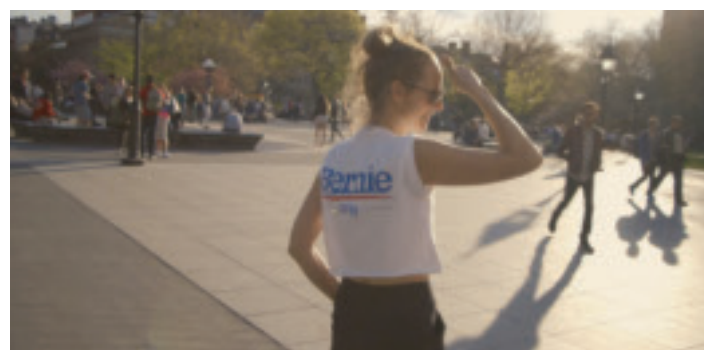
WHERE JUSTICE ENDS

WHERE JUSTICE ENDS is at the intersection of two important and timely topics of social justice — conditions within the U.S. prison system and the injustices that befall transgender people encountering the law. Directed by George Zuber and Andres Rodriguez, 56 minutes



CAHIER AFRICAIN

It all started with a small exercise book. Its pages were checked with the courageous testimonies of 300 Central African women, girls and men. They reveal what Congolese mercenaries did to them. They gathered together their testimonies in this book. Directed by Heidi Specogna, French, Arabic, Sango, 119 minutes



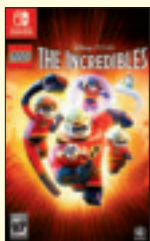
A CAMPAIGN OF THEIR OWN

This cinema verite documentary follows Bernie Sanders' loyal base during the 2016 presidential election. The film captures their frustrations that include New York state's voter suppression laws, the DNC's convention-delegate rules designed to block minority opinions, and reveals the issues likely to divide Democratic voters in elections to come. Director: Lionel Rupp, 74 minutes

into the role of newly-turned vampyr Dr. Jonathan Reid, who as a doctor must find a cure to save the city's flu-ravaged citizens, but as a vampyr is cursed to feed on those he vowed to heal.

June 10—June 16

LEGO The Incredibles (Warner, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). Inspired by the titular movie franchise, this latest third-person action-adventure LEGO game finds players controlling their favorite Incredibles characters while conquering crime and enjoying family life.



June 17—June 23

The Lost Child (NIS America, PS4/Switch: \$49.99, Rated: RP). In this first-person RPG, occult journalist Hayato Ibuki encounters a strange girl during his investigations into a series of mysterious suicides in Tokyo who gives him a mystical device that will send him on a journey that could decide the fate of the world.

Mario Tennis Aces (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: E). This tennis simulation game features all-out battles with fan-favorite Mushroom Kingdom characters.

New Gundam Breaker (Bandai Namco, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this third-person action-adventure game, players blast through enemy Gunplas, and collect fallen weapons and armor to customize their own Gunpla in real time.



June 24—June 30

The Crew 2 (Ubisoft, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this open-world racing-game sequel, players dominate land, air, and sea using a wide variety of exotic cars, bikes, boats, and planes in adrenaline-pumping competition.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

Claws: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98). Aired on TNT, this 2017 debut season of the dramedy series centering on the organized crime dabbling of South Florida nail salon man-

icurists stars Niecy Nash, Carrie Preston, Judy Reyes, and Harold Perrineau.

Hailey Dean Mystery: Murder, With Love (Hallmark, DVD: \$14.95). Based on the book series by Nancy Grace, this mystery drama movie stars Kellie Martin as the titular lawyer turned therapist.

The Long Road Home (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). Produced by National Geographic, this scripted miniseries follows Fort Hood troops who are attacked in Baghdad.

NW (BBC, DVD: \$24.95). An adaptation of Zadie Smith's 2012 novel, this 2016 TV movie focusing on a two-decade friendship begun in a London council estate stars Nila Aalia, Ronke Adekoluejo, and Nikki Amuka-Bird.



Outlander: Season Three (Sony, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$55.99). The 2017 third season of this historical fiction series adapted from the books by Diana Gabaldon finds pregnant combat nurse Claire (Caitriona Balfe) returning through time from the 1700s back to 1948.

The Robot Chicken Walking Dead Special (Warner, DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98). Aired in October 2017, this special from the stop-motion animated Adult Swim-aided black comedy series spoofs the titular zombie drama and features the voices of *Walking Dead* stars Andrew Lincoln, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, and others.

StarTalk with Neil deGrasse Tyson: Season 4 (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.95). Hip astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson hosts this 2017-18 fourth season of the National Geographic-produced science/pop culture series, featuring guests including Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Jane Goodall, Salman Rushdie, and Stephen Colbert.



Unforgotten: The Complete First Season (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). London detectives (Nicola Walker, Sanjeev Bhaskar) tackle cold cases in this 2015 first season of the ITV series, aired stateside on *Masterpiece Mystery!*

May 1

Broken (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). A

Catholic priest (Sean Bean) tries to help his congregation in this 2017 miniseries aired on BBC One that also features Anna Friel and Adrian Dunbar.

Dear Murderer: Series 1 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Set in New Zealand, this 2017 first season follows the ups and downs of high-profile lawyer Mike Bungay (Mark Mitchinson).

May 8

Ackley Bridge: Series 1 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). This 2017 first season of the Channel 4 drama follows the escapades of the staff and students of a multicultural academy school, and stars Jo Joyner, Amy-Leigh Hickman, and Poppy Lee Friar.

Dear White People:

Season One (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Adapted from the 2014 feature film, this 2017 Netflix comedy featuring black students at an Ivy League school stars Logan Browning, Brandon P. Bell, and Marque Richardson (the latter two reprising their movie roles).



Police Woman: 4—Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$34.99). Angie Dickinson is back as a comely undercover L.A. detective in this 1977-78 fourth and final season of the police procedural, featuring guest appearances by Nipsey Russell, Adam West, Danny DeVito, Eartha Kitt, and Debra Winger.

Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In: The Complete Fourth Season (Time Life, DVD: 7 discs, \$39.95). Hosted by Dan Rowan and Dick Martin, this 1970-71 fourth season of the offbeat variety series includes guest appearances by Wilt Chamberlain, Vincent Price, Greer Garson, and Desi Arnaz.

May 15

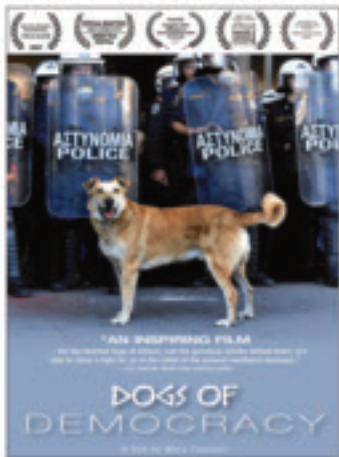
The Bold Type: Season

One (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). A trio of women share personal and professional issues as workers at a NYC magazine in this 2017 first season starring Katie Stevens, Aisha Dee, Meghann Fahy, and Melora Hardin.



Cold Feet—The New Years: Season One (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Picking up after the first series' ending in 2003,

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.

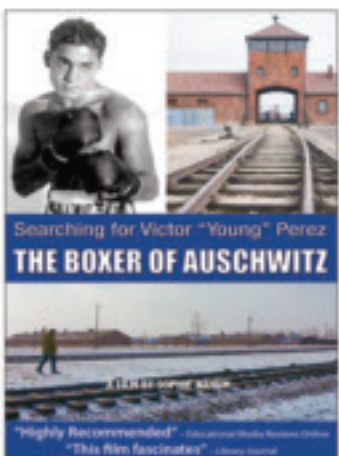
Best Documentary 2017 Imagine This Women's International Film Festival



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.

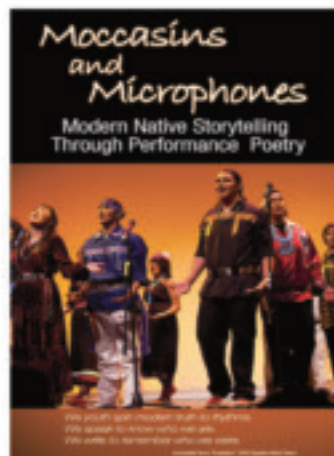
"Highly Recommended"
- Library Journal



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

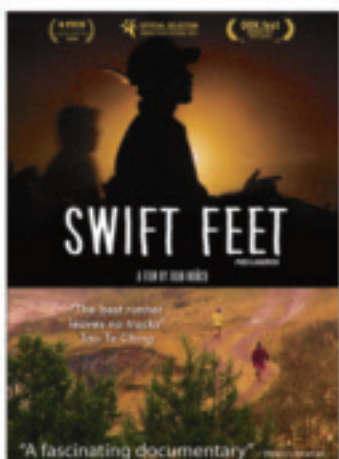
The forgotten story of Victor Perez, who rose to great fame in 1931 as the youngest world champion in boxing history – only to be deported to Auschwitz, where he was forced to box in the concentration camp for the amusement of the guards. Through interviews with the last people who knew Perez, this documentary 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

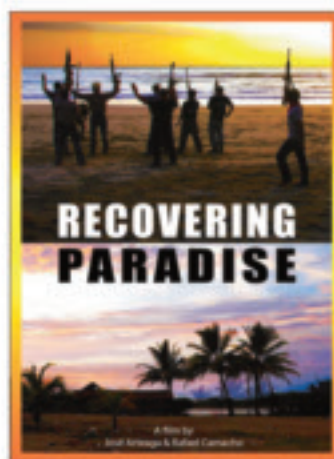
Established in 1890, the Santa Fe Indian High School educates Native American children from Southwestern tribes. The SFIS Spoken Word Team travels are documented, as the high school students prepare and present a theater production of their finest poems woven with traditional and contemporary song and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

Study Guides for All Films. Visit EPFMedia.com

this 2016 reboot of the ITV show following several Manchester friends and families stars James Nesbitt, Robert Bathurst, and Hermione Norris.

Mum: Season One (BBC, DVD: \$24.98). A widow gets advice from her busybody family in this 2016 debut season of the British sitcom starring Lesley Manville, Peter Mullan, and Dorothy Atkinson.

The Shannara Chronicles: Season Two (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99, Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$36.99). Based on the fantasy book series by Terry Brooks, this 2017 sophomore season—moved from MTV to Spike—is newly available on high-definition Blu-ray.

Silent Witness: The Complete Season Five (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Pathologist and professor Sam Ryan (Amanda Burton) gets on well with staff and students at the University of London but still works on high-profile cases in this 2000-01 fifth series that includes “The World Cruise,” “Two Below Zero,” and “Faith.”



Unforgotten: The Complete Second Season (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). A London detective duo (Nicola Walker, Sanjeev Bhaskar) go after cold cases in this 2017 second season of the *Masterpiece Mystery!*-aired series.

May 22

Call the Midwife: Season Seven (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$35.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98). This 2018 seventh season based on the memoirs of London midwife Jennifer Worth stars Linda Bassett, Cliff Parisi, and Leonie Elliott.



Gunsmoke: The Thirteenth Season, Volume 1 (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$45.98). Featuring guest stars including Buck Taylor, Carroll O'Connor, and Victor French, this first volume from the 1967-68 13th season of the beloved Western series follows Marshal Matt Dillon (James Arness) as he helps the citizens of Dodge City. Also newly available at the same price is **Gunsmoke: The Thirteenth Season, Volume 2**.

May 29

Detectorists: Series 3 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Metal detecting pals keep

their hobby going in this third and final season of the BAFTA-winning comedy starring Mackenzie Crook and Toby Jones.

Diff'rent Strokes: The Complete Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$22.98). This 1985-86 eighth and final season of the sitcom never reveals exactly what Willis was talkin' 'bout but it does feature guest appearances by Forest Whitaker, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Robin Givens.

East West 101: Series 2 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Muslim Sydney detective Zane Malik (Don Hany) deals with post-9/11 culture clash in this 2009 second season of the Australian drama series.



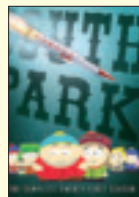
I'm Dying Up Here: Season One (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Wannabes work their craft at a 1970s Hollywood standup comedy club in this 2017 debut season of the Showtime series that stars Melissa Leo, Ari Graynor, and Clark Duke.

June 5

The Invaders: The Complete Series (Paramount, DVD: 12 discs, \$39.98). Starring Roy Thinnes as an architect who learns that displaced aliens plan to rule Earth, this 1967-68 sci-fi series features guest appearances by Anne Francis, Barbara Hershey, and Dabney Coleman.

The Last Ship: The Complete Fourth Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; 2 discs, Blu-ray: \$39.99). Based on the novel by William Brinkley, this 2017 fourth season of the post-apocalyptic action series stars Eric Dane, Adam Baldwin, and Marissa Neitling.

South Park: The Complete Twenty-First Season (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). The Colorado cartoon characters continue their silly antics in this 2017 21st season, which features episodes including “White People Renovating Houses,” “Hummels & Heroin,” and “Super Hard PCness.”



June 12

One Day at a Time: Season Three (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$22.98). Indianapolis divorcée Ann Romano (Bonnie Franklin) rises to the challenges posed by

her daughters (Mackenzie Phillips, Valerie Bertinelli) in this 1977-78 third season of the classic sitcom.

Suits: Season Seven (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). This 2017-18 seventh season of the legal drama stars Gabriel Macht, Patrick J. Adams, and a pre-Mrs. Prince Harry Meghan Markle.



June 19

In the Dark (BBC, DVD: \$19.98). Starring MyAnna Buring as a pregnant detective, this 2017 miniseries also features Ben Batt, Emma Fryer, and David Leon.

Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 2008 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). The cask of wine never seems to drain for the Yorkshire Dales elderly friends in this 2008 29th season of the sitcom starring Brian Murphy, Peter Sallis, and Frank Thornton.

Man in an Orange Shirt (PBS, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99). This 2017 *Masterpiece*-aired miniseries about a secret spanning generations stars David Gyasi, Oliver Jackson-Cohen, and James McArdle.

June 26

Girlfriends: Series 1 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Phyllis Logan, Miranda Richardson, and Zoë Wanamaker star as decades-long friends in this 2018 first season of the British drama series.

The Heart Guy: Series 2 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.99). A Sydney heart surgeon (Rodger Corser) works on his personal life and career after returning to his rural hometown in this 2017 second season of the Australian drama series.

Peyton Place: Part Four (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$34.99). Based on the racy classic by Grace Metalious, this fourth compilation features episodes from the 1964-69 primetime soap starring Ed Nelson, Mia Farrow, Ryan O'Neal, and Dorothy Malone.



Looking Ahead

Slated for July is the first season of **Top Gear America**, as well as the third season of **The Tunnel**. Slated for August is the sixth season of **Silent Witness**.

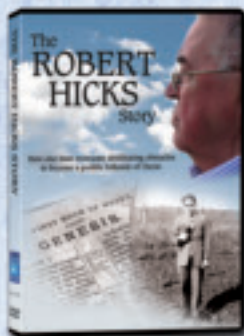
COMPELLING NEW RELEASES FROM VISION VIDEO



C. T. Studd: Gifted Athlete and Pioneering Missionary

C. T. Studd had it all. Born into a wealthy upperclass family in England, he studied at Cambridge University and went on to become one of the country's most celebrated athletes. Realizing that fame and flattery would not last, however, Studd decided to pursue missionary work in China. This docudrama explores his extraordinary life through expert interviews and engaging re-enactment scenes. 48 minutes.

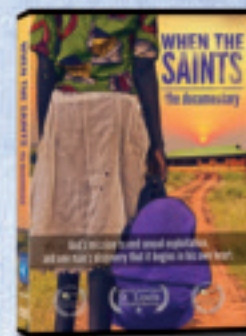
#501746D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01746 4



The Robert Hicks Story

Born tongue-tied and dyslexic and suffering at the hands of abusive parents, Robert Hicks seemed to be doomed to a life of pain and poverty. But a miraculous transformation would allow him to become a successful entrepreneur, operating a variety of productive businesses including a publishing company. Discover how Robert Hicks went from forgotten child to productive businessman in this personal and profound program. Documentary, 40 minutes.

#501768D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01768 6



When the Saints

When the Saints documents one young man's mission to end sexual exploitation in the African nation of Malawi, a journey that begins in his own heart. The program not only calls us to care about justice for girls trafficked in rural Africa, but also to examine the ways that lust, personal impurity, pornography, and distorted views about romantic relationships serve to feed the problem. The film is a thought-provoking and powerful tool to rally people with a call to greater purity. Documentary, 60 minutes.

#501788D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01788 4



Carry Me Home: A Remember America Film

Carry Me Home is a short film following the true story of Maria Ennals (Lindsey Grimbale), 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



C. S. Lewis Onstage

Using C. S. Lewis's own words, award-winning actor Max McLean inhabits Lewis in this powerful stage performance to take us on his rigorous journey from hard-boiled atheist to "the most reluctant convert in all England." Discover how the "Hound of Heaven" pursued Lewis relentlessly until he finally "gave in"...only to become the most influential Christian writer of the twentieth century. 77 minutes.

#501800D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01800 3



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



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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

12 Strong ★★½

Warner, 130 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99, May 1



This contemporary war film celebrates the brave soldiers who fought against Al Qaeda—without probing too deeply into the political justification or disillusioning aftermath of their heroic efforts. Green Beret Operational Detachment Alpha 595 consists of a 12-member U.S. Special Forces squad sent into mountainous northern Afghanistan shortly after 9/11. Their mission is to take the Taliban stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif within three weeks—before the winter snow hits. Led by Capt. Mitch Nelson (Chris Hemsworth), Chief Warrant Officer Cal Spencer (Michael Shannon), and Sgt. First Class Sam Diller (Michael Peña), they're informed that Afghanistan is the "graveyard of empires." Accompanied by tribal warriors under Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum (Navid Negahban)—who later became Afghanistan's vice-president—they ride on horseback across 40 miles of Taliban-controlled territory, liberating small villages along the way and calling in B-52 airstrikes when necessary. The evasive military tactics and calculated maneuvers are made clear here—with New Mexico's harsh terrain subbing for Afghanistan's landscape—but the only philosophical insight into the ongoing struggle occurs when the Americans are bluntly told, "you will be cowards if you leave and you will be enemies if you stay." Inspired by Doug Stanton's 2009 nonfiction book *Horse Soldiers*, this is directed with mucho machismo by Nicolai Fuglsig, a Danish photojournalist who was a war correspondent in Kosovo. *12 Strong* serves up ferocious action, procedural frustration, and inevitable anguish, albeit without offering much food for thought. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Aida's Secrets ★★★

Music Box, 95 min., in English & Hebrew w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



While filmmakers Alon and Shaul Schwartz's documentary centers on their own family, it also deals more broadly with the horrendous shadow that the Holocaust continues to cast over all of its victims. The story begins with the filmmakers' uncle Izak, who was born in the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp in Germany shortly after World War II and sent to an adoptive family in Israel. Izak's biological mother Aida visited him from Canada as a child, but he only recently learned of a younger, blind brother, who also moved to Canada with his father. That discovery initiates a quest to find Izak's sibling, Shepsel, who is eventually located, and the two men not only meet but are also reunited with the elderly Aida, who is in a nursing home. But this is only the beginning of the family's domestic mystery. Photos of the two boys as children with Aida also show not one man but two, and since Shepsel's father has since died, he cannot be questioned. Nor does Aida, despite her ability to recall much of the past fairly clearly, offer any explanation. Stitching together archival material, home movies, and new interviews with various family members and friends, the film ultimately cannot provide answers to all of the questions it raises, but its acceptance of Aida's need to keep some secrets, given the circumstances she had to endure, is both humbling and rather inspiring. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Aliens Ate My Homework ★★★

Universal, 90 min., PG, DVD: \$14.99



Unapologetically cheesy as effects-heavy sci-fi films go, *Aliens Ate My Homework* makes up for a lot of hokey ray-guns, miniature spaceships, and a talking shrub (or something) with clever, ironic humor that appeals to the middle-schooler in us all. Based on the titular 1993 first novel in a YA series by Bruce Coville, the story finds sixth-grader Rod (Jayden Grieb)—bullied at school and pestered at home by his suspicious live-in cousin Elspeth (Lauren McNamara)—just trying to get on with life. When a pack of extraterrestrial security forces land their dinner-plate-size ship in his bedroom, Rod reluctantly joins them, along with Elspeth, in their pursuit of a villainous alien who is hiding in plain sight. What makes the movie funny—aside from the motley team of alien cops from several planets—are the reactions of the adults to all of the weird stuff happening. And, awful as this will sound, a prolonged scene of projectile vomiting is pretty hilarious. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

All the Money in the World ★★★

Sony, 133 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Perhaps even more fascinating than this fact-based kidnap drama is how director Ridley Scott replaced scandal-ridden Kevin Spacey with persuasive Christopher Plummer as billionaire J. Paul Getty (after re-filming 22 scenes, Scott seamlessly edited old reaction shots with the new footage). In 1973, bohemian, 16-year-old John "Paul" Getty III (Charlie Plummer) was kidnapped in Rome. His frantic mother, Gail Harris (Michelle Williams), was desperate to deliver the \$17 million ransom that the kidnapers demanded, but obstinate grandfather Getty declined to pay, instead summoning an ex-CIA agent, Fletcher Chase (Mark Wahlberg)—the family "fixer," skilled in security and crisis management—to track Paul down. A pioneering oil tycoon, Getty was then the richest man in history, paying no taxes because his global estate was in a charitable trust, allowing him to invest in art work and antiquities. Notoriously frugal, Getty installed a pay phone for visitors at his baronial, 73-plus-room British mansion. The elderly Getty icily claimed that since he had 14 grandchildren, paying a ransom for Paul would encourage further kidnappings. Italian crime syndicate operatives, part of the Red Brigade, held the troubled teenager hostage in the countryside, at one point cutting off Paul's right ear and mailing it to a Rome newspaper. Based on John Pearson's 1995 book *Painfully Rich: The Outrageous Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Heirs of J. Paul Getty*, this tense true thriller is recommended. (S. Granger)

The Assistant ★★★

Icarus, 87 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99



Filmmakers Christophe Ali and Nicolas Bonilauri tap into Hitchcock territory with this off-kilter revenge thriller. French film legend Nathalie Baye (*Day for Night*, *Every Man for Himself*) plays Marie-France, a new secretary for younger urban planner Thomas (Malik Zidi). What Thomas does not realize is that the two have a previous history: nine years earlier, while racing to the hospital with his pregnant wife, Thomas's car fatally struck a young man who was Marie-France's son. While Thomas is initially skeptical of her abilities, he quickly comes to realize her value in the office. She also swiftly becomes a part of his after-work life, drawing the attention of his young son, as well as romantic interest from Thomas's elderly father. Only Thomas's now-estranged wife is not enchanted with Marie-France, who it turns out is not exactly

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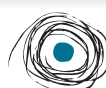
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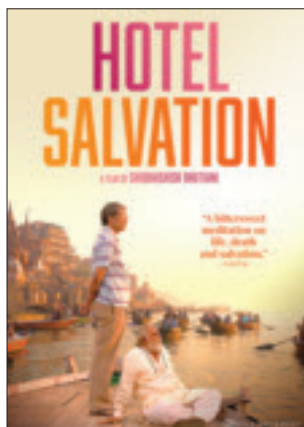
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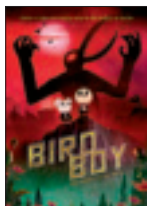
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the forgive-and-forget type, as she begins to exhibit an intense homicidal personality with the sole goal of avenging her son's death. While the film has some logic holes—Thomas may be the most obtuse movie victim in recent memory—the real fun lies in watching the talented Baye carefully spin her treacherous plans around her unsuspecting targets with quiet but steely intensity. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Birdboy: The Forgotten Children ★★★

Shout! Factory, 76 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles and English, not rated, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$22.99



If Hayao Miyazaki re-made *Animal Farm*, the result might resemble this darkly comic fable about mice, dogs, foxes, and pigs making their way through a post-apocalyptic landscape. Dinky, an outspoken mouse, lives with sanctimonious Christian parents who obviously prefer her little brother, a bulldog in a luchadora mask. Although he has nothing but harsh words for Dinky, her engineer father dotes on her robotic alarm clock. Dinky is fascinated by Birdboy, a mute orphan who lives in an abandoned lighthouse (with his oversized head, hollow eyes, and dark suit, he looks like a refugee from a Henry Selick film). Dinky tells her friends that as long as Birdboy snacks on happy pills—which she sneaks from her parents—he can contain the demon inside of him (the demon really appears, but feels more like a manifestation of trauma). Misunderstood and mistreated, Birdboy is a loner who bonds more with nature than humanity. But Dinky and her friends also have problems of their own, trying to save money to escape their island, which leads to encounters with shady characters, including an army of bloodthirsty rats. Adapted from Alberto Vázquez's graphic novel *Psiconautas* (which was previously made into a short film), co-directors Vázquez and Pedro Rivero's strikingly original film won the Goya (or Spanish Oscar) for best animated feature. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Blade of the Immortal ★★★

Magnolia, 141 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles & English-dubbed, R, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Japanese filmmaker Takashi Miike made his reputation directing off-beat crime films that featured wild twists, energetic momentum, creative imagery, and often extreme acts of violence, cranking out as many as eight films in a single year. He has slowed down in recent years as his productions grew bigger but he's still one

of the most prolific filmmakers in the world and *Blade of the Immortal*—a sprawling samurai adventure based on a long-running manga by Hiroaki Samura—is billed as his 100th film. Japanese TV star Takuya Kimura plays the sword-wielding anti-hero Manji, an assassin cursed with immortality thanks to magical bloodworms that heal his wounds. After a black-and-white prologue that sketches a tragic backstory (including his failure to save his little sister), Manji becomes bodyguard to a teenage girl (Hana Sugisaki) who is on a mission of vengeance against the men who slaughtered her family—a band of rogue fighters who are led by an androgynous madman. It's a set-up for scene after gory scene of swordplay as Manji mows down armies of anonymous swordsmen and engages in singular combat with particularly gifted enemies, and Miike delivers flying limbs, spraying blood, and fields of corpses with flamboyant style and a mordant sense of humor. The excess action becomes part of the point: revenge can result in an epic body count. Sure to please action and samurai movie fans, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Breadwinner ★★★

Universal, 93 min., PG-13, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



Co-executive produced by Angelina Jolie, this Oscar-nominated animated film—directed by Nora Twomey (co-director of the 2009 Oscar nominee *The Secret of Kells*)—is set in Taliban-controlled Kabul, Afghanistan, where 11-year-old Parvana (voiced by Saara Chaudry) and her “babu” (father) sell wares at a local market. When Parvana's babu is arrested without reason and taken to a prison, Parvana and her mother try to get more information, only to be harangued by a Taliban member for being out in the streets without a male chaperone (this man also severely beats Parvana's mother). Since Parvana—as a female—cannot work in the market, her older sister cuts Parvana's hair, after which she poses as a boy, taking the name of Aatish and striking up a friendship with Shauzia, another girl pretending to be a boy. Parvana's main goal is to find and help her babu, a dangerous quest, while also taking on work that makes her the “breadwinner” for the family. Interwoven throughout the story is another tale that Parvana tells her baby brother about a brave villager who tries to retrieve precious seeds stolen by the Elephant King—a second narrative strand that dovetails nicely with the main story during the climactic finale. Based on Deborah Ellis's 2000 YA novel, this is a beautifully-animated paean to family ties, with a strong female-empowerment theme. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Court ★★★

Kino Lorber, 116 min., in Marathi, Hindi, English & Gujarati w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Filmmaker Chaitanya Tamhane's satire of India's judicial system takes on the systemic issues of corruption and oppression—achieved through bureaucratic harassment and legal abuses—with a deadpan sense of humor. The case under review is that of Narayan Kamble (Vira Sathidar), an aging folk singer and political activist known as “the people's poet,” who is arrested on clearly trumped-up charges of “abetment of suicide” of a sewer worker found dead from exposure to poison gases. Kamble's politically-driven defense lawyer takes on a prosecutor who pedantically pulls out archaic laws and calls on dubious witnesses, dragging the case out for months as people fail to appear in court and evidence is either misplaced or found to simply not exist. Meanwhile, the judge refuses bail and the 65-year-old Kamble falls ill in prison. Tamhane observes it all from a distance, watching the absurdities play out straight-faced and then follows participants through their everyday lives while the accused is left in custody without a voice in his own defense. Along with uncovering a pattern of abuse of power—in which the government locks up political and social activists while baseless cases take months to wind through the bureaucratic morass of the courts—the film also addresses class and caste prejudices. The dark humor arises from the sheer absurdity of the coached witnesses, non-existent evidence, and claims that fall apart upon scrutiny—all presented with deadpan seriousness. An award winner at the Venice Film Festival and the National Film Awards in India, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

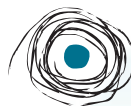
Don't Call Me Son ★★

Kino Lorber, 82 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Brazilian filmmaker Anna Muylaert's *Don't Call Me Son* mashes together several familiar themes, including the reunion of a lost child and his parents, a coming-of-age drama, and LGBT self-identity struggles. Pierre, an androgynous teen with bisexual tastes and a penchant for eyeliner, is quite happy with his life until he learns that his mother, a low-income single woman, actually kidnapped him from his biological parents when he was an infant. Pierre's real parents, who have been searching for him for the last 17 years, are initially thrilled to have found their long-lost child. But this family is a straight-laced bourgeois clan and Pierre's preference for zebra print miniskirts clashes with their sensibilities. Even worse

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—Sherilyn Connelly, *SF Weekly*

Bored Tokyo office lady Setsuko (Independent Spirit Award-nominee **Shinobu Terajima**) breaks free of her monotonous life, when her niece, Mika (**Shioli Kutsuna**), convinces her to enroll in an unorthodox English class. There, she adopts a blonde-haired alter ego named "Lucy" and develops romantic feelings for her American instructor, John (**Josh Hartnett**). But after his sudden disappearance, Setsuko follows his trail halfway around the world to Southern California, where family ties and past lives are tested as she struggles to fulfill the promise of "Lucy."

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for Pierre, his biological father turns out to be a drunken bully while his mother is an emotionally unstable woman who enables her spouse's crass behavior. There are subplots involving Pierre's siblings—a younger sister who was also kidnapped in infancy by the false mother, and a younger brother in his new home—but neither of those are well sketched out. The charismatic Naomi Nero offers a memorable turn as the idiosyncratic Pierre, but the story feels clichéd. Optional. (P. Hall)

Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool ★★★

Sony, 106 min., R, DVD: \$25.99



Annette Bening delivers a powerhouse performance as sultry Gloria Grahame. Back in the 1940s and '50s, Grahame starred in the film noir hits *Crossfire*, *Sudden Fear*, *The Big Heat*, *In a Lonely Place* and *The Bad and the Beautiful*, for which she won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar (fans also remember her from *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Greatest Show on Earth* and *Oklahoma!*). Obsessed with her appearance, Grahame underwent extensive plastic surgery, habitually fixing nonexistent flaws. Her volatile temperament alienated even the most admiring directors, and she courted scandalous gossip with four disastrous marriages. The day after divorcing actor Stanley Clements, she married director Nicholas Ray, a relationship that ended disastrously after Ray found Gloria in bed with Tony, his 13-year-old son by a previous marriage. She then married and divorced producer Cy Howard before marrying her stepson, now 23-year-old Tony Ray. In 1979, Gloria was onstage in England when she met Peter Turner (Jamie Bell), who was 28 years younger. Peter was besotted, and Gloria spent the last days of her life at his family's home in Liverpool, where she died from recurring breast cancer in 1981 at the age of 57. This is their love story—just theirs, with only occasional flashbacks (unfortunately). Inspired by Turner's titular 1984 memoir, director Paul McGuigan's subtly poignant bio-pic—also featuring Julie Walters and Vanessa Redgrave—effectively chronicles another Tinseltown tragedy. Recommended. (S. Granger)

The Girl Without Hands ★★★

Shout! Factory, 76 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$22.99



Sébastien Laudenbach's animated feature is based on a fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm, who had a distinctive sensibility regarding innocence under assault in a cruel world. The titular girl is the daughter of a poor miller, a man

who makes a deal with the devil and ends up selling his daughter for a river of gold. The devil forces the miller to chop off her hands but she is too pure and selfless for the devil to take and she winds up fleeing into the forest. A goddess takes pity on her and a prince falls in love with her but her happily ever after is continually sabotaged by the devil. The animation has the sketchy quality of a minimalist painting in motion, with figures suggested in a few brushstrokes against a backdrop of swathes of watercolors in a highly evocative visual style. *The Girl Without Hands* is a dark and quite beautiful fantasy tale that embraces the earthiness of human existence (it includes scenes of childbirth, nudity, and even defecation, albeit presented in minimalist imagery). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Hangman ★

Lionsgate, 99 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$21.99



The prologue of this meaningless whodunit directed by stuntman-turned-actor Johnny Martin shows retired homicide detective Ray Archer (Al Pacino) sitting in his vintage car, doing crossword puzzles in Latin (because he was once an altar boy). Suddenly, he's sideswiped by a hit-and-run driver in a blue truck. After a high-speed chase, the culprit is caught. Flash forward one year as Ray becomes involved in a string of grisly, gruesome murders committed by a vicious serial killer who strings up his victims and, using their corpses, carves alphabet-letter clues using the titular word game. Apparently, Ray's badge number and that of his stoic buddy Will Ruiney (Karl Urban), whose wife was murdered a while ago, were found whittled on a classroom desk in a school near the first victim's body. Although the setting is Monroe, GA, joining them is intrepid *New York Times* investigative reporter Christi Davies (Brittany Snow), who was once nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, although her ride-along presence is obviously unwelcome. The trio's sleuthing becomes even more urgent when they realize that there will be a new victim every 24 hours, unless they can somehow follow the clues and capture the psychopathic perpetrator. Saddled with stereotypical characters and an illogical and inanely convoluted script, *Hangman* relies on fast-paced action scenes to distract from the idiotic banter that passes for dialogue here and the lame police procedural plot. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

Hostiles ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 134 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Paying homage to classic Westerns such as John Ford's *The Searchers*, writer-director Scott Cooper's *Hostiles* tries to connect with contemporary themes regarding Na-

tive Americans, including reconciliation, inclusion, and equality. Set on the frontier in 1892, the film begins with parallel views of a vicious Comanche raid on isolated homesteaders and an instance of U.S. soldiers torturing an Apache family—setting the scene for this revisionist examination of the American West. Under threat of court martial, embittered Army Capt. Joseph Blocker (Christian Bale) must escort dying Cheyenne Chief Yellow Hawk (Wes Studi) and his family from imprisonment at Fort Berringer in New Mexico territory to their tribal lands in Montana. Riding northward through the rugged landscape, Blocker and his small troop of soldiers discover grief-wracked Mrs. Quaid (Rosamond Pike), sole survivor of the Comanche raid, who is determined to dig her children's graves with her bare hands. Given no choice, Blocker takes the widow along, and when they reach Ford Collins, CO, he's further burdened by having to transport psychopathic Sgt. Charles Wills (Ben Foster) to a trial. When the party is attacked by Comanche raiders, Yellow Hawk begs to be released so he can fight, observing, "We must unite..." Filmmaker Cooper enlisted the aid of Chief Philip Whiteman, the pre-eminent Northern Cheyenne Chief of Montana, to ensure authenticity. A violent, sorrowful film that is also episodic and somewhat uneven, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



In Her Name ★★★

Icarus, 87 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99



Filmmaker Vincent Garenq's *In Her Name* dramatizes the true story of one man's obsessive quest for justice, a legal odyssey spanning some 30 years. It was known as the Bamberski Affair in France where it made periodic headlines, but the story is practically unknown in the U.S. Daniel Auteuil plays André Bamberski, a French businessman who, in the opening scene, is arrested by police on charges of kidnapping. Rewind to 1974, when the happily married businessman and family man meets Dr. Dieter Krombach (Sebastian Koch), a German widower with two children of his own, in Morocco. Krombach has an affair with Bamberski's wife that continues when they move back to France, ultimately leading to the adulterers marrying. Eight years later in Germany, Bamberski's daughter Kalinka inexplicably dies in the home of her mother and new stepfather. Suspicious evidence uncovered in the autopsy is ignored and Bamberski spends the next three decades trying to bring Krombach to justice for rape and murder, an accusation that gains

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pant, and where souls are highly regarded, but
come quite cheap.

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traction as more accusers come forward. The film shows how the distraught father drives away his ex-wife, son, and second wife in his obsessive quest, but it is more of a procedural than a tragedy or psychological drama, meticulously covering every legal procedure and political setback. *In Her Name* is interesting without being dramatically compelling but it does feature strong performances and serves up an intriguing real-life story of one man's all-devouring pursuit of justice. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

In the Fade ★★½

Magnolia, 105 min., in German w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99, May 1

Fatih Akin's psychological thriller is somber, slow-moving, and quietly heartbreaking. Diane Kruger stars as Katja, who marries Nuri (Numan Acar), a Turkish drug-dealer and ex-convict. Some years later they are living contentedly with their darling young son Rocco when tragedy strikes, as father and son are killed by a terrorist bomb placed outside Nuri's office. The police suspect criminal associates of Nuri's, but Katja, so depressed that she attempts suicide, dismisses that possibility, and is proven correct when the perpetrators are found—a young neo-Nazi couple. At their trial, the prosecution offers a spirited case, but the defense attorney sows sufficient doubt to secure a reluctant acquittal from the judges. So Katja decides to pursue vengeance herself and travels to Greece, home of the witness who provided a perjured alibi for the pair. On a quest to track down the guilty couple, she prepares to mete out poetic justice and bring her grief to an end. Kruger is the film's linchpin, delivering a performance that conveys deep reservoirs of emotion without becoming showy. And *In the Fade* subverts the crude expectations of vigilante justice thrillers: Katja never devolves into a super-heroine, and her actions are always tinged with sadness and self-doubt. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



It Takes From Within ★

First Run, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Experimental features sometimes seem like practical jokes, and that is often the case with filmmaker Lee Eubanks's debut, which might most charitably be described as a misguided effort to replicate the mood of angst-ridden loneliness that Michelangelo Antonioni captured so memorably more than a half-century ago. After a prologue in which several couples crawl to a bed situated in what appears to be a field, an unnamed man and woman are introduced bickering poisonously in a motel room. They have apparently come to a seaside town to attend a funeral, but



spend most of their time simply wandering around in a gloomy haze, bumping into odd characters, including an old woman who can abruptly go berserk. There are spasms of dialogue, but all of it is obstinately opaque, and many inexplicable moments, such as when an older man staggers around in a forest before collapsing, becoming naked, and groveling on the ground. The black-and-white camerawork periodically captures a striking image, but for the most part Eubanks's film proves to be both a grim endurance test and a decidedly failed experiment. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Jasper Jones ★★½

Film Movement, 103 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A powerful mystery-drama based on a much-praised 2009 novel by Craig Silvey, *Jasper Jones* could be described as a small-town crime story with a solution that unlocks all of the secrets and misery of everyone involved. But director Rachel Perkins doesn't answer every question or solve every enigma, which leaves the film's teenage central character, Charlie (Levi Miller), with the nagging, real-world conclusion that sometimes we have to move forward despite ambiguity. Set in an Australian suburb early in the Vietnam War, *Jasper Jones* finds the title character (Aaron L. McGrath)—a much-despised and feared mixed-race kid—seeking late-night help from Charlie, to whom he's never even spoken. The problem: a girl who Jasper was secretly seeing is hanging dead from a tree. Certain he will be blamed, Jasper implores Charlie to help him hide the body. Hobbled by rising paranoia and the terror of being found out as an accomplice, Charlie tries to get on with his troubled home life (his parents are played by Toni Collette and Dan Wyllie), while also dealing with sweet romantic overtures from the dead girl's younger sister (Angourie Rice), and a grizzled war veteran (Hugo Weaving) around whom rumors swirl. Perkins maintains masterful control over the film's pacing on the way towards shocking revelations, but her primary focus is on the characters who are nurturing secret lives away from the glare of a sometimes brutal community. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



Just Charlie ★★★

Wolfe, 99 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.99

Just Charlie follows in the wake of fact-based films like *Boys Don't Cry* and *The Danish Girl*, which featured transgender characters who attempted to live as their authentic selves. Unlike those films, however, Rebekah Fortune's narrative feature isn't a tragedy. Charlie (newcomer Harry Gilby)



is a talented 14-year-old soccer player who presents as a boy to the world. His father Paul (Scot Williams), who wasn't able to fulfill his own athletic aspirations, has transferred his dreams to his son. But while soccer unites father and son, Charlie is starting to strain against his gender identity. Stuck in Britain's provincial Midlands, he can't tell anyone that he would rather dress like his sister, Eve (Elinor Machen-Fortune), so he tries on her clothes in secret. When Paul catches him in the act, Charlie attempts to explain himself, but his father won't hear it. Fortunately, his soccer coach, Mick (writer Peter Machen), offers support after he finds out what's going on. Once Charlie's mother (Patricia Potter) and Eve adjust to this new reality, Charlie meets with a therapist to prepare for the process of transitioning, although it takes longer for Charlie's father and grandmother to accept the changes. Mick also arranges for Charlie to play on a girls' soccer team, but not everyone accepts her. And when Charlie wears girls' clothes to school, she finds herself more isolated than ever. Director Fortune continues to alternate between Charlie's family, friends, and community, where confusion leads to fights, name-calling, and even a separation, but Charlie's resolve never falters, and Gilby makes certain that every move is believable and sympathetic. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Lady Bird ★★★★★

Lionsgate, 93 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Actress-screenwriter Greta Gerwig makes an auspicious directorial debut with this perceptive coming-of-age dramedy, chronicling the tempestuous bond between a teenager and her mother. Set in 2002 in Gerwig's hometown of Sacramento, the film begins with novelist Joan Didion's acerbic observation: "Anybody who talks about California hedonism has never spent a Christmas in Sacramento." Christine "Lady Bird" McPherson (Saoirse Ronan) is coping with her senior year at a Catholic high school and unrest at home: her mild-mannered father, Larry (Tracy Letts), lost his job, and her strong-willed mother, Marion (Laurie Metcalf), works two shifts as a psychiatric nurse to keep the lower-middle-class family afloat, albeit on the "wrong" side of the tracks. Understandably eager to leave home, just-turned-18-year-old Lady Bird secretly applies to East Coast colleges, "where the culture is," even though her parents can barely afford in-state tuition at nearby UC Davis. Not surprisingly, Lady Bird's adolescent love life is also awkwardly complicated, first with hunky thespian Danny O'Neill (Lucas Hedges), who has his own problems, and then with musician Kyle Scheible (Timothée Chalamet), who takes her virginity. Besieged by emotional



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Under the guise of an off-kilter New York romantic comedy, *Keep the Change* does something quite radical in casting actors with autism to play characters with autism, offering a refreshingly honest portrait of a community seldom depicted on the big screen. Rarely has a romcom felt so deep and poignant. Thoroughly charming and quite funny, the film's warmth and candor brings growth and transformation to the characters, and ultimately, to us.

"Keep the Change does something unusual, casting actors on the autism spectrum to play autistic roles. It's sweet and honest, funny and poignant. The story is intensely personal and wholly universal."

— Claire Baiz, *Bright Lights Film Journal*

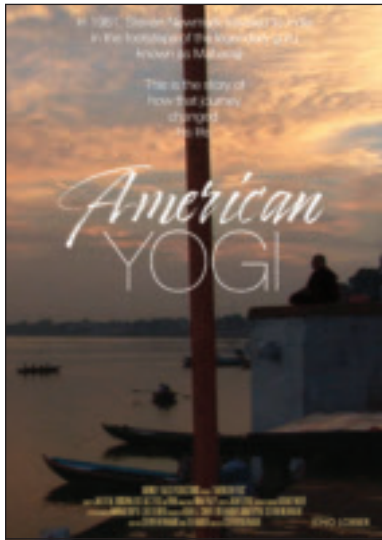


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"Brilliantly and beautifully engaged in the present. A sparkling example of how to document our icons. Allows us to appreciate the reality of the artist in her most candid moments, in her own words, which is way more interesting than what we'd find in yet another standard biopic."

— Daisy Jones, *VICE*

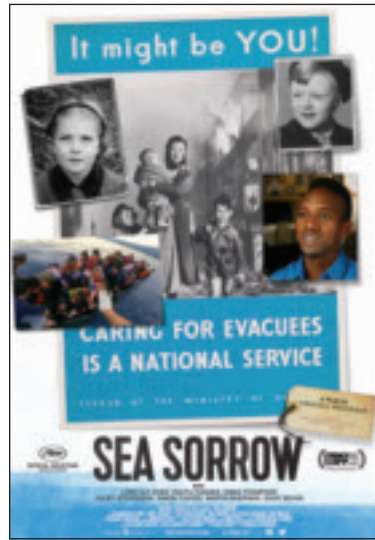


AMERICAN YOGI

American Yogi is a delightful autobiographical documentary about a nice Jewish boy from Miami who travels to San Francisco for the "Summer of Love" and returns a hippie. Later, as a successful but dissatisfied businessman, he discovers Ram Dass's iconic book *Be Here Now* about the Indian Saint Maharajji and decides to travel to India in search of a more meaningful life. There, he comes face to face with the mind-altering world of ancient India and must choose between the miracles he sees and life as he knew it.

"American Yogi will open your heart and just might change your life."

— James Baraz, author of *Awakening Joy*



SEA SORROW

Sea Sorrow marks Vanessa Redgrave's debut as a film director. The meditative piece was filmed in Greece, Lebanon, Italy, Calais, and Sands Films (London) & Twickenham Studios where Vanessa focuses on the present and past history of refugees in Europe. She tells her own story beginning as a two-year-old 'evacuee' from London at the outset of World War Two; later as a student volunteer helping Hungarian refugees; concluding with her return to Lebanon to visit Palestinian three-year olds in a refugee camp nursery school.



WALK WITH ME

With unprecedented access, *Walk With Me* takes us deep inside the world-famous monastery of Zen Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh, and captures the life of a monastic community who have given up all their possessions for one common purpose — to practice the art of mindfulness. Filmed over three years, this visceral film is a meditation on a community determined to develop a deep sense of presence, not just for themselves but for all those they love. As the seasons come and go, the monastics' inner journey is amplified by insights from Thich Nhat Hanh's early journals, narrated by Benedict Cumberbatch.

"It's possible that the 94 minutes spent watching Walk With Me may be a suspension of life and its wonders, but Pugh and Frances have made a documentary which is fascinating enough to be worth the risk."

— Screen International



HITLER'S HOLLYWOOD

Filmmaker Rüdiger Suchsland suggests that the Third Reich was essentially an immersive movie starring the German nation, produced and directed by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. *Hitler's Hollywood* collages key films from the more than 1000 features the Nazis produced from 1933-1945: musicals, melodramas, romances, costume dramas, war films — and when the real war got tough, insanely lavish, over-the-top fantasies. The German folk were portrayed as happy and sporty with lives of exaggerated cheerfulness or, conversely, full of morbid yearning for a death that would serve the Fatherland. Hannah Arendt gives perspective and context: "One of the chief characteristics of modern masses... (is) they do not trust their eyes and ears, but only their imaginations. What convinces masses are not facts, not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the illusion." It's a frightening insight that could just as easily apply to the American political landscape today.

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contradictions and confusion, Lady Bird recklessly jilts her sensitive BFF (Beanie Feldstein) for a richer, more popular classmate (Odeya Rush). In addition to eliciting superb performances from Ronan and Metcalf, filmmaker Gerwig pays attention to artfully delineated supporting characters, such as the insightful counseling by Sister Sarah Joan (Lois Smith) and the clueless ex-football-coach-turned-drama director who diagrams staging with X's and O's on a chalkboard. Full of anguish and sass, this bittersweet, multi-Oscar-nominated film (including Best Picture) is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)

Looking Glass ★1/2

Sony, 103 min., R, DVD: \$17.99, Blu-ray: \$19.99

Apparently inspired by Gay Talese's 2016 nonfiction book *The Voyeur's Motel*—about a motel owner who spied on his guests—filmmaker Tim Hunter's *Looking Glass* centers on Ray (Nicolas Cage) and Maggie (Robin Tunney), a couple guilt-ridden over the recent death of their daughter, who buy a motel in a small desert town to start a new life. While investigating, Ray discovers a crawlspace where he can—via a two-way mirror—observe what happens in one of the rooms: the one a grubby truck driver always wants for his nights with a local hooker, where Ray watches in horror as a murder unfolds. Ray's voyeurism sparks his own lust but also leads to psychological deterioration, especially after a local cop begins asking questions, not only about the disappearance of the recent murder victim but also a previous killing of a young girl at the motel. The mystery of the deaths is finally resolved, albeit only elliptically, but that opaque revelation is secondary to Ray's emotional arc, which is no clearer. Burdened by too many digressions, false leads, and much opacity—and marked by a strangely subdued turn by the usually wild-eyed Cage—this *Glass* doesn't deserve a look. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



Menashe ★★★

A24, 81 min., in Yiddish w/ English subtitles, PG, Blu-ray: \$37.99

Set in Brooklyn's ultra-Orthodox Borough Park neighborhood, this is the story of a Jewish widower named Menashe (Menashe Lustig), who has lost custody of his beloved 10-year-old son, Rieven (Ruben Niborski). According to strict Hasidic custom, the youngster cannot be raised by a single parent, so Menashe's married, financially secure, judgmental brother-in-law Eizik (Yoel Weisshaus) has become Rieven's guardian. Rebellious Menashe is a portly, disheveled klutz who refuses to wear the traditional long black coat and hat. He is the epitome of

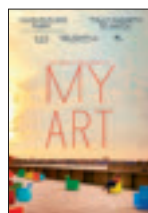


the luckless *schlimazel*. Although the rabbi (Meyer Schwartz) encourages Menashe to re-marry to provide an appropriate home in which to raise Rieven, Menashe doesn't want a new wife. All he wants is his precious son. Working in a small, kosher convenience store, Menashe's earnings are meager, so he will be hard-pressed to host a proper reception in his tiny apartment after the memorial for his late wife, who died a year ago. But that is something he's determined to do. Loosely based on actual events in Yiddish comedian and star Lustig's life, filmmaker Joshua Z. Weinstein's *Menashe* is a sensitive, unconventional character study, offering a sympathetic glimpse into the cultural mores and manners of the self-segregated Hasidic community, punctuated by a subtly melancholy musical score. Recommended. (S. Granger)

My Art ★★1/2

Film Movement, 87 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Noted photographer Laurie Simmons was one of the leads in her daughter Lena Dunham's film *Tiny Furniture* (VL-5/12), and now Dunham returns the favor by taking a role (albeit a small one) in Simmons's debut as writer-director-star of her own movie. Simmons plays Ellie, a New York art teacher who house-sits a friend's upstate mansion, where she plans to employ her time in a creative spurt. Since her medium of choice is to recreate scenes from favorite films in which she assumes roles originally played by Marilyn Monroe (*The Misfits*), Kim Novak (*Bell, Book and Candle*), Ann Blyth (*Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid*), and even Malcolm McDowell (*A Clockwork Orange*)—to name only a few—she has to enlist folks to act along with her. These aides include her gardener Frank (Robert Clohessy), already an amateur thespian, with whom she develops a mildly romantic relationship; John (John Rothman), a lawyer who is also a suitor; and Frank's young assistant Tom (Josh Safdie). For film buffs the recreations are fun to watch (even if it is hardly credible that such elaborate tableaux could be made with a single camera and no crew whatsoever); these scenes are, in fact, by far the best part of *My Art*, which is otherwise poorly structured and limply staged. But Simmons does show the instinct of a true Hollywood director: when in doubt she cuts away to a shot of Ellie's lovable limping dog Bing. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



My Entire High School Sinking Into the Sea ★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 77 min., PG-13, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99

The title of cartoonist and graphic novelist Dash Shaw's animated feature is actually not metaphorical, although the film itself surely is. Dash (voiced by Jason Schwartzman) and

Assaf (Reggie Watts) are geeky high school social outcasts and best friends who write for the school paper, but turbulence erupts in their relationship when the paper's editor Verti (Maya Rudolph) breaks up their partnership. Dash unearths a major cover-up—the school is built on an unstable seaside cliff on a major fault line—right when an earthquake sends it plunging into the ocean. Survival becomes a mix of *The Poseidon Adventure* and *The Towering Inferno* reworked as a video game: our heroes have to ascend the floors of the school—each being another class with its own social hierarchy—to escape the rising waters. Susan Sarandon voices a crusty but maternal old lunch lady who adopts the group and fights like a figure from a 1990s *Mortal Kombat* video game. The film is animated in a purposely scribbly, thick-lined style that looks like cartoons sketched by kids. The story doesn't always transcend the high school clichés it aims to spoof but the shaggy hand-drawn aesthetic and smart-aleck indie humor offers an interesting alternative to the polish of current computer animation. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Nicholas on Holiday

★★★

Icarus, 102 min., in French w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$26.99

The opening credits of this luscious French film evoke the giddiness of a family comedy straight out of 1964. In fact, the story is set in that time of larger-than-life Italian movie producers, family vacations to resorts with complaining grandmas in tow, and expected civility at crowded strips of relaxing beaches. Into this *Mad Men*-era world of the French middle class comes young Nicholas (Mathéo Boissellier), his frustrated mother (Valérie Lemercier), hapless father (Kad Merad), and chronically dissatisfied grandmother (Dominique Lavanant), all taking a summertime holiday. The ocean beckons, food is plentiful, an unexpected reunion occurs with an old schoolmate, and a crew of rascal boys get up to hijinks with Nicholas. What could go wrong? Plenty, it turns out in this divertingly over-the-top farce. Mother is lured into temporary celebrity by a hard-sell producer. Father has to urgently retrieve a hastily-written letter to his boss from an unbreakable post box. Nicholas's parents are assumed to be broke. A hotel guest is showered with sewage. And Nicholas is terrified of a little girl who resembles Wednesday Addams. Sometimes very funny and always pleasurable, *Nicholas on Holiday* is a film with loads of easygoing, sunny charm. Recommended. (T. Keogh)





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Flavorwire

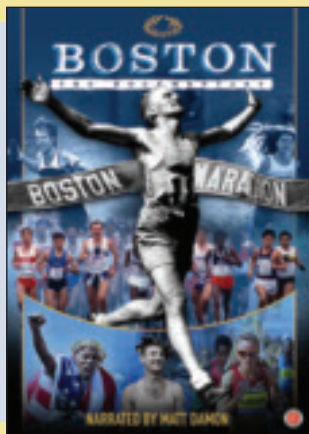


COACH JAKE

82 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917612D
COMING TO HOME VIDEO ON JUNE 5

Martin Jacobson may be the winningest high school soccer coach in New York City public school history, but his greatest victories lie in helping others. Jacobson has won a record 17 NYC Championships since he began coaching soccer at Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Manhattan in 1994, gaining notoriety for flipping the school's bad reputation to a pillar of the athletic community...improving lives as much as he has scoring averages. *Coach Jake* delves into the life and work of high school soccer's most intriguing figure.

"Tells a tale of redemption and fulfillment through the lives of his players...the enthusiastic, passionate, imperfect coach of the Martin Luther King High School soccer team." -Empire of Soccer



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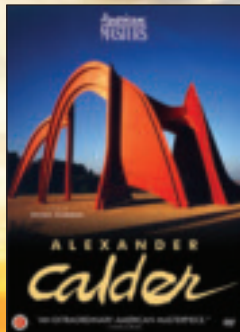
"The long, rich and, more recently, tragic history of the marathon is traced with involving detail and heart in Jon Dunham's inspiring film, narrated by Beantown native Matt Damon." -Los Angeles Times

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Old Stone ★★★

Kino Lorber, 80 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



A barbed satire of urban Chinese culture and bureaucratic indifference, *Old Stone* is a Kafka-esque nightmare presented as a social realist drama. Taxi driver Lao Shi (which translates to both “old stone” and “honest”) tries to do the right thing after a drunken passenger causes his taxi to hit a motorcycle rider: Lao reports the accident to the police and drives the hurt man to the hospital. But he winds up becoming responsible for the medical bills (he failed to follow proper procedures with the insurance company) and loses his savings, his wife, and eventually his moral equilibrium. Canadian-Chinese filmmaker Johnny Ma directs this surreal journey in a realistic manner, with Lao an honorable man in a callous society, although Ma also manufactures complications with inconsistent behavior, such as Lao not telling his wife until she notices their disappearing savings, and his neglecting to give key evidence to the police that could save him. Those inconsistencies aside, actor Chen Gang's performance as Lao is quite affecting as he endures the indifference of the hospital, the insurance company, the police, and the wounded man's family, who are all happy to let him shoulder the burden and want to wash their hands of any responsibility. It's a compelling piece of social commentary, an effective psychological drama, a bitter comedy with a bleak punchline, and an interesting portrait of life in contemporary urban China, where everyone is looking for an angle. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Only the Brave ★★½

Sony, 134 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Another big-budget dramatization of a story “ripped from the headlines,” Joseph Kosinski's *Only the Brave* recreates the tragedy that struck an ace team of Arizona first responders fighting a massive wildfire in 2013. The first—and longest—part of this epic-length movie introduces the men of the Prescott unit, a Type 2 squad charged with assisting hotshot Type 1 units, the latter having primary on-the-ground decision-making authority. Headed up by Eric Marsh (Josh Brolin), the team wins certification as the Granite Mountain Hotshots with the help of Duane Steinbrink (Jeff Bridges), chief of Prescott's Wildland Department. Juxtaposed with the group's training exercises and locker-room camaraderie is the story of a new recruit, Brendan McDonough (Miles Teller), a troubled young man who learns that his girlfriend is pregnant and he is now deter-

mined to turn over a new leaf. This prolonged introduction—which plays like a 90-minute exhibition of testosterone-fueled machismo and domestic family interaction—leads into the big finale, in which the Hotshots are called in to deal with the Yarnell Hill Fire, with 19 becoming trapped when the wind suddenly changes direction and the fire cuts off their escape route. While the climactic action scenes are technically well-executed—without excessive special effects and with appropriate soberness—the long lead-up is often melodramatically old-fashioned, with thinly-drawn characters. A respectful tribute to first responders who put their lives on the line to save others, this is unfortunately more workmanlike than inspired. Still, it should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Paradise ★★★

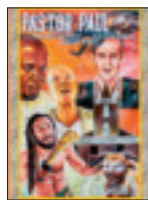
Film Movement, 132 min., in Russian, German, French & Yiddish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Andrei Konchalovsky's Holocaust drama interweaves the stories of three people: Olga (Julia Vysotskaya), an émigré Russian countess and fashion editor who has become a member of the French Resistance and is arrested for sheltering Jewish children; Jules (Philippe Duquesne), a collaborationist police official who meets an unhappy fate after he lets Olga go in hopes of romantic favors; and Helmut (Christian Clauss), an SS officer who renews a brief pre-war encounter he had with Olga when he recognizes her in the concentration camp where he has been assigned to investigate the commandant's possible financial malfeasance. Although the initial segment focuses on Jules, detailing the destruction of his pleasantly bourgeois family life, the story of Helmut and Olga quickly takes center stage. The film's greatest strength lies in the complexity of the characters, with Helmut, for example, portrayed as a firm believer in Nazi ideals who is confronted by the seedy reality of how they are continually being debased in practice. It is weakened, however, by a streak of sentimentality coupled with an odd structure (combining straightforward narrative elements, flashbacks, and excerpts from interviews with the three principals). Despite its flaws, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Pastor Paul ★★½

IndiePix, 67 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



A sporadically funny indie comedy, *Pastor Paul* finds Benjamin (played by the film's director, Jules David Bartkowski)—a pale American redhead and geeky mathematician—visiting Ghana to study the rhythms of

homegrown music. Sticking out in the African community like a vanilla popsicle, Benjamin is solicited to play the ghost Pastor Paul in a Nollywood film inspired by *Hamlet*. Although he tries to beg off, the timorous tourist reluctantly agrees and begins a strange odyssey into the occult. Bullied by the film's fierce director, Benjamin unintentionally enters a deep, hypnotic state, shaking violently and seemingly becoming possessed. What follows are efforts by some to free Benjamin with the aid of a village doctor—who practices occult remedies—while others warn Benjamin to keep away from dark magic. Bartkowski takes a semi-improvisational approach to the action and dialogue, with mixed results, drawing the viewer in one moment and repelling him or her the next. Still, the performances are surprisingly strong, and an extended scene in which Benjamin dances like crazy during an exorcism is something to see. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

The Pirates of Somalia

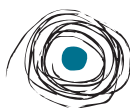
★★

Echo Bridge, 118 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



The Tom Hanks film *Captain Phillips* brought the issue of piracy and hijackings of cargo ships on the Indian Ocean off the Horn of Africa into the public eye. This drama delves deeper into the culture of Somalia and its precarious democracy. Tired of being rejected by leading magazines, wannabe Canadian journalist Jay Bahadur (Evan Peters) relishes a chance encounter with his idol, newspaperman Seymour Tobin (Al Pacino), who urges him to find a crazy, compelling story and pursue it. Having written a term paper on Somalia, Bahadur borrows money from his mother (Melanie Griffith) to travel to the country, where he hopes to meet with its newly-elected president about the complex socioeconomics of this region that was once known as a “land of poets” where people resolved their disputes with language. At the airport, Bahadur is met by translator Abdi (Barkhad Abdi, Oscar-nominated for *Captain Phillips*), who advises him not to accept CBS News's offer of \$1,000 for hostage footage from a ship captured by Somali pirates. So Bahadur schedules interviews with Somali bigwigs, all of whom expect to be bribed with the local drug khat, a chewable narcotic easily purchased in the open marketplace. Since Bahadur's a stoner, he understands this well. Unfortunately, as portrayed by Peters, Bahadur is an annoying wiseass, even though he does eventually become an acknowledged authority on Somalia. Based on the real Jay Bahadur's 2011 nonfiction book *The Pirates of Somalia: Inside Their Hidden World*, this debut feature by filmmaker Bryan Buckley suffers from simplistic subplots and superfluous characters. Optional. (S. Granger)

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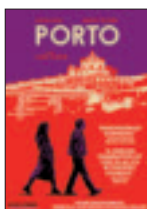
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Porto ★★

Kino Lorber, 76 min., in English, French & Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Porto could almost qualify as a remake of Richard Linklater's plotless 1995 romantic walk-a-thon *Before Sunrise*, the talky twentysomething drama featuring Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy. Here, Hawke's conversationally indulgent character is replaced by the late Anton Yelchin's child-like vulnerability and quiet-guy bohemian brooding as Jake, a privileged 26-year-old drifter floating around Europe who happens to be in Porto when he has an improbable hook-up with Mati (Lucie Lucas), a gorgeous Sorbonne-educated archeologist, in a local cafe. Although Jake is a man of few words, all of his tentative patter directed at Mati seems impossibly cloying; still, thirtysomething Mati, who could have her pick of any man in Europe, chooses to sleep with the tiresome Jake. Of course, Jake falls in love immediately, while behind Mati's façade viewers know that she's just marking time until Mr. Right comes along. The true star of the movie is the cinematography, which beautifully captures Porto's neon-lit nighttime café culture as well as its broader scenic appeal. Unfortunately, the human element is sadly lacking. *Optional.* (M. Sandlin)

The Post ★★★★★

Fox, 116 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99



Steven Spielberg's timely thriller celebrates journalistic independence and the courage of Katharine Graham, a woman who put free speech ahead of friendship and business, battling Richard Nixon's vindictive White House over the publication of what became known as the *Pentagon Papers*. When insecure Kay Graham (Meryl Streep) inherited the *Washington Post* following her husband's suicide, she became the first female publisher of a major American newspaper. In 1971, Defense Department whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg (Matthew Rhys) leaks top secret information to the *New York Times*, specifically a RAND Corporation study revealing a massive cover-up regarding the futility of the Vietnam War. Furious over being scooped, editor Ben Bradlee (Tom Hanks) seizes an opportunity to elevate the *Post's* position when one of his reporters obtains a copy of the controversial study. But Bradlee and his staff have only one day to sort out relevant information that the *Times* has had for months. Meanwhile, patrician Graham is taking her family's cash-poor company public, and she knows that potential investors might bolt due to the possibility of a

"catastrophic occurrence," since she could be arrested and imprisoned for treason. Plus, Graham has personal reservations, tied to her longtime bond with Defense Secretary Robert McNamara (Bruce Greenwood) from a time when she and Bradlee socialized with the Kennedys. Upon publication of the *Pentagon Papers*, Nixon's aides seek a court injunction, sparking a First Amendment battle that winds up in the Supreme Court. Streep and Hanks deliver powerhouse performances in this timely Best Picture-nominated film that reminds all Americans of the clear and present threat to democracy posed by an assault on the freedom of the press. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)

Proud Mary ★★

Sony, 89 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



In the spirit of '70s blaxploitation films—ethnic action thrillers that were originally aimed at urban audiences, but found wider appeal—*Proud Mary* stars Taraji P. Henson in the title role as a ruthless African American assassin who feels guilty about one particular hit for the Boston mob. After killing his father, Mary actually does little to keep orphaned Danny (Jahi Di'Allo Winston) out of trouble—until she discovers him unconscious in an alley, and then goes after the culprits. That search involves Mary's boss Benny (Danny Glover), Benny's feckless son Tom (Billy Brown) and, above all, Mary's desire to leave behind her badass lifestyle. Working from a simplistic script, director Babak Najafi's film suffers from poor pacing and lighting that is either too bright or too dark. On a side note: singer/songwriter John Fogerty is adamant that his 1969 hit song with Creedence Clearwater Revival and the title character have nothing in common, writing on Facebook: "I wrote the song about a mythical riverboat, cruising on a mythical river, in a mythical time.... It was obviously a metaphor about leaving painful, stressful things behind for a more tranquil and meaningful life. Far from a story about killing people for money." A disappointing thriller, this is an optional purchase at best. (S. Granger)

Sami Blood ★★

MVD Visual, 109 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Writer-director Amanda Kernell's *Sami Blood* is an understated but subtly powerful look at life in the Swedish rural Lapland of the 1930s, in particular the struggles of indigenous Sami people living agrarian lives. The film centers on precocious adolescent Elle Marja (Lene Cecilia Sparrok), who takes no pride

in her Lapp heritage, seeing it as nothing but a magnet for racial insults, dirty looks, and sometimes violent attacks from the local white populace. Elle, who proves to be highly intelligent and ambitious, dreams of casting off the stifling yoke of tradition and traveling to the nearest city, Uppsala, to start a new life. One night at a local dance, she meets a wealthy Uppsalan boy named Niklas (Julius Fleischanderl), who invites her to visit him someday. Soon, Elle gets up the gumption to jump on a train and show up at his doorstep unannounced, and before long she has hit the guy up for enough money to buy her way into a posh girls' school. Elle often proves to be a coarse and confounding character, but there is more nuance here than simply the story of an indigenous girl overcoming prejudice to make good: once Elle finally gets to the promised land, she's surprised that her sophisticated schoolmates have an anthropological interest in her ethnicity that is almost as discomfiting as the overt hatred she experienced back home. *Recommended.* (M. Sandlin)

Santoalla ★★

Oscilloscope, 82 min., in Gallegan & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



A real-life mystery lies at the center of this documentary about idealistic Dutch couple Martin and Margo Verfondern, modern day hippies who left their home in Amsterdam in the 1990s to live off the land in their own Eden in the mountains of Northern Spain. The locale was chosen for its isolation, wild beauty, and thriving forests, and this urban couple takes to farming with a passion. The Rodriguez family, their only neighbors, have been working their land for generations and now the two sons tend the fields for their elderly parents. All seem to co-exist well enough but keep to themselves. Then Martin disappears in 2010 and European immigrant Margo, who is unwilling to leave, becomes deeply suspicious of her Spanish neighbors. Using interviews and archival video footage (Martin started documenting his neighbors as tensions built), filmmakers Andrew Becker and Daniel Mehrer use the existential mystery here as a frame to examine how cultural mistrust is transformed into outright conflict (the mystery is ultimately solved in the final minutes, recasting the claims of its subjects in a new light). This is the kind of documentary that is less about the ostensible subject matter (what happened to Martin) and more about telling a unique story with many strands: the idealism of a couple embracing an old way of life, the failing economies of small villages, the mistrust of outsiders, and the complications of human nature. Beautifully shot and quite compelling, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



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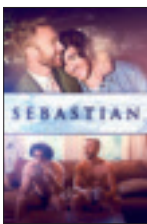
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Sebastian ★★

Wolfe, 84 min., not rated,
DVD: \$26.99

If you thought you had seen the last of that clichéd romantic ending in which someone runs through an airport to prevent a lover from boarding a plane that will separate them forever, think again. The only difference in this limp *Brief Encounter* re-tread from writer-director-star James Fanizza is that the couple is gay. Fanizza plays Alex, a Toronto artist whose boyfriend Nelson (Guifré Bantjes-Rafols) is going off to a conference. Before departing, Nelson introduces Alex to his cousin Sebastian (Alex House), who is visiting from Argentina for a week. Big mistake: Alex and Sebastian are quickly smitten with one another, gamboling through the city's sights and enjoying nights snuggling in bed. When Nelson returns, he is understandably miffed with both, but the central issue is whether the new relationship will stick or Sebastian will go back home alone. *Sebastian* plays like a sincere attempt to depict a gay romance, and House has a smoldering handsome presence, but Fanizza makes for a lightweight protagonist. And while fans might be interested in seeing Brian McCook, who appears here both in his everyday duds and his drag stage persona of "Katya," he seems distinctly uncomfortable before the camera. Optional. (F. Swietek)



Song of Granite

★★★1/2

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

Combining evocative dramatic recreations, archival footage, interview excerpts, and musical performances, filmmaker Pat Collins's canny blend of narrative and documentary paints a moving, mysterious portrait of Irish sean nós singer Joe Heaney (1919-1984). Shot in starkly beautiful black-and-white that gives everything a luminous but gritty glow, the film begins by depicting Heaney's hardscrabble boyhood in the rocky landscape of Ireland's western coast while offering a description, as well as examples, of the traditional style of solo singing that he shyly mastered. The narrative then segues into Heaney's middle-age years, as he leaves the home country for Scotland, England, and America, where his ordinary and often ragged existence (sometimes as a doorman) is mixed with public performances—including one at the Newport Folk Festival—that earn him admiration and a degree of recognition. Finally, viewers see him as a crotchety old man looking back on his life with longing for his roots. While this outline suggests orderliness, *Song of Granite* is a defiantly



impressionistic work, shuffling timeframes and often simply stopping for a musical interlude—either by Heaney in archival footage, or by one of the three actors (Colm Seoighe, Mícheál Ó'Chonfhaola, Macdara Ó Fátharta) playing him at various ages, or by someone else. By avoiding convention and cliché, *Song of Granite* becomes not merely a partial biography of Heaney but also a kind of cinematic poem celebrating ancient Irish culture. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Sunstroke ★★1/2

Icarus, 180 min., in Russian
w/English subtitles, not rated,
DVD: \$26.99

With its epic David Lean-like aspirations, *Sunstroke* is clearly meant to be Russian heavyweight director Nikita Mikhalkov's answer to *Dr. Zhivago* or *Lawrence of Arabia*. However, clocking in at three hours, this admittedly ambitious and beautifully lensed story is too thin to prop up such a grand cinematic scheme. Set in 1920 in the wake of Tsarist Russia's fall to the Bolsheviks, *Sunstroke* initially centers on a group of stupefied White Russian Army officers surrendering en masse to the victorious Red Army, handing over their epaulettes and swallowing their imperialist pride in a haze of confusion and disbelief that they are capitulating to workers and peasants. These beleaguered soldiers have been herded into a processing camp, and are supposedly being readied to be shipped out of the country into retirement, although such an easy passage for these men seems dubious from the get-go. Eventually, one lieutenant's story is singled out and told in alternating flashbacks and flash-forwards, giving viewers a glimpse of 1907 Russia, a place and time far more comfortable for the aristocracy. Tsarist Russia is depicted as a gilded, peaceful heaven on earth for those in the upper reaches of the class structure, where the lieutenant, who is engaged, has a bittersweet *Brief Encounter*-like fling with a married woman. Although Mikhalkov invests his characters with real humanity and vision, the director never delivers on the film's initial epic promise. A strong optional purchase. (M. Sandlin)

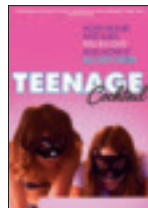


and she mopes about until she meets Jules (Fabianne Therese), an aspiring dancer. Jules teaches her a few moves, and even though Annie lacks her grace, the two become fast friends. Jules dreams of moving to New York to join a dance company; her biggest fear is that she'll remain in their sleepy California town, teaching dance classes until she dies. Jules introduces Annie to marijuana, gives her a homemade tattoo, and encourages her crush. Jules also persuades Annie to work as a webcam girl, where they earn money by making out on camera, attracting a particularly ardent fan named Frank (Pat Healy), an unhappily married father. When the school gets wind of Annie and Jules's illicit activities, the girls decide to split town. First, they just need a quick influx of cash, so they turn to Frank, who isn't quite what he appears to be. After a night of paid passion, they escalate to extortion. Unfortunately, *Teenage Cocktail* then shifts into thriller territory, which—though telegraphed from the opening sequence—feels less carefully considered than the rest of the film. Fortunately, Bloom and Therese, who have a very believable chemistry, weather the tonal shifts just fine. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennesy)

Thelma ★★★

Passion River, 117 min., in
Norwegian w/English subtitles,
not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Imagine Brian De Palma's lurid, over-the-top adaptation of Stephen King's *Carrie* recast in a cool, cerebral Scandinavian style and you will have some idea of what Norwegian writer-director Joachim Trier's film is like. *Thelma* (Eili Harboe) is a lonely college freshman whose doctor father (Henrik Rafaelsen) and wheelchair-bound mother (Ellen Dorrit Petersen) keep close tabs on her by phone. The couple have raised their daughter in a strict Christian environment, and are concerned she might stray from the path of righteousness—a fear that appears to be justified when she becomes physically attracted to classmate Anja (Kaya Wilkins), a beautiful extrovert who returns her interest and introduces her to a coterie of secular friends. *Thelma* begins suffering from violent seizures that she initially assumes are epileptic, but a battery of medical tests prove inconclusive and she later learns that she has telekinetic powers. And she exhibited them with such tragic results in her childhood that her father actually considered killing her. Now, he might still decide to take strong action. Along the way, Trier serves up a series of chilling set-pieces—an opening flashback on a frozen lake, a frightening scene in a swimming pool, an eerie episode at an opera house, etc.—in this film that (like *Carrie*) is not terribly strong on logic, but in its chilly Nordic way creates an atmosphere that is persistently, and pleasurably, unsettling. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Teenage Cocktail ★★1/2

MPI, 89 min., not rated, DVD:
\$14.99

John Carchietta's directorial debut invests a familiar story with a fresh quality—at least until the somewhat predictable dénouement—as a lost teenager falls under the sway of a more glamorous peer. Annie (Nichole Bloom) is an awkward misfit who hates high school, and it hates her back. Her family (Michelle Borth and Joshua Leonard play Annie's cooler-than-average parents) is new to town,

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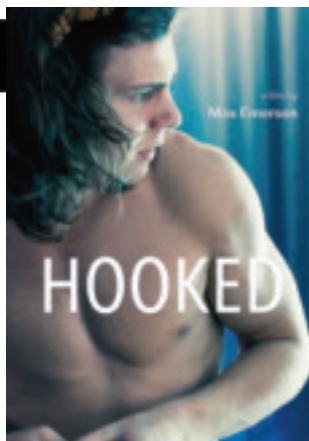
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Thirsty ★★★

Breaking Glass, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

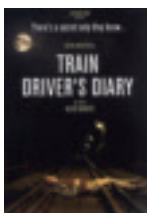
This musical dramedy stars Scott Townsend as himself, a real-life Cher impersonator whose stage name is Thirsty Burlington. Serving up a stylish origin story, *Thirsty* begins on a note of fantasy, introducing Townsend as a little girl with superpowers—delightful snapshot moments that alternate with scenes of a less assertive, young male Scott trying his best to look sexually ambiguous. At different stages of growing up, Townsend (played by multiple actors) struggles with gender identity issues—not so much his own feelings, but rather those of family members and others. Living with his supportive but substance-abusing mother, Townsend has a lot of other conflicts on his plate, contributing to isolation. All of that changes when Townsend finds himself in demand as a full-on drag act doing a pretty good impression of Cher. Late director Margo Pelletier sprinkles her light-operatic take on Townsend's story with playful, sudden shifts to dance numbers and group singing, at times evoking *West Side Story* and other musical classics, all in infectious good fun. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Train Driver's Diary ★★★

Passion River, 96 min., in Serbian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$59.99

A mordant feature that was Serbia's submission for the 2016 Academy Awards, filmmaker Milos Radovic's tragicomedy centers on people being run over in great numbers by trains. Gore is never shown explicitly, but the gruesome topic obsesses the railway protagonists. Ilija (Lazar Ristovski) is an old engineer, accepting with resigned regret the many people killed by locomotives that he manned (including an entire gypsy troupe). He adopts an abandoned boy who tried to kill himself by lying on the tracks, but the now young-adult Sima (Petar Kora) defies the old man's wishes, becoming an apprentice train driver himself. Even so, Sima is an anxious youth, petrified of the time when he will himself run over his first casualty. How he loses his "virginity" (in both senses) propels the somewhat slack but consistently wry and witty narrative. Recommended. (C. Cassady)



Winchester ★★

Lionsgate, 100 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, May 1

Supposedly "inspired by actual events," this Gothic ghost story revolves around widowed Sarah Lockwood Winchester (Helen Mirren), inheritor of a vast fortune from her husband, whose family founded Winchester

Repeating Arms. From 1864 until her death in 1922, Sarah supervised construction of an elaborate estate in San Jose, CA, a project reputedly instigated by a New England seer to delay her own demise and, perhaps, calm the spirits of those killed by Winchester rifles. Deeply superstitious, Sarah went each night to her séance room where spirits guided her to design new spaces: doors leading to sheer drops and other architectural oddities. Sarah's construction crew adored her; many were paid triple wages to insure their loyalty. As part of a power struggle within the Winchester company, reclusive Sarah agreed to a psychiatric assessment that was administered by laudanum-addicted Dr. Eric Price (Jason Clarke), who was bribed to declare her mentally unfit. Sketchily written and directed by Australian twin brothers Michael and Peter Spierig, *Winchester* is a cinematic misfire, utterly lacking in tension and suspense. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)



The Woman Who Left

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 228 min., in Filipino w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Running a bit under four hours, Lav Diaz's new film—inspired by the same Tolstoy short story as Stephen King's novella "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption" (collected in 1982's *Different Seasons*)—won the Golden Lion award at the 2016 Venice Film Festival. The protagonist is Horacia (Charo Santos), who is released in 1997 from a Filipino women's prison after the actual perpetrator of the murder she was convicted for decades earlier—a fellow inmate and her best friend—confesses to the crime. Horacia also learns that the man who framed her was Rodrigo, a former lover who was enraged when she married someone else. But Horacia's return home is joyless, since her husband has died, her son has gone missing, her daughter has moved away, and the country is reeling from endemic violence and poverty. On the one hand, she is determined to avenge Rodrigo's betrayal, plotting the murder of this wealthy, powerful man. On the other, she becomes on the outside what she was behind bars—a helpful and comforting presence to those who are even less fortunate than she, most notably a young transgender prostitute (John Lloyd Cruz) who is brutalized by local thugs and aims to repay her kindness. The black-and-white images are often stunning and Santos gives an impressive performance, but glacial pacing also turns this into an overly static quasi-epic of misery and rebirth, when it could have been more effective as



a straightforward two-hour drama. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Young Karl Marx

★★★1/2

Passion River, 118 min., in German, English & French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmaker Raoul Peck's handsomely mounted bio-pic of the founder of Communism (more like a dual biography of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels) might remind some of Warren Beatty's 1981 epic *Reds*—if Beatty's film had dwelt at length on committee meetings of guys debating the philosophy of Hegel. In the 1840s, against a background of harsh industrial exploitation, young Marx (August Diehl) is blissfully married to wife Jenny (Vicky Krieps), who has forsaken an aristocratic family for life with the impoverished revolutionary. Engels (Stefan Konarske) remains a factotum for his hated factory-owner father, even as he and Marx work on pamphlets, letters, rallies, and what will become *The Communist Manifesto*. And there are meetings, all over Europe. Mild doubts about Marxism's drawbacks, such as inflexible political dogma and personality cults, are voiced by secondary characters. Peck's sympathies are obvious—a closing montage references future depressions and Wall Street crashes up to the present—but this is an uneven bio-pic. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassady)



Classic Films

An Actor's Revenge

★★★1/2

Criterion, 113 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Kon Ichikawa's 1963 remake of a 1930s melodrama reinvigorates a creaky old revenge tale using an almost experimental approach. *An Actor's Revenge* was produced to celebrate the 300th film of actor Kazuo Hasegawa, who not only starred in the original production, but also plays the same two roles here: kabuki star Yuki, a revered *onnagata* (a female impersonator) in an acclaimed Osaka kabuki troupe, and the thief Yamitaro. Yuki has come to Edo (Tokyo) to take revenge on the three men—now rich and powerful—who drove his parents to suicide. His fame grants him access to their world, where—being constantly in character offstage as well as onstage—he is able to manipulate them even as they attempt to woo him (men and women both fall for Yuki). Thieves, food riots, seduction, and innocents are all part of the fallout. Although set in the 1830s, Ichikawa directs with a dynamic, highly stylized ap-



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Street Date: **May 22, 2017** | SRP: **\$24.99**
DVD #: 3717-2 | UPC: 7 12267 37172 3
98 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In French with English subtitles

THE WORKSHOP

From the director of The Class

Antoine attends a summer writing workshop in which a few young people have been selected to write a crime thriller with the help of Olivia, a famous novelist. The creative process will recall the town's industrial past, a form of nostalgia to which Antoine feels indifferent. More concerned with the fears of the modern world, the young man soon clashes with the group and Olivia, who seems at the same time alarmed and captivated by Antoine's violence.

Street date: **Jun 19, 2018** | SRP: **\$27.99**
DVD #: 3719-2 | UPC: 7 12267 37192 1
108 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In Spanish with English subtitles



HAVE A NICE DAY

A gritty Chinese anime in the style of Quentin Tarantino

An official selection at the Berlin International Film Festival, the animated neo-noir *HAVE A NICE DAY* follows interweaving storylines that lead an eccentric cast of characters to a bloody climax over one bag of stolen money.

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Street date: **Jun 5, 2018** | SRP: **\$24.99**
DVD #: 3805-2 | UPC: 7 12267 38052 7
92 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In Spanish with English subtitles



proach, melding theatrical performances and expressionistic images with a script that leaps forward with rapid-fire exposition and break-neck momentum. It can be hard to follow the intricacies of the plot but Ichikawa puts the characters in the foreground and he films entirely in the studio to create distinctive images that sometimes seem to be playing out on a stylized kabuki stage and at other times in a heightened cinematic space, all set to an eclectic modern score. *An Actor's Revenge* is gorgeous, compelling, and constantly surprising. Ichikawa never made another film like it. Extras include a 1999 interview with the director and a new interview with film historian Tony Rayns. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Age of Innocence

★★★1/2

Criterion, 138 min., PG, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95

The Age of Innocence is not the only costume drama or period piece made by Martin Scorsese, but it is his only classic literature adaptation and it shows a different side of this filmmaker who is known for edgy violence and cinematic energy. Adapted from Edith Wharton's 1920 novel and set in 19th-century New York City, this 1993 film stars Daniel Day-Lewis as Newland Archer, a respected lawyer and respectable member of elite society who is engaged to the beautiful young May (Winona Ryder) but falls in love with her cousin, the worldly Countess Ellen Olenska (Michelle Pfeiffer). Some have suggested that the film's presentation of the ruthless rules of conduct of high society serves as a companion to the more volatile and physical codes of Scorsese's gangster movies. That may be true, but here the director adopts a subtle, nuanced style to the dialogue, where conversation is akin to verbal dueling over what characters mean but never actually say. Along the way, Scorsese pays tribute to filmmakers Max Ophüls and Luchino Visconti, and to William Wyler's *The Heiress* and Orson Welles's *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Arguably Scorsese's most overlooked masterpiece, one hopes that the Criterion stamp of approval will help audiences discover it anew. Extras include new interviews with Scorsese, screenwriter Jay Cocks, production designer Dante Ferreri, and costume designer Gabriella Pescucci, as well as an archival behind-the-scenes featurette, and a booklet. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Baal

Criterion, 84 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

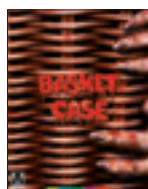
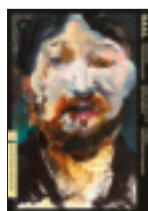
Rainer Werner Fassbinder had yet to make his name as a filmmaker when he was cast in the leading role of Volker Schlöndorff's 1970 adaptation of Bertold Brecht's 1918

first play. Fassbinder is the vulgar, sadistic Baal, a hedonistic working-class poet who insults his patrons with anti-authoritarian glee and is (almost absurdly) irresistible to women, who endure his humiliations until he heartlessly dumps them. Baal's romantic poetry suggests a sensitive soul but he behaves like a monstrous man-child with voracious appetites and a sadistic streak, destroying the lives of everyone he touches, including a fellow poet (Sigi Graue) who can't seem to break away from the mysteriously charismatic Baal. Schlöndorff was one of the founders of the New German Cinema and this film, made for German TV on a tiny budget, is his most experimental. The actors were cast from Munich's experimental theater world, including many members of Fassbinder's Antitheater troupe (Hanna Schygulla, Günther Kaufmann, and Irm Hermann). *Baal* is an unpleasant film by design—shot with a jittery handheld camera on 16mm—but it is an interesting time capsule that captures Fassbinder as a young actor, along with the rebellious impulses of the new generation of German filmmakers. Unavailable for decades and only recently revived and restored, *Baal* bows on home video in a Criterion special edition with extras including new and archival interviews with filmmaker Schlöndorff, costar Margarethe von Trotta, and film historian Eric Rentschler, as well as a conversation between Ethan Hawke and playwright Jonathan Marc Sherman, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Basket Case

Arrow, 91 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$39.99

The 1982 debut feature of filmmaker Frank Henenlotter is a gruesome cult indie-horror drama of brotherly love and righteous vengeance shot on location in the seedier sections of New York City. Kevin Van Hentenryck stars in this low-budget exercise in grotesquery and gore as Duane, the "normal" brother sent by his deformed, formerly-conjoined twin Belial to take revenge on the doctors who separated the two and left the blobby, grotesquely misshapen sibling to die. Henenlotter was reared on the cheap horror films of Herschell Gordon Lewis and other independent exploitation directors of the 1960s and '70s, and *Basket Case* is in many ways his tribute to the grindhouse horror films that he loves, a cheapie monster movie with creative twists and DIY special effects that are created with a mix of puppets, models, and stop-motion animation. Most of the effects shrewdly take place just offscreen, with spurts of blood and a gnarly hand dragging the character out of view to feed our imaginations. Henenlotter



adopts a loving B-movie attitude and brings a genuine sense of tragedy to the character of the snaggle-toothed Belial in this cult classic that offers an inspired twist on the Cain and Abel story. Newly remastered for its Blu-ray debut, this special edition features a wealth of extras, including new and archival audio commentaries with Henenlotter, cast and crew interviews, behind-the-scenes featurettes, bonus short films, image galleries, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Belle Epoque

Olive, 109 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Winner of the 1994 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, the Spanish comedy *Belle Epoque* is a sexy, romantic romp about an army deserter in 1931 Spain who takes refuge with an aging artist and his four beautiful daughters in a remote country villa. As the monarchy falls and the Spanish Civil War erupts, this farm becomes a refuge, an idyllic escape from the violence, offering brief peace for the handsome young soldier (Jorge Sanz), who is as enchanted by the daughters as they are with him. It's hard to tell just who is seducing who as he ends up sleeping with each woman in turn: the widow (Miriam Diaz-Aroca), the flirt (Maribel Verdu), the tomboy (Ariadna Gil, who seduces him only after he puts on a dress for a costume party), and the youngest sister (Penelope Cruz), an innocent virgin who desperately wants to indulge in the pleasures that her sisters have already experienced. Much sweeter than this description makes it sound, director Fernando Trueba's *Belle Epoque* has the sun-dappled beauty of an Impressionist painting, and the mix of comic innocence and romantic delight in this temporary Eden is poignantly set against the coming horrors. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Covered Wagon

★★★

Kino Lorber, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

The first Western epic, made in 1923, follows a wagon train from Westport Landing (soon to become Kansas City) to Oregon. J. Warren Kerrigan is our hero, playing the handsome and experienced Will Banion, who joins the massive Wingate wagon train and falls for the expedition leader's daughter, Molly (Lois Wilson). Naturally, there's a romantic triangle—she's engaged to Sam Woodhull (Alan Hale), who immediately smears Will's reputation and has him ejected from the wagon train—that plays out over the episodic odyssey across the unsettled West, circa 1848. The wagon train endures a dangerous river crossing, an Indian attack, near-starvation, a buffalo hunt,





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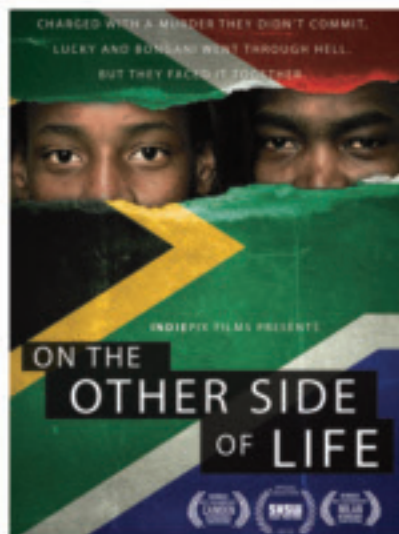
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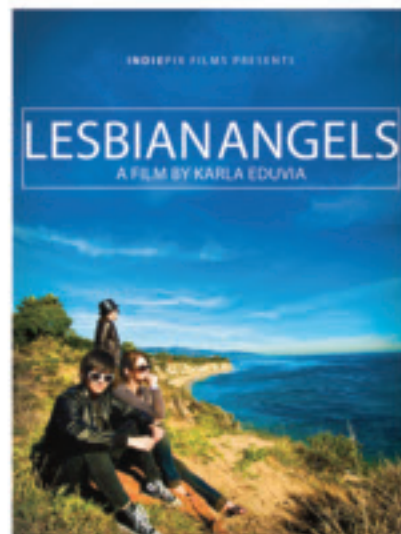
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a funeral, a birth, and the temptation of the California Gold Rush during the journey. The film also calls out to real-life historical figures: a message carved in a bison skull from Brigham Young, a reference to a lawyer named Abraham Lincoln, and appearances by frontier trader Jim Bridger and scout Kit Carson. Shot in location in Utah, this is a grandly mounted production—featuring authentic wagons and hundreds of horses—that aims to be an accurate portrayal of life on the trail. Director James Cruze and cinematographer Karl Brown (the pioneering cameraman who photographed some of D.W. Griffith's greatest films), give the story an epic visual scope and it became one of the top grossing films of the decade as well as a major influence on the Western genre. Debuting on home video with an archival score by Gaylord Carter playing the Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ, extras include audio commentary by film historian Toby Roan, the 1932 short spoof "The Pie-Covered Wagon" featuring a pre-fame Shirley Temple, and a booklet with an essay by film scholar Matt Hauske. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

The Dumb Girl of Portici

★★★

Milestone/Oscilloscope, 112 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

The first blockbuster helmed by a woman director in Hollywood, Lois Weber's 1916 film *The Dumb Girl of Portici* (based on the opera by Daniel Auber) features legendary ballerina Anna Pavlova in her only feature film performance. Pavlova is a natural in the role of the innocent, mute peasant girl living in an Italian fishing village that is taxed by a corrupt aristocracy into a state of starvation and poverty. She moves with a grace and energy that sets her apart from the other silent movie actors in the cast, who deliver conventional performances and wear their characters like a costume. The personality of Pavlova's peasant girl Fenella radiates from within and powers her character. Future filmmaker Rupert Julian (who directed Lon Chaney in the original *The Phantom of the Opera*) plays Fenella's brother, a fisherman who leads a peasant revolt against the oppressive rule of the nobility. Weber, famed for the intimacy and seriousness of her dramas, delivers an epic production with vast sets, lavish portraits of aristocratic decadence, and fiery mobs roused into revolt, yet she still keeps the story centered on Pavlova's innocent free spirit who is under threat from the lust and greed of the rich. It makes an instructive contrast to the epics that D.W. Griffith was filming at the same time and reveals a talent that has been unfairly overlooked for decades. Long unavailable in any form, this landmark film makes its home video debut, newly restored with a musical score by John



Sweeney. A bonus disc features the 52-minute Pavlova documentary *The Immortal Swan* (1935), as well as archival newsreel and home movie footage of Pavlova. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

A Fistful of Dynamite

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 157 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Also known as *Duck, You Sucker*, Sergio Leone's 1971 Western stars James Coburn as John, an IRA revolutionary with a penchant for dynamite who fled Ireland for Mexico, and Rod Steiger as Juan, a Mexican bandit who targets the rich and pompous. When Juan crosses paths with the explosive-tossing John, the two men start off as adversaries in a game of one-upmanship but eventually become partners and finally friends. Juan has no illusions about the Mexican revolution and is simply out for gold. John, driven by guilt and betrayal, is committed to the revolution and he drags Juan into his mission. Coburn plays the role as a tormented hero under the mask of a smile, while Steiger adopts an exaggerated Mexican accent but his physical performance is impressive as he transforms from shuffling peasant to bandito patriarch to bank robber to unlikely hero of the revolution. Ultimately, Leone's epic of the Mexican revolution is a portrait in disillusion featuring one of the most eccentric and touching friendships in the director's oeuvre. *A Fistful of Dynamite* was a financial flop and is not as well-regarded as his most famous movies, but it remains an interesting and engaging film about commitment, idealism, loyalty, and betrayal in the midst of revolution. Extras include audio commentary tracks by filmmaker Alex Cox and film historian Christopher Frayling, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. A strong optional purchase. (S. *Axmaker*)



Goodbye Again

★★★1/2 Warner, 66 min., not rated, DVD: \$21.99

Warren William, a silver fox of 1930s cinema, was adept at playing cads, gentlemen, romantics, suave seducers, ruthless businessmen, and fun-loving society gents. The 1933 comedy *Goodbye Again* showcases his spirited side and comic charm. William plays bestselling romance novelist Kenneth Bixby, who is in the midst of a cross-country promotional tour for his latest book when an old flame (Genevieve Tobin) appears and pledges to leave her husband to renew their affair. Kenneth doesn't even remember her but plays along, ostensibly to shake the woman out of her delusion (she's convinced he based his latest heroine on her), much to the frustration of his devoted sec-



retary and Girl Friday Anne (Joan Blondell), who tries to protect Kenneth from his own impulsive decisions and from the woman's worried family. Directed with snappy energy by Michael Curtiz, it's a slight but entertaining pre-Code farce filled with some suggestive material as the characters careen through train cars and hotel rooms in hot pursuit of compromising situations. William is quite charming and very entertaining as a reckless romantic who isn't as smart as he thinks he is but is constantly hatching new plans with a big grin. And he has great chemistry with Blondell, who is torn between jealousy and her protective instincts. *Goodbye Again* is no lost classic but it is good fun for fans of screwball comedy and pre-Code attitude. A strong optional purchase. (S. *Axmaker*)

The Hero

★★★ Criterion, 117 min., in Bengali w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Satyajit Ray made his films outside of the traditional Bengali film industry, which produced popular melodramas, adventures, and family dramas, but for 1966's *The Hero* he cast the biggest Bengali movie star of the day in the title role. Uttam Kumar plays Arindam Mukherjee, a matinee idol whose new movie is failing at the box office. To distract himself, he impulsively takes an overnight train to accept an award in Delhi and, much to his own surprise, reflects back on his life, career, and anxieties in frank terms with a journalist (Sharmila Tagore) he meets while riding. Along with the flashbacks to his time as a poor theater actor and his experience making his first film opposite a veteran star, Ray serves up the stories of other passengers, including an ad executive who isn't above using his beautiful young wife to land a big client. Kumar plays his role with confidence and modesty, a man aware of the importance of fans for his career and generous in all his interactions, but one who also acknowledges the ego and vulnerabilities of movie stars. While not as famous as Ray's more celebrated films, it is a contemplative and nuanced drama about an actor who in real life can't live up to the uncomplicated heroes that he plays onscreen. Debuting on home video in a newly restored edition, extras include a 2008 interview with Tagore, a new interview with film scholar and Ray expert Meheli Sen, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)



Images

★★★1/2 Arrow, 101 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$39.99

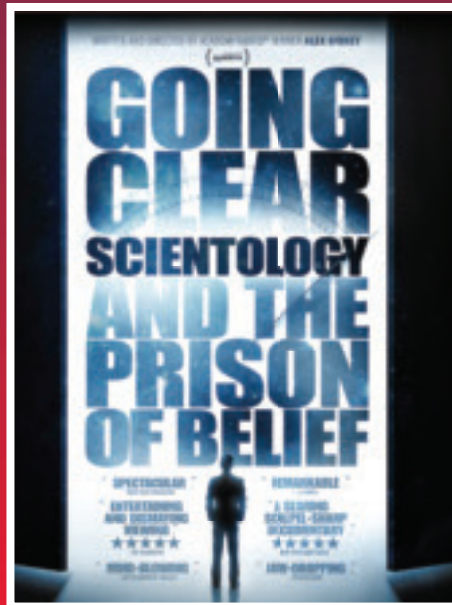
Susannah York won the Best Actress award at Cannes for her performance as a deeply schizophrenic woman who can't sort out her hallucinations from real life in Robert Altman's richly textured 1972 psychological thriller. Cathryn (York) and her husband

"Pure genius"
Rolling Stone



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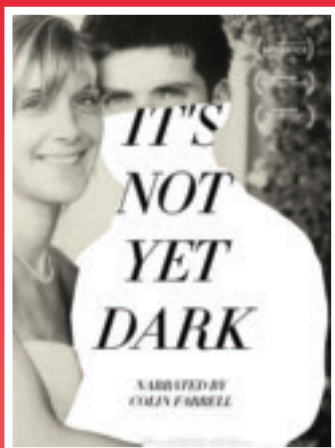


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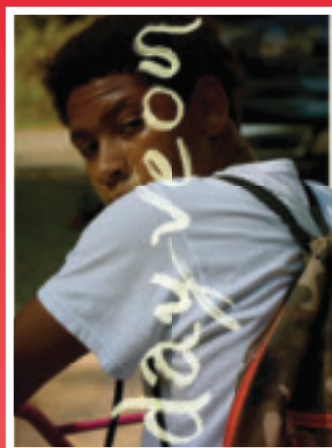
"Inspiring"
The Hollywood Reporter



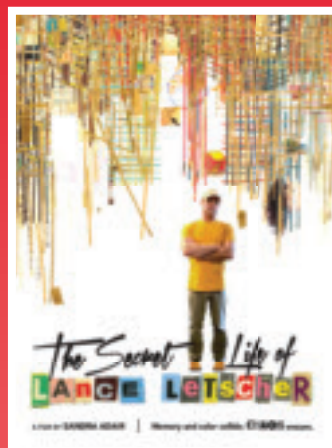
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Hugh (Altman regular René Auberjonois) retreat from the city to their country home in the rolling hills of Ireland for a rest with a family friend (Hugh Millais)—who is also one of Cathryn's former lovers—and his daughter. When confronted by another dead lover (Marcel Bozzuffi), she shoots him with a shotgun, which gives her the idea of ridding herself of her other visions by killing them. This is one of Altman's most intimate films, made in an unusually reserved, removed style that is very different from his bustling ensemble dramas and comedies, and it is one of his most demanding. Like his *3 Women*, the narrative explores anxiety, madness, and sexual desire in women who are living in a world of aggressive masculinity, but this is actually more of a psychological puzzle, a complex intertwining of realities that seem equally real to both Cathryn and to viewers. *Images* is filmed on location in Ireland by the legendary Vilmos Zsigmond in cool colors and it is accompanied by a discordant John Williams score that adds to the uneasy atmosphere. Although one of Altman's least well-known films, it is also one of his richest and most personal, and it deserves rediscovery. Bowing on Blu-ray in a newly restored edition, extras include audio commentaries (an archival scene-select one by Altman, and a new track by critics Sam Deighan and Kat Ellinger), and new and archival interviews. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)



Jamón Jamón ★★

Olive, 95 min., in Spanish w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

When it was first released, Spanish filmmaker Bigas Lunas's 1992 absurdist drama-comedy seemed to belong in the same category of melodramatic farce and post-Franco sexual liberation as the popular arthouse works of Pedro Almodóvar. But today, *Jamón Jamón*—while still often enjoyable—is more obviously lacking in the kind of sophisticated, self-aware black comedy that Almodóvar mastered in the 1980s. A dark, tongue-in-cheek tale of intertwined betrayal, the lure of bad boys on motorcycles, and forbidden fruit on opposite sides of a class divide, the film stars Penelope Cruz as Silvia, a lovely worker in an underwear factory in a small Spanish town. The pregnant Silvia is secretly engaged to the son (Jordi Mollá) of the factory's rich owner, Conchita (Stefania Sandrelli), who is horrified that her boy has taken up with the daughter of a prostitute (Carmen Galiena). Conchita conspires to derail her son's love for Silvia by throwing Raul (Javier Bardem), a beastly seducer, at Silvia. Raw desires end up tearing apart everyone's hopes and expectations, leading to tragic



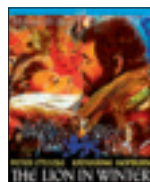
(yet also amusing) consequences. But while the cast is good and a climactic fight in the desert is impressive, the film ultimately winds up feeling superficial. Optional. (T. Keogh)

The Lion in Winter

★★★★

Kino Lorber, 134 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Anthony Harvey's 1968 historical epic centering on Henry II (Peter O'Toole) and Eleanor of Aquitaine (Katharine Hepburn) features tour de force performances from both leads and one of the most devastatingly witty scripts to ever emerge from Hollywood. *The Lion in Winter* begins in 1183, with Henry meeting his wife for their annual Christmas reunion—meaning that he has let Eleanor out of her castle (where he keeps her due to her political meddling). Once back in the court, Eleanor rolls up her sleeves and commences to politicking. Her goal is to bypass Henry's mistress's (Jane Merrow) plan: which is to have a baby by Henry, and let the king's three sons wither on the vine. Eleanor won't have it, although it must be said that the three sons in question—a bully (Anthony Hopkins), an intellectual robot (John Castle), and a pimple-faced brat (Nigel Terry)—are not exactly prime regal material. The domestic war escalates with the arrival of Eleanor's brother, King Philip of France (Timothy Dalton), as insults fly thicker than arrows, and no one's pride escapes being brought down a notch or three. Rollicking, grand entertainment, *The Lion in Winter* was nominated for multiple Oscars (including Best Picture), taking home wins for Best Actress (Hepburn) and James Goldman's scintillating screenplay. Debuting on Blu-ray, extras include audio commentary by Harvey, and an interview with sound recordist Simon Kaye. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. (R. Pitman)



Opera ★★1/2

Scorpion, 107 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, R, Blu-ray: \$24.95

There's an element of *Phantom of the Opera* in Dario Argento's 1987 horror film about an understudy who takes the leading role in a production of Verdi's opera *Macbeth*, but the inspiration does not go far. A mysterious killer repeatedly abducts young soprano Betty (Cristina Marsillach) to make her watch as he murders everyone who is close to her (he tapes needles under her eyes to prevent her from blinking). Opera director Marco (Ian Charleson) concocts a plan to flush out the black-gloved murderer. *Opera* belongs to the distinctly Italian horror genre known as giallo and features many of the hallmarks: voyeurism, sadistic violence, numerous shots from the killer's point of view, and stylized set pieces that



turn murder into performance art. Argento is less concerned with plot logic and character consistency than in creating lush images and an atmosphere of unease, and his showy camerawork includes a raven's point of view as it circles and swoops over the audience in the opera house. The musical score mixes extensive selections from the opera (performed by Maria Callas) with electronic music from Brian Eno and Claudio Simonetti, as well as hard rock songs. Argento claims this production to be his personal favorite, but it's very melodramatic and the plot turns on frankly ridiculous twists (the sexual politics are also disturbing, at best). Still, for genre fans this is a minor classic of memorable baroque Italian horror. Extras include new interviews with Argento and costar William McNamara. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

The Outlaw ★★

Kino Lorber, 116 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Many a Hollywood film has been sold with the promise of sex and violence but rarely as explicitly as this notorious 1943 Western produced and directed by Howard Hughes. The film was promoted with salacious pin-ups of Jane Russell in a tight, low-cut blouse, showing plenty of leg, and clutching a pistol at her waist. And—truth in advertising—Russell's cleavage is blatantly on display in the film, while plenty of sexual activity is suggested just offscreen. But Russell is actually a supporting character in what turns out to be a romantic triangle between three men: Sheriff Pat Garrett (Thomas Mitchell), legendary gambler Doc Holliday (Walter Huston), and young gunfighter Billy the Kid (newcomer Jack Buetel), the latter riding into town on Holliday's stolen horse, after which Doc ends up helping Billy escape from Garrett (all events that have no historical basis). The film was initiated by Hollywood great Howard Hawks, but Hughes took it over and started from scratch, much to the detriment of the film as Hughes's direction is clumsy and the story suffers from stilted conversations and static scenes. The film's reputation rests entirely on its blatant sexuality and barely concealed homoerotic undercurrent: Hughes shoots scenes between Billy and Garrett with the intimacy of a seduction and he photographs Russell being manhandled by Billy, bending over, and tied up and staked out in a scene straight out of a kinky bondage pin-up. *The Outlaw* is a bad film but an interesting historical curiosity. Extras include audio commentary by film historian Troy Howarth. Optional. (S. Axmayer)



The Thomas Crown Affair ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 102 min., R, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Steve McQueen is Thomas Crown, a



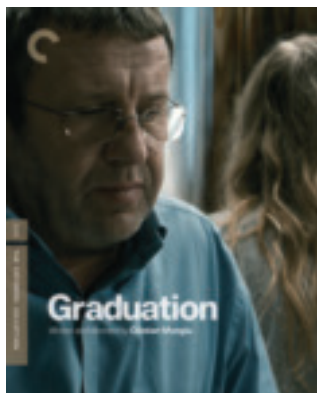
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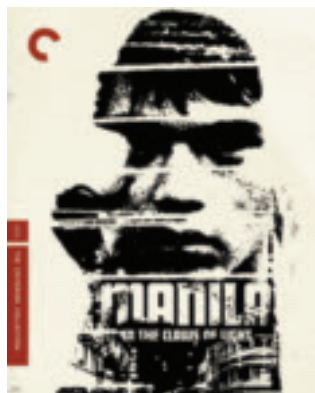
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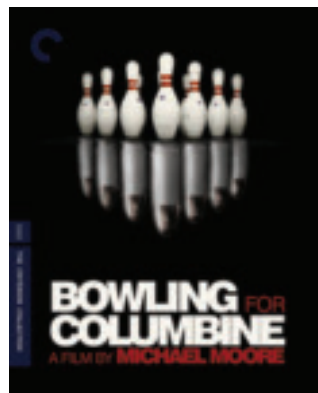
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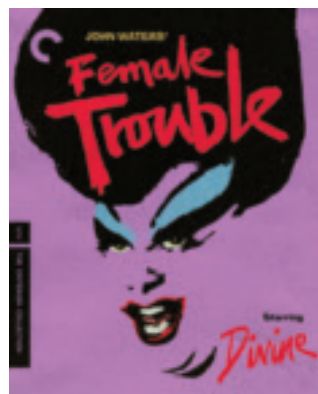
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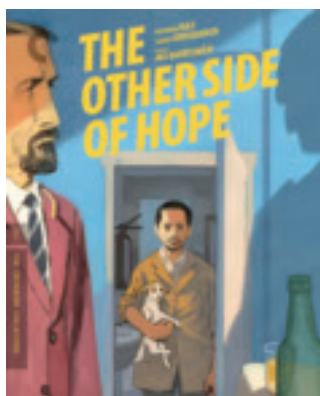
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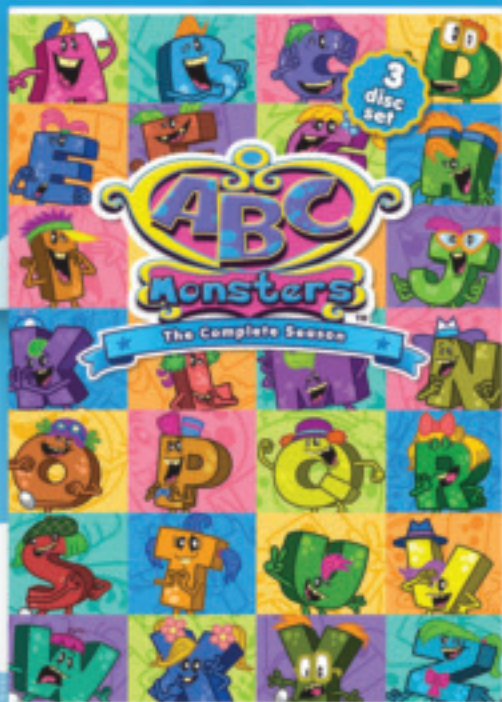
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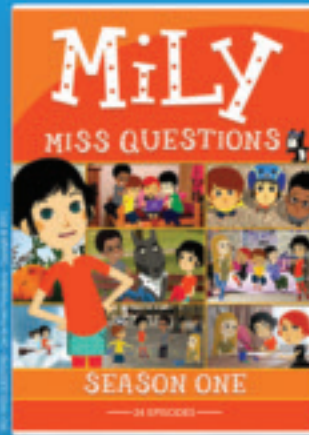
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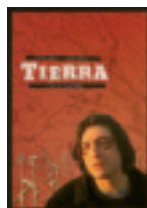
suave bank executive who masterminds an ingenious daylight robbery of his own bank, and Faye Dunaway is elegant and relentless insurance investigator Vicki Anderson in this 1968 heist classic from director Norman Jewison. The actual heists here aren't particularly elaborate—Crown uses telephone signals to instruct hired operatives who never meet—and the film instead focuses on the cat-and-mouse battle of wits between Crown and Anderson. Jewison relies on flashy camera angles, fragmented editing, and elaborate split screens to jazz up the look, giving the film a sheen of modern style that looked snazzy in 1968 but appears contrived and dated today. McQueen was at the height of his screen stardom and never seems less than cool whether he's pulling the strings of a robbery or wooing Dunaway over a game of chess in front of a roaring fire, and Dunaway is equally commanding as the ambitious, almost ruthless investigator. Jack Weston costars as the hapless getaway driver who is snared by the otherwise ineffectual cops. McQueen and Dunaway bring the sex appeal in the handsomely mounted *The Thomas Crown Affair*, but while somewhat interesting as a period piece it's also a disappointing crime film. Winner of an Oscar for its theme song, "Windmills of Your Mind," the film bows on Blu-ray with extras including audio commentary tracks (one by Jewison, the other by film historian Lem Dobbs and filmmaker Nick Redman), interviews with Jewison and title designer Pablo Ferro, and an archival behind-the-scenes featurette. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Tierra ★★★

Olive, 124 min., in Spanish w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

The lush, visually vivid films of Spain's Julio Medem are as much about his country's distinctive landscapes and natural wonders as they are about the restless and obsessive characters that wander through his world. His 1996 film *Tierra* ("Earth") begins in the heavens with a vast view of the planet and then dives down into a microscopic examination of the underworld beneath the red soil of a remote wine-growing region in Spain. There we find Angel Bengoelxo (Carmelo Gómez), a melancholy fumigator whose wandering soul is torn between the lovely, lonely, ethereal Angela (Emma Suárez) and the earthy, passionate, impulsive Mari (Silke). Medem sets this tale of love and lust amidst the stunning austere landscape of fiery red hills, a world that seems both primal and alien (dressed in white protective suits, the fumigators look like astronauts on the red planet Mars), where the enigmatic wood lice lives under the ground



and angels reside with humans above. Medem weaves multiple stories together with natural history and philosophical musings into a passionate film about fate, fantasy, and the illogical power of love. A transcendent, beautiful movie, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Topaze ★★★

Kino Lorber, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

John Barrymore stars as Professor Auguste A. Topaze, a dedicated and beloved schoolteacher in an elite private school, in this satirical 1933 comedy adapted from the play by French writer Marcel Pagnol. Barrymore, who tended to embrace his hammy side, is more restrained here as a naïve, idealistic professor who is blind to the corruption of the real world and winds up being fired when he refuses to give a passing grade to a failing student. Through the kind of screwball coincidences that exist only in plays and movies, he lands a job with the aristocratic Baron de La Tour-La Tour (Reginald Mason)—father of the failing student that got him canned—as the representative of a phony tonic. Ben Hecht, a master of American cynicism and barbed wit, adapted the play, filling it with satirical jabs at the hypocrisy of the rich and powerful that was only possible pre-Code: in fact, the film opens with the Baron telling his mistress Coco (Myrna Loy), "You know I have to get home to my wife." Director Harry d'Abbadie d'Arrast brings an elegant touch and worldly attitude to this cynical portrait that features a satisfying twist of poetic justice. Extras include audio commentary by film historian Kat Ellinger. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



celebrate the centenary of Italian unification and Rossellini uses his budget to present grand scenes of warfare, but it is as much history lesson as drama, with loads of dialogue featuring background on the politics and historical backdrop of the events onscreen. Rossellini's intention was to direct it as a "documentary made after the fact" and he claimed that he was more proud of this film than any other he made. Bowing on DVD and Blu-ray in a newly restored edition, extras include a shorter English-dubbed version originally created for American release, an interview with Rossellini's assistant Ruggero Deodato, and a video essay by Rossellini scholar Tag Gallagher. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Wilby Conspiracy

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 105 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Sidney Poitier is Shack Twala, a political activist in 1970s apartheid-era South Africa, and Michael Caine plays Jim Keogh, a British engineer who ends up on the run with Twala after he intervenes during a brutal display of police abuse. Adapted from a 1972 novel by Peter Driscoll, this 1975 escape thriller plays like a modern version of *The Defiant Ones*, minus the shackles and racial animosity—at least between the two fugitives. The racism is all on the side of the white South African police led by the ruthlessly racist Afrikaner Major Horn (Nicol Williamson), who treats the manhunt like a matter of national security. The story plays like a classic chase thriller as the two strangers thrown together by circumstance work together to get across the border to safety in Zimbabwe. It is also one of the first mainstream American movies to present apartheid South Africa as a racist police state, a lesson that Keogh learns firsthand. Director Ralph Nelson doesn't soften the portrait of the virulently bigoted cops who treat every black African as a criminal or a child. It makes for an interesting time capsule, while the banter between Poitier and Caine sustains the action through the familiar twists and turns of the plot. The great Indian actor Saeed Jaffrey plays a friend sympathetic to the black rights movement, while Rutger Hauer makes his film debut in a small role. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Viva L'Italia ★★★

Arrow, 129 min., in Italian w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Roberto Rossellini was one of the godfathers of Italian neorealism, but in the 1960s he directed a series of historical films that explored key events in Italian and world history, combining documentary realism with political rumination. *Viva L'Italia* (1961) was his first, a drama about Giuseppe Garibaldi and his military campaign to aid the uprisings in Sicily and Naples against the Bourbon king in 1860. Renzo Ricci stars as Garibaldi, leader of a revolutionary movement to unify the disparate states of the Italian people under the constitutional monarch Victor Emmanuel II. Garibaldi is portrayed as a driven and courageous general as well as a committed humanist as he leads his loyal thousand volunteers against the superior numbers of the Bourbon forces. Ricci plays the character with a paternal warmth and contemplative seriousness. The film was commissioned by the Italian government to



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Animal Kingdom: The Complete Second Season

★★★

Warner, 640 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$39.99



The second season of the TNT crime drama about a family of robbers in San Diego run by a matriarch (who picks the targets and masterminds the heists her sons execute) moves away from the template of the Australian film that inspired the series. Crew leader Baz (Scott Speedman) and his brothers leave their controlling, ruthless mother Smurf (Ellen Barkin, alternately maternal and cold-blooded) and plan their own jobs, which results in nephew J (Finn Cole)—an orphaned high school kid adopted by Smurf—being caught between his uncles and his grandmother. As Baz learns just how much Smurf has withheld from them—from murder, to a small fortune she has hidden away—the volatile Pope (Shawn Hatosy) grows tormented with guilt over his past acts of violence, surf bum Deran (Jake Weary) buys a beach dive bar and tries to go legit, and family screw-up Craig (Ben Robson) pulls himself together to plan his own job. Meanwhile, Smurf's violent past catches up with her, which puts them all in danger. This season features a number of elaborate, well-directed heists (including robberies of a mega-church and a cruise ship), but it's the evolution of the characters that elevates the show from a gritty crime family drama of reckless machismo and maternal manipulation to a dark drama of complex family relationships within a culture of violence and greed in the Southern California sun. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2017 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

The Deuce: The Complete First Season

★★★1/2
HBO, 3 discs, 500 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$59.99



David Simon, creator of HBO's *The Wire* and *Treme*, teamed up with crime fiction author George Pelecanos to explore the sex trade and origins of the pornography industry in early 1970s New York City. *The Deuce* features a sprawling cast of characters (almost 40 significant roles) to show the vast ecosystem on the seedy streets, from ambitious barman Vincent Martino and his twin brother Frankie (both played by James Franco) to independent streetwalker and single mother Candy (Maggie Gyllenhaal), from the flashy, sometimes brutal pimps and the sex workers under their control, to the police patrolmen who never know why they target certain streets and leave others alone, and the mobsters getting their fingers into everything. It's a complex drama that recreates the

era when New York's 42nd Street and Times Square (nicknamed "the Deuce") comprised a tawdry, grimy urban slum of dive bars, grindhouse theaters, and adult bookstores, and where sex workers paraded their business out in the open. And it captures the rise of the porn industry from out of the shadows and into the mainstream. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2017 debut season, extras include audio commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes. A smart, complex series that is full of sharp writing, vivid characters, and complicated relationships, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

East West 101: Series 1

★★★

Acorn, 2 discs, 324 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



This Australian cop drama takes on race and culture in the diverse population of Sydney as it follows the story of Zane Malik (Don Hany), a first generation Arab-Australian Muslim on Sydney's Major Crime Squad, and his superior officer Ray Crowley (William McNees), an old-school bigot. Crowley's default position is to target every non-white suspect, and he clashes with Malik, who constantly challenges his assumptions. Malik is driven in part by guilt—he blames himself for the death of his father and is searching for his father's killer—while Crowley is on his own crusade to find the drug dealer who sold a fatal dose to his son. *East West 101* presents a much more diverse portrait of Sydney than most Aussie police dramas, from the affluent and largely white eastern suburbs to the poorer neighborhoods of west Sydney where the Arab, Chinese, Indonesians, Bosnians, and pretty much every culture from the South Pacific diaspora are centered. The show confronts the collision of cultures both between the various ethnic groups and within individuals who are struggling to reconcile their own traditions and beliefs with Australian society. *East West 101* ran for three seasons in Australia to critical acclaim but is not well-known to American audiences. Compiling all six episodes from the 2007-08 first season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

The Good Fight: Season One

★★★1/2

Paramount, 3 discs, 491 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



This spin-off of *The Good Wife* follows Diane Lockhart (Christine Baranski), who is named partner of the Chicago law firm where Alicia Florrick (*Good Wife* star Julianna Margulies) was an associate, and Lucca Quinn (Cush Jumbo), Alicia's cohort in the final season of the series. Lucca has left for a position in an African American-owned

firm run by Adrian Boseman (Delroy Lindo) and Diane has plans to retire until she discovers that all of her investments have been lost in a Ponzi scheme run by one of her closest friends. So she and Maia Rindell (Rose Leslie), daughter of the investment fund manager under investigation, follow Lucca to the new firm. The format and style comes directly from *The Good Wife*, complete with timely issues and political wrangling, but plays out in the culture of a maverick firm that has built a business model around civil rights and social justice cases. The writing is smart, the performances are excellent, and the show offers interesting observations on race and politics. Plus it brings back many regular and recurring characters from *The Good Wife*, including Carrie Preston as eccentric attorney Elsbeth Tascioni, John Benjamin Hickey as web guru Neil Gross, and Dylan Baker as rich psychopath Colin Sweeney. With so much of the creative team carried over from the earlier hit show, there should be a lot of interest in this one. Presenting all 10 episodes from the 2017 debut season, extras include deleted scenes and a gag reel. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Love, Lies & Records

★★

RLJ, 2 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

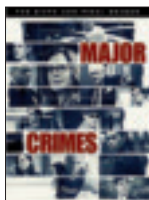


This BBC series doesn't know if it wants to be a sitcom, a soap opera, a tribute to political correctness, or a continuation of hackneyed gender stereotypes. Emmy nominee Ashley Jensen stars as Kate, a registrar in the English city of Leeds, where she is responsible for birth, marriage, and death certificates. Kate tends to take a little extra interest in her work, from performing a marriage for a woman dying in a hospice, to cueing her police officer live-in boyfriend to a potential scam involving immigrants trying to gain residency through sham marriages. Kate's home life is complex—she has two teenage children with her boyfriend, but he's estranged from his wife, and his son from that marriage lives with them. Complicating matters is Kate's attraction to a handsome co-worker, which challenges her domestic union. There is also a jealous female co-worker who goes into full-throttle fury when she gets passed over for a promotion in favor of Kate, plus a male colleague who abruptly announces that he is transitioning into a woman. The episodes ping-pong between dumb laughs—Kate whacks her stepson with a cricket bat when she mistakes him for a late-night intruder, a couple seeking a birth certificate wants to name their infant daughter Chlamydia—and sticky-sweet melodrama, and the performances seem a bit over-cafeinated. Compiling all six episodes from 2017, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a cast Q&A. Optional. (P. Hall)

Major Crimes: The Sixth and Final Season ★★

Warner, 3 discs, 547 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

This sixth and final season of the TNT police procedural centering on a special unit of the LAPD takes a different approach, playing out stories over multiple episodes, while focusing on three individual cases: the disappearance of a trio of teenage boys from a Catholic school field trip, the murder of a high-profile attorney famous for taking on cases of sexual harassment, and the pursuit of escaped serial killer Phillip Stroh (Billy Burke), who has vowed to kill Rusty (Graham Patrick Martin), the adoptive son of Captain Sharon Raydor (Mary McDonnell). The series was a spin-off of *The Closer* but developed its own distinctive identity thanks to its portrait of teamwork within a crack squad that has evolved over the years, and those relationships come to the fore in the final episodes as the team pulls together over the death of a major character and unites to protect Rusty. The final season also sees key characters making major changes, from the team's video and electronics expert Buzz (Phillip P. Keene) getting a well-deserved promotion, to Julio (Raymond Cruz) moving into a new role as a father, to Louie (G.W. Bailey) stepping up definitively as team leader. It is a strong end to the series. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2017-18, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a blooper reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Newton's Law: Season 1 ★★

RLJ, 3 discs, 445 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99

Australian actress Claudia Karvan stars as Josephine Newton, a talented and committed solicitor who reluctantly gives up her practice helping the poor and disenfranchised after her office is blown up, returning to her former career as a barrister in a high-powered firm alongside an erstwhile boyfriend (Toby Schmitz). Claudia's old ties won't go away so easily, however, so she secretly reopens her practice in the garage below her new offices with partner Helena (Georgina Naidu), a gifted solicitor with self-confidence issues, and assistant Johnny (Sean Keenan), a former client who signs on as their investigator. *Newton's Law* is a lighthearted series that leans on humor and features a cast of eccentric characters both in the exclusive suites above and in the clandestine office below. The show plays up the underdog angle of the ragtag team as they periodically join forces with Newton's upscale colleagues, most of whom have no idea about the garage operation. Along the way, there are plenty of family complications—Newton's ex-husband is a charming eco-activist whose



influence gets their daughter arrested at a protest—and romantic tangles. Presenting all eight episodes from the 2017 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and cast and crew interviews. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Rebecka Martinsson: Series 1 ★★1/2

RLJ, 2 discs, 370 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$49.99

Based on novels by Åsa Larsson, *Rebecka Martinsson* stars Ida Engvoll in the title role of a young, ambitious Stockholm lawyer who returns to her hometown—a remote place north of the Arctic Circle—after she learns of the death of a close friend, a female vicar who disturbed some of the locals with her activist ways. Divided into four two-episode arcs, the first finds Rebecka working with a local policewoman to prove that what was originally presumed to be an accidental fall was actually murder. The second mystery involves another murder, this time concerning members of a mining family, and the third centers on an effort to find a submerged plane that could implicate someone in pro-German activity during World War II. The final story focuses on a family whose members are being systematically killed off. Over the course of the series Rebecka suffers from psychological problems so grave that she contemplates suicide, and she reconsiders her commitment to her boyfriend, another lawyer in Stockholm, while becoming involved with a one-armed local cop. The location atmosphere is strong, but the plots never develop the degree of complexity that one has come to expect from this kind of northern noir. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2017 first season, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



The Sinner: Season One ★★1/2

Universal, 2 discs, 339 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

In the opening minutes of this miniseries produced for the USA Network, Cora (Jessica Biel), a suburban wife and overly-protective mother of a young child, stabs a medical student to death on a lakeside beach with no warning or apparent motivation. Unable to explain or understand her own actions and filled with horror and remorse, Cora confesses to the crime and pleads guilty. But Detective Harry Ambrose (Bill Pullman)—the local police investigator—is convinced there is something bigger behind the crime and he keeps investigating. Based on the 1999 novel by Petra Hammesfahr, this compelling show is a murder mystery by way of a psychological drama that delves into Cora's upbringing by an oppressively religious and judgmental mother, as well as her

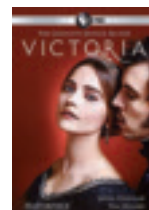


relationship with her terminally-ill younger sister, her past romance with a shady drug dealer, and the terrible truth behind a missing two months of her life. At the same time, *The Sinner* explores the self-destructive desires of Harry that destroy his marriage, secrets that perhaps make him sympathetic to Cora's torment. This is an adult series in the best sense, one that deals with complicated emotions and acknowledges bad decisions and guilty feelings tormenting otherwise good people. Compiling all eight episodes from 2017, extras include deleted scenes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Victoria: The Complete Second Season ★★

PBS, 3 discs, 450 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$59.99

The second season of the BBC royal drama *Victoria*, starring Jenna Coleman as the young Queen Victoria and Tom Hughes as Prince Albert, opens with Victoria being constantly coddled after the birth of the couple's first child, as Albert tries to shield her from the crisis of the British defeat in Afghanistan—an act that Victoria sees as a betrayal; an instance of yet another man trying to make decisions for her. The episodes follow their efforts to find a balance in their marriage and Albert's attempts to make a meaningful contribution to the realm, while major historical events transpire, including food shortages in London, a potentially threatening royal marriage between France and Spain, and the Irish famine, all playing out amidst the social culture of the time, from anti-Catholic prejudice to class division. One could call this *The Crown*-lite, but it's just more of a traditional historical royal melodrama in the manner of *Downton Abbey*, with stories of the servants woven through. But the show also makes clear that the ruling class of Britain thinks non-Britons, specifically the Irish and black Africans, are unworthy of their concern, and it presents Victoria as an idealistic young queen whose compassion clashes with the prejudices of white British men running the government. Compiling all nine episodes from the 2017 second season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during May and June, including: *Christopher Kimball's Milk Street: 1*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm: The Complete Ninth Season*, *Fear the Walking Dead: The Complete Third Season*, *Knightfall: Season One*, and much more!

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

★★★★ = Excellent

★★★ = Good

★★ = Fair

★ = Poor

PPR = Public Performance Rights

DRA = Digital Rights Available

Aud = Audience

K = Preschool-Kindergarten

E = Elementary (grades 1-3)

I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)

J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)

H = High School (grades 9-12)

C = Colleges & Universities

P = Public Libraries

CHILDREN'S

The Adventures of Robin Hood ★★½

(2018) 16 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5200-9230-0.

As retold by Philip Edwards, this iconic graphic-animated adaptation of his 2017 picture book refashions Howard Pyle's 1883 child-friendly version of tales centered on the infamous Robin of Locksley. Narrated by Michael Page, and featuring sweeping gold and green English countryside landscapes by illustrator Adam Horsepool, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* tells familiar stories about master archer and thief Robin and his crew of Sherwood Forest outlaws, who famously stole from the rich to give to the poor. The tale of the origin of Robin's descent into the wrong side of "the law" by shooting the king's deer for sport and his subsequent €200 bounty and rivalry with the embarrassed Sheriff of Nottingham is presented, along with his first skirmish with later friend Little John, and his bid for the affections of Maid Marian. Unfortunately, the featureless, ill-defined faces here are distractingly banal, but while this is unlikely to impress the hyperkinetic Cartoon Network set, it does offer an introduction to a classic. A strong optional purchase. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz: We're Not in Kansas Anymore ★★½

(2017) 113 min. DVD: \$14.98. Warner Bros. Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Inspired by the 1939 classic film adaptation

of L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, the computer-animated TV series *Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz* features familiar music and the simpering voices and clownish antics of the Lion, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Man, but—title notwithstanding—no "Wizard" (presumably this is set after he took off). So leader duties in the magical realm fall to ditzy Queen Ozma, who in the episode "Beware the Woozy" is literally petrified by a perfume potion, after which Dorothy and friends use the infamous ruby slippers to transport themselves to the titular pink-and-yellow creature to get some hairs from his tail for the antidote (the Woozy has a strange aversion to people whispering—he responds by shooting lasers from his eyes). Dorothy and her pals engage in problem-solving just in time to stop the squirrely Gnome King from taking over while Ozma is incapacitated. "Toto Unleashed" finds everyone's favorite "little dog, too" desperate for attention but understandably ticked when mini-witch Wilhemina (niece of the famous Wicked Witch of the West) uses her flying monkeys to kidnap him to be her own pet. Also including "Mixed-Up Mixer," the valentine-themed "Rules of Attraction," and a patchwork girlfriend for Scarecrow in "Brain Power of Love," this 10-episode set from a rather silly update series is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

French for Kids—L'anniversaire de Fritzi ★★★

(2017) 30 min. DVD: \$19.99 (teacher's guide included). DRA. PPR. Whistlefritz (avail. from most distributors).

Although I'm not exactly sure what it is that adult host Marie Laure is saying in this addition to the Whistlefritz language

immersion series, she's charming in any language. Centering around preparations for animated mouse mascot Fritzi's birthday, *L'anniversaire de Fritzi* combines Laure's conversational onscreen commentary with animated segments, as well as clips of real-life kids playing and repeating along. Young viewers will learn French words and phrases describing balloons, primary colors, cake (a family makes one together backed by a song), gifts (including toys and books), and more. Designed for ages 2-7, the program includes a parent/teacher translation guide. Recommended. [Note: this title is also available in the three-volume *French for Kids—The French Collection* set, priced at \$89.99.] Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

JoJo Siwa: My World ★★★

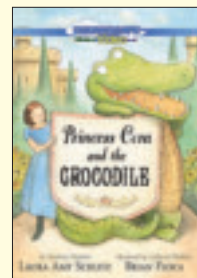
(2017) 44 min. DVD: \$14.99. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Hyper teenage song-and-dance star JoJo Siwa takes center stage in this biographical profile that leads up to her June 2017 performance at the Mall of America. A history of the small-town Nebraska girl starts with footage of her onstage as a dancing two-year-old (JoJo fondly refers to herself as a "chicken nugget") before segueing into her stint on Lifetime's notorious *Dance Moms* reality show. But JoJo's main rise to fame has been through social media, specifically her wacky web show "JoJo's Juice," where she usually ends up pouring juice over her head. While her Mom says "she's really serious in a business sort of way," noting that sometimes the teen stays up past midnight, and her Dad acknowledges that "she goes 24/7," viewers are reminded just how young the exuberant star is with a clip of a hotel room decoration surprise for JoJo's 14th

Princess Cora and the Crocodile ★★½

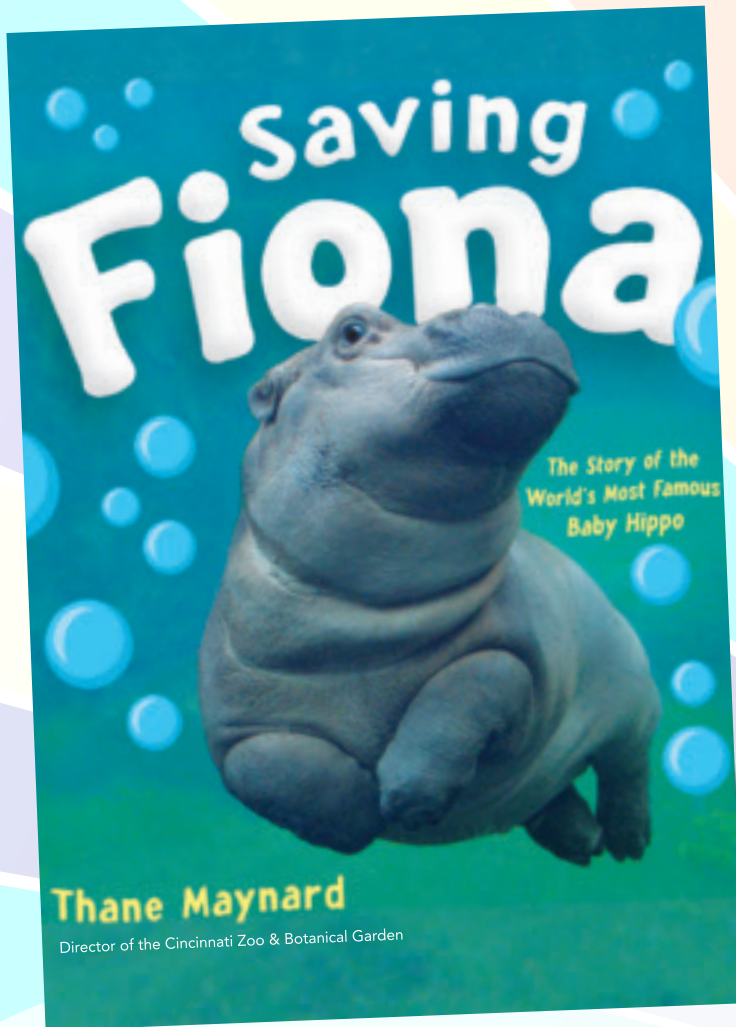
(2018) 40 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5200-9254-6.

Newbury Medalist author Laura Amy Schlitz's text and Caldecott Medalist Brian Floca's illustrations tie together seamlessly in this funny iconographic-animated fable based on their 2017 picture book. The birth of the titular princess brings brief happiness to the king and queen, who get right to work training the baby to be a leader. By age seven, Princess Cora is browbeaten by a nanny who overkills with three baths a day, a mom who force-feeds her boringly dry books for study in the tower room, and a dad who exhausts her with constant rope-skipping for strength conditioning. The gal is understandably angry, and when a request for a pet dog is shot down by the adults, Cora appeals to her fairy godmother. The next morning, a mysterious box with holes in it appears, but rather than a puppy it holds an enormous wild-eyed crocodile, who likes cream puffs and lets Cora know "I bite!" and can knock people down if she wants. While Cora takes a day off to climb trees, pick strawberries, and wade in the stream, Croc impersonates the girl as a favor and bedevils the pushy grownups with silly antics, including swinging from a chandelier and ripping the king's trousers. Angie Kane's narration shines—especially as the funny Croc—in this delightful tale featuring delicately drawn watercolor and gouache pictures. Bonus features include a read-along option. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



Amazing animals, true tales

Two inspiring stories that touched hearts around the globe and brought communities together.



Saving Fiona

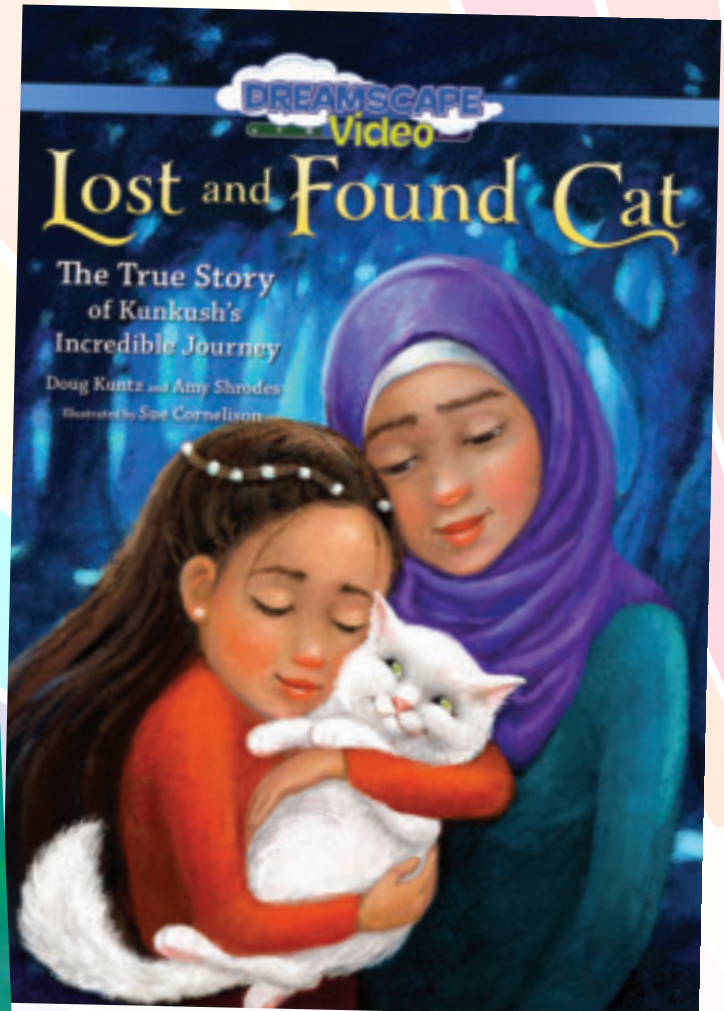
The Story of the World's Most Famous Baby Hippo

The amazing true story of the baby hippo who overcame the odds and became an international sensation.

Available July 17

ISBN 9781974901586

\$24.99



Lost and Found Cat

The True Story of Kunkush's Incredible Journey

Doug Kuntz, Amy Shrodes

An Iraqi family forced to flee their home brings their beloved cat, Kunkush, with them, but when Kunkush gets lost, the community must come together to reunite them.

Available May 22

ISBN 9781974901524

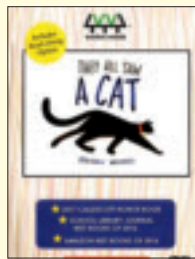
\$29.99

Teacher's
Resource
Guide PDF
Included

They All Saw a Cat ★★★1/2

(2017) 6 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1338230-390.

Liltingly narrated by actor John Lithgow, this charming adaptation of the 2016 picture book by author and illustrator Brendan Wenzel features animation by Cha-Pow and music by David Mansfield. The story is simple: a cat with a tinkling bell "walked through the world," strutting his stuff while viewers witness the impression he makes through the eyes of others. A child sees him normally, to a dog he's an angular strange creature, to a fox the cat looks rather plump, and to a fish and a mouse, the cat looks enormous, vicious, and scary. These alternative perspectives are presented in vignettes employing various colorful art styles: a bee with insect eyes sees the cat as a sort of dot collage, a bird looks down on the cat from an aerial view, a flea peers out from the cat's hair on its back, and a worm registers the cat's vibrations from underground. This winning animated short about differing viewpoints nicely captures the vision of this Caldecott Honor Book. Bonus features include a read-along option and a 2017 interview with Wenzel. Highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



birthday. Also featuring behind-the-scenes rehearsal segments and comments from fans ("She makes me believe anything is possible!"), this is a sure-to-be-popular title for kids and 'tweens. Bonus features include catchy music videos, a Q&A with JoJo, and video diary entries. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures—Complete Season Two

★★★1/2

(2017) 2 discs. 267 min. DVD: \$22.99. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

The second and final 2017 season of this children's animated series follows the adventures of the Freemakers, three orphaned siblings and deep space scavengers who build and repair ships from salvaged parts, as they join the rebellion in the *Star Wars* universe. This season continues the race to find the powerful kyber crystals, which the Freemakers need to power a new ship and Darth Vader seeks for a new Death Star. Set during the time of *Return of the Jedi*, some scenes play out in the margins of major events from the movie, including the attack on the second Death Star and the planet of the Ewoks. The youngest Freemaker brother discovers that his connection to The Force gives him master builder skills, which means a lot of objects get taken apart and rebuilt on screen (in keeping with the *LEGO* toy franchise). Like all of the *LEGO*-themed animated shows, this one is heavy on comedy (although it is strange that a lot of underlings get ejected out of airlocks, dropped down airshafts, or blown through blast holes in slapstick scenes), along with lessons in teamwork and communication. Presenting all 12 episodes, originally produced for the Disney XD channel, extras include bonus shorts. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (S. Axmaker)

Lots & Lots of Animal Stories for Kids! Vol. 3 Birdies ★★★

(2017) 30 min. DVD: \$12.95 (\$14.95 w/PPR). Marshall Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-936134-70-5.

Talented singer-actress Miss Danni Donkey returns for the latest volume of this live-action/animated children's series mixing story and song. This episode features a long-form tale that follows the adventures of a bird who has lost its song. The bird meets a talking dandelion with a Jamaican accent (and a green/yellow/red beanie) who insists that he is a flower, although the birds claim he is a weed. The dandelion breaks into a song about how his seeds are spread far and wide by the wind. While the story is animated, it is interspersed with live-action segments of Danni singing. Using a winning variety-show format featuring an audience of kids, this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (C. Block)

Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library ★★★

(2017) 52 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5200-8715-3.

Author Carole Boston Weatherford serves up a reverential look at the life of historian and bibliographer Arturo Schomburg (1874-1938) in this iconographic-animated adaptation of the titular 2017 picture book, featuring illustrations by Eric Velasquez. Gorgeous realistic oils depict scenes of Afro-Puerto Rican Schomburg, who even in fifth grade questioned a teacher who said that Africans had no history of note. Digging deeper for his own curiosity, Arturo had more access to knowledge at the tip of his fingers after immigrating to NYC as a 17-year-old, and while working as a law clerk he also became an important figure in the Harlem Renaissance. His appreciation of Africana and "book-hunting disease" found Arturo poring over rare and lost books, art, and artifacts, discovering little-known African American history about

Benjamin Banneker, Phillis Wheatley, the Amistead uprisings, and the African roots of luminaries including John James Audubon, Alexandre Dumas, Alexander Pushkin, and Beethoven. Also touching on Schomburg's family life (he married three women named Elizabeth) and future as a renowned curator whose collections were made accessible to the public (including his own research library branch of the NYPL), this biographical profile read by Ron Butler also notes that Schomburg once fired a librarian for using the Dewey decimal system instead of his own methodology (ouch). Recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Controlling Anger Before It Controls You

★★★

(2018) 18 min. DVD: \$149.95 (study guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-095-0.

Why in the hell did I get this title for review? Is this a not-so-subtle hint from other staff that I need to work on my issues? I'm livid! Fortunately, *Controlling Anger Before It Controls You* offers a great breakdown of the titular emotion, suggesting healthy ways to clarify and deal with problems, along with tips on using relaxation techniques and effective communication. Clinical psychologists Deborah Gatins and L. Kevin Chapman provide expert commentary along with two host guides and several young interviewees, exploring various topics including the physical components of anger (such as shortness of breath, racing heart, muscle tension, etc.), causes (such as social slights and being put-down or misunderstood, general adolescent challenges, and family issues beyond one's control), and ways in which anger can spur an honest addressing of problems before they escalate. A brief segment with a teen youth activist looks at how anger can be beneficial for effective action in social justice movements. Overall, this offers thoughtful guidance on a key aspect of emotional health. There, I feel better already! Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Departure ★★★1/2

(2017) 87 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Emmy-winning filmmaker Lana Wilson's documentary centers on Ittetsu Nemoto, a former punk musician whose midlife career shift finds him serving as a Buddhist priest in Japan, where he helps people who are seeking to end their lives. Living with his wife, young son, and mother in a countryside temple, Nemoto's deep commitment is emotionally challenging; his ability to remain reassuring and compassionate while working with individuals undergoing physical and emotional

hardship is truly impressive. In one of the most memorable sequences, Nemoto carefully offers instruction regarding the concepts of life and death to participants in a suicide prevention workshop. As the film progresses, it becomes clear that Nemoto's dedication to this mission is not just academic or charitable, but also a mirror of his own experience: his health is fraying dramatically, and the questions that others ask of him are identical to those he asks himself. But Nemoto insists on being a rock of stability for those seeking his aid. "I take on so much of their suffering when I'm counseling—I can never show them how draining it is," he says. Suicide is a difficult subject to tackle cinematically, but Wilson offers a mature and provocative examination of the topic via one remarkable advocate of life. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Mindfulness Goes Mainstream: Techniques ★★★

(2017) 3 discs. 165 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0241-0.

In this time of Internet distraction, divisive politics, controversies, and high-volume arguments, mindfulness offers a retreat into silence and stillness, a moment to dwell contentedly in the present moment. This PBS-aided miniseries guide explores the mindfulness movement, with instructors offering simple exercises that require no special equipment or conditions. The goal is to empty the mind of noise and distraction, to "fall awake" into "awareness itself," which is accomplished through: breathing and body awareness; wishing yourself wellness, happiness, and peacefulness; and extending compassion first to yourself, then to those you like or love, and finally to difficult persons you

may resent, or who resent you. If the mind slips back into everyday concerns, viewers are advised to simply redirect their thoughts back to meditation. As the instructors speak, peaceful images are shown, accompanied by the sound of soft chimes. Several of the segments deal with using mindfulness in different scenarios, such as business offices and police departments, as well as schools and libraries. Also included is the original documentary *Mindfulness Goes Mainstream*, narrated by Michael Murphy, which features testimonials from newsmen Dan Harris and folksinger and songwriter Jewel, while serving up an overview of the mindfulness revolution and its benefits. While some viewers may dismiss this as New Age-y, many will find it useful. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

American Yogi ★★½

(2017) 79 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

In what often feels like a promotional film on behalf of Hindu spiritualism, filmmaker Steven Newmark presents an autobiographical essay on his journey toward enlightenment, an odyssey in which the Indian guru Maharajji played a pivotal role. Maharajji also inspired Richard Alpert: under his influence Alpert took the name Ram Dass and published *Be Here Now*, the 1971 book that brought the guru's message to a wide audience. Among its readers was Newmark, a seeker of personal fulfillment who decided to travel to India, where—as he explains with footage of his trips and animation inserts—he experienced the effect of the guru's presence

even though Maharajji had died years before. Spending time with Maharajji's disciples and even experiencing encounters with the guru's spirit, Newmark says he was liberated from his body and transformed. Newmark also describes his visit to a temple where he was introduced to his own personal palm leaf prophecy, found in an ancient text that described the circumstances of his life and search in incredibly accurate detail. Newmark also reconnects with erstwhile girlfriend Zoe Harber—the measure for all of the other women in his life—who joined Newmark on another journey to India and became his fellow-traveler on the road to enlightenment. Harber adds her voice to Newmark's in extolling the example of Indian Hinduism in general and of Maharajji in particular. Newmark and Harber are engaging hosts, and whether or not *American Yogi* persuades people to follow their path, it does present an amiable journey of discovery. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

C.T. Studd: Gifted Athlete and Pioneering Missionary ★★★

(2018) 48 min. DVD: \$19.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Gary Wilkinson's documentary tells the captivating story of Charles Studd, a renowned English cricketer who gave up the sport to become an ambitious missionary on a global scale. After accepting Jesus Christ as his savior, Studd yearned to do more in life than just reap fame as an athlete. When one of his two older brothers became seriously ill, Studd decided that life was too short to not try to make a difference. Studd became a missionary in China for several years (where he met his wife, Priscilla, with whom he had four daughters), and then moved on to India, Sudan, and Congo. Everywhere he went, conversions followed, and Studd took to calling his proselytizing a form of "muscular Christianity." Studd's determination was so strong that some of his actions and words caused controversy, including his pronouncement that worldly matters are trivial compared to the work of Christ. Following his death in 1931, Studd's legacy of missionary service on different continents continued to thrive and still does so today. Combining archival materials with dramatic re-enactments, this illuminating biographical profile is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Jesus Meets the Gay Man ★★★

(2018) 107 min. DVD: \$17.99. Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The thoughtful and funny documentary *Jesus Meets the Gay Man* begins with the observation that nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus have anything to say about life on the LGBTQ spectrum. Filmmakers Jean-Claude Lafond and Timothy F. H. Doucette take that as an invitation to speculate on



The Work ★★★★★

(2017) 89 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Men's support and therapy groups inevitably touch on so-called father issues for those participating in the fellowship of healing, including absent fathers, abusive fathers, emotionally-withholding fathers, etc. Sons left adrift and damaged will seek something—even something wrong—to compensate. In this outstanding documentary from filmmakers Jaius McLeary and Gethin Aldous, male convicts at California's Folsom State Prison gather in long-running therapy groups to talk about their dads

and much else. But there is an interesting twist to the process: non-convict men from outside Folsom's gates are also invited to be part of the therapy setting, bringing their own problems into the brotherhood of felons. *The Work* follows three civilians who gradually begin to participate in meetings, listening and watching, until it's time for each to open up. A free-roaming camera captures reactions from non-prisoners and prisoners alike, from quiet admissions to violent rages to mourning aloud. Per rules set by therapist-facilitators from a nonprofit service, all of the participants have to leave their gang affiliations at the door. So viewers see some remarkable sights, including a heavily-tattooed, former neo-Nazi laying sympathetic hands on men of color and sharing hard-earned wisdom. A raw and powerful documentary, this is highly recommended.

Editor's Choice. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

what the Messiah might have said to a gay man if they'd met. A series of often quite funny comic sketches address that potential encounter in an irreverent yet also innocent way, while other skits reflect on Christ's penchant for miracles and hanging out with the lower classes. The best piece here is actually very sweet: Jesus asking the apostles (as he does in scripture) who they think he is. The ensuing conversation—lubricated with wine—reimagines Christ and his posse as bonding bros. Between the laughs are more serious reflections on what it means to reconcile negative views of the LGBTQ community with the desire of many of their members to be part of a Christian church. Extras include additional interviews and deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

One Mind ★★

(2015) 81 min. In Mandarin w/English subtitles. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). DRA. Juno Films.

Shot in the Zhenru Chan Monastery in China's Jiangxi Province—a monastic village in a territory that is so rural the government allows it to remain open, despite official oppression of monks elsewhere—the illuminating documentary *One Mind* is a contemplative, quiet film. Adhering to a 1,200-year-old tradition, the Chan Buddhist monks living at Zhenru spend most of their days working, meditating, and living in silence, tending to the commonplace with a singular focus that is best described by the film's title. Director Edward Burger succeeds beautifully in capturing that heightened focus that overcomes distractions of the mind. *One Mind* has no narration and the few conversations between monks captured here take place during relaxed moments—getting one's head shaved, or discussing a crop schedule. Instead, the film immerses viewers in an array of images and sounds: wind blowing through a bamboo forest, rain splattering on a stone floor. Burger alternates close-ups with wide shots to both provide context and exude a sense of worldly oneness. While the monks clearly lead hard and rigorous lives, the film also strongly suggests the rewards of enlightenment. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Robert Hicks Story ★★

(2018) 40 min. DVD: \$19.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

Robert Hicks, a successful British publisher of Christian books, is the engaging and often sympathetic figure at the center of Gary Wilkinson's documentary about overcoming the travails of youth to take one's place in the world. Born in Birmingham during a 1940 air raid, Hicks grew up burdened by physically abusive parents, dyslexia, and ankyloglossia (commonly known as being tongue-tied). Living in a Dickensian nightmare, Hicks found the strength to fight back against his father (decking him one night, which put an end to beatings). But it was only after he fled

home while still a boy that he was able to find comfort and opportunity elsewhere, as well as gain help for his communication and reading problems. From there Hicks willed himself to become a successful businessman who was guided by faith. Hicks, who sounds exactly like Michael Caine when he speaks, is a humble yet appealing straight-talker whose story will serve as an inspiration to others. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

There Are Jews Here ★★

(2018) 90 min. DVD: \$99: public libraries; \$350 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Brad Lichtenstein and Morgan Elise Johnson's documentary looks at a number of small Jewish communities around the country that are in danger of disappearing as the result of declining membership. One is in Latrobe, PA, where octogenarian congregation leader Mickey Radman—who describes himself as one of the group's younger members and relies on a family that has moved away but drives regularly to services to provide a minyan—must accede to selling their building and merging with a community in New Jersey (one of the most poignant moments is the final Latrobe bat mitzvah). Another example is Laredo, TX, where Uri Druker is futilely trying to reinvigorate the local community before considering moving to San Antonio with his wife, a Catholic convert. In Butte, MT, the focus is on Nancy Oyer, whose leadership of the community is threatened when she falls ill and the congregation is forced to rely on its former president and student rabbis. But the community in Dothan, AL, seems to have a more positive future—a benefactor is offering \$50,000 to Jewish families who choose to

move to the town, and the film documents the successful recruitment of one family from California. An affecting portrait of religious communities struggling to survive, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

11/8/16 ★★½

(2017) 104 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

In his previous documentary 11/4/08 (VL-3/11), filmmaker Jeff Deutchman served up an on-the-ground overview of the 2008 U.S. presidential election, closely following the contest that ended in Barack Obama's victory. It was a short and basically celebratory film, which he now follows up with a longer, more balanced look at the 2016 election of Donald Trump. Divided into three parts—"Morning," "Afternoon," and "Evening"—11/8/16 draws on interviews with more than a dozen supporters of Trump and Hillary Clinton to depict the shift in mood that happened when results began to trickle in, indicating the likelihood of an upset that would prove all of the polls wrong. Unfortunately, while the observations of a few interviewees—including an Alabama man casting his first ballot after serving three decades on death row before being exonerated and released—carry a fair amount of dramatic punch, and the comments of women excitedly contemplating the inauguration of the first female president are of historical interest, most of the talk here is partisan boilerplate, however likable the speakers might be. Still, Deutch-



Driving with Selvi ★★

(2014) 74 min. In English & Kannada w/English subtitles. DVD: \$30 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. Closed captioned.

A devout Hindu woman finds her purpose in Elisa Paloschi's sympathetic documentary. Selvi's achievement might not seem so unusual in the United States, but she is South India's first female taxi driver. When she was 14, Selvi's brother arranged for her to marry a man who ended up abusing her. Although she wanted to kill herself, she got in a bus and left instead. In secret, she took driving lessons, but at the time didn't even know how to ride a bicycle and felt uncomfortable talking to strangers. Now she converses easily with customers while driving. "I may look delicate," she says, "but not in the driver's seat." In recalling her troubled childhood, Selvi says she never knew her father and was neglected by her mother. After years on her own, she meets and falls in love with Viji. Although her first husband beat her because he expected a larger dowry, Viji marries Selvi for Selvi. Afterward, the couple start a family, but once Selvi's mother finds out she's doing well, she pressures her daughter to take her in, which Selvi does her best to resist. Paloschi catches up with the couple after their daughter, Hariga, is born. Viji doesn't want his wife to drive, even though they could use the money, but after a few more years the situation changes in surprising ways as Selvi reconnects with her closest friends and favorite relatives. She also picks up new skills that prove what an unstoppable force an abused and neglected woman can be when she finds the love and support she deserves. Featuring both the full-length version and a 52-minuted abridged edition, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

man and his co-directors—each operating in a different region of the country—chose a good cross-section of the electorate, most of whom offer their views in sedate tones. Anyone looking for a sketch of how the country behaved on November 8, 2016—whether you rejoiced at the result or were horrified by it—will find this to be a solid if unremarkable record. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Act & Punishment: The Pussy Riot Trials

★★★

(2018) 90 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Evgeny Mitta's documentary centers on the Russian all-female Pussy Riot collective of performance artists, who famously became a thorn in the side of the Kremlin starting in 2011. Given to noisy, musical protests while wearing ski masks in public places, Pussy Riot's guerrilla tactics gained traction with YouTube videos and extensive press coverage. Eventually, three of the women were arrested following a controversial protest at a church, followed by lengthy stints in jail awaiting trial. Footage from those arrests, court proceedings, and related events are painfully fascinating to watch, all resulting in two-year prison sentences handed out for "hooliganism." This heavy-handed response sparked an international backlash from many, including musical artists such as Paul McCartney and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Pussy Riot members are interviewed before and after their punishments, looking weary and anxious for some semblance of normalcy. A timely documentary about free speech in a semi-autocratic country, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Blood Business ★★★

(2017) 52 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$250 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmakers Marie Maurisse, François Pilet, and Pierre Monnard's documentary looks at the "new cannibalism," a European label attached to the ghoulish, multibillion dollar blood plasma industry. *Blood Business* claims that there is much the average person likely doesn't know about the blood industry. For example, 80% of blood donations are sold to private pharmaceutical companies that use plasma to create new medications worth billions of dollars on the market. Additionally, those companies and others harvest plasma by paying people for their blood in the U.S., where it is legal (unlike Europe, where it's not). The film hops around Germany, Switzerland, Portugal, and France, interviewing various CEOs, health officials, politicians, lab scientists, and patients who are all part of the blood and plasma supply-and-demand chain. But the strongest material is shot in Cleveland, OH, where people living below the poverty line sell their blood for \$20 a pop,



Newtown ★★★★★

(2015) 83 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Kim A. Snyder's documentary examining the aftermath of the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, takes on even greater relevance following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, that sparked nationwide protests by students against gun violence. Wisely, this film does not dive into the debate over the Second Amendment or gun control, nor does it seek to hang blame on political or media factions (aside from a few fleeting comments aimed at feckless politicians). Instead, *Newtown* focuses on the emotional angst still lingering in the small town and among the families of those who lost loved ones to the carnage. The film's subjects speak with a sincerity that barely conceals the pain they still carry, and their efforts to make sense of one of the most senseless crimes imaginable is heartbreaking. In many ways, *Newtown* serves as an elegiac meditation on death and the challenges faced by those who must soldier on after experiencing profound tragedy. "There are monsters that walk among us," one shooting survivor calmly explains. "There are people that think unthinkable thoughts and do unthinkable things." A haunting, mournful film, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$95 for public libraries and \$350 for colleges and universities from Ro*co Films Educational, www.rocofilms.com.] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

typically two or even three times a week. A hidden camera takes viewers inside one of the several for-profit blood-purchasing businesses conveniently located in the poorest sections of the city—here, people who were lined up outside the door at 7 a.m. are now seen seated in rows and rows of chairs, their blood flowing through tubes in a scene that is strongly reminiscent of an industrial dairy farm. Some of the regular donors speak of scams that are run by drug dealers with their clients' blood, while others explain how easy it is to sell blood even if you have diseases that disqualify you. A disturbing film about an exploitive business unfamiliar to most, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

For Ahkeem ★★★

(2017) 90 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

A powerful, fly-on-the-wall documentary shot over a couple of years in one African American teen girl's life in the slums of St. Louis, *For Ahkeem* underscores the many obstacles that black children face in the so-called school-to-prison (or school-to-grave) pipeline. With recent deregulation taking place in the U.S. Department of Education—stoking fears that more black kids will be (as statistics show) suspended or expelled for minor discipline problems—filmmakers Jeremy S. Levine and Landon Van Soest's documentary is particularly timely and valuable. The focus is on 17-year-old Daje Shelton, an ambitious but unruly girl. When a judge gives her no choice but to enroll in a school for at-risk kids, Daje (nicknamed Boonie) takes her classroom work and college prospects seriously. But eventually she proves to be disruptive to other students, jeopardizing her

hard-won victories, which then threatens her with a dismal future. Complicating matters is Boonie's unexpected pregnancy, a criminal boyfriend, and rioting in St. Louis County following the police killing of Michael Brown. The arrival of baby Ahkeem leaves Boonie wondering what steps forward are available to fulfill herself and assure opportunities for an African American boy in a society where they are marginalized. The real heartbreak lies in the fact that there is nothing unique about Boonie's story and her diminishing choices. A powerful documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Grammar of Happiness ★★★1/2

(2015) 52 min. DVD: \$49; public libraries; \$99; high schools; \$225; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. SDH captioned.

Who knew that the tale of an ex-Christian missionary's 30-year relationship with an indigenous Amazonian tribe of hunter-gatherers would result in an extensive dustup with the most famous linguist in the English language? That is the enthralling story told in filmmaker Michael O'Neill's documentary *The Grammar of Happiness*, which centers on Daniel Everett, a red-bearded American who initially brought his wife and kids annually to preach to the Pirahã people, a tribe notorious for eschewing outside visitors and influences. Surviving some scary encounters with hostile elders, Everett was eventually accepted by the Pirahã, whose questions about and challenges to his faith ultimately led him to become an atheist. That resulted in Everett's estrangement from his devout family, and a decision to complete academic work to defend his extraordinary claim that the Pirahã language does not rely on "recursion," i.e., the ability to build sentences within sentences.

Everett's publishing on the subject was immediately dismissed by Noam Chomsky, whose contention that recursion is the basis of language has long been the gold standard in linguistics. Chomsky appears here to refute Everett, although the latter finds defenders at other prestigious universities. Wrapped around this drama is another in which Everett is suddenly denied permission to visit the Pirahã again, perhaps forever. A fascinating documentary that takes viewers from the river bank of a reclusive insular community in South America to the halls of MIT, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Lake of Betrayal ★★★1/2

(2017) 57 min. DVD: \$19.95 (\$125 w/PPR). Vision Maker Media. Closed captioned.

A deeply disturbing documentary about a little-remembered cultural tragedy in the 1960s, filmmaker Paul Lamont's *Lake of Betrayal* reveals yet another shameful instance of indigenous people in America being robbed of both rights and land that was lawfully ceded to them via treaties. The focus here is on the building of the Kinzua Dam on the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania, which displaced the Seneca Nation of Indians from ancestral lands in breach of a treaty signed by no less than George Washington. As Roosevelt-era federally-funded public works programs turned into a postwar jumpstart for the economy, dam-building remained a popular solution for meeting heightened demand for electricity. The decision to build the Kinzua Dam despite the objections of Seneca Indians and others resulted in a 27-mile reservoir that flooded beautiful reservation land that not only long supported a population but also was the burial ground for generation upon generation. The full story of the Kinzua project—which was touted as a solution to flooding problems in Pittsburgh but was actually a for-profit hydroelectric giveaway—makes for compelling if also sober viewing, employing a wealth of archival footage capturing the heroic efforts of Seneca activists to try to stop a catastrophe. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Mully ★★★1/2

(2015) 81 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

In this inspiring documentary, the titular Charles Mully is a rags-to-riches Kenyan who, after being abandoned at the age of six, begged and survived on the streets for 10 years until a farmer took him in as a hand. Mully's hard work paid off and he moved into management, saving his money to buy businesses of his own. Eventually, Mully became a multi-millionaire, and one day he felt a calling to use his wealth and resources to help street children in Nairobi. Stunning his family, Mully announced that their home would now become a sanctuary for unruly or-

phans—a profound change for the Mully clan after years of comfortable living. Filmmaker Scott Haze reconstructs this history through interviews with Mully and his family (in time, everyone got on board with the big changes), as well as some of those now-grown orphans. Haze even captures an underlying hint of comedy as the population of abandoned kids swells to the point where a move to a larger tract of land and bigger dwelling become necessary. Interestingly, having way, way too many kids around looks a lot less stressful than caring for three or four, or at least that's the sense one gets watching Mrs. Mully breeze through her day with boys and girls crawling over everything. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The New Radical ★★★

(2017) 109 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Radicalism has long been associated with the left, but filmmaker Adam Bhala Lough's documentary focuses on a new breed of radical who gravitates to the extreme right. These new radicals with anti-government views and an emphasis on personal freedom harken back historically to figures such as John Milton, whose *Areopagitica* (1644)—offering a defense of absolute liberty regarding publication—is espoused as a credo by Lough's first example: Cody Wilson, an Arkansas native who invented a plastic gun called the Liberator, which can be made on a 3D printer. Lough follows government efforts to squelch Wilson's use of the Internet to promote the product, after which Wilson heads to the courts to argue against any abridgement of his right to disseminate instructions for making

the gun (one interviewee compares those efforts to prohibiting an online recipe for chocolate chip cookies). Lough's second subject is British-Iranian computer programmer Amir Taaki, a major force in the creation of the virtual currency bitcoin, which he opines will be the death of the banking industry. The film not only gives both men ample opportunity to explain their crypto-anarchist, anti-establishment views, but also follows their joint effort to establish Dark Wallet, a project that would keep web transactions anonymous, which naturally invites law enforcement scrutiny. The aim of Wilson and Taaki, as well as WikiLeaks's Julian Assange—who is interviewed here, along with scholars and journalists—is to upend the political, social, and economic status quo. A provocative film that will surely encourage animated discussion, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Pornocracy ★★★

(2018) 77 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from most distributors).

Mark Felt, the Watergate informant known by a nickname derived from the most famous "adult" movie of his day, advised Woodward and Bernstein in the film *All the President's Men* to "follow the money." And that is precisely what Ovidie, the French writer-journalist (and former porn actress-director) turned documentarian does in her film about the evolution of her former business as a result of the Internet. In effect, she mourns the demise of old-fashioned cinematic pornography, which she suggests held itself to certain standards (and was restricted to viewers of a proper age). Her focus is on the proliferation of porn websites that offer content for free



War on the EPA ★★★

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0373-8.

What happens when a U.S. cabinet position is occupied by an avowed enemy of the associated department? This kind of "hostile takeover" occurred when President Trump nominated Scott Pruitt as head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Filmmaker James Jacoby's PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary examines Pruitt's mission to undo "eight years of hell" under Obama, notably what he calls the "war on coal," anti-pollution rules enacted by "radical environmentalists," and the "overreach" of scientists on the issue of climate change. As Attorney General of Oklahoma, Pruitt waged war on Washington, forging partnerships between GOP politicians, lobbyists, and gas and oil industry executives, while also initiating a flurry of lawsuits and blocking actions. Riding high on the Tea Party revolution, Pruitt fought federal rules and promoted doubt on climate change. Installed at the EPA, Pruitt has been effective at seeking budget cutbacks, reducing the size of federally protected land and parks, and relaxing the rules on clean air and water, all while leaving key positions unfilled. And at every point the gas and oil industry has been given a "seat at the table." The atmosphere between new appointees and old department holdovers is tense, with minimal cooperation and communication on both sides. Although the currently beleaguered Pruitt is not interviewed here, there is plenty of input from both critics and Pruitt supporters. Looking at a prime example of Trump chaos in a department where political cultures collide, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

to anybody—particularly YouPorn, which German entrepreneur Fabian Thylmann built into an industry colossus by gobbling up rivals, shattering old content taboos, sidestepping restrictions meant to insure that users were not minors, and employing convoluted business models to hide the enormous profits being made (not so much from online traffic, Ovidie concludes, but from money laundering). In trying to understand how the business has changed and disentangle the mystery of who is actually behind the companies that dominate Internet porn, Ovidie interviews producers who thrived making “adult” movies in the DVD era but have now left the business, women in Eastern Europe who are exploited making web content, and journalists who have spent years investigating YouPorn and others. *Pornocracy* is an intriguing study of a mega-business that operates mostly in the shadows, even if its notion that *Deep Throat* represents the good old days seems weird. Recommended, with the caveat that some scenes here are only a camera angle away from being sexually explicit. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Rape of Recy Taylor ★★

(2018) 91 min. DVD: \$69.95 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Nancy Buirski's documentary centers on the 1944 gang-rape of the titular 24-year-old African American woman in small-town Alabama, which was followed by a complete lack of justice at the hands of a racist system. Archival materials (including re-enacted depositions), extended excerpts from interviews with Taylor's brother and sister, and comments from historians Crystal Feimster and Danielle L. McGuire (who discuss not only the specific case of Taylor but also the larger worldview it represented) bring home the sad reality of how seven young white men, brought up to consider the casual abuse of a black woman as their birthright, escaped scot-free (Rosa Parks is introduced as a young NAACP activist whose attempt to interview the Taylor family is brutally obstructed by the local sheriff). The film closes on a powerful note with a brief glimpse of the aged, infirm Taylor (who died in December 2017 at the age of 97) in a nursing home, along with an account of how she overcame her experience to build a fulfilling life. Unfortunately, the documentary is rather clumsily structured, and the periodic inclusion of clips from the so-called “race films” made by directors such as Oscar Micheaux for African American audiences proves a debatable choice, blurring the line between reality and fiction. Despite the film's flaws, however, the plight of Recy Taylor (whose story Oprah Winfrey briefly alluded to in a Golden Globes speech) illuminates a culture of inequality that existed in full force not so long ago (and still echoes in contemporary society), where

profound injustices were not only permitted but also encouraged. Recommended, overall. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Thank You for the Rain ★★

(2017) 87 min. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

The effects of climate change are shown on an intensely personal level in this documentary by Norwegian director Julia Dahr and Kenyan farmer Kisilu Musya. After Musya and his family's small plot suffers from a severe drought followed by a torrential storm, he takes the lead in learning about global warming and instructing his neighbors about its impact on weather. Musya's collaboration with Dahr to document his work in Kenya leads to a visit to Europe, where he observes a level of expertise he would like to see emulated in his homeland. The trip also paves the way for an invitation to attend a meeting of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP21, in Paris, where he offers deeply felt testimony about what he and his fellow Kenyans have endured, and urges international action. The result is not at all what he hoped for, as the conference ends in empty promises without any practical effect. Despite this less than hopeful outcome, *Thank You for the Rain* makes for a compelling plea for action on climate change, thanks to the personality of Musya. The footage of him working the land with his wife and children, gloomily observing the destruction wrought by drought and rain, and talking with other farmers about what they must learn to expect, is both heartbreaking and inspiring. By film's end, Musya comes to embody the passion that is needed, but sadly lacking, in world leaders. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Trophy ★★

(2017) 110 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

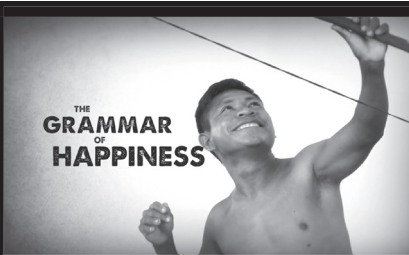
With an American president whose two oldest sons are big-game hunters, and whose administration recently eliminated a U.S. ban on imported elephant-parts trophies, now seems like a good time to talk about the value of hunting. Are there good reasons to do it? Is there something wrong with hunting as a sport? Should conservationists exploit certain animals economically in order to discourage poaching? These questions are addressed in filmmakers Shaul Schwarz and Christina Clusiau's probing, sometimes disquieting documentary *Trophy*. Viewers meet diehard hunters, including a father accompanying his son on the latter's first kill of a buck, and several wealthy elites willing to part with hundreds of thousands of dollars to bag big game. Also interviewed is a lion breeder whose captive animals are not part of a sanctuary, but instead are raised to be shot by weekend warriors. On the other side

of the divide about hunting are seasoned protectors who sometimes take radical steps, such as sawing the horns off tranquilized rhinos to lessen incentives for their slaughter. *Trophy* doesn't take an absolutist stand one way or another, proposing that there may be good reasons to hunt at times (predator control) and save animals at others (to avoid extinction). Some of what is seen here will be disturbing to animal lovers, although much else will be heartening. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

When the Saints ★★½

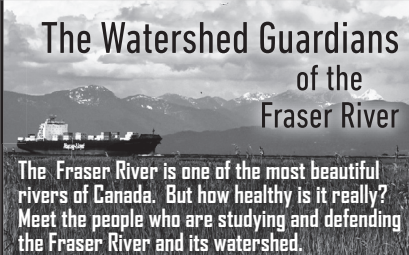
(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

A curious film that sometimes conflates the scourge of human trafficking with ordinary, healthy sexual impulses, filmmaker Dan Parris's *When the Saints* looks at an honorable mission to create a shelter for trafficked girls and women in Malawi, Africa. But a broad streak of well-meaning yet rather naïve observations linking garden variety desire and libido with sex slavery and monstrous exploitation undoes some of the goodwill here. The leader of this African effort, an American named David Peterka, confesses that after a spell of being a youthful stud, he began to feel guilty and wanted to purge superficial lust. Why he didn't just make a commitment



THE GRAMMAR OF HAPPINESS

DANIEL EVERETT is an American linguist and author best known for his study of the Amazon Basin's Pirahã people and their language. The film explores whether one man's journey into the heart of the Amazon can redefine our understanding of human language.



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"An alarming documentary on a perennial hot-button issue, this is recommended." - Video Librarian



Following the Ninth CC

A film about the global impact of Beethoven's final symphony. The film, released in mid-2013, has screened in over 250 cities in the United States and around the globe, with more to come.

"Thrilling, smartly assembled and gracefully paced" - The New York Times

to pursue more meaningful and respectful sexual relationships is Peterka's business, but he did decide his calling was to go to Malawi and try to help, while also preaching that the problem of predation begins with men allowing sexual interest in their hearts in the first place. Over time, Peterka is joined by more young evangelicals, and the shelter takes shape. While it's very hard to find fault with *When the Saints*, especially when considering the dire need to rescue enslaved girls and women, it's a shame that the mission is a bit undercut here by calling for a sublimation of part of our humanity. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Where's Daddy? ★★★

(2018) 106 min. DVD: \$19.99. Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Deadbeat dads are regularly excoriated as men who carelessly abandon responsibility to their children, and while they come in all skin colors, media attention has often focused on African Americans. Filmmaker Rel Dowdell's documentary argues that true deadbeat dads deserve censure whatever their race, but it centers on black men who try to meet their obligations yet for some perfectly reasonable cause might fall temporarily behind in payments. Often, courts will respond by sentencing the father to jail, removing his ability to earn money and driving him even further into arrears, thereby encouraging a vicious cycle that only makes the situation worse, sometimes resulting in lost jobs. *Where's Daddy?* is largely based on interviews with men having first-hand experience—both well-known individuals like pro football receiver Fred Barnett and rap artist Freeway, and ordinary guys who

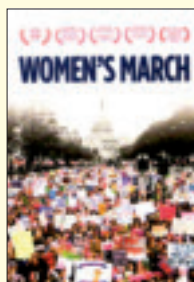
recall their own traumatic childhoods—as well as experts and religious figures who have provided counseling. While not overlooking the bias in favor of mothers that is inherent in the child-support system (as well as the inclination of some women to exploit it), and honestly acknowledging that some fathers really are stereotypical deadbeat dads, *Where's Daddy?* explores the unintended impact that the process can have on fathers trying to do their best—which often further fractures families by weakening the bonds between fathers and children. The film offers no simple solutions, but by arguing that the child-support system as a whole is in need of repair, it will encourage useful debate. Extras include audience reaction and Q&A at a screening, a deleted interview, and a song from the film. Taking a balanced approach to an incendiary subject, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

LAW & CRIME

Cruel and Unusual ★★★1/2

(2017) 102 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from www.amazon.com).

British filmmaker Vadim Jean first explored the story of the so-called "Angola 3" in his 2010 documentary *In the Land of the Free*. His new film offers greater depth and an update to this harrowing story of justice gone haywire. In 1972, three African American convicts at Louisiana's Angola Prison—Robert King, Herman Wallace, and Albert Woodfox—were accused of murdering a prison guard. Convicted on flimsy eyewitness testimony and without physical evidence, the trio were subjected to long-term solitary confinement—imposed by



Women's March ★★★

(2017) 30 min. DVD: \$79; public libraries & high schools; \$149: colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

On January 21, 2017, the day following President Donald Trump's inauguration, four million individuals, many wearing signature pink hats, participated in the Women's March in major cities across the United States as part of the largest protest in American history. Rather than focusing on speakers for the marches, filmmaker Mischa Hedges's documentary tells the impactful stories of five diverse women who participated in marches in Washington, D.C., Boston, San Francisco, Oakland, and Santa Rosa. Gretchen, a scientist, was moved to march on behalf of support for women in scientific research and to emphasize the reality of climate change. Lila, a refugee from Afghanistan, created a bright poster that said "refugees add to the fabric of our country"; she felt that dissent was a gift her parents gave her in coming to this democratic country. Eighty-eight-year-old Shira decided to march against anti-Semitism and racism and be a part of a larger community. Scenes captured from above and within the various marches accentuate the size and enthusiasm of the crowds, while emotional highpoints are also included from speeches in the different marches by Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Kamala Harris, poet Malkia Cyril, and activist Gloria Steinem. A fine documentary that captures the enormous energy and passion of women (and men) engaging in democratic activism on an historic day, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Root)

the state's Department of Corrections—that appeared to violate constitutional law. King was released from prison in 2001 after his conviction was overturned, Wallace died from liver cancer three days after his 2013 release (which was ordered by a state judge), and Woodfox remained in solitary until a plea deal release in 2016 despite having his conviction overturned three different times. Vadim was denied access to Angola, and was therefore forced to rely on photographs and archival footage to provide insight into the physical aspects of the four-decade solitary confinement sentences. Yet even without setting foot in Angola, Vadim brilliantly captures the soul of the three men and their refusal to be crushed by endless years in isolation. King and Woodfox provide eloquent testimony about their suffering—Wallace was too ill to be interviewed—in this film that offers a harsh rebuke aimed at the casual cruelty dished out by a penal system that arrogantly refuses to answer for its actions. A disturbing and provocative documentary about punishment and the indefatigable spirit to survive, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Life After Life ★★★

(2018) 91 min. DVD: \$69.95 (\$300 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

The difficulties faced by inmates who after many years behind bars are paroled and struggle to assimilate into society are explored in Tamara Perkins's documentary. She focuses on three men—Noel, Harrison, and Chris—whose time in San Quentin she sketches through footage and interviews regarding their backgrounds and crimes, before proceeding to follow the trio into the outside world after their release. There is understandable tension as the men reconnect with family, friends, and in some cases fiancées, and they all face the challenge of making their own choices and fending for themselves after having their daily routines carefully circumscribed and regulated for so long. For two, the outcome will be basically positive: one will take advantage of educational opportunities, while the other will find solace in family and faith, although he will have to contend with losses as well. For the third, the result will be less favorable, as after a promising start he is drawn back into crime and winds up once again behind bars. Perkins's style is direct and free of editorializing; she obviously came to know the men over the course of filming, but while clearly sympathizing with their plights, she does not excuse either their past actions or their missteps on parole. *Life After Life* serves up an honest, unvarnished portrait of the obstacles parolees must overcome in reintegrating into society after serving long prison terms. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Bird Brain ★★★1/2

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0356-1.

Aired on PBS's NOVA series, *Bird Brain* persuasively demonstrates that birds are intelligent. Through various experiments and observations, scientists from Austria, England, the United States, France, and New Zealand show that birds can infer, problem solve, repeat rewarding behavior, and be adaptive. Not surprisingly, the crow family—made up of ravens, jays, jackdaws, and crows—plus the many species of parrots have the largest brains among birds. But scientists have also learned that even small birds have more neurons than other mammals with larger brains. While experts agree that many bird activities—such as flying, coordinating patterns of flight, and egg nesting—are instinctive, they now hypothesize that birds may act more like humans than we thought. Several fascinating experiments involving New Caledonian crows and Kea parrots found in New Zealand illustrate that these birds will delay gratification for a preferred food, work together to achieve a goal, and manipulate tools such as a ball, stick, and string to grab food. Kea parrots even like to play by stacking cups, just as a child would do. And a jackdaw could watch and correctly read a scientist's eye and facial movements to discover which cup the food was hiding beneath. Since crows and parrots live in groups, scientists hypothesize that social hierarchies enable these birds to handle more complex sets of relationships, which can increase intelligence. A fascinating documentary with touches of humor, this beautifully-lensed film is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Root)

H is for Hawk ★★★

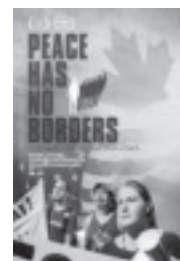
(2017) 55 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0045-4.

Prize-winning British author Helen MacDonald has had a lifelong love affair with birds of prey, particularly goshawks, as chronicled in her titular 2014 memoir. Goshawks are "magnificent phantoms"—endangered in Britain until recent years—who are often seen only during the breeding season. Filmmaker Mike Birkhead's PBS-aired documentary follows MacDonald's journey and her mission to bond with hawks, a job requiring patience and a "fierce clarity." MacDonald raised and trained a goshawk in the wake of the devastating death of her photojournalist father. As part of her continuing healing process, she follows birding experts into the woods, observes goshawk nesting sites, and selects one bird to train from scratch. Goshawks exist to hunt and kill, a process MacDonald accepts as an eternal and necessary part of the natural world. As narrator, MacDonald



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Vista/EndHunger.org

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1.5 Stay Alive ★★★★★

(2015) 55 min. DVD: \$39; public libraries; \$79; high schools; \$150; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR.

In North America, climate change is sometimes a source of benign humor, such as when someone thanks global warming for an unseasonably toasty winter day. But for those under the most immediate threat of climate change, the situation is no laughing matter. Lucian Segura's alarming documentary begins in the Caribbean region, where the average temperature has increased by one-degree Celsius since the middle of the last century. Residents of Guyana report that due to arctic ice melt, sea levels are rising at five times the international average, resulting in faster-building and more devastating major-category tropical storms, threats to coral reefs, and negative effects on fisheries, while also stoking fears about the future. The film argues that a mere half-degree higher temperature will produce catastrophic results in the Caribbean and beyond. Moving north to Florida, Segura examines the impact of rising sea levels that are predicted to erase much of the land mass, including the Miami area. Miami-Dade County has invested in a multi-million dollar pump system to address immediate concerns. But critics of the pumps would prefer that the money was spent on preventative measures to help stabilize—and even possibly reverse—melting polar ice. Although the effects of global warming—especially in the Caribbean area—are predicted to be huge, the cumulative causes of greenhouse gasses mostly come from elsewhere in the world. Addressing the issue is beyond the capabilities of any single nation, and will require a concerted effort from “team Earth.” Also featuring outstanding, rhythm-infused musical performances addressing the titular subject with passion and conviction, this documentary designed to increase awareness and consciousness about the planet's most pressing problem is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: J, H, C, P. (C. Block)



describes the trial and error process, marked by daily small gains as the trainer works to gain the bird's trust, a feat requiring time and patience (it does no good to menace or punish a hawk). Although she previously worked in isolation, MacDonald now partners up with another hawk fancier, which helps draw her back to both the natural world and the wider sphere of human contact. A film that is as much about MacDonald's quest as it is about the world of hawks, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Killer Hurricanes ★★★★★

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0231-1.

Was there a time when hurricanes were as bad as the storms currently hitting the United States and the Caribbean? Filmmaker Oliver Twinch's PBS-aided NOVA documentary takes a look at hurricanes, focusing in particular on the so-called Great Hurricane of 1780, a perfect storm that was so massive it took nine days to cross the Caribbean, ultimately killing some 22,000 people. *Killer Hurricanes* follows the work of various hurricane historians who are piecing together facts about the 1780 disaster from written accounts, computer simulations, and clues from ruins. What they discover is a monster-size event that one hopes we will never see the likes of again. In addition to the 1780 hurricane, the film also explores other massive hurricanes from time past, with some of the most interesting material devoted to researchers' almost miraculous methods for looking back into

pre-history. Deep samples from the Earth's crust and ancient stalagmites in caves reveal clear pictures of hurricane activity from eons ago that help scientists understand patterns and causes. An interesting exploration of a frighteningly timely subject, this is recommended. [Note: also newly available at the same price are *Killer Floods* and *Killer Volcanoes*.] Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

Oceans: The Mystery of the Missing Plastic ★★★★★

(2016) 52 min. DVD: \$39; public libraries; \$79; high schools; \$159; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Joining the numerous documentaries that have been made about the environmental debacle of plastics filling our oceans, filmmaker Vincent Pérezio's *Oceans: The Mystery of the Missing Plastic* focuses on extensive and often surprising research into the amount of plastic in the world's seas, where the plastic has gone, and what happens to it over time. In answering some of these questions, scientists have found novel ways of tracking the travel paths of objects caught in crosscurrents that find their way to resting places in deep canyons, among other unnatural graves. But that only explains part of the mystery of hidden plastic, and the film looks at cutting-edge research that may provide more insight. The uglier question is: what happens to plastic after years of being in sea water? The answer is horrifying, describing a potential destruction of the food chain and alteration of ocean ecosystems. A solid complement to

Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch (VL-9/17) and *A Plastic Ocean* (VL-3/17), this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

Physics & Engineering: Solar Energy

★★★★

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

Part of the *Show Me Science: Advanced Technology* series, this fast-paced, instructional film looks at solar energy technology, exploring both its potential as a clean renewable energy source, and the possibility for career opportunities. According to the narrator, one hour of the sun's enormous energy would be enough to supply the world's power needs for a year. Three types of solar energy systems are illustrated that harness and use solar energy: photovoltaics (PV), in which sunlight is directly converted to electricity, and cells are made up of three layers of phosphorus, crystalized silicon, and boron; solar heating and cooling systems (SHC), where thermal energy is captured to provide hot water and air conditioning; and concentrating solar power (CSP), which uses thermal energy on a much larger scale for utility systems. Three CSP processes are illustrated for solar capture: parabolic-shaped troughs that capture sunlight and heat tubes of liquid running to a central collection system that is hot enough to produce steam to power a turbine; parabolic-shaped dishes that concentrate the sun's energy and focus it to a single point; and a central receiver (or power tower) that uses mirrors to focus light that heats liquid salt and may be stored for later use. Passive solar design in house construction is also covered: built with many windows and skylights, a house facing south would capture heat and light, while awnings and tall trees could provide shade. In the future, other materials could produce more cost-efficient hybrid photovoltaic cells. Offering students a clear introduction to innovations in solar energy, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (T. Root)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Care ★★★★★1/2

(2017) 56 min. DVD: \$99; high schools & public libraries; \$350; colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57448-446-5.

Filmmaker Deirdre Fishel's documentary offers insights into the world of home care for the elderly and the terminally ill. The film cites statistics showing that 90 percent of Americans want to age in their homes, but caring for older people as their health begins to fray requires significant investments of time, energy, and emotion. Three cases of at-home care are highlighted here: a 93-year-old

woman with no next of kin who is cared for by an illegal immigrant from Costa Rica, a wheelchair-bound man in a rural town whose caregiver is the mother of five, and a married former CBS executive whose world has been destroyed by Parkinson's disease. While the quality of care is not an issue—all three caregivers seen here come across as sincere, mature, and professional women—the related problems are considerable. Even though maintaining 24/7 care is very expensive (the wife of the former CBS executive says they are facing bankruptcy due to costs), caregivers are mostly poorly paid. And the Costa Rican-born caregiver faces her own dilemma in attempts to gain legal residency. An impressive exploration of difficult subject matter, *Care* illuminates many of the issues surrounding home healthcare. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Cyborgs Among Us ★★

(2017) 52 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$250 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Rafel Duran Torrent's dazzling future-is-here documentary opens with shots of a quiet, old-growth forest. Into this sylvan scene steps a slight, quirky fellow with a stylish, bowl-shaped haircut and an antenna sticking out the back of his head. This device is a flexible stick that resembles the antennae of ants, and it is rooted in his brain, which allows him to hear sounds that humans can't ordinarily hear and see parts of the light spectrum that our eyes are not built to witness. When he looks toward the sky, data appears in his vision field. Rather than feeling separated from the natural world due to this technology, he says he enjoys nature now more than ever. Welcome to the brave new world of cybernetic organisms—"cyborgs" for short—a term coined almost 60 years ago when scientists envisioned physically augmented astronauts wandering the moon and planets without bulky spacesuits. We're not there yet, but cybernetic technology has been driven by other needs in the areas of medicine, commercial industries, and pioneering sciences. State-of-the-art prosthetics anchored in bone are capable of doing what real limbs can't. Cochlear implants restore hearing, but are also computers with the potential to be programmed for more. And the field has moved well past simply compensating for physical impairments: current research and development is focusing on the further merger of bodies and synthetics, foreseeing a time—perhaps a century from now—when the human body will be radically different from today. Until then, inventors experiment on themselves with embedded chips, and speculate how far out into the stars our enhanced selves will take us. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Gene Doctors ★★½

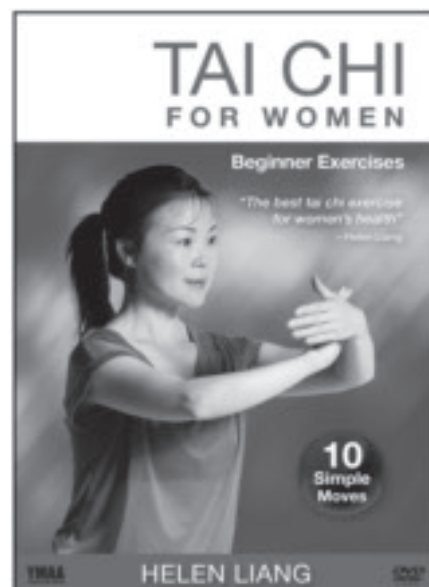
(2017) 55 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0365-3.

Filmmaker Rob Whittlesey's PBS-aided documentary examines the huge potential of using gene therapy in the treatment of acute medical conditions, including the rare genetic retinal disease Leber congenital amaurosis, cystic fibrosis, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, and the neurologic disease known as fatal familial insomnia. *The Gene Doctors* follows patients who undergo gene therapy treatments while also describing in accessible terms how these treatments are supposed to work. Perhaps the most fascinating story here involves treating Leber congenital amaurosis using Spark Therapeutics' Luxturna, which received U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval in December 2017. In this process, one injection into each eye introduces a good copy of the problematic gene that could lead to blindness. Here, a canine test patient responds successfully to the treatment, as does a young teenage girl who has a fondness for puzzle solving. The medical professionals behind these advances have been working for years to perfect these treatments, although it will still be some time before they become low-cost, commonplace solutions available to a wider population. A compelling film that posits an encouraging future for eradicating illnesses once seen as an early death sentence, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Generation Zapped ★★

(2018) 74 min. DVD: \$30 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. Closed captioned.

Although cell phones are simply electrical devices, their portability and ubiquity contributes to the radiation around us. Cell phones emit non-ionizing radiation as opposed to the ionizing radiation that poses more immediate harm. But while the FDA and the EPA have proclaimed cell phones safe, the verdict in the scientific community is not conclusive, and if not for the Telecommunications Act of 1996, more rigorous studies might have been pursued. By contrast, the World Health Organization does believe that cell phone radiation presents a risk. Filmmaker Sabine El Gemayel speaks with doctors and subjects who believe that cell phone usage causes adverse health effects, the latter including Donna Jaynes, who developed breast cancer in the exact spot where she used to store her cell phone, and Alan Marks, whose brain cancer appeared where he used to hold his cell phone. The surgical oncologist who treated Donna confirms that he had never seen a pattern of tumors like hers before. Alan and his wife, Ellie, formed the California Brain Tumor Association in order to share information and to affect legislation. Subjects with electro-sensitivity like Jaime (no last name provided) also claim



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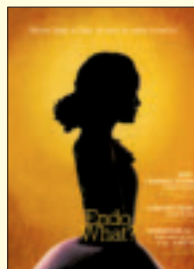
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Endo What? ★★★

(2016) 55 min. DVD: \$19.99. DRA. *Endo What*. PPR. Closed captioned.

In recent years, documentaries about obscure or misunderstood diseases, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, have proliferated at a rapid clip. Endometriosis, which affects as many as 176 million women and girls, is hardly obscure, but Shannon Cohn's informative documentary details the ways that misdiagnosis and mistreatment have come to characterize a fairly common condition. At its most basic, the disease stems from irregular growth of the uterine lining, leading to debilitating pain and—in extreme cases—infertility (it can also develop in the heart and lungs). Although endometriosis primarily affects women, men who take high doses of estrogen are also at risk. Medical experts here note that it's a systemic disease with a genetic component, with mothers often passing it on to their daughters. On average, it takes 8-10 years for sufferers to receive a diagnosis after onset, which can occur any time between adolescence and adulthood. Psychological factors also come into play, since pain can cause depression, which can in turn exacerbate pain. It doesn't help when doctors tell patients that the pain is normal or that it's all in their heads. For some, pain subsides after pregnancy or hysterectomy, but for others these have no effect. Since estrogen is the culprit, treatments include hormone suppressants and surgery, but side effects and complications can be too much for some women to handle. Cohn's well-organized documentary also covers diet, exercise, and other regimens that have proven effective, but there is no universal treatment (let alone a cure), and most of the film's subjects had to experiment before they found what worked best for them. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



that electromagnetic fields cause illness. With 215,000 cell phone towers nationwide, avoidance is difficult, so Jaime and his wife, Amber, have made efforts to reduce the radiation in their surroundings, including at their children's school. El Gemayel ends her sobering cautionary documentary with practical solutions to reduce exposure. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Going the Distance: Journeys of Recovery ★★★

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$100: public libraries; \$150: colleges & universities. Study guide included. EPF Media. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-933724-54-6.

Four individuals who have suffered traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) share their stories in David L. Brown's enlightening documentary. Jay Waller, a Yale graduate who planned to become a doctor, was injured in a road rage incident. Doctors cautioned his mother and sister that he might not recover, but over time he learned to walk and talk again, although problems with concentration brought his pre-med career to an end. Waller's cognitive therapist notes that TBI patients often cannot expect to be the same person following an injury, but Waller did find his way back to the medical field through work as a paramedic and as a physical therapy student. Jason Poole of the U.S. Marine Corps was injured during his third tour of duty in Iraq. In addition to his TBI, he lost an eye and his fiancée—which only added to his difficult recovery, although he did find love again. Kristen Collins was hit by a truck driver while riding on a friend's motorcycle. Doctors informed her parents that she might not emerge from her coma, but she beat the odds, although her mother

notes personality changes. She credits equine therapy for helping her daughter regain physical and mental strength. Collins even went on to get a nursing degree. Ian McFarland, the youngest subject, was in a car accident that claimed the lives of his parents. Afterward, he suffered from seizures and temporary paralysis, and has since been learning how to do everything all over again. Since insurance rarely covers cognitive therapy, his friends and family have helped to raise the funds he needs for treatment. Overall, these stories offer much hope and encouragement for those who suffer TBIs. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Qi Gong for Healthy Joints ★★★

(2017) 54 min. DVD: \$29.95. YMAA Publication Center.

Super-chill host Lee Holden is back in this latest exercise program (see review of *Qi Gong for Anxiety* in VL-1/18) built around the ancient practice of qi gong, here specifically tailored toward maintaining healthy joints. In his intro, Holden mentions that stress, repetitive motion, and improper posture can be hard on the joints and cites the benefits of the "gentle and powerful" qi gong workout, including the treatment of arthritis and osteoporosis. Set against a bucolic background of impossibly blue sky and craggy mountains in the Yosemite Valley, *Qi Gong for Healthy Joints* finds Holden performing a wide range of movements that can vary in look from something like rave dancing to the "I'm a Little Teapot" routine. Along with his accompanying narration, Holden's demonstration of circles, shakes and stretches, leg crosses and lifts, and arm spirals—as well as attention

to focused breathing—should be just the right medicine for the intended audience. Featuring short, long, and extended versions of the workout, this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Tai Chi Fusion: Bamboo ★★★

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$29.95. YMAA Publication Center. ISBN: 978-1-59439-593-2.

Tai chi is a martial arts discipline comprised of slow precision movements. Yoga is a stretching regimen that promotes strength and flexibility. Both improve balance and health, and here they are combined by acclaimed instructor David-Dorian Ross into something he calls a "tajifit" experience. Filmed in a bamboo forest in Hawaii (with bamboo symbolically showing how it can bend with the wind but not break), Ross and companion C.J. McFee lead viewers through a number of beautiful moves. Along the way, Ross narrates in a manner that is much like a guided meditation ("...in this move one hand is drawing back the arrow, while the other is holding the bow..."), suggesting complementary visual images while also directing the breathing for various exercises. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Why Are We Fat? ★★★

(2016) 129 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

Obesity is a worldwide health concern. In this New Zealand documentary, likable chef Simon Gault discovers that he has Type 2 diabetes and is determined to find out why he and others are obese and facing serious health conditions. Using himself as the subject, Gault consults with his physician and collaborates with medical personnel and an exercise team to discover the reasons why he is overweight, and what steps may be taken to improve and even change his prognosis. After his physical, Gault undergoes testing to determine the amount of his body fat, discovering that his is dangerously located around and inside his body organs, including his liver. Next, Gault speaks with over 20 doctors and university researchers from New Zealand, Australia, and the United States in the areas of biomedicine, biochemistry, epidemiology, neurobiology, nutrition science, exercise, and sleep physiology, as well as professionals in mental and public health regarding the causes of obesity. The experts agree that sugar is the principal culprit, which is found in so many processed foods. Gault also meets with education professionals to learn about initiatives begun in various schools to lower students' weight with healthier meals, less processed food, no sugary drinks, and increased physical activity. After three months of exercise and a changed diet, Gault dramatically improves his numbers. Presenting persuasive research on the harmful effects of consuming sugar and processed foods, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Root)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

100 Men ★

(2017) 94 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

Gay New Zealand filmmaker Paul Oremland turns the camera on himself for this feature-length video essay in which he recalls 100 sexual partners he connected with during the past 40 years. Oremland actually brushes over many encounters without offering details (many erstwhile lovers aren't even identified by name), but he does track down several of his former bedmates, who are mostly bemused by their participation in this odd project. Oremland, who relocated to London as a 19-year-old

and eventually launched a successful career as an independent filmmaker, also sprinkles in clips from his cinematic output, although none of his works are well-known on this side of the Atlantic, which only adds to the overall sense of "huh?" here. Oremland also juxtaposes his personal sexual odyssey with the four-decade-long changes within both the gay community and the wider society. And he catalogues friends who fell victim to the AIDS pandemic, and details the struggles he has had in maintaining a monogamous relationship after finally meeting Mr. Right. While Oremland can be a charming raconteur, this ultimately feels like an oversized vanity film and his tales of serial promiscuity quickly grow tiresome. Not recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Dina ★★★

(2017) 102 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

In this engrossing documentary by filmmakers Antonio Santini and Dan Sickles, two people on the autism spectrum—Dina Buno and Scott Levin—meet at a support group for the mentally challenged and decide to get married. Dina is the more experienced of the pair in terms of previous relationships; she was happily married, but her husband died. And then one in a string of boyfriends—a man she simply calls "the psycho"—tried to stab her to death before tearfully calling the police to turn himself in. Dina still yearns for affection, and she is deeply attracted to the gentleness of Scott, who has been diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. The film follows the pair as they prepare for their wedding—to the concern of both Dina's hard-nosed mother and Scott's parents, who have sheltered him all his life. The cameras visit her bachelorette party, complete with a dancing cop, as well as his far more sedate stag party at a bowling alley. The film's main focus, however, is on the intimacy that Dina needs but Scott seems unable, or unwilling, to provide. A trip to the beach (his first ever), in which she tries to discuss the issue, proves at once touching and more than a little uncomfortable, as though we have become voyeurs intruding into a moment that should remain private. Yet it is this extraordinary access that Dina and Scott gave to the filmmakers that makes the end result so inspiring and hopeful. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



FOOD & SPIRITS

Constructing Albert ★★★

(2017) 82 min. In Spanish & Catalan w/English subtitles. DVD: \$349. DRA. Juno Films. PPR.

Filmmakers Laura Collado and Jim Loomis's insightful and often entertaining documentary is a film about ambition, vision, obsession, and believing in the long game of destiny. For 25 years, Albert Adrià and his older brother Ferran ran a three-Michelin-starred restaurant in Barcelona called El Bulli, widely credited as a revolutionary force that changed haute cuisine. Ferran had the greater experience as a chef and a larger personality, attracting the lion's share of credit for El Bulli's success. In the shadows was Albert, a master pastry chef who also contributed to the adventurous gourmet menu. When El Bulli closed in 2011, Albert took a year or two off to be with his newborn son—and then roared back into the industry with a master plan to open five new restaurants in a year. Each establishment is more boldly innovative than the one previous, culminating in the daring Enigma, conceived as a new paradigm for the dining experience. Along the way, Adrià becomes a man possessed, not brutal or meanspirited, but rather the captain of an untested ship in uncharted waters. When Enigma takes years to open, Adrià anxiously keeps faith in the mission. A strangely compelling and visually sumptuous film, *Constructing Albert* will appeal both to foodies and those fascinated by glimpses of Captain Ahab in unexpected places. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Michelin Stars: Tales from the Kitchen

★★★

(2017) 82 min. In English, French, German, Italian & Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$349. DRA. Juno Films. PPR.

The appealing globetrotting documentary *Michelin Stars* is much like its subject in that it deals with delicious food (for thought) dazzlingly presented. How did the tire company Michelin get into the business of bestowing star ratings to the top restaurants in the world? The simple answer is: to sell tires. When automobiles were new and drivers were few, the Michelin brothers reasoned that creating incentives for people to drive—such as going out for gourmet dining—would help wear tires down and sell more of same. Over time, the annual *Michelin Guide* took on a life of its own, earning significant cachet in the world of haute gastronomy. Filmmaker Rasmus Dinesen's *Michelin Stars* takes viewers into the kitchens of some of the top-rated restaurants in North America, Europe, and Asia to meet brilliant chefs who talk about their individual drives and philosophies. Naturally, there is as much variety in their approaches as there are cuisines, but some

HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

Brimstone & Glory ★★★

(2017) 67 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Oscilloscope (avail. from most distributors).

The annual National Pyrotechnic Festival in Tultepec, Mexico, is the setting for filmmaker Viktor Jakovleski's dreamlike documentary about the town's complete immersion in a mad celebration called the Day of the Bulls. A roving camera captures sometimes harrowing images of locals involved in the 10-day run-up to this literally explosive day. Adults and children alike handle combustible elements for hours at a time, creating firecrackers and fireworks by the thousands. Evidence of

past accidents is not hard to spot: there's an old man with an amputated hand, and a woman grieving the loss of a son due to a fiery accident (she talks about this even as she helps prepare for the next Day of the Bulls—paid work that she needs because jobs are scarce). Huge papier-mâché bulls loaded with fireworks are rolled down streets, creating the potential for sudden conflagration. While a town's tradition clearly plays a large part in these dangerous activities, there is also a sense that the community is enslaved to a deadly ritual that not everyone wants. An oddball documentary, *Brimstone & Glory* tells a strange and haunting true story. Extras include interviews with Jakovleski and artist Amauri Sanabria Urbán. Recommended Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Bugs ★★★

(2016) 2 discs. 76 min. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

At a time when the disparity between food production and global population threatens to reach critical levels, Andreas Johnsen's documentary asks whether insects can fill the growing protein gap. Johnsen focuses on one of the teams fielded by Denmark's Nordic Food Lab, who are tasked with globetrotting to places where bugs are already part of the local diet in order to sample the cuisine. Here, chef Ben Reade and food researcher Josh Evans embark on expeditions to Australia, Mexico, Kenya, Uganda, Peru, Japan, and Italy, joining locals as they forage for particularly savory examples of insect life (in Italy, bugs are employed in the production of cheese), and then happily consume such delicacies as bulbous termite queens, grasshoppers, and honey ants, describing tastes as they munch. Back home, the pair visit a bug farm where insects are raised in bulk (Ben and Josh note that these do not taste as good as the ones they dug up themselves) and prepare a gourmet meal for a few appreciative guests. Their conclusions, however, are not Pollyanna-ish: both doubt whether insects can be the answer to the problem of a sustainable food supply, and when they make a presentation at a U.N. conference on food and agriculture, they are dismayed to find—after talking with a corporate type who opines that the insect market “smells like money”—that it will simply become another part of the business swallowed up in capitalist profiteering. Featuring both the documentary and the original eight-episode TV series, extras include deleted scenes. An offbeat entry (entrée?) that will likely appeal to socially-conscious (and adventurous) foodies, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



of the most interesting material here centers on reflective chefs who cook in a sustainable way and extol the importance of buying ingredients locally. The top boss of *The Michelin Guide* is interviewed here, along with several food writers who help determine the number of stars that are assigned for establishments. Most of the chefs find it devastating to lose a star, and feel enormous pressure to maintain top-tier status. Sure to appeal to foodies, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Bitter Money ★★1/2

(2016) 162 min. In Mandarin w/English subtitles. DVD: \$350. Icarus Films. PPR.

The social impact of China's capitalist economic transformation—a common theme in filmmaker Wang Bing's lengthy documentaries (see review of *Three Sisters* in VL-9/17)—is at the center of Bing's two-hour-plus *Bitter Money*, which chronicles the experiences of rural folk coming to the city (here Huzhou, outside Shanghai) to work long hours for minimal wages in clothing factories. The film begins with a long sequence showing two young cousins enjoying a final meal with their families before boarding an overcrowded train that takes them to Huzhou, where they secure sweatshop jobs. The focus then shifts to Ling, a woman who demands money from the abusive husband who kicked her out of their house; he responds by threatening her in front of his friends, who only feebly object. The camera then moves into the workshops and dormitories, briefly following other work-

ers, including a burly man whose drinking imperils his continued employment. *Bitter Money* closes with finished garments being forced into bundles for shipment to market. While there are many striking moments here, the sheer number of figures Wang follows, coupled with a penchant for detached and distant camerawork, tend to diminish the film's overall power. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Empire of Red Gold ★★★

(2017) 52 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$250 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Where does all of that tomato concentrate in ketchup, pizza and pasta sauces, soups, and canned tomato paste come from? Chances are very good it hails from China, where decades ago an army general convinced the government to build a tomato-product industry that could export to the whole world. Filmmakers Jean-Baptiste Malet and Xavier Deleu's illuminating documentary *The Empire of Red Gold* (based on Malet's titular book) explains how China rose to dominance in a multi-trillion dollar business while also harvesting and processing its own genetically-altered brand of resilient tomato. Africa, Italy, and the U.S. all play roles in the global tomato industry. Italian factories were disassembled and rebuilt in China as part of an elaborate barter, calling into question all of those product labels with Italian names evoking sunny, Mediterranean orchards (not an illegal practice, but certainly not honest). Keeping up the globalization narrative, the film tells the story of the Heinz company, which employed

assembly lines and automation long before Henry Ford. In fact, Heinz provided many North American workers with good-paying jobs until Warren Buffett bought the whole works in 2014, closing many factories and laying off thousands (transferring labor to cheaper places). The global economy is full of surprises as this intriguing documentary about the world's most consumed fruit makes clear. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

She Started It ★★★

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities. Grasshopper Film. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmakers Nora Poggi and Insiyah Saeed profile young women entrepreneurs who are beating the odds in this enlightening documentary. Since the media tends to focus on men in technology, women have fewer role models to emulate and seek out as mentors. Stacey Ferreira of Scottsdale, AZ, started her first company at the age of 18 with her brother Scott, which attracted \$1 million in seed money from Virgin founder Richard Branson. After the siblings sold the company, Stacey launched another, which led to a sideline in public speaking. Thuy Truong, 27, who began a frozen yogurt company in Vietnam when she was 23, co-founded an app with a Silicon Valley associate four years later. Stacey and Thuy make pitches here to solicit funding, which goes to show that it takes more than just a good idea to be successful—and the entrepreneur also has to know how to sell it. But when the funds don't roll in, the two women lose colleagues who can't afford to wait for a steady income that may never come, so Stacey goes back to college and Thuy returns to Vietnam. But their stories don't end there, as both women find ways to make new starts. Poggi and Saeed also provide spotlight profiles of Brienne Ghafourifar and Sheena Allen, who founded or co-founded tech companies. If there is a subtext here it's that most of these women partnered with a male friend or relative when getting started, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it does underscore the fact that women still have a ways to go in the male-dominated tech field. Presented in both the full-length version and a 52-minute abridgement, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennesy)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

Breaking Balls ★★1/2

(2017) 75 min. DVD: \$19.99. Pallino Productions (avail. from most distributors).

When it comes to sports films, one could argue that bocce has been significantly underrepresented on the big screen. Documentary filmmaker John P. Vourlis seeks to rectify that oversight with this feature-length film about the 30th Anniversary Cleveland

Challenge Cup of Bocce tournament, held at the Wickliffe Italian-American Club in Wickliffe, OH. As tournaments go, this event is rather modest—first prize is \$20,000—but the characters are certainly colorful. Three wonderful raconteurs are in the spotlight here: world class bocce champion Brian Polantz, tournament director Gino Latessa (who has a day job as a produce buyer), and the indefatigable 78-year-old Dominic Olivo, head groundskeeper at the Wickliffe club. Olivo is especially delightful, directing his volunteer team in getting the bocce courts ready for play, a process starting at 6:30 a.m. that lasts for at least three hours until everything is in perfect shape. Unfortunately, Vourlis is not able to turn the too-casual bocce games into a compelling activity that will keep viewers on the edge of their seat. So, while bocce enthusiasts might be drawn to this, those unfamiliar with the sport will not likely be hooked. Still, the participants are an interesting bunch. Extras include bocce-related featurettes and an interview with Mario Pagnoni, author of *The Joy of Bocce*. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Dealt ★★1/2

(2017) 86 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

This well-meaning but flawed documentary about 62-year-old magician and “card mechanic” Richard Turner would seem to be a can’t miss film on the surface, given that Turner is completely blind. Turner is a force of nature, a man who cannot come to terms with his handicap and so comports himself with a grimly determined attitude to play down his optical limitations in everything

he does. Director Luke Korem’s film follows Turner through his initial accomplishments as a black belt martial artist and then traces his surge through the ranks of card-magicians: old 1980s TV clips of Turner show him effortlessly baffling audiences and television hosts. But Korem’s attention is so trained on Turner’s obsessive-compulsive personality and his battles with sightlessness that he skimps on the technical specifics of the card trickery. Viewers are told that Turner’s a world-class “card mechanic,” but Korem never seriously investigates the specific tricks that make Turner so unique. And the film never adequately illuminates the weirdo-geek magic profession as a whole: yes, we do witness Turner being nominated for a Magic Award in Los Angeles for “Best Close-up Magician,” but this categorical nomenclature gets viewers no further towards understanding what Turner has specifically accomplished or what his competition was like. Ironically, although Turner loathes being defined primarily by his handicap, this is exactly what Korem’s film has done. Extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and deleted scenes. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)

THE ARTS

#artoffline ★★1/2

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The question of what impact the Internet has had on artists and their audience is explored in Manuel Correa’s documentary fea-

turing a broad panel of interviewees—artists, curators, thinkers, and critics—who opine about the effect of the ever-increasing dissemination of artwork online. Some bemoan the result, arguing that viewers looking at reproductions—often with mediocre resolution quality to boot—are unaware of how much they are missing. Some gallery and museum curators also regret the loss of the sheer experience of seeing works *in situ*, in groups. But others applaud the democratization that wider distribution brings, including artists who are designing work specifically for the Internet, and commentators who are glad to see the stranglehold of elitism shattered (arguing that this will force a beneficial change in the marketing of art, which has become a business involving staggering wealth and attendant corruption). Some curators also talk about how they are devising innovative methods of presentation that will continue to make live viewing a distinctive experience, one that cannot be replicated online. The give-and-take here makes for an interesting argument that carries both practical and philosophical undertones, although Correa’s approach is technically conventional. In the end, the questions that #artoffline raises are similar to worries from the 1950s that TV would kill radio and movies, yet all three have not only survived but thrived. The same will likely be said about art. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

American Valhalla ★★★

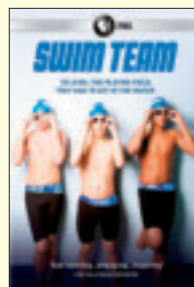
(2017) 81 min. DVD: \$15.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Josh Homme, guitarist and leader of the rock group Queens of the Stone Age, got a call from rock legend Iggy Pop in 2016 about possibly collaborating on a recording and tour. The resulting meeting of the minds, and the music their partnership yielded, is the subject of *American Valhalla*, co-directed by Homme with Andreas Neumann. With (strangely enough) top chef Anthony Bourdain serving as an interviewer, the completed film feels like an extended article in *Rolling Stone*, which is not a bad thing since it probes the thought process that led to Pop’s outreach to Homme, and the latter’s understandable anxiety about working with a hero. There are extensive scenes of the two reflecting together on what went through their minds in the early days, including Homme’s long-delayed response to Pop’s journal-like letter that he sent the younger artist as a way of opening up. More interesting are the concrete steps the two took to write and record new songs at a rustic studio sitting by itself in the California desert, near Joshua Tree. Footage from a European tour rounds things out, but it’s the pairing of these two interesting men—Pop the eternal primitive, Homme reminiscent of Beat Generation icon Neal Cassady—that is most captivating. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Swim Team ★★★1/2

(2016) 100 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0360-8.

For unknown reasons, New Jersey has one of the highest rates of autism in the country. Until recently, families dealing with this disorder had to suffer in shadows and silence. Filmmaker Lara Stolman’s PBS-aired documentary concerns parents who refused to accept autism as a life-defining set of limitations, and started a swim team known as the “Jersey Hammerheads,” composed entirely of young men with autism spectrum disorders. Like many with autism, some of the boys have special problems, some were told they would never learn to talk, and all must overcome awkwardness, self-consciousness, and isolation. One teen worked at a local theater—cleaning carpets and concession stand machines—but needs help filling out resumes, tracking his money, and doing chores that are essential to independent living, such as cooking. Another teen is wracked with body tics and Tourette’s syndrome, leading to outbursts of profanity and moments of violence, such as punching holes in doors and walls. Outings must be carefully planned. The swim team lets the kids socialize with other special needs teens, which helps them overcome isolation, and gives parents a feeling of empowerment. There are, of course, inevitable disappointments: one teen briefly quits the team, while another is disqualified when he changes his stroke in the middle of a race, costing his team the gold medal. But, overall, this is a poignant and inspiring documentary carrying a powerful message. As one father put it, “You can’t give up on your kid.” Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



NSEW ★★1/2

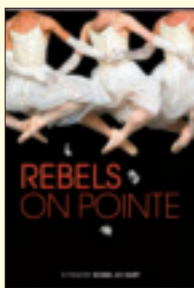
(2016) 180 min. DVD: \$25; individuals; \$300: institutions. Vanessa Renwick (avail. from www.odoka.org). PPR.

The work of Portland, OR, video artist Vanessa Renwick is showcased in this compilation of over 20 of her films. Some repurpose old footage—such as *Red Stallions Revenge*, a shortened version of a 1940s Western, or *Britton, South Dakota*, featuring a montage of children photographed in the titular town in 1938. Others are evocative depictions of particular places, like the three examples from Renwick's "Portraits" series included here (one concerning the destruction of a nuclear plant cooling tower). Also featured are fairly conventional portraits of eccentrics, such as *Richart*, a profile of Richard Tracy, who has filled several lots with his curious artwork, or *Satan's Holiday*, about a self-styled priest who exhibits his collection of items that includes human skulls. These contrast with more experimental films, such as one simply showing a woman bicycling down deserted streets, first clothed and then nude; or a quite explicit, deliberately gritty record of a home childbirth; or a vignette called *Crowdog*, in which a woman's monologue about going a couple of years without wearing shoes segues into a recollection about a trip to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. These are highly personal pieces that will likely spark mixed reactions (some viewers may emulate the succession of faces in Renwick's *Yawn*), but the compilation does offer a comprehensive sample of a modern American artist's work. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Paris Opera ★★★

(2018) 111 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Following in the wake of Frederick Wiseman's documentary on the Paris Opera Ballet, *La Danse* (VL-3/11), Jean-Stéphane Bron offers a similarly fly-on-the-wall treatment of the opera company as a whole, concentrating on the 2015-16 season, when Stéphane Lissner assumed the directorship. Much of the film is devoted to rehearsal footage, most notably of an ambitious production of Arnold Schoenberg's difficult and rarely performed *Moses und Aron*, which features a cameo by a huge live bull that had to be maneuvered on and off the stage. But while the ballet dancers do not receive as much attention as the opera singers and staff, a controversy regarding the tenure of choreographer Benjamin Millepied is touched on. A substantial amount of the film is also about the practical details of operating such an enormous enterprise—one hobbled by budgetary and staff cuts and strike threats, all of which Lissner and his staff must confront while also debating how best to show the company's sympathy with the victims of terrorist attacks. Bron also personalizes the film with a segment featuring Ursula

**Rebels on Pointe ★★★**

(2017) 90 min. DVD: \$29.98 (\$328 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (available from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Bobbi Jo Hart's exuberant documentary serves up a portrait of a New York-based company of gay dancers who don pointe shoes and tutus to perform humorous routines that nonetheless demand exceptional skill (think of a Harlem Globetrotters-style act transferred to the ballet stage). *Rebels on Pointe*—which features occasional excerpts from performances (some quite droll) and appreciative comments from "serious" dancers and ballet critics—offers a summary of the troupe's history, delivered for the most part by current artistic director Tory Dobrin; behind-the-scenes footage of dancers putting on their makeup and costumes; and revealing interviews with company members (one dancer amusingly recalls coming out to his mother, who drily informed him that his sexual preferences were no news to her). Some find romance with other dancers; others suffer injuries that threaten to curtail their continued participation; and one young Cuban immigrant is followed as he makes his way to America and finds acceptance and comradeship in the company. Audiences are seen responding enthusiastically to the troupe's performances—they have become virtual rock stars in Japan, where they regularly tour. In a poignant moment, Dobrin observes that the company now has three married couples—which would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier. So while this is an engaging introduction to a unique dance company, it also touches on the troupe's place in the context of the gay liberation movement. Extras include more than two hours of behind-the-scenes footage and additional interviews. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Naccache, who subsidizes a teaching program for school-age instrumentalists, and periodic episodes showcasing Mikhail Timoshenko, a Russian singer accepted into the opera's apprenticeship program, who we follow as he is fitted by company costumers, meets one of his idols (bass-baritone Bryn Terfel), and falls into a funk after performing poorly (in his estimation) in a recital, although he recoups with a more satisfying solo later. Extras include audio commentary by (and an interview with) Bron, and a short modern dance piece performed to music by baroque master Jean-Philippe Rameau. Sure to appeal to opera lovers, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Somos Lengua ★★1/2

(2017) 83 min. In Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

Director Kyza Terrazas spent three years working on this geographically-rich documentary about Mexico's hip-hop scene. *Somos Lengua* focuses on male and female participants in Aguascalientes, Monterrey, Guadalajara, Torreón, Ecatepec, and other parts of the country (unfortunately, none are identified until the end credits). When they aren't talking about their lives, the subjects are seen performing in groups with live instruments, solo freestyle sessions, and rap battles in front of rambunctious crowds. One rapper, Lobo Estepario of Distrito Federal, even performs on subways trains as a regular part of his routine. While hip-hop originated in the United States, these musicians put their own stamp on the genre, and since they rap in Spanish they also gravitate towards Spanish-language

music samples. Through their lyrics, they comment on drugs, gangs, violence, and other concerns from a distinctly Mexican perspective. Two of the more forthcoming subjects, Giro from Aguascalientes and Loco Neto from San Nicolás de los Garza, talk about their past lives of lawless behavior, crediting hip-hop for providing them with a productive outlet for their fears and frustrations about life in a perilously unstable economy. The unavoidable influence of American hip-hop manifests itself through lyrical references to north of the border acts like KRS-One, Tupac, Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest, and Wu-Tang Clan (and through the t-shirts and posters that appear in the film). Just as in the States, hip-hop isn't only a sound, but part of the larger b-boy culture, and Terrazas's subjects also participate in non-musical activities like breakdancing and graffiti-painting. While there is not a lot of context here, the director definitely captures a street-level feel for the scene. Extras include "Rap in Mexico: Informational Videos." A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Spettacolo ★★★

(2017) 91 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99 (\$99.95: public libraries; \$375: colleges & universities w/PPR). Grasshopper Film.

There's nothing unusual about an Italian town filled with theater lovers, except that Monticchiello—"the town that plays itself"—is more like one big theater. Each year, the Tuscan village with a population of 136 puts on a play. They call themselves the Teatro Povero (aka Poor Theatre), and people come from miles around to see their performances, a tradition dating back to the 1940s. After

decades of costume dramas, however, the townspeople decided to write their own plays, starting with the dramatization of a 1944 incident in which partisans won a stay of execution against fascists. The resulting drama helped them to exorcise long-buried demons, so each year they find new issues to work out on the piazza that serves as their stage. These include women's rights, the shift away from an agrarian lifestyle, and the corruption of the financial sector—including the bank that sponsors their work. Over the course of four seasons, filmmakers Chris Shellen and Jeff Malmberg capture discussions, writing sessions, rehearsals, and performances, while also profiling the primary players behind the project, from dedicated director Andrea to founder Alpo, who passes away during the course of filming. As longtime member Arturo points out, "A third of us are dead! The future of the theater—just like always—is in the hands of the young." Unfortunately, however, fewer young people have been getting involved in recent years. Even Andrea's son, who runs a B&B, believes the town's future is in tourism. The situation further deteriorates when a play about gentrification divides the town, driving even some of the veteran players to drop out. By film's end, it isn't clear if the Poor Theatre will continue, but it has unquestionably made an indelible impact on Monticchiello. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Wrestling Jerusalem ★★1/2

(2016) 90 min. In English, Hebrew & Arabic w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$75; public libraries & high schools; \$250: colleges & universities. DRA. Tugg. PPR.

Aaron Davidman's one-man play about the longstanding Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been "opened up" to a certain extent by director Dylan Kussman, albeit in a way that increases rather than mutes the sense of artificiality. Davidman portrays 17 characters, segueing from an Israeli Special Forces soldier to such figures as a rabbi who condemns his more extreme colleagues, a hardline Israeli settler, a Palestinian man whose son was injured by an Israeli soldier, a Palestinian woman working for the United Nations, a chain-smoking dishwasher who tries to avoid the news, and himself. Davidman's performances are passionate, but also very theatrical; shouting is his default tone, and moments of quiet introspection are rare. Kussman somewhat undermines the cumulative effect of the play by cutting incessantly from venue to venue—a theatre with (and without) an audience, the backstage dressing room, and an empty expanse of desert. By presenting a variety of voices so intensely, Davidman successfully depicts the maze of opposing views tied to the apparently insoluble question of the future of Palestine. Unfortunately, neither he nor Kussman has found a fully satisfying cinematic approach

for transferring a supremely stagebound piece to the screen. Still, the power of the concept overcomes to some extent the flaws in execution, making this a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

8 Borders 8 Days ★★★

(2017) 60 min. In Arabic & English w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$75; public libraries & high schools; \$350: colleges & universities. DRA. Tugg. PPR.

The human cost of the Syrian Civil War and resultant refugee crisis is treated in an intensely personal fashion in Amanda Bailly's documentary, which simply follows a divorced woman named Sham and her children—rambunctious Yaman and charming Lulu—on their long journey from the conflict to safety in the West. When the film opens, the family has fled to Lebanon, where they wait over a year for a U.S. asylum application that is never granted. In despair, Sham finally decamps with the children to Turkey and then the island of Lesbos, from which they take a dangerous raft journey to Greece and then walk to Macedonia and on to Hungary, the gateway to Austria and Germany. Bailly's camera records their progress as they trudge across the landscape or drift over the sea, pausing periodically for Sham and the children to describe how the raft deflated during the crossing, barely allowing them to reach shore, or how the owner of a Macedonian diner refused them entry, leaving the family on the street in the rain, or how they traveled quietly at night to evade police border checkpoints. The documentary closes with the trio having

reached Germany, but their situation remains precarious, especially given that Sham—who remarried along the way to facilitate their passage—is again pregnant through a new husband who is no longer with them. Putting a personal face on a contemporary tragedy, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Bones of Contention ★★★

(2017) 75 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$348. Icarus Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

The dark legacy of the Spanish Civil War—specifically, the execution by Franco's nationalist forces of tens of thousands (including poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca), whose remains were buried in mass graves that still dot the peninsula—is examined in Andrea Weiss's fine documentary. The centerpiece of the film is the search for Lorca's resting place, which inspires a biographical sketch of his life, complete with scholarly assessments of his importance both as a writer and as a symbol of the repression that the regime practiced not only against socialists but also homosexuals. This leads to a broader treatment of the government's policies of summary execution and mass imprisonment, bolstered by testimony from survivors and family members who have undertaken a campaign against the "culture of silence" that has prevailed in regard to the brutality of Franco's four-decade rule ever since his death in 1975. Combining its two major themes, *Bones of Contention* explores the gay liberation movement in Spain, as well as the controversial demand that the thousands of mass graves be excavated in order to bring a semblance of closure to those still mourning the deaths of loved ones. Weiss combines archival footage with commentary by experts and literary



49 Pulses ★★★

(2018) 83 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned.

The mass killing of 49 people at the Orlando, FL, nightclub Pulse on June 12, 2016, is the subject of this grueling documentary, which recounts the moment-by-moment, hour-by-hour events as recalled by survivors of the long siege. Beginning a short while before the killer (who goes unnamed here) entered Pulse with an assault weapon and began firing, witnesses describe dancing and generally having a good time. So frenzied was the dance scene, says one interviewee, that when he heard

the initial burst of multiple shots, he assumed it was an effect that the DJ had worked into the music. As bodies fell and people began pushing their way to the restrooms, gunshot victims who were still breathing bled out and in many cases were comforted by others in hiding. Interviewees describe what it was like waiting for hours to be rescued, and first responders talk about their actions and decisions in the thick of the mayhem. Some survivors criticize authorities for being too slow to move in on Pulse, but audio of a police negotiator listening to the murderer describe explosives on his person makes the delays understandable. Director Charlie Minn incorporates dramatic re-enactments with actors playing the parts of clubgoers, providing a visceral vision of this night of true hell. A timely documentary during the ongoing gun control debate, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

figures to provide historical context and an understanding of Lorca's place, while also personalizing the narrative with extensive interviews of survivors who discuss how they suffered under the dictatorship and are still struggling for justice. A fine documentary about a 20th-century tragedy that still casts a long shadow over contemporary Spain, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Into the Amazon ★★★

(2018) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0268-7.

Many former presidents spend their post-White House years in a relatively benign state of comfort, authoring books and giving the occasional lecture. Theodore Roosevelt, not surprisingly, wasn't interested in retirement, so in late 1913 he teamed with Brazilian explorer Col. Cândido Rondon for a scientific expedition into the most remote western section of Brazil's rainforest to chart the course of an unexplored tributary known as the River of Doubt. Roosevelt, who was joined by his son Kermit and 20 other explorers, wound up having much more of an adventure than he anticipated. John Maggio's PBS-aided *American Experience* documentary details this ill-fated expedition, which seemed doomed from the start: the canoes were too heavy for the river, food provisions were inadequate, and the explorers were unprepared for tropical illnesses. Roosevelt injured his leg during the trip, and the rapid spread of infection from the wound raised a serious concern that he would die in the rainforest. Roosevelt, whose life was built on courage and fearlessness, had requested that he be left to his fate in order to preserve the lives of his fellow travelers, but he was brought to safety and later detailed the depth of the expedition's findings to astonished scientific gatherings. Drawing on a wealth of rare newsreels and archival photographs recording the historic journey, along with Alec Baldwin's recitations from Roosevelt's journals, *Into the Amazon* presents this fascinating story with Roosevelt-worthy vigor. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

North Korea's Deadly Dictator ★★★

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99. PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0372-1.

For over 70 years, North Korea has essentially been ruled as a Communist monarchy, a regime marked by isolation, brutality, and belligerence. Now on the brink of being a nuclear power capable of striking the United States, international concern is running at a fever pitch. Filmmaker Jane McMullen's PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary reviews recent events in Kim Jong-un's dictatorship, notably the mysterious killing of Kim Jong-nam, the older half-brother of North Korea's strongman. The murder was brazenly carried out in a Malaysian airport by two women who covered Jong-nam's face with a cloth soaked with a deadly nerve agent, and were appar-



Line 41 ★★½

(2015) 96 min. In German & Polish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

The title of Tanja Cummings's documentary refers to a trolley line that passed through the Łódź Ghetto holding Jewish residents in Nazi-occupied Poland during World War II. The trolley never actually stopped in this section of the city, where the virtual prisoners watched as the indifferent passengers passed by on a daily basis. *Line 41* centers on the postwar lives of two men with very different experiences during this period: Natan Grossmann survived the ghetto but lost contact with his parents and brother, who all perished in the Holocaust. Jens-Jürgen Ventzki was born in 1944 as the son of Werner Ventzki, the city's Nazi mayor. Grossmann tries to exorcise memories of the ghetto and seeks answers about his family's deaths, while Ventzki struggles to come to terms with the unspeakable horror fueled by his father's actions. The film compares occupied Łódź with today's city—Grossmann here makes his first return trip—and Cummings uses haunting ink sketches to recreate the degradation and misery of the ghetto occupants. While wartime Łódź was the focus of one of the most significant Holocaust documentaries—the 1988 classic *Łódź Ghetto* (VL-7/91)—this work offers a more intimate but no less painful consideration of the subject. Extras include bonus footage. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

ently convinced they were part of a reality show type prank. Although the women were apprehended, the North Korean intelligence agents who watched nearby escaped, fleeing back to North Korea. The documentary notes that the murder sent a message that the country could reach any of its enemies. Although Jong-nam was a dissolute playboy, he dabbled in illegal financial schemes, had criticized the regime and urged reforms, and there was fear that he might form a government in exile. Kim Jong-un, who came to power in 2011 and didn't have much time to build a power base, has conducted bloody purges, engaged in human rights abuses, and ordered brutal executions (including his uncle's). Jong-un is obsessed with maintaining his power and stockpiling nuclear weapons, which he views as a hedge against regime change. Computer hacking, money laundering, and other criminal activities help to overcome crippling international financial sanctions, increasing his chance of survival. Although many of North Korea's citizens are starving and are subject to surveillance and suppression, the cultivation of the country's military and government elites favors the continuation of this "elaborate soap opera." The documentary ends by asking the perennial question, "What does North Korea want?" Featuring interviews with think tank members and government officials, this is a timely and alarming examination of one of the biggest threats to world peace. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Open Bethlehem ★★★

(2017) 90 min. DVD: \$350. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-941545-92-0.

Leila Sansour's film is a personal essay centering on a movement that she spearheaded to protest Israel's construction of a security wall through her titular hometown, which

is traditionally considered the birthplace of Jesus. Sansour draws on archival materials, including home movies, to depict an idyllic childhood in a place where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived together in harmony, and where her local hero father founded a university recognized as the crowning jewel of Palestinian higher education. Returning to Bethlehem after a long absence, Sansour finds the town fractured by the wall, with some buildings reduced to rubble, and many houses and businesses effectively cut off from contact with their neighbors, while access for the entire area is tightly controlled by security forces, choking off the tourism that is the town's economic lifeblood. Together with some friends and relatives, she founds the Open Bethlehem movement, enlisting religious leaders, government officials, and supporters around the world (including some influential figures) to declare the town a free zone (they even collaborate on a "Bethlehem passport" declaring the holders' right to come and go as they please and stay as long as they wish). Combining Sansour's own personal journey (in a battered old car) with the vicissitudes of the campaign, *Open Bethlehem* is hardly apolitical, but it is a touching tribute to the dream of Middle Eastern reconciliation. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Putin's Revenge ★★★

(2017) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0364-6.

Vladimir Putin served as a KGB officer in East Germany in the waning days of the Cold War. Humiliated by the fall of the Soviet Union and nursing a sense of grievance, Putin viewed it as his mission to return Russia to its proper place on the world stage. Filmmaker Michael Kirk's PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary details Putin's long-simmering

resentments and distrust of America. Putin reinvented himself as the Prime Minister under ailing Premier Boris Yeltsin, who stepped down in 1999, after which Putin took control. Although paying lip service to democracy, Putin had the instincts of an intelligence chief, what one person calls a “professional liar” who saw enemies everywhere. Realizing that Russia couldn’t match America on the battlefield, Putin turned to cyberwarfare, using hacking to sow doubts and undermine America’s image at home and abroad. After events in Iraq and Libya, Putin was convinced that America was trying to promote regime change in Russia. A born strongman, Putin was TV savvy, and he promoted his image as a virile and powerful figure, coming down hard on breakaway republics, terrorists, and critics on TV and in the streets (some opponents were mysteriously killed or disappeared). After dealing with domestic enemies, Putin took his revenge on America’s “freedom agenda,” using hacking, voter manipulation, fraud, and social media to spread “fake news.” Putin harbored a particular dislike for Hillary Clinton for her roles in plotting Gaddafi’s overthrow and death in Libya, the Arab Spring, and sowing dissent and unrest in the Ukraine. The film covers Putin’s mostly successful attempts to stir discord and confusion during America’s 2016 election, his disinformation campaigns and weaponizing of leaks, and the “hybrid wars” in Syria and the Ukraine. Offering an urgent warning about a powerful player in global politics at a time when relations between the Soviets and the West are at their worst since the Cold War, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

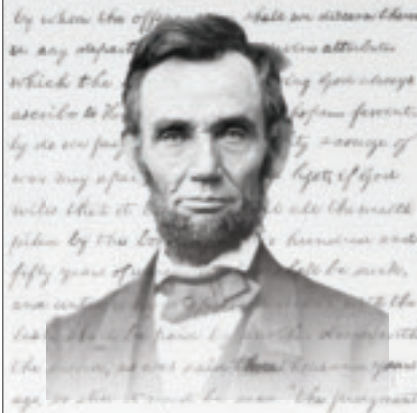
The Secret of Tuxedo Park ★★★1/2
(2018) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0396-7.

Filmmaker Rob Rapley’s PBS-aided *American Experience* documentary shines a long overdue spotlight on the invaluable contributions made by Alfred Lee Loomis to the Allied effort during World War II. A lawyer who became a Wall Street financier, Loomis wisely withdrew his fortune from the stock market prior to the 1929 crash, using his money to create a private laboratory at his mansion in Tuxedo Park, an exclusive village in upstate New York. During the rise of Nazi Germany, Loomis invited German scientists who were fleeing from Hitler—including Jewish refugees—to work for him. He also attracted the attention of Winston Churchill, who sought out Loomis and his team for the development of radar technology that would be used against the Germans. The importance of Loomis’s role in developing scientific breakthroughs to help win World War II was not made known to the general public; Loomis worked diligently to avoid publicity, shutting down his lab in 1945 and refusing to give either interviews or access to his Tuxedo Park estate until his death in 1975. Rapley deserves much credit for piecing together this story, given the scarcity of archival film and photographs detailing the work at Loomis’s lab. Some aspects of Loomis’s life were less than heroic, most notably his divorce from his wife Ellen in 1945 after she developed severe depression. Nonetheless, his important wartime work deserves the attention paid here. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

Tell Them We Are Rising: The Story of Historically Black Colleges and Universities ★★★1/2

(2017) 85 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0341-7 (dvd), 978-1-5317-0355-4 (blu-ray).

Acclaimed filmmaker Stanley Nelson’s PBS-aided documentary traces the tumultuous history of the nation’s historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) from the pre-Civil War era to the present day. Most of these schools were founded in the South during the post-Civil War era by benevolent Northerners who supported higher education for the black population. Initially focusing on vocational education, the HBCUs later expanded their subject areas to incorporate law, medicine, science, and liberal arts studies. During the Jim Crow era, when colleges and universities in both the South and the North were hostile to black enrollment, HBCUs provided educational opportunities for men and women who would become pillars in their communities (nearly all black teachers in the early 20th century received their degrees from HBCUs), and served as stepping stones for individuals who would go on to change the world. *Tell Them We Are Rising* presents a wide-ranging history, although some of the stories have been covered at greater depth in other documentaries, most notably the intellectual feud between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois on the state of black education, and the role played by North Carolina A&T State University students in launching the lunch counter sit-in protests during the early 1960s. The film also gingerly examines the role of HBCUs in today’s inclusive society, as well as the struggles that some schools face in trying to maintain operations. A handsomely produced, ultimately celebratory history of black academic institutions in America, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

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Who Put the Klan Into Ku Klux Klan

★★★

(2016) 59 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199 w/PPR).
Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

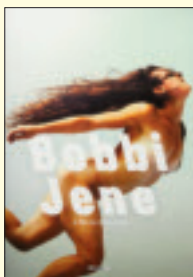
Historian Neil Oliver hosts this documentary by Ian Lilley, which investigates how Scottish influence in the United States—while bringing many positive effects—was instrumental in the creation of the Ku Klux Klan and its ideology. Combining archival materials and interviews, the film lays out the facts of Scottish immigration to America during the colonial period, explaining how newcomers eventually created cotton plantations and purchased slaves to work them. After the Civil War a small group of southern Scots-Americans joined in a club they called the KKK, partially constructing the name from the romantic vision of the clans of Scotland derived from the novels of Sir Walter Scott. As Reconstruction grew more onerous, the KKK began terrorizing blacks, setting the stage for the passage of Jim Crow laws and institutional segregation. The group's influence waned over the decades, but was reinvigorated with the publication of *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon, another Scots-American, in 1905, and its film adaptation *The Birth of a Nation* by director D.W. Griffith in 1915, both of which portrayed the KKK as noble heroes. Afterwards, the group's political power again declined over time, but was revived in response to the Civil Rights movement during the 1950s and '60s. Although subtitles would have helped for Oliver's heavily-accented narration, this is an historically intriguing and informative documentary. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

BIOGRAPHY

Dolores ★★★

(2017) 96 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99, PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0243-3 (dvd), 978-1-5317-0338-7 (blu-ray).

Although Cesar Chavez remains the iconic figure in the battle for agricultural workers' rights, Peter Bratt's engrossing PBS-aired documentary makes clear that Dolores Huerta was of equal, and in some respects even greater, importance to the success of the struggle. Bratt argues that her contribution continues to be underestimated not only because she is a woman, but also because she led an unconventional life, having 11 children with three men and (as some of her children testify) sometimes placing her activism ahead of her family. *Dolores* serves up a densely-packed portrait of Huerta's life, from a childhood in which she quickly became aware of racial prejudice, through a career as one of the most effective organizers in the early agricultural labor movement and an alliance with Chavez that ultimately resulted in the creation—and



Bobbi Jene ★★★

(2017) 95 min. DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Oscilloscope (avail. from most distributors).

This haunting documentary centers on American dancer and choreographer Bobbi Jene Smith, a remarkable artist who goes all out to achieve her goals. Anyone looking for a film about dance *per se*, however, will not find it here. *Bobbi Jene* is not a study of an art form or anyone's mastery of it; instead it's a loosely-organized portrait of a young woman who gradually learns what is lost and sacrificed through absolute commitment to creative independence. Viewers meet Smith, an Iowa native, as she hovers around the age of 30, ready to conclude a decade in a prominent position with Israel's Batsheva Dance Company. Slowly parting with the troupe's artistic director, Ohad Naharin (a former lover), and her current boyfriend (another dancer, 10 years younger), Smith returns to America, where she begins teaching and trying to figure out what how to be a relevant and dynamic force in the dance world. Meanwhile, the personal side of things—particularly the faraway boyfriend—take on a different urgency that require decisions. The film's climactic scene—a solo performance Smith choreographed and dances in the nude—is essentially her bold declaration about the value of her ideas and the risks she will take for them. Director Elvira Lind had access to Smith's private and public world's over a long period, and the resulting journey is a compelling one. Extras include bonus performances, an interview with Lind and Smith, and deleted scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

recognition—of the United Farm Workers union. (One of the saddest observations here is that the presidency of the UFW was denied Huerta when Chavez died, primarily because of her gender.) Bratt also looks at Huerta's more recent history, detailing the controversy the outspoken Huerta caused when she bluntly declared in a speech that Republicans hate Latinos. Ample interviews—archival and new—with her children and the octogenarian Huerta herself are combined with a treasure trove of news footage from the 1950s and '60s to present this long overdue credit to an unsung heroine of the 20th-century labor movement. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Henry David Thoreau: Surveyor of the Soul ★★★½

(2017) 114 min. DVD: \$29.95. Films by Huey. ISBN: 0-9729294-8-7.

For Henry David Thoreau, to learn what questions were important in life required involvement with nature. In this film by mono-named director Huey, Thoreau's strong affinity for the natural world is clearly manifested in the serene beauty of his home at Walden Pond, along with the outdoor places he visited. Bill McKibben, the late Howard Zinn, Robert Bly, and other scholars and writers here discuss the life and work of this famed 19th-century writer. Residing for most of his life in Concord, MA, Thoreau was instrumental in improving the process of making lead pencils for his father's factory. After attending Harvard University, he returned to Concord and built a house near Walden Pond in order to live close to nature. Stone posts outline the location of the original 10 x 15 ft. dwelling, and a replica stands nearby where a knowledgeable

guide answers questions. The Walden Woods Project, founded by rock band The Eagles' Don Henley, features educational projects in which high school students read and write at Walden Pond while gaining an appreciation for nature (the film beautifully captures the colors of the pond and woods in all four seasons). Thoreau surveyed Walden Pond and areas around Concord (drawings show the detail of his observations and measurements), spoke out against slavery, and wrote about civil disobedience. Featuring traditional songs and original music, this documentary capturing important aspects of Thoreau's life and writings is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Root)

The Indomitable Teddy Roosevelt ★★★

(1986) 94 min. Blu-ray: \$24.95. Flicker Alley (avail. from most distributors).

Harrison Engle's 1986 documentary about the nation's 26th (and, until John Kennedy, youngest) president has been carefully restored for this Blu-ray release. Narrated by George C. Scott, the film brings together archival footage and dramatic recreations (some featuring descendants of the Roosevelt family) to present a portrait of T.R.'s life, including his childhood struggles with physical infirmity, service in New York government, domestic tragedies, Rough Riders exploits in the Spanish-American War, selection as the Republican vice-presidential nominee in 1900, and sudden accession to the presidency in 1901 as a result of McKinley's assassination. It also celebrates Roosevelt's landslide re-election in 1904, and his accomplishments in office, such as strengthening the Navy, establishing national parks, building the Panama Canal, and undertaking anti-trust policies to secure a "Square Deal" for ordi-

nary citizens. But the generally uncritical assessment here of the often domineering way in which Roosevelt achieved his aims is historically debatable. His disagreements with his Republican successor Taft led him to split the party in 1912, inviting a Democratic victory, but his later years of life-threatening exploration in Brazil and vigorous support for U.S. involvement in World War I are properly treated as a poignant postscript to his political career. Overall, this veers toward the panegyric, but as an overview of a presidency central in the development of the powers ascribed to that office in the 20th century, it remains an informative educational documentary. Extras include a new interview with Engle, and a text copy of T.R.'s 1905 inaugural address. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Ku Kanaka/Stand Tall ★★☆☆

(2017) 26 min. DVD: \$69: high schools; \$79: public libraries; \$189: colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57448-447-2.

Filmmaker Marlene Booth's tender remembrance of Terry "Kanalū" Young, a professor of Hawaiian studies at the University of Hawaii and an activist for the Hawaiian people, touches on disability, education, and the righting of historical wrongs. In 1969, at the age of 15, Young dove into shallow water near Diamond Head on Oahu, instantly becoming quadriplegic. After a period of rage over his accident, Young made a commitment to immerse himself in the 1970s rise of a Hawaiian renaissance, fighting for an indigenous people whose monarchy was overthrown and whose islands were taken from them. Earning his Ph.D in Pacific Island studies, Young—who renamed himself Kanalū—was in the forefront of the movement for ethnic Hawaiian autonomy, and was even violently pulled from his wheelchair by police during a protest at Iolani Palace. The film features extensive archival footage of Young (who died in 2008 at the age of 54) charismatically sharing his passionate message. An engaging portrait of a truly inspirational figure, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Last Dalai Lama? ★★☆☆1/2

(2016) 82 min. DVD: \$95: high schools & public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Ro*co Films Educational. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Mickey Lemle profiled the 14th Dalai Lama in 1993 for the nonfiction feature *Compassion in Exile*. Here he revisits the revered but aging godhead of Tibetan Buddhism, reflecting on the newly octogenarian religious icon's legacy and continuing inspirational effect on others. The Dalai Lama admits (surprisingly) that he possesses what he considers a short temper. And he confesses that over the years he has not made the progress he had hoped to in liberating Tibet from Chinese occupation (a number of Tibetans have committed high-profile suicide

in protest). While followers attempt to extend his life and good works with prayer, the Dalai Lama placidly contemplates his own death and the apparent likelihood that the Beijing regime will produce their own sham lama "reincarnation" as a puppet. In the meantime, the Dalai Lama visits with Canadian schoolchildren and oversees an audacious project to create a map of human emotions (one of numerous discussions in which spirituality and science intersect). Interviewees include authors Robert Thurman and Pico Ayer, as well as composer Philip Glass and George W. Bush (both of the latter based creative works on the Dalai Lama). Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Martin Luther: The Idea That Changed the World ★★☆☆1/2

(2017) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0342-4.

Five hundred years ago, a lowly monk named Martin Luther transformed world history. Narrated by Hugh Bonneville, filmmaker David Batty's PBS-aired biography examines the arc of Luther's turbulent and productive life. Luther always struggled with depression, along with feelings of guilt and a deep sense of unworthiness. After nearly being killed in a violent thunderstorm, Luther experienced a spiritual revelation, turning away from his father's wish that he become a lawyer and instead joining the church. Always a hard worker, Luther rose rapidly in the monastery, where he focused on the questions "Am I a good person?" and "How do I get salvation?" At one point, Luther walked hundreds of miles to Rome, only to find "depravity." He was particularly outraged by the Catholic Church's sale of indulgences, a "salvation for sale" scheme that Luther felt led people away from God.

Taking advantage of the new technology of the printing press, and using blunt, earthy (even profane) language, Luther questioned the authority of the Pope, urging Christians to "believe freely," only accepting scripture as authority. To this end, Luther translated the Bible into German, increased music in services (even writing the famous "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"), and used the power of images to supplement the text (Luther ultimately wrote some 130 books). The film covers Luther's famous 95 theses (debate topics) challenging religious doctrine, his difficulties with Rome and German authorities that led to well-attended trials, and his acceptance of the need for sex within marriage (he fathered six children by a former nun). Also examined is Luther's self-righteousness and his sometimes vicious anti-Semitic writings, which were hailed centuries later by the Nazis. Luther was a flawed figure with a complex personality, but his belief in the power of hope, grace, and forgiveness endures, inspiring modern day democratic and civil rights movements. Featuring dramatic recreations featuring Padraic Delaney as Luther, this well-written biographical profile is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Take Every Wave: The Life of Laird Hamilton ★★☆☆

(2017) 118 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

Legendary surfer Laird Hamilton was never interested in entering surfing competitions, preferring to engage in "exploration of the unknown" as he puts it in this documentary, which chronicles Hamilton's rise to surfing-world fame along with his sometimes controversial innovations in the sport. As filmmaker Rory Kennedy makes clear, Hamilton had plenty of competition—from

Frank Serpico ★★☆☆1/2

(2018) 98 min. DVD: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Antonino D'Ambrosio's documentary tells the true story of the young New York City police officer who became a household name after the release of Sidney Lumet's blockbuster 1971 drama *Serpico*. Raised with an idealistic moral code and trained as a social worker, Frank Serpico—a rare Italian among the insular Irish-descended NYPD regulars—was appalled at the culture of casual bribery and graft rampant on the force. His complaints and testimonies before the Knapp Commission were followed by a transfer to the narcotics division (oddly, which gave him an even bigger window into corruption. When backup withdrew during a drug bust, leaving Serpico shot and wounded, a deliberate conspiracy was suspected. A series of journalistic profiles (and a true-crime book by Peter Maas) inspired the hit Al Pacino movie. In real life, Serpico moved away from the spotlight to a farm in Holland—a disco-era Barbara Walters seems appalled here, but in retrospect Serpico's shunning of celebrity seems to have been a wise move. Recent high-profile examples of police abusing power and shooting unarmed suspects has given Serpico's story fresh relevance. Here, the outspoken Serpico comes across as a gifted storyteller and a man of conviction. Extras include deleted scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



himself. From the age of 7, Hamilton had ambitions to ride the biggest waves that the global ecosystem could produce, and as he grew into adulthood, those ambitions turned into single-minded obsessions with mastering “unrideable” waves. Laird’s innovations such as tow-in surfing—in which a jet ski tows the surfer into waves that are too big to reach by paddling—were maligned by purists at first. And his idea to invite publicity to his surf collective Strapped and its beloved “secret” Hawaiian surfing spot caused a dangerous overcrowding of the spot, where more than a few of the collective wound up with life-changing injuries. Kennedy never dwells too much on the surfer’s difficult personal issues (and there are a few), tending to cast Hamilton in an exaggeratedly deified light. But the real magnetic center of the film is Hamilton’s sheer talent, his preternatural ability to defy injury and age to preserve his status as the greatest living big-wave surfer. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)

This is Bob Hope... ★★☆☆1/2

(2017) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0320-2.

During his century-long life, Bob Hope (1903-2003) conquered vaudeville, radio, TV, and movies. Hope kept people laughing through the depths of the Depression, and brought mirth, hope, and a feeling of home to American troops from World War II through Desert Storm. Filmmaker John Scheinfeld’s PBS-aided *American Masters* tribute examines Hope’s long and sometimes contradictory career. Although Hope seemed the most American of entertainers, he was actually born in England (and his real first name was Leslie). As a young man, Hope decided the stage was his “dish,” and early on he perfected a persona as a braggart and woman chaser who ultimately was revealed as a coward (and he rarely strayed far from that formula). Hope’s act had an improvisational feel, and though he was not a comedy writer, he was an expert at selecting and refining gags (some of his best bits came when he reacted to a joke that fell flat). Hope showed an easy rapport with Bing Crosby, parlaying this into a series of long running *Road* movies. After WWII broke out, he entertained troops by spoofing his hammy image, but while his energy was endless, the danger he was in was sometimes real. The famed comedian was also an expert businessman and self-marketer, spurning a TV series in favor of “specials.” The documentary describes his long marriage, offscreen womanizing, charity work, controversies over his support for President Nixon and the Vietnam War, and his corny jokes about “Passover” (i.e., his failure to win an Oscar). Billy Crystal provides the voice of Hope in this portrait that features numerous archival clips, along with comments from Woody Allen, Conan O’Brien, Brooke Shields, Tom Selleck, and many others. Extras include

bonus footage and interviews. The definitive video biography of Bob Hope, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

The Untold Tales of Armistead Maupin

★★★

(2017) 91 min. DVD: \$29.99; individuals; \$325: institutions. DRA. Outcast Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Jennifer M. Kroot’s lively and affectionate profile of Armistead Maupin, which aired on PBS’s *Independent Lens*, presents its subject as both author and gay icon. In an early interview, Maupin describes himself as a writer who is gay rather than a gay writer. He grew up in North Carolina, where he became a conservative like his father. Far-right politician Jesse Helms even gave him his first writing job. Maupin went on to serve in Vietnam, which made his father proud. After the war, he established himself in the Bay Area through the column that would later be the basis for his famed *Tales of the City* novel series. The ongoing saga about Mary Ann Singleton and her LGBT social circle started in the *Pacific Sun* before being picked up by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Maupin thought it would make him famous, and he was right. Friends including Neil Gaiman and Laura Linney (who played Mary Ann in three miniseries aired between 1993-2001), offer their thoughts about Maupin’s unique twist on the Dickensian serial. Kate Bornstein, a non-binary theorist, was particularly impressed by the character of Anna Madrigal, a transgender apartment manager that Maupin modeled on his beloved grandmother. The show went on to become one of PBS’s biggest success stories, although the outcry from conservative leaders led to its cancellation after the first season (Showtime commissioned the second and third). Actress Selene Luna also praises Maupin’s novel *Maybe the Moon*, the story of a little person like Luna herself, for depicting her reality with such empathy. Other speakers include Sir Ian McKellen, Amy Tan, and Olympia Dukakis, who played Ms. Madrigal in the TV adaptations. A fond celebration of Maupin’s work, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during May and June, including: *Celtic Soul*, *The Divide*, *The Empathy Gap: Masculinity & the Courage to Change*, *Flames*, *Kids and the Church Year*, *Metal Road*, *Mosul*, *Naledi: One Little Elephant*, *Red Trees*, *Steve McQueen: American Icon*, *Travel Safe Not Sorry: Discover California*, *Vermeer: Beyond Time*, *Written Off*, and much more!

Series Update

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

Filmed in partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company, **Julius Caesar** (163 min., DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99) is the most recent adaptation from the series of Opus Arte and Naxos of America releases of contemporary productions of the Bard’s classic plays. See review of *The Tempest* in VL-11/17.



Rock ‘N Learn: Telling Time (46 min., DVD: \$19.95), the latest title in Rock ‘N Learn’s educational computer-animated series, teaches young viewers about digital and analog clocks using songs, rhymes, and new animation. See review of *Rock ‘N Learn: Phonics* in VL-3/18. Available from: Rock ‘N Learn, P.O. Box 3595, Conroe, TX 77305; tel: 800-348-8445; web: rocknlearn.com.

NCircle Entertainment has recently released **Mack & Moxy: S.T.E.M. Strong** (75 min., DVD: \$9.99), featuring BFF blue moose Mack and pink raccoon Moxy in a collection of four Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math-themed stories from the animated series. See review of *Mack & Moxy: The Great Helpee Heroes* in VL-9/16.

Newly available from Shout! Factory is **Super Sentai—Kyuukyuu Sentai GoGoFive: The Complete Series** (1,245 min., DVD: 8 discs, \$59.98), the 1999-2000 latest set from the Japanese tokusatsu precursor to the wildly popular *Power Rangers* teen-superhero action franchise. See review of *Super Sentai—Ninja Sentai Kakuranger: The Complete Series* in VL-7/16.

The latest title from PBS Distribution’s animated series following inquisitive preschooler Caillou is **Caillou Goes Camping** (55 min. DVD: \$12.99), which centers on a fun camping adventure in the garden with Grandpa. See review of *Caillou: Let’s Go Sledding* in VL-11/13.



Ace Attorney: Part 1

★★★★1/2

(2016) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This anime series, based on a popular video game franchise, focuses on young defense attorney Phoenix Wright. The courtroom drama occurs in an unusual judicial environment where cases must be tried and decided in a three-day period. Wright is assisted by a spirit medium named Maya Fey, who is the sister of Mia Fey, Wright's mentor. When Mia is killed, Maya is accused of her death. Wright's defense of Maya gets off to a bad start, and he winds up getting arrested for Mia's death, but things eventually work out and Wright takes on the defense of other characters charged with homicide. *Ace Attorney* is a rather unusual anime series, especially since it uses a warped legal setting as the foundation for wild misadventures. The straight-laced Wright and funky Maya also make for an amusing odd couple, engaging in cases that offer a merry mixture of by-the-book courtroom melodrama and off-the-wall anime madness. While a few plot twists are a bit clumsy, the series overall moves at a crisp pace, and the animation is stylish. Presenting the first 13 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include an episode commentary and outtakes. Highly recommended. [Note: *Ace Attorney: Part 2* is slated for release on May 8.] (P. Hall)

All Out!! Part 1 ★★1/2

(2016) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Based on a manga by Shiori Amase, this 2016 sports anime is a nicely produced but rather formulaic genre entry in which the featured sport is rugby. *All Out!!* begins with the meeting of two mismatched freshman at Jinko High School: Kenji Gion, a short but volatile kid who wants to play because he loves the thought of tackling other players, and tall but shy Sumiaki Iwashimizu, who has rugby experience but is disinclined to try out for the team because he injured a friend while playing in middle school. Both end up joining the squad captained by severe Takuya Sekizan, only to be outclassed by their rivals in practice sessions. That leads Gion to lobby for the recruitment of an experienced but demanding coach, Shingo Komori, who like *The Karate Kid's* Mr. Miyagi uses unorthodox methods in rigorous training sessions. As the series progresses, it digresses from the main characters to focus briefly on personal troubles facing other members of the team, including portly Mutsumi Hachiouji. The narrative trajectory of *All Out!!* is extremely

familiar, but the animation is colorful, the characterizations are intriguing, and the on-the-field action is energetic. Presenting the first 13 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. [Note: *All Out!! Part 2* is slated for release on May 15.] (F. Swietek)

Berserk: Season I

★★★★1/2

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



This anime series based on Kentaro Miura's popular manga displays a contemporary artistic style that is more aesthetically sophisticated than the identically named original 1997 series. The focus here is on the swordsman Guts, who travels through a hostile land in the years after a cataclysmic solar eclipse. Guts's adventures get off on a violent foot, with a fight against a group of bandits followed by an attack from skeletons, and his imprisonment by the Holy Chain Iron Knights, who are suspicious of Guts's origins and purpose. From there, things grow progressively crazier: Guts is caged but escapes with the help of an elf, only to be chased by vicious dogs, and then he saves a strange woman about to be raped by a horse. From there, *Berserk* serves up torture, more fights, episodes of madness, and incidents that challenge both good taste and good sense. While nothing here is suitable for younger viewers, adults with a sense of the absurd and a strong stomach may find this to be perversely amusing (the rapid action leaves little time to pause and question the inane plot twists or excessive blood and gore). And Guts is one of the most brilliantly enigmatic anti-heroes in contemporary anime. Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2016 first season in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, this is highly recommended. [Note: *Berserk: Season II* is slated for release on June 12.] (P. Hall)

Cheer Boys!! The Complete Series ★★1/2

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



One might expect this sports anime series—based on a novel by Ryo Asai—about a group of college students who form an all-male cheerleading squad to feature plenty of team action. But while many sequences are set during practice sessions in the gym, the emphasis here is on character and interpersonal drama. Even at the end, when the "Breakers" compete in a national contest, we see only snippets of their routine. Instead, the show follows the building of the squad after Haruki, who has to abandon judo when he is injured, is approached by his

friend Kazuma to take up cheerleading, and the two begin recruitment efforts. Eventually, a group of 16 members are assembled with various levels of expertise, who struggle to work together and overcome their individual hang-ups and personal problems. With such a large cast of continuing characters, some inevitably receive only cursory treatment, and the backstories of others can be a bit melodramatic and heavy-handed. The animation, moreover, is sometimes sketch-like, with colors that are rather pallid. Still, *Cheer Boys!!* is more mature than most sports anime entries, offering an intriguingly different spin on the genre. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-PG, extras include an episode commentary, a bonus episode, and two OVAs. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Chihayafuru: Season 1

★★★★1/2

(2011) 625 min. DVD: 5 discs, \$79.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$99.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Chihayafuru is a sports anime series based on a traditional card game called karuta that is only loosely considered a sport (the game has also inspired manga, light novels, and live-action movies). Beautiful and goofy Chihaya enters high school hoping to start a karuta club. She intends to reach the highest levels of competition as a means of seeing her childhood friends: handsome perfectionist Taichi, and quietly intense Arata, whose love of karuta infected Chihaya before he left town with his parents. Taichi winds up attending her school, and their renewed friendship draws him back into karuta, despite his initial disinclination. Recruiting club members is a common trope of sports anime, as are training, tournaments, and love triangles, but while these have a familiar ring, the series ultimately upends expectations as it follows the funny and heartwarming process of team-building, as well as the excitement of watching characters discover and pursue their dreams. The well-designed animation is vibrant, and learning about the history/rules of karuta is nearly as fun as getting to know the cast. Presenting all 25 episodes from 2011-12 in a dual-language Blu-ray set, rated TV-14, this is highly recommended. [Note: *Chihayafuru: Season 2* is also newly available.] (L. Martincik)

Hunter x Hunter: Phantom Rouge ★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99. Viz Media (avail. from most distributors).

Wildly confusing for anyone unfamiliar with the hit (in Japan) manga and television series *Hunter x Hunter*, this feature-length entry reunites four "hunters" (a combination of soldiers of fortune, bounty hunters, and

spies)—Gon, Killua, Kurapika, and Leorio—who face a supervillain from a crime organization called Phantom Troupe. Investigating, Kurapika meets a boy he recognizes as a childhood friend, Pairo. Out of the blue, Pairo, a puppet, steals Kurapika's eyes, and the others must now protect Kurapika and fend off further assaults from other puppets. Joining them is a brave puppeteer, Retsu. The frantic fight scene action during key sequences is often disorienting, although the images can be sometimes beautiful. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include cast interviews, footage from the Japanese premiere, and an art gallery. Optional. (T. Keogh)



Kabaneri of the Iron Fortress ★★½

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



This original action anime series, written by Ichiro Okouchi and directed by Tetsuro Araki, is set in a world in the midst of industrialization that is struck by a terrible plague, transforming much of the population into Kabane—undead, zombie-like creatures who feast on human flesh. On the island of Hinomoto, the humans have constructed a line of train stations to act as garrisons, connected by rail lines along which powerful steam trains called hayajiro run to deliver supplies. Young engineer Ikoma has invented an anti-Kabane gun but is infected while testing it, becoming a Kabane-human hybrid—or Kabaneri—in the process. He leads the survivors of a station overrun by Kabane on a journey seeking safety aboard a hayajiro called Kotetsujo (Iron Fortress), aided by a young female hybrid named Mumei. Naturally, their quest is endangered by various threats, including an army of artificially-developed Kabaneri. There is a strong *Walking Dead* vibe here, as well as echoes of Bong Joon-ho's live-action thriller *Snowpiercer*, but what the series lacks in originality it makes up for with loads of action (some quite violent) and striking animation, although the characters lack much depth. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Morose Mononokean ★★½

(2016) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).

This lighthearted anime series, based on the manga by Kiri Wazawa, focuses on high school freshman Ashiya Hanae, who one day finds that a furry white “yokai”—a spirit from the Underworld—has attached itself to

him and is sapping his energy. Although he ultimately bonds with the entity he christens Fuzzy—which gives him the rare ability to see other yokai as well—he initially enlists stern classmate Abeno, who happens to be an exorcist, to separate Fuzzy from him. But Abeno demands to be Ashiya's assistant in return. The series consists mainly of adventures in which the pair help yokai return to their Underworld home, but the narrative introduces other characters along the way, most notably Zenko, the daughter of a temple priest, who also gains the power to see yokai when she is nipped by Yahiko, a fox demon. *The Morose Mononokean* lacks both action and tension, and the lead figures are rather thin, with Ashiya coming across as a whiner and Abeno all too fully embodying the dourness of the title adjective. The animation is colorful, however, and younger viewers will likely enjoy the odd menagerie of yokai here, especially the cute Fuzzy. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-PG, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



My Neighbors the Yamadas ★★★

(1999) 104 min. DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

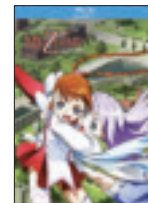


Produced by Studio Ghibli, the Japanese animation studio founded by Hayao Miyazaki, this goofy and sweet 1999 anime is as different from Miyazaki's lush, dense, and epic storytelling as could be. Based on a popular newspaper comic strip, this sly and clever comedy about an endearingly dysfunctional middle-class family is drawn in a sparse style. The film plays like a series of blackout gags woven together with imaginative metaphors (a struggle for control of the TV remote spoofs martial arts movies), brought to visual life and punctuated with lovely haiku (recited by the late David Ogden Stiers in the English language version, which also features James Belushi and Molly Shannon). Yet director Isao Takahata's bobbing rhythm and deftly composed character journeys (as well as a delightful score) give it the feel of a lighthearted symphony of human behavior in all its eccentricities. They squabble, goof off, avoid housework, and bait one another, yet also display a kind of family camaraderie that isn't often seen in contemporary movies. A lesser-known Ghibli film that never achieved the success or reputation of the studio's great fantasies, this is a lovely and funny comedy that (references to food aside) translates beautifully to suburban America. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated PG, extras include

behind-the-scenes featurettes, the complete film in storyboard form, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

My-HiME—My-Otome: The Complete Series

★★½
(2005) 7 discs. 650 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



In 2004-05, the Sunrise studio created an anime series called *My-HiME*, centering on a group of girls with unusual abilities—enhanced by nanotech—who trained at a special school in order to defend humankind from monsters. The following year the studio produced this follow-up, which is not so much a sequel as it is a semi-remake with mostly different characters in another time and place—a futuristic planet colonized by Earthlings that now features various kingdoms. The story arc begins with the arrival at Windbloom of country girl Arika Yumemiya, who is determined to follow in her mother's footsteps by training at the academy to become an Otome—a virgin warrior protecting the country against monsters called Slaves. Over the course of the series the narrative swerves wildly, with major characters like classmate Nina wavering between friendship and rivalry with Arika, and Nina's foster father Sergay threatening Arika's devotion to the idea of becoming an Otome. Another major figure is Mashiro, an arrogant princess whose often abusive conduct threatens the kingdom's stability. The series features a good deal of action throughout, both in training sessions and actual missions, as well as some fan service, but while Arika matures somewhat over the course of the narrative, she also remains loud and mostly irritating to the end. Presenting all 26 episodes from 2005-06 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include a bonus featurette. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Napping Princess ★★★

(2017) 106 min. DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



This delightful 2017 animated feature (the original Japanese title translates to *Ancien and the Magic Tablet*) serves up a clever and creative mix of magical fantasy, real-world adventure, and family drama. The film opens in fantasy mode with the teenage sorceress Princess Ancien, who is hidden away from the car-obsessed King by a scheming, would-be usurper. But when high school girl Kokone wakes up, it turns out it was all a dream, one that has been continuing like a serial adventure. Over the course of the story the dream world and

Kokone's life with her father mirror one another and then cross over. Set in 2020 before the opening of the Tokyo Summer Olympics, the story involves a corporate plot to steal the computer program for a self-driving car developed by Kokone's father along with the president of the auto company (who looks just like the king in Kokone's dreams). Director Kenji Kamiyama mixes magic, mecha, fantasy, and technology into a tale sustained by the spirit of a high school girl and her sidekick and protector Morio, as they flee the corporate bad guys. While the ending goes a little too far in action movie excess, this is otherwise a colorful, briskly-paced film that is both an imaginative adventure and a touching and sweet story about family, friends, and loyalty. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, not rated (but suitable for 10 and up), extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and interviews. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Squid Girl: Complete Collection, Seasons 1 & 2 ★★½

(2017) 675 min. DVD: 7 discs, \$79.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$99.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Gag comics inspired this fun anime series, in which Squid Girl (which is her proper name) arises from the ocean to “ink-vade” and punish humanity for pollution of the seas. But she’s just a cute-looking adolescent (albeit with superpowered blue tentacles for hair) and seldom fazes anybody; furthermore, she doesn’t really have any plan for “ink-vasion” besides talking it up. Squid Girl ends up doing menial chores for the Lemon Beach House, a seaside snack bar, where she is accepted as a curio. Typical episodes find Squid Girl contending with human peculiarities (ghost legends, singing idols, superhero cosplay, shopping, etc.), while a running gag features American MIT scientists who are obsessed with proving that she (or anyone) is an alien. The swimsuit setting provides a bit of beefcake and cheesecake elements, but this is relatively low-key. Presenting all 24 episodes from 2010-11 along with three OVAs from 2012-14 in a dual-language Blu-ray edition, rated TV-14, extras include “Squid Girl” shorts and Japanese cast audio commentaries. A delightful, fun series, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Taboo Tattoo: The Complete Series ★★★

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



Seigi, a Japanese high-school streetfighter with a strong sense of justice finds himself sur-

rounded by fury and intrigue when his hand is abruptly imprinted with a mystic tattoo, one of a set that grants their wearers superpowers. The U.S. military is after the weaponized body art, competing against a ruthless princess whose own tattooed forces (and clones) are conspiring to give her god-like mojo, against which even Seigi’s feared “Voidmaker” tattoo may be insufficient. Viewers can relate when, more than once, a character complains about being confused, as various opponents face off in escalating duels and dismemberment, climaxing in a kaiju monster battle. Nonetheless, even in the midst of torture and death, the material here can flip into quick comedy, fan-service lesbian gropes, and even a post-modern gag at an anime convention (one hero assures his lady love that he’s too archetypal of a character to get killed). While the series doubles down on action, kinetic artwork, and teasing near-nudity, it’s also noteworthy for grudging affection in the portrayal of the Americans, a roughneck bunch whose leader is called Col. Sanders. Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2016 first season in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Time Travel Girl ★★★

(2016) 2 discs. 300 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$44.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This strange and delightful anime series focuses on the century-jumping adventures of Mari Hayase, a schoolgirl whose scientist father mysteriously disappeared. Mari discovers a book that once belonged to her father, which proves to be a portal that enables her to travel back in time. With her best friend Waka Mizuki tagging along, Mari goes back through the years to meet such notable scientists and inventors as Benjamin Franklin, Michael Faraday, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, and Alessandro Giuseppe Antonio Anastasio Volta. During her encounters with these important figures, Mari keeps an eye out for her lost father, who she believes was somehow sucked back through time but has failed to figure out how to return to his own epoch. *Time Travel Girl* is a curious mix of sci-fi, history, and teen adventure, with spunky female characters taking the lead—a kind of funky stepping stone to encourage young viewers to learn more about STEM- and history-related topics. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2016 in a DVD edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-PG, this is recommended. (P. Hall)

Trickster: Part One ★★

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

Set during the 2030s, this anime series

inspired by the works of 1920s Japanese mystery writer Edogawa Ranpo focuses on the Boy Detectives Club assembled by the enigmatic private eye Kogorou Akechi (Ranpo’s most celebrated creation).



While the boys are tasked with tracking down the criminal known as “Fiend with Twenty Faces” (another Ranpo character), much of the story involves Yoshio Kobayashi, a boy who has achieved a degree of immortality due to a mysterious fog (Yoshio’s attempts at suicide are stopped by this inexplicable preservation force). His partner is Kensuke Hanasaki, an energetic teen with no special powers and—at least initially—no great talent for crime solving, but ultimately Hanasaki gets the chance to prove his worth. In a nod to contemporary technology, there is a computer hacker character—a gnomish girl—added to the stories, but her personality is rather bland. Overall, the animation is unexceptional, the character development (especially supporting characters) rather stunted, and the pacing lethargic. Presenting the first 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is not a necessary purchase. [Note: *Trickster: Part Two* is also newly available.] (P. Hall)

Yuri!!! On Ice ★★★

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



The world of figure skating is at the center of this anime series that serves up a mature, intriguing, and dramatic story of competition, fidelity, and emotional challenge. Unsatisfied with his career, 23-year-old Japanese figure skater Yuri Katsuki decides to take a break from competition. But when secretly videotaped footage of Yuri imitating a classic skating routine by Russian figure skating champion Victor Nikiforov appears online it captures the latter’s attention. Victor goes to Japan and offers to become Yuri’s coach, but Victor is also approached by Yuri Plisetsky, a 15-year-old Russian skater who reminds Victor that he promised to coach him if he should win a junior championship. So Victor decides to have the two skaters compete against each other. Complicating matters is the emerging attraction that Yuri Katsuki and Victor have for each other. This series is uncommonly well-written and beautifully animated, and the skating sequences were choreographed by champion skater Kenji Miyamoto. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, extras include a bonus OVA and an episode commentary. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Così fan tutte ★★1/2

(2017) 183 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



When a choreographer stages Mozart's delectable repertory opera comedy—in which Ferrando (Frédéric Antoun) and Guglielmo (Philippe Sly) are persuaded by their cynical friend Don Alfonso (Paulo Szot) to disguise themselves and exchange girlfriends on a bet in order to test the women's fidelity—one can be certain that a good deal of dance will be added to the mix. That is certainly the case with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's 2017 production at the Opéra National de Paris. Her idea is to pair each of the six main characters—the three men, sisters Fiordiligi (Jacquelyn Wagner) and Dora-bella (Michele Losier), and their maid Despina (Ginger Costa-Jackson)—with a dancer from her Rosas Ballet Company, who will silently express the character's emotions through movement while the singers sing. The conceit is misguided, not only because Mozart conveyed inner feelings perfectly well through his music, but also because the moves that De Keersmaeker has devised are for the most part either obvious or opaque (too often the performers merely bend sideways in unison for a “leaning tower” effect, or lurch about individually like Frankenstein's monster). The cameraperson is of no help as there are far too many close-ups of feet. As conducted by Philippe Jordan, the performance is fleet, and the vocalism is fine, but the sparse staging (with only a liquor cabinet in sight) and nondescript costumes are visually dull. While trying to be different, this *Così* does not especially distinguish itself. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Didone Abbandonata

★★★1/2

(2017) 2 discs. 166 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$34.99. Dynamic (dist. by Naxos of America).

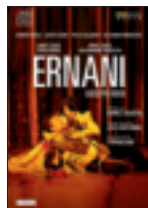


This 1726 work by Neapolitan composer Leonardo Vinci (1690-1730) signals the very beginnings of *opera seria*, being one of the earliest settings of the 1724 libretto by Pietro Metastasio, based on the tale of Dido and Aeneas from Virgil. This first modern mounting by the Opera di Firenze in 2017 is a fairly typical example of the form, presenting a succession of florid arias separated by reams of recitative—dramatically inert but elegant and falling easily on the ear (although the quiet, abrupt ending comes as a shock). Soprano Roberta Mameli is vocally impressive in the demanding role of Dido, as is Carlo Allemano as Aeneas, even if he looks rather too old for

the role. The four secondary singers are all adequate, even if countertenor Raffaele Pé, as the African prince Iarba—Aeneas's rival for Dido's affections—is obliged to snap a whip a bit too much. The whip-snapping is representative of Deda Cristina Colonna's unimaginative staging, in which the characters simply pose on the single set of interlocked pipes, gesturing clumsily as they deliver their arias, clothed in odd costumes (Dido's gown, for instance, has some weird metallic rigging attached). The score is played by the modern-string Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino under Carlo Ipata with little flair (and occasionally poor discipline). Still, this release serves as an introduction to the work of a historically important composer. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Ernani ★★★

(2014) 130 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Giuseppe Verdi's fifth opera—an early triumph for the young composer when it premiered in 1844, cementing his international reputation—is based on a tragedy by Victor Hugo and set in 16th-century Spain. *Ernani* pits the titular nobleman turned outlaw against King Don Carlo as rivals for the affections of the lovely Elvira, who is about to marry the elderly grandee de Silva. A conspiracy against the king is hatched, but he suddenly shows clemency to the lovers after being elected emperor. Not surprisingly, all does not end happily, as the chivalrous Ernani must commit suicide to keep a vow that he made earlier to the jealous de Silva. Despite its initial popularity, the piece faded in public estimation and has only recently reemerged in the repertory. This 2014 production from the Monte-Carlo Opera, vividly conducted by Daniele Callegari, features a strong male lineup in Ramón Vargas (Ernani), Ludovic Tézier (Don Carlos), and Alexander Vinogradov (de Silva), and even though Svetla Vassilieva's Elvira is rather pallid and Jean-Louis Grinda's direction is relatively unimaginative (as are the sets and costumes), overall this is an enjoyable production. Presented in 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)

Havana Time Machine ★★★★★

(2017) 50 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0368-4.

Stage presence is hard to define, but you know it when you see it. In one scene of this outstanding documentary on Cuban music, host and vocalist Raul Malo (no slouch himself in the “it” department) sits sip-

ping coffee in a café—gut string acoustic guitar on his lap—talking about music with Ivette Cepeda. In the midst of the conversation, Malo strums the opening chord to “Perhaps Perhaps Perhaps” and Cepeda, still cradling a coffee cup in her hands, softly begins the melody. Soon, the pair are performing an amazing duet that soars to the heavens, without either ever rising from the table. Malo is a Miami singer who came to fame in the U.S. with his roots/rock band the Mavericks. *Havana Time Machine* documents his recent journey to the original homeland of his family to explore the rich—and still somewhat hidden—music traditions of Cuba. The film opens with Malo performing with the acclaimed Eliades Ochoa (introduced to the world by Ry Cooder through the excellent Buena Vista Social Club) and proceeds to mine a rich musical vein of the old and very new (the latter represented by the indie-pop Sweet Lizzy Project) with artists including Roberto Fonseca, the Instituto Superior de Arte's student string quartet, and of course the Mavericks. The musicians here don't just play the music, they also seem to live it, expressing and exploring rhythms and melodies that simultaneously connect, sooth, and energize in a language that is unique to an island that has one foot frozen in time and another stepping boldly into the future. Combining astounding musical performances with rich local cinematography, this PBS-aided program presented in stereo is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (C. Block)



Les Indes Galantes

★★★1/2

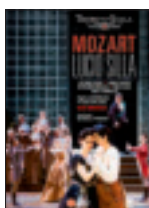
(2016) 180 min. In French w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



Jean-Philippe Rameau's 1735 *opéra-ballet* is already represented by an excellent 2014 production by the Opéra National de Bordeaux (VL-11/15). This mounting from the 2016 Munich Festival of the Bayerische Staatsoper is equally compelling. While both are musically superb—this version is conducted expertly by baroque specialist Ivor Bolton—they are quite different in their treatment of this tale of love reigning triumphant in four different “exotic” locales: the Ottoman Empire, Peru, Persia, and America. The Bordeaux version opts for a bizarre amalgam of period literalism and modernist updating, complete with some strategically-placed nudity. Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's Munich staging is more abstract, set in a parochial elementary school where

the contest between love and war is played out in venues including a museum (for the Ottoman sequence, with glass display cases substituting for prison cells) and a chapel (where the Peruvian high priest is the Catholic chaplain). These are striking backdrops for the singers and dancers—who include a group of soloists who often take on multiple roles, the Balthasar-Neumann-Chor, and a dozen members of the Dancers of Eastman. The costumes are mostly simple and conventionally modern and the expert camerawork nicely captures the intricacies of Cherkaoui's imaginative choreography. A choice between the Munich and Bordeaux productions would be difficult, but each allows Rameau's brilliant work to shine. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Lucio Silla ★★½
(2015) 186 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$47.99, Blu-ray: \$42.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



Mozart was still in his teens when he won great acclaim for the titular *opera seria*, composed in 1772. This 2015 production from Milan's Teatro alla Scala reveals it to be an amazingly mature work even for such a wunderkind. The libretto offers a fanciful take on Roman history: cruel dictator Silla (Kresimir Spicer)—i.e., Lucius Cornelius Sulla—wants to marry lovely Giunia (Lenné Ruiten), whose fiancé, Cecilio (Marianne Crebassa), Silla has exiled and now says has died. Cecilio, of course, is still quite alive, and he secretly returns to Rome with plans to kill Silla, while other characters—Cinna (Inga Kalna) and his beloved, the dictator's own sister Celia (Giulia Semenzato)—are implicated in plots against Silla as well. Violence seems imminent until Silla, in a sudden if also narratively convenient act of generosity, forgives all and allows both couples to marry. While the story is pure *opera seria* formula, the 16-year-old Mozart's music is masterful, and the succession of long, elaborate arias are beautifully sung by all the soloists while conductor Marc Minkowski leads the company orchestra and chorus in a flexible, rich reading of the score. (Casting difficulties forced Mozart to shorten Silla's role, but Minkowski has added a florid aria for him to the last act from Johann Christian Bach's 1774 setting of the same libretto; it fits nicely, and Spicer does it complete justice.) Elegant sets and costumes, as well as brief bits of dance expertly performed by the company ballet troupe, add fine touches to this excellent release. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Pelléas et Mélisande

★★★
(2016) 178 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classics (dist. by Naxos of America).



The gossamer, ethereal quality of Claude Debussy's 1902 opera is sensitively caught in Benjamin Lazar's imaginative 2016 production from the Malmö Opera—a performance that also radiates a sense of humanity often absent from more abstract stagings. The libretto, based on Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist tragedy, centers on jealousy and doomed love. Golaud (Laurent Alvaro) weds Mélisande (Jenny Daviet), a girl he finds weeping in the forest, but comes to suspect that she is cheating on him with his half-brother Pelléas (Marc Mauillon), so he assigns Yniold (Julie Mathevet)—his son by a previous marriage—to spy on the pair. Things do not end well, as the principals die and Golaud is left to wonder whether he badly misjudged the two of them from the very beginning. With a dreamily bucolic set and modern costumes in pastel hues, Lazar's visual presentation is romantic but restrained, never indulging in excess emotion even at the most wrenching moments. The singing throughout is similarly controlled, as is the pristine playing of the company orchestra under the sure hand of Maxime Pascal. All in all, this is a sufficiently distinctive version of *Pelléas* to merit consideration even by those who already own an earlier release. Presented in 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)

Robert Plant and the Sensational Space Shifters: Live at David Lynch's Festival of Disruption

★★★
(2016) 77 min. DVD: \$15.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Each year, David Lynch's Festival of Disruption brings together music, film, and art in order to raise funds to promote transcendental meditation to students, veterans, and various at-risk populations. On the first night of the inaugural 2016 event, Robert Plant and the Sensational Space Shifters performed a sold-out show at Los Angeles's Ace Hotel. The lineup included Billy Fuller (bass), Justin Adams (guitar, bendir, mandolin, tehardant), John Baggot (keyboards, piano, loops, percussion), Juldeh Camara (riti, kologo, bendir), Dave Smith (drums), and Liam "Skin" Tyson (acoustic and electric guitar, banjo). The music that the nimble ensemble produces hews closer to the blues-infused rock of Plant's past than to the roots music of more recent years. The most notable selections, four Led

Zeppelin tracks, take on jazzier shapes in this configuration. "Black Dog," for instance, ends with an Afro-Celtic breakdown as Gambian musician Camara plays the kologo (a West African one-string fiddle), while Plant beats out a rhythm on a bendir (North African frame drum). The versions of "Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You" and "Whole Lotta Love" are also more expansive, distinguished by synths and flamenco-style guitar. Even when the band takes on an Appalachian number like "Little Maggie," the results resemble rock more than folk. After a 10-song set (including a medley), the band returns for an encore of "Going to California," the only song where Plant's voice sounds rougher than in his youth. It's a relatively short but potent set on behalf of a worthy cause. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, extras include an interview with Lynch. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

The Tale of Tsar Saltan

★★½
(2015) 150 min. In Russian w/English subtitles. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.98. Mariinsky (dist. by Naxos of America).



Conductor Valery Gergiev and his St. Petersburg-based Mariinsky Theatre company continue their project to revive all of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's operas with this 2015 performance of a rarely staged 1900 fairytale opera based on a poem by Pushkin. The libretto tells the story of Tsar Saltan (Edward Tsanga), a man tricked into condemning his queen (Irina Churilova) and her infant son to what appears to be a watery grave by the queen's jealous sisters, who are egged on by a malignant old woman. Actually, mother and son reach a remote island where the boy grows into the strapping young man Guidon (Mikhail Vekua) and saves a swan from a hawk. The bird proves to be a beautiful princess (Albina Shagimuratova), who changes Guidon into a bee so that he can travel home, sting his treacherous aunts, and spur the tsar to visit the island (the occasion for the famous "Flight of the Bumblebee"). After arriving, Saltan learns the truth and is reunited with his wife and son, who weds the Swan-Princess. The piece is filled with pleasant if not terribly memorable tunes and Gergiev conducts with his customary zeal, but the vocalism is of variable quality, with some of the male singing particularly rough, and the physical production—which recreates the sets and costumes of a 1937 Leningrad staging—has a crude comic-book look, accentuated by the practice of overlaying the orchestral transitions not only with shots of the musicians but also bits of choppy animation. Still, this Rimsky-Korsakov rarity will likely appeal to fans of Russian opera. Presented in PCM stereo in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

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VL Website 3.0 Redux

Last September we began planning for a major website reboot. Our original website was launched in 1997 and revamped in 2008, but the time was past due for a big overhaul. At the end of February we launched the new site. Looking back at my editorial from the September/October 2017 issue, I wanted to see how close we came to our original aims:

"We intend to replace the updated every-two-week subscriber-only 'Video News Briefs' section with a running blog free to all that will highlight new announcements. While some of these will be for major releases, our real focus will continue to be on documentaries that might be lesser-known but also important and timely (or just plain fun)." **And this is exactly what we did.**

"We will be improving and streamlining the search function in the 'VL Reviews Database' section (which currently has some 40,000 full-text reviews), creating better drop-down menus and adding more tolerant search parameters for slightly misspelled words." **This turned out to be the biggest headache**

of the revamp, and we were unable to allow for misspelled words, but we did add a "VL Web Review Archive" so that subscribers would always have a way to check recent web reviews.

"A 'Latest Reviews' section on the home page will feature new movie, TV, and documentary reviews with links that go directly to the reviews in the database, rather than taking visitors to a separate page with reviews to scroll through." **Yep, did that.**

"Most important of all, we will be adding complete digital editions of each issue that will be available at no extra cost to all *Video Librarian Plus* subscribers." **Not only is the current issue available in a digital edition now, but there are also issues dating back to January 2012 for download.**

As I said before, just as the video world is gradually shifting away from physical formats toward digital content delivery, we can foresee a day when *Video Librarian* might become a digital-only publication. Making digital issues available to *VL Plus* subscribers represents the first step in that direction.

"And at some point we also hope to create a *Video Librarian* app for mobile and tablet use." **Actually, the new *Video Librarian* website is built on the WordPress platform,**

which displays well on both phones and tablets, so a separate app is unnecessary.

"Other aspects of the site will undergo minor changes, but will remain functionally similar, including our 'New Release Calendar' with links to full-text pre-pub reviews of upcoming movie releases; our 'Bi-Weekly DVD/Blu-ray Selection Guide,' which highlights forthcoming titles worth noting in several areas: children's, documentaries, TV, Japanese anime, music, and older titles new to DVD and/or Blu-ray; the searchable 'Distributors Database' with contact info for some 1,000 distributors; and a 'Resources' section that includes over a decade's worth of annotated annual 'Best Documentaries' lists." **"Resources" was changed to just "Best Documentaries," but otherwise this is all true, including some nice tweaks.**

"Given that our project will involve migrating to an entirely new platform—amongst other major changes—the revamp is likely to extend to the end of this year." **Ha ha ha! Well of course it took longer. But we are very happy with the results and hope that you are too.**

Randy Pitman



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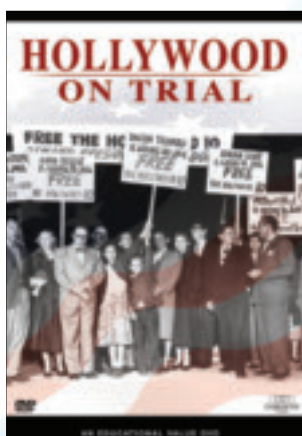
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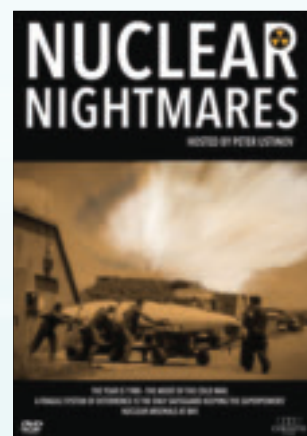
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Inspiring story, beautifully told."

- Jennifer Vitela

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