

January-February 2018

Video Librarian

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IN THIS ISSUE

2017 Best Docs | Eagles of Death Metal: Nos Amis | Lost in Paris | Last Men in Aleppo | Machines | Farewell Ferris Wheel | The Last Laugh



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Publisher/Editor: Randy Pitman
Associate Editor: Jazza Williams-Wood
Editorial Assistant: Christopher Pitman
Graphic Designer: Carol Kaufman
Marketing Director: Anne Williams

Contributing Writers

Carson Block, formerly with
Poudre River Public Library District
Kathleen C. Fennessy, *Reviewer,*
The Stranger
Susan Granger, *SSG Syndicate*
Donald Liebensohn, *Reviewer,*
Entertainment Weekly, Amazon.com
Stephen Rees, *Librarian, formerly with*
Bucks Co. Free Library, Levittown, PA
Frank Swietek, *Associate Professor*
of History, University of Dallas, TX

Additional Contributors:

Sean Axmaker
Charles Cassady
Jose Cruz
Phil Hall
Tom Keogh
Lisa Martincik
Phil Morehart
Michael Sandlin

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Telephone/Fax/E-mail
Subscriptions: (800) 692-2270
Editorial: (360) 626-1259
Advertising: (800) 265-7965
Fax: (360) 626-1260
E-mail: vidlib@videolibrarian.com
Web: www.videolibrarian.com

Eagles of Death Metal: Nos Amis

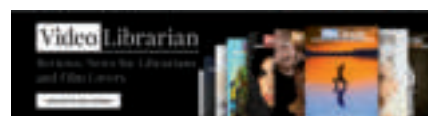
★★★★1/2
 (2017) 84 min. DVD:
 \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98.
 Shout! Factory (avail.
 from most distributors).



Much more than a standard documentary about a rock band, the HBO-aired *Eagles of Death Metal: Nos Amis* is a shattering, deeply felt film about the American group that was performing in the Bataclan Theatre in Paris, France, when terrorists broke in and killed 89 audience members. The attack was part of a larger, coordinated terrorist assault on the city on November 13, 2015, that left a total of 130 dead. Actor-turned-director Colin Hanks (son of Tom Hanks) does an outstanding job of telling this horrifying story in painful detail, capturing the unimaginable trauma and sorrow endured by the survivors. Hanks particularly focuses on Eagles of Death Metal frontman Jesse Hughes, a fascinating and complex intellectual, rock 'n' roll oracle, and avuncular showman who is terribly distraught in the weeks following the tragedy. Shaking, crying, at times struggling to keep from completely falling apart, Hughes is a profoundly sympathetic figure searching for a path forward while knowing, intuitively, that the answer partly lies in a return to Paris—daunting as that may sound—with the garage rock/rockabilly passions of the Eagles' music

(incidentally, there is nothing at all “death metal” about the band, despite its tongue-in-cheek name). But he's also a classic study in rock 'n' roll reinvention, having evolved from a bullied, drifting kid into a gregarious artist whose charismatic, caring relationship with audiences resembles Bruce Springsteen's. The odyssey culminates in the Eagles' return to Paris for a cathartic concert with fellow survivors and *nos amis* (our friends)—a show that underscores the resilience and courage of people who defiantly choose to embrace life in the wake of international terrorism. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Video Librarian Website



The *Video Librarian* website revamp is in its final stages and we hope to wrap up at the end of January. The new site will include digital copies of the magazine (including back issues) for *Video Librarian Plus!* subscribers, a running news blog available to all, a simplified search for the 40,000-plus full-text review database, and much more. Check it out at the beginning of February at www.videolibrarian.com.

Cover Photo: *Eagles of Death Metal: Nos Amis* cover photo courtesy of Shout! Factory

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"A SHEER TRIUMPH!"
—CULTURE FIX



IN HER NAME • A film by Vincent Garenq
2015 • 87 min • Color • In French
w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00223-4 • SRP: \$26.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

"LIKE A FAIRY TALE!"
—DAILY SABAH



SUNSTROKE • A film by Nikita Mikhalkov
2015 • 180 min • Color • In French & Russian
w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00227-2 • SRP: \$26.98
AVAILABLE 2/20

"GENUINE SUSPENSE!"
—FRENCH CINEMA REVIEW



THE ASSISTANT • A film by Christophe All and Nicolas Bonilauri
2015 • 87 min • Color • In French
w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-545650-02289 • SRP: \$26.98
AVAILABLE 3/13

NEW FROM THE KIMSTIM COLLECTION! **Kimstim**

"MAGIC!"
—VOGUE



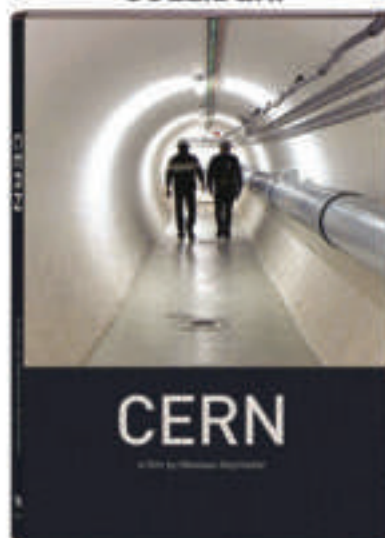
DRIES • A film by Reiner Holzemer
2017 • 90 min • Color • In English and Flemish
w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 6-98452-21343-9 • SRP: \$29.99
AVAILABLE NOW!

"BEAUTIFUL!"
—NEW YORK TIMES



HAPPY HOUR • A film by Ryusuke Hamaguchi
2016 • 317 min • Color • In Japanese
w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 6-98452-21253-1 • SRP: \$32.48
AVAILABLE NOW!

THE LARGE HADRON COLLIDER!



CERN • A film by Nikolaus Geyrhofer
2013 • 75 min • Color
In English • Not Rated
UPC # 6-98452-21373-6 • SRP: \$24.99
AVAILABLE 1/16

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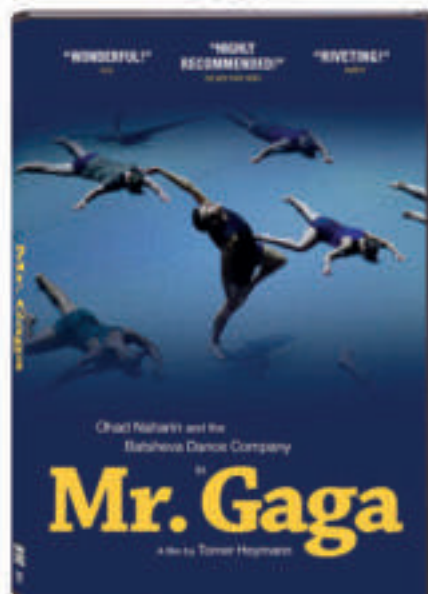


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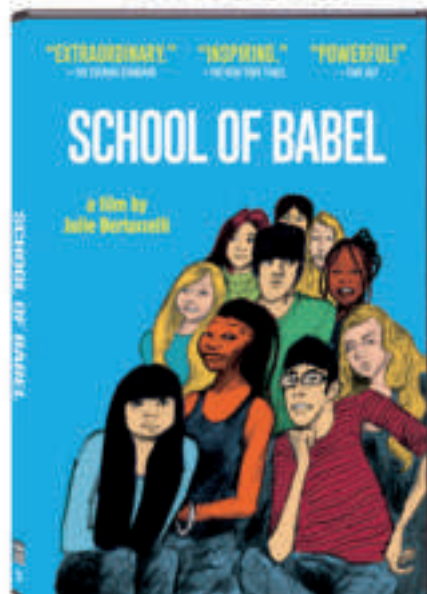
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"ELECTRIC!"
—VARIETY



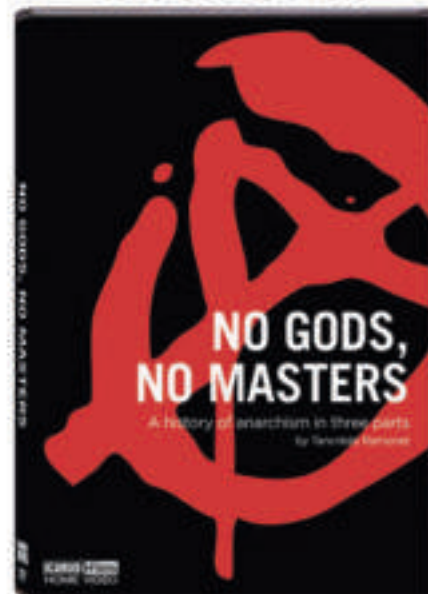
MR. GAGA • A film by Tomer Heymann
2015 • 100 min • Color • In Hebrew and English
w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00215-9 • SRP: \$29.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

"SUPERB!"
—THE FINANCIAL TIMES



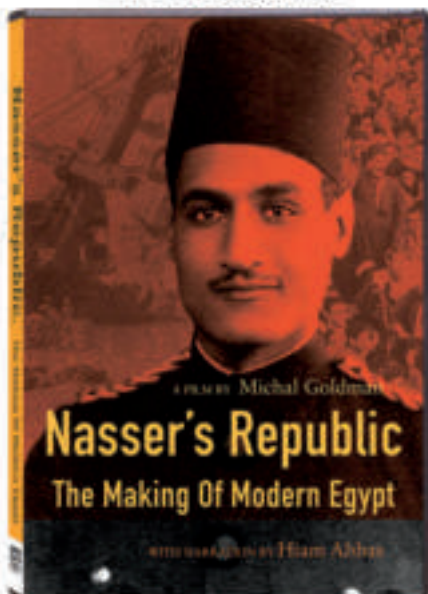
SCHOOL OF BABEL • A film by Julie Bertucelli
2013 • 89 min • Color •
In French w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00219-7 • SRP: \$29.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

"RIGOROUS!"
—LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE



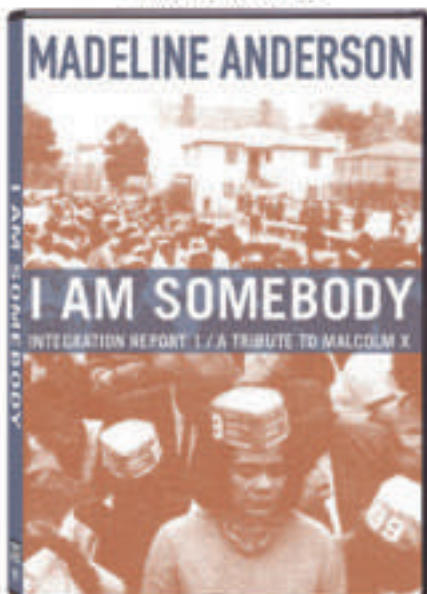
NO GODS, NO MASTERS • A film by Tancred Ramonet
2016 • 3 x 56 min • Color • In English, German
and French w/English subtitles • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00222-7 • SRP: \$34.98
AVAILABLE NOW!

"IMPRESSIVE!"
—FILM INTERNATIONAL



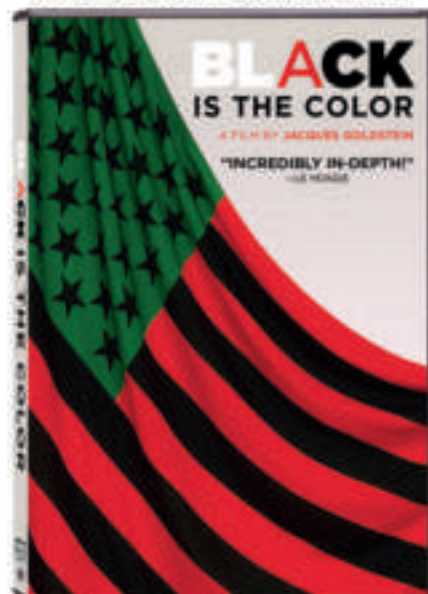
NASSER'S REPUBLIC • A film by Michal Goldman
2016 • 82 min • Color
In English • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00224-1 • SRP: \$29.98
AVAILABLE 1/23

"TERRIFIC!"
—NEW YORK TIMES



I AM SOMEBODY • A film by Madeline Anderson
1970 • 80 min • Color
In English • Not Rated
UPC # 8-54565-00225-8 • SRP: \$29.98
AVAILABLE 2/6

**A HISTORY OF
AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART**



BLACK IS THE COLOR • A film by Jacques Goldstein
2016 • 52 min • Color • In English, German and French
w/English subtitles • Not Rated • Closed Captioned
UPC # 8-54565-00221-0 • SRP: \$24.98
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2017 New Releases



SEED & SPROUT: GROWING THE FOOD RESCUE REVOLUTION

Can ordinary people end hunger by redistributing a small percentage of wasted food flooding our food system and dumping grounds? This film follows eight innovative food rescue initiatives in an effort to find out.



ADHD: NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Specialists and researchers provide insights on the current science and treatments of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.



12 MONTHS

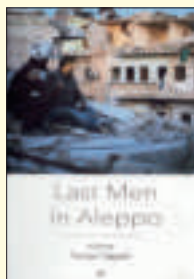
A Los Angeles man rents his home for the entire year for \$1 per month to help a family he has never met get back on their feet.

www.darkhollowfilms.com

Video Newsbriefs

National Media Market Awards Best in Show to "Last Men in Aleppo" from Grasshopper Film

At the annual National Media Market and Conference (NMM) this October, the feature documentary *Last Men in Aleppo* (see review on page 67) was given the Best in Show Award in a brief ceremony at the Northwest Film Center in the Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR. The award was received by the film's distributor, Ryan Krivoshey, founder and president of Grasshopper Film, followed by a full-length screening of the film for participants at the market. Also claiming the Grand Jury Documentary prize at the Sundance Film Festival, *Last Men in Aleppo* chronicles the story of the White Helmets—a rescue group comprised of ordinary citizens who are the first to rush toward military strikes in the hope of saving lives. This extraordinary organization has gained international acclaim in the midst of the Syrian Civil War along with the film's director, Feras Fayyad, who lived with the group and filmed their activities. The National Media Market and Conference, a nonprofit event, has given the Best in Show award annually since 2007, and was given an "upgrade" this year, according to outgoing chair, Sarah McCleskey. "This year's three finalists and eventual winner were decided by a select jury of librarians who acquire and curate media for public libraries and educational institutions, and who have significant experience judging for film festivals," McCleskey said. To add to the award's desirability, NMM also bestowed upon the winner a package that included the full-length screening, a social media campaign, and a full-page color ad in *Video Librarian*. See more from National Media Market Best in Show at www.nmm.net/best-in-show. *Last Men in Aleppo* is available from Grasshopper Film (www.grasshopperfilm.com).



the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress. Chosen for their cultural, historic and/or aesthetic importance, these 25 motion pictures span the period 1905 to 2000 and include Hollywood blockbusters, documentaries, silent movies, animation, shorts, and independent and home movies. Among this year's films are the 1939 aviation adventure starring Cary Grant, *Only Angels Have Wings*; Elia Kazan's 1947 study of anti-Semitism, *Gentleman's Agreement*; Stanley Kramer's 1967 groundbreaking drama *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*; Yvonne Rainer's 1972 experimental film *Lives of Performers*; the 1985 adventure *The Goonies*; the 1989 inspirational fantasy *Field of Dreams*; *Titanic*, James Cameron's 1997 blockbuster maritime disaster; Christopher Nolan's 2000 breakthrough thriller *Memento*; the historical epic *Spartacus*; the 1988 action classic *Die Hard*; and the 1978 version of the quintessential superhero, *Superman*, directed by Richard Donner. Several films on the registry showcased the ethnic diversity of American cinema, including the 1979 documentary-styled *Boulevard Nights* on the struggles facing Chicano youth in Los Angeles; the 1987 musical biopic *La Bamba* on Mexican-American superstar, Ritchie Valens; and African-American director Charles Burnett's *To Sleep with Anger* (1990) on cultural and generational conflicts within a black family. Documentaries and shorts named to the registry include *4 Little Girls* (1997), Spike Lee's sensitive account of the deaths of four young children in the 1963 church firebombing in Alabama; *Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser*, an insightful 1988 film about the famed jazz pianist-composer; and *With the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain* (1937-38), shot during the Spanish Civil War. Two animated films that made the list are *Dumbo*, Disney's 1941 timeless tale about a little imperfect elephant, and *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, a 1918 propaganda short. Silent motion pictures include the 1924 landmark drama *He Who Gets Slapped*, starring Lon Chaney in one of the earliest creepy clown movies. For the full list, visit www.loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry.

"Titanic," "Dumbo," "Superman," "Memento," and "Spartacus" Among 2017 National Film Registry Picks

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden has announced the 2017 selections to

Correction

In our review of Paraclete Press's *Feeding Your Family's Soul* in the November/December 2017 issue on page 52, the DVD price was incorrectly listed as \$99.99. The correct price is \$59.99.

National Media Market and Conference congratulates the winner and finalists of our annual Best in Show Award

Presented October 25, 2017, Portland, OR



BEST IN SHOW
Last Men in Aleppo

Distributed by
Grasshopper Film

Director
Feras Fayyad



Finalist
Ghosts of our Forest

Distributor
Cinema Guild

Director
Daniel Roher



Finalist
RUMBLE:
The Indians Who
Rocked the World

Distributor
Kino Lorber EDU

Directors
Catherine Bainbridge
Alfonso Maiorana



See the entire list of 23 stellar entries at nmm.net/best-of-show
Join us at National Media Market 2018, October 7-11, Indianapolis, IN



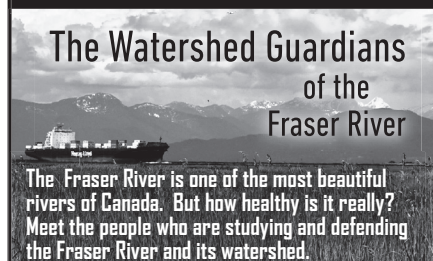
From Best-Selling Lincoln biographer Ronald C. White and Emmy-winning director Ken Kebow comes **Lincoln's Greatest Speech**

★★★★★
Highly Recommended
~Video Librarian

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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.

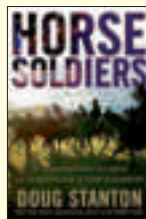


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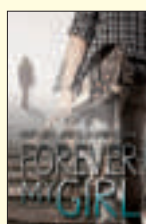
The following films based on books are slated to open during January and February. Movie release dates are subject to change.

Coming in January

12 Strong (Jan. 19) is based on Doug Stanton's 2009 nonfiction book *Horse Soldiers*. Telling the story of U.S. Special Forces sent to Afghanistan after 9/11, director Nicolai Fuglsig's war drama stars Chris Hemsworth, Michael Shannon, and Michael Peña.



Forever My Girl (Jan. 19) is based on the 2012 first book in author Heidi McLaughlin's "Beaumont Series." Directed by Bethany Ashton Wolf, the romantic drama stars Alex Roe, Jessica Rothe, and John Benjamin Hickey.



The Leisure Seeker (Jan. 19) is based on Michael Zadoorian's 2009 romantic road comedy novel. Directed by Paolo Virzì, the film stars Donald Sutherland and Helen Mirren.



Maze Runner: The Death Cure (Jan. 26) is based on James Dashner's 2011 final book in his YA post-apocalyptic sci-fi trilogy. Directed by Wes Ball, the film brings back stars Dylan O'Brien, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, and Kaya Scodelario.



Coming in February

The 15:17 to Paris (Feb. 9) is based on the 2016 nonfiction book *The 15:17 to Paris: The True Story of a Terrorist, a Train, and Three American Heroes*. Co-authors Spencer Stone, Anthony Sadler, and Alek Skarlatos play themselves in this drama directed by Clint Eastwood that also stars Judy Greer, Jenna Fischer, and Thomas Lennon.



Fifty Shades Freed (Feb. 9) is based on author E.L. James's 2012 third entry in the erotic romance series. Directed by James Foley, the film features the return of stars Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan.



Peter Rabbit (Feb. 9) is based on the classic character created by author Beatrix Potter in her 1902 children's book *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Directed by Will Gluck, the live-action/CGI animated film stars Domhnall Gleeson, Rose Byrne, and Sam Neill, with James Corden as the voice of Peter Rabbit.



Annihilation (Feb. 23) is based on the 2014 first novel in author Jeff VanderMeer's sci-fi horror fantasy "Southern Reach Trilogy." Directed by Alex Garland, the film stars Natalie Portman, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Oscar Isaac, and Gina Rodriguez.



The War with Grandpa (Feb. 23) is based on the 1984 YA novel by Robert Kimmel Smith. Directed by Tim Hill, this family comedy/drama stars Robert De Niro, Oakes Fegley, and Uma Thurman.



Looking Ahead

Slated for March is **Ready Player One**, based on the 2011 sci-fi novel by author Ernest Cline. Directed by Steven Spielberg, this futuristic adventure stars Tye Sheridan, T.J. Miller, Olivia Cooke, and Simon Pegg.



Also coming in March is **A Wrinkle in Time**, based on the classic 1962 YA sci-fi fantasy novel by Madeleine L'Engle. Directed by Ava DuVernay, the film stars Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon, and Mindy Kaling.





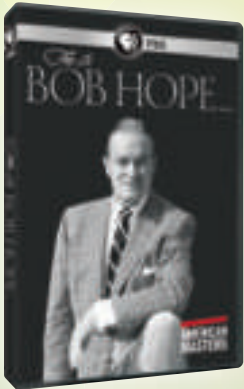
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VICTORIA, SEASON 2

Created and written by Daisy Goodwin, *Victoria* is a landmark account of the life of one of history's greatest monarchs. With a stellar ensemble cast, *Victoria* draws on real-life events and the Queen's own diaries to paint a vivid portrait of transformation from impulsive teen to her early years as wife, mother, and leader of a global empire.



THIS IS BOB HOPE...

During his eight-decade career, Bob Hope was the only performer to achieve top-rated success in every form of mass entertainment: Vaudeville, Broadway, movies, radio, television, popular song and personal appearances. *American Masters* explores the entertainer's life with unprecedented access to his personal archives and clips from his classic films.



THE SECRET OF TUXEDO PARK

In the fall of 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered his country's most valuable military secret – a revolutionary radar component – to Wall Street tycoon Alfred Lee Loomis. Using his money and his brilliant scientific mind, Loomis and his team developed radar technology that played a more decisive role than any other weapon in World War II.



QUEEN ELIZABETH'S SECRET AGENTS

This new documentary series tells the fascinating story of how the Tudor court established one of the world's first secret service organizations to protect Queen Elizabeth I from assassination, terror and treason. A must-have for aficionados of British history.



FINDING YOUR ROOTS, SEASON 4

In this new season of *Finding Your Roots*, viewers discover the surprising ancestral stories of fascinating guests, including Carmelo Anthony, Téa Leoni, Ana Navarro, Bernie Sanders, Questlove, and Christopher Walken.

Just in Time for Black History Month



BLACK WINGS

For early aviators, conquering the forces of gravity was a daunting challenge. But black aviators had an additional challenge — conquering the forces of racism. Meet the men and women who took to the skies throughout the 20th century, proving to a segregated nation that skin color doesn't determine skill level.

For Your Youngest Patrons



WE'RE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT

Based on the best-selling children's book by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, this delightful story follows four siblings and their dog as they adventure through whirling snowstorms, oozing mud, and dark forests in search of bears! This beloved classic is perfect for any collection!

Find DVDs for patrons of every age, plus great savings at Shop.PBS.org/teachershop.

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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.

January 14—January 20

Digimon Story: Cyber Sleuth—Hacker's Memory (Bandai Namco, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this third-person RPG from the long-running franchise, players step into the role of Keisuke Amazawa, who after being framed has no choice but to dive into the digital world to prove his innocence and protect loved ones.

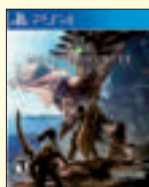


Ni no Kuni II: Revenant Kingdom (Bandai Namco, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this third-person fantasy RPG, players assume control of Evan, a boy prince who learns how to become a leader and build a kingdom.

January 21—January 27

Dragon Ball FighterZ (Bandai Namco, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). This 2D fighting game is the latest entry in the long-running *Dragon Ball* franchise.

Monster Hunter: World (Capcom, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this latest third-person action game in the popular series, players battle fearsome monsters while progressively improving their hunting abilities.



January 28—February 3

Dissidia: Final Fantasy NT (Square Enix, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). This fighting game features *Final Fantasy* characters and worlds from the past 30 years of the franchise.

EA Sports UFC 3 (EA, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). This latest entry in the mixed martial arts fighting series invites players

to step back into the Octagon.

February 4—February 10

The Seven Deadly Sins: Knights of Britannia (Bandai Namco, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). Based on a hit manga, this anime-style brawler has players fighting as famous characters including Meliodas, Elizabeth, and Hawk.



Shadow of the Colossus (Sony, PS4: \$39.99, Rated: T). This completely remastered third-person action game takes players on a journey through ancient lands to seek out and bring down gigantic beasts, armed with only a sword and a bow.

February 11—February 17

Bayonetta 2 (Nintendo, Switch: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-adventure sequel, players take on the role of Bayonetta, a gun-wielding witch with superpowers (including the ability to morph into a panther) who navigates a story characterized by outrageous action and fast-paced dynamic combat.

Dynasty Warriors 9 (Koei Tecmo, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action game, players experience an open-world adventure featuring signature "One Versus Thousands" style action in China's Three Kingdoms era.

Kingdom Come Deliverance (Deep Silver, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this open-world first-person RPG, players embark on an epic adventure in the Holy Roman Empire as they battle invading forces.

Monster Energy Supercross: The Official Videogame (Milestone, PS4/Switch/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). Players race with the official riders from 250SX and 450SX classes on official tracks (Daytona included) in this high-octane racing competition game.

February 18—February 24

Metal Gear Survive (Konami, PS4/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this third-person survival action game set in an alternative universe, players scavenge materials to fashion into usable items, gear, and weapons.



Sword Art Online: Fatal Bullet (Bandai Namco, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: RP). In this third-person action RPG, players explore versatile landscapes and environments in an original story supervised by series creator Reki Kawahara.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

24: Legacy (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). Aired in 2017, this short-lived spin-off from the action-packed 24 franchise stars Corey Hawkins, Miranda Otto, Anna Diop, and Jimmy Smits.

Eastsiders: Season 3 (Wolfe, DVD: \$26.95). After a year in NYC, the guys head back to L.A. in this 2017 third season of the dark comedy web series starring Willam Belli, Stephen Guarino, Brianna Brown, and Constance Wu.

George Gently: Series 8 (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.95). This 2017 eighth season focuses on DCI George Gently's (Martin Shaw) retirement and re-opening of an old case.

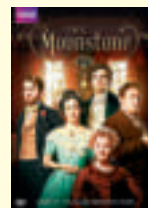
Twin Peaks: A Limited Event Series (Showtime, DVD: 8 discs, \$53.98; Blu-ray: 8 discs, \$64.99). Set 25 years after David Lynch's original 1990-91 series, this sequel stars Kyle MacLachlan, Mädchen Amick, and Richard Beymer.



January 2

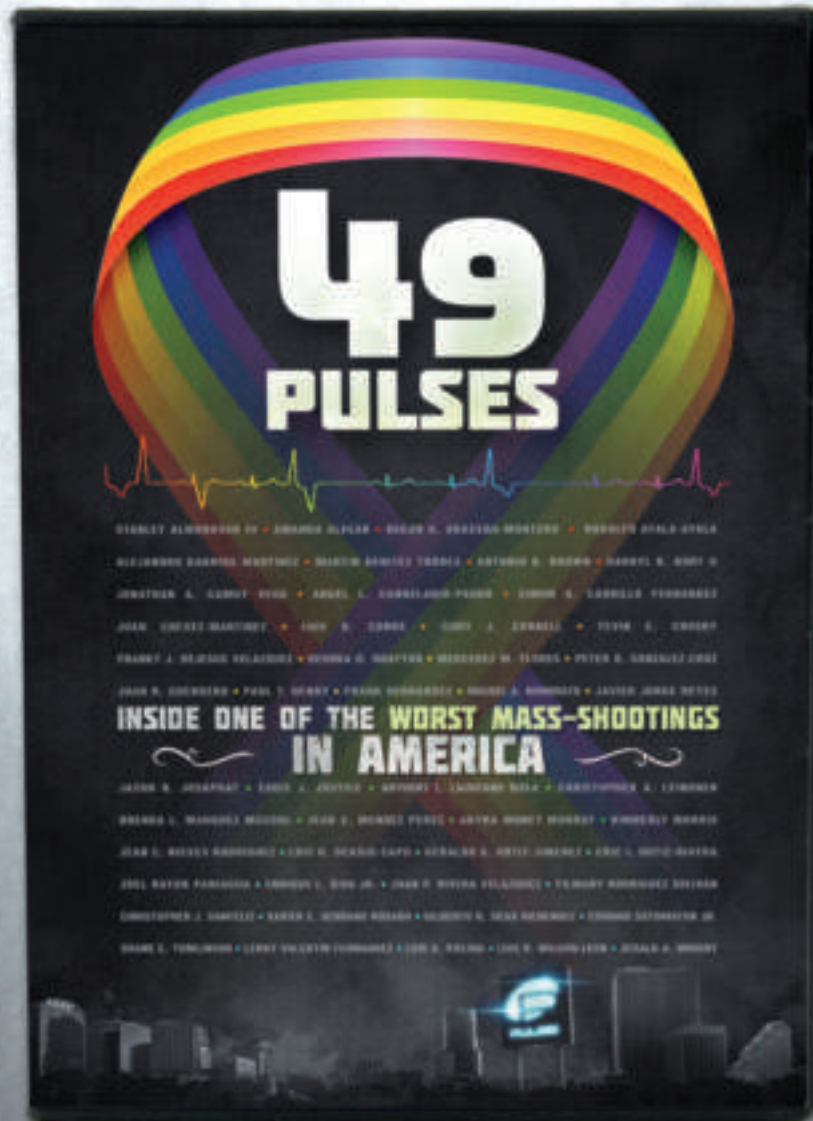
Last Tango in Halifax: Holiday Special (BBC, DVD: \$24.98). This two-part 2017 holiday special from the dramedy series stars Derek Jacobi, Anne Reid, Nicola Walker, and Sarah Lancashire.

The Moonstone (BBC, DVD: \$34.98). Based on the 19th-century epistolary detective novel by Wilkie Collins, this 2016 dramatic miniseries series revolving around a stolen and cursed diamond stars Terenia Edwards, Joshua Silver, John Thomson, and David Calder.



Ten Days in the Valley (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$24.98). Aired on ABC, this 2017-18 limited drama series following a TV producer (Kyra Sedgwick) whose daughter disappears also stars

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January 9

Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In: The Complete Second Season (Time Life, DVD: 7 discs, \$39.95). Hosted by Dan Rowan and Dick Martin, this 1968-69 sophomore season of the offbeat variety series includes guest appearances by Hugh Hefner, Lena Horne, Liberace, Nipsey Russell, and the Smothers Brothers.

January 16

Alibi (Acorn, DVD: \$34.99). The plot to dispose of a corpse leads to trouble in this 2003 thriller miniseries starring Michael Kitchen, Phyllis Logan, and Sophie Okonedo.

Better Call Saul: Season Three (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$35.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$45.99). This 2017 third season of the *Breaking Bad* spin-off and prequel following a small-time lawyer (Bob Odenkirk) also stars Jonathan Banks, Rhea Seehorn, and Patrick Fabian.



The Commander: The Complete Collection (Acorn, DVD: 7 discs, \$59.99). High-ranking Scotland Yard officer Clare Blake (Amanda Burton) is featured in this 2003-08 five-season series, newly available in a complete collection.

The Doctor Blake Mysteries: Season Four (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$35.99). Doctor Lucien Blake (Craig McLachlan) and his helper housekeeper (Nadine Garner) are back in this 2016 fourth season of the Australian period mystery series.

Him (BBC, DVD: \$19.98). Produced by ITV, this 2016 miniseries focusing on a telekinetic boy (Fionn Whitehead) also stars James Murray, Katherine Kelly, and Simona Brown.



January 23

Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency: Season Two (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.98). Based on novels by Douglas Adams, this 2017 second season of the fantasy detective series stars Samuel Barnett, Elijah Wood, and Hannah Marks.

The Paper Chase: The Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$22.98). Based on the 1973 film, this 1986 fourth and final season of the Harvard-set law school drama stars John Houseman, James Stephens, and Tom Fitzsimmons.

January 30

Ray Donovan: Season Five (Showtime, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Charming fixer Ray (Liev Schreiber) is vulnerable due to family situations in this 2017 fifth season of the Showtime drama series that features guest appearances by C. Thomas Howell and Susan Sarandon.

Victoria: The Complete Second Season (PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Aired on PBS's *Masterpiece*, this 2017 sophomore season of the series about the life of Queen Victoria stars Jenna Coleman, Tom Hughes, and Peter Bowles.



February 13

Animal Kingdom: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98). Ellen Barkin, Scott Speedman, and Shawn Hatosy are back in this 2017 second season of the TNT-aired crime clan drama.

Broad City: Season 4 (Paramount, DVD: 2 discs, \$27.99). Stars Abbi Jacobson and Ilana Glazer continue their NYC escapades in this 2017 fourth season of the Comedy Central series that features guest appearances by Wanda Sykes, RuPaul, Jane Curtin, and Steve Buscemi.



The Deuce: The Complete First Season (HBO, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Set in the porn underworld of NYC's Times Square in the early '70s, this 2017 HBO series' first season stars James Franco and Maggie Gyllenhaal.

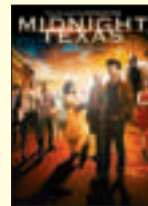
The Sinner: Season One (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Aired on the USA Network, this 2017 miniseries based on the book by Petra Hammesfahr about a mother who randomly commits murder in public stars Jessica Biel, Christopher Abbott, and Bill Pullman.

February 20

The Master: The Complete Series

(Kino, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.95; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.95). Lee Van Cleef stars as an aging ninja master in this short-lived 1984 action-adventure series that features guest stars including Claude Akins, Demi Moore, George Lazenby, and Clu Gulagher.

Midnight, Texas: Season One (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98). Based on the bestselling books by Charlaiane Harris, this 2017 debut season of the supernatural drama series stars François Arnaud, Dylan Bruce, Parisa Fitz-Henley, and Arielle Kebbel.



February 27

Diff'rent Strokes: The Complete Seventh Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.98). Guest stars for this 1984-85 penultimate seventh season of the Gary Coleman sitcom include John Astin, Hervé Villechaize, Stephen Dorff, and Soleil Moon Frye.

Rebecka Martinsson: Series 1 (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99). Adapted from the crime novels by Åsa Larsson, this 2017 first season of the Swedish drama series stars Ida Engvoll as the titular Stockholm lawyer.

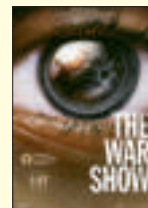
Looking Ahead

Slated for March is the fifth and final season of *Lou Grant*, and the sixth and final season of *Major Crimes*. Slated for April is the debut season of *The Coroner*.

Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

The Settlers (Film Movement, DVD: \$24.95). Newly re-priced for home video, filmmaker Shimon Dotan's timely 2016 documentary (VL-3/17 ★★) looks at the history of and current attitudes about the expansion of Jewish settlements into Palestinian territory since the founding of Israel. Also newly available are the re-priced titles *Gun Runners* (VL Online-7/17 ★★) and *Karl Marx City* (VL-9/17 ★★).

The War Show (Film Movement, DVD: \$24.95). The early years of the Syrian Civil War are depicted from the perspective of a group of friends in this PBS-aired POV documentary (VL-9/17 ★★) from filmmakers Andreas Dalsgaard and former Damascus radio DJ Obaidah Zytoon.



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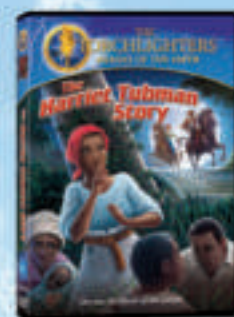
#501773D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01773 0



Amish and the Reformation

Host Joseph Graber, a former member of the Amish Church, traces his family origins back to the Reformation era and gives unique insights into how Amish beliefs have changed over the centuries. Beginning with Luther's 95 theses, the program describes the advent of the Reformation, the establishment of a reformed state sponsored church in Switzerland and the formation of the breakaway Anabaptist Movement. From its Anabaptist origins the Amish developed as a unique sub-group under the leadership of Jakob Ammann. Documentary, 55 minutes.

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Torchlighters: The Harriet Tubman Story

For centuries slavery reigned in parts of America, forcing an entire people into a lifetime of suffering and servitude. Living under the thumb of this oppressive system, young Harriet Tubman prayed that she and her family would be set free. Little did she know that she would help rescue not only her own family, but hundreds of other enslaved African-Americans as well. Discover how Harriet persevered despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles in this latest *Torchlighters* episode. Animated, 30 minutes.

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A Man Named Martin Part 3: The Movement

The Reformation was a time of tumultuous flux: widespread cultural and religious tensions, heated theological controversies, and bloody conflicts across the map. Beginning with Luther's nailing of his 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg in 1517 to the Peace of Westphalia, a treaty that capped the Thirty Years' War in 1648, the Reformation launched by Luther produced enormous changes in Europe—changes that eventually swept across the Atlantic, influencing our nation as well. Documentary, 73 minutes.

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Parable

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500: The Impact of the Reformation Today

Martin Luther's actions 500 years ago continue to have a great impact. Renowned Luther scholars from around the world reveal how the Reformation surrounds us more than we realize through religion, politics, and our society. This thought-provoking documentary was four years in the making, with portions shot on location throughout Germany where the actual Reformation events occurred. Hosted by St. Louis Fox News anchor Sandy Miller. Documentary, 104 minutes.

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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

All I See Is You ★

Universal, 110 min., R, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99, Feb. 6



Set in Bangkok, Thailand, this absurd psychodrama revolves around legally blind Gina (Blake Lively) and her husband James (Jason Clarke). After visiting an ophthalmologist (Danny Huston), Gina undergoes a corneal transplant to restore sight to her right eye (her vision was damaged in an automobile accident many years earlier). As Gina begins to perceive the world around her more clearly, not only is their apartment a disappointment but so is her husband. The couple travel to Barcelona to visit Gina's sister and brother-in-law, who take them to a grotesquely garish peep show, which leads Gina to realize that certain aspects of her sexuality are going unfulfilled. Returning to Bangkok, James agrees to buy a house that can accommodate a child. And Gina's distress over not getting pregnant is relieved after an encounter with hunky Daniel (Wes Chatham), a fellow swimmer from the gym. Naturally, the fact that increasingly insecure James was told by another specialist that his sperm was not viable complicates matters—as do mysterious difficulties involving Gina's steroid eye drops. Director Marc Forster's film is a weak thriller that is further hobbled by Lively's limited acting range. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

American Assassin ★★

Lionsgate, 112 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.98



This derivative albeit timely political thriller follows covert U.S. operatives zeroing in on terrorist factions and renegade mercenaries. The story begins on the Spanish island of Ibiza, where

Mitch Rapp (Dylan O'Brien) proposes to his blonde, bikini-clad girlfriend, Katrina (Charlotte Vega). She accepts, but their idyllic vacation ends abruptly in a bloodbath when Katrina is killed, along with other beachgoers, by Uzi-toting Muslim terrorists from a Libyan group under Adnan Al-Mansur (Shahid Ahmed). Determined to avenge Katrina's murder by infiltrating Al-Mansur's Tripoli-based cell, traumatized Rapp quits his graduate studies to buff up and learn marksmanship, martial arts, and Arabic, which attracts attention from U.S. intelligence. Although the CIA director (David Suchet) has his doubts about channeling Rapp's unbridled thirst for revenge, the counterintelligence chief (Sanaa Lathan) views him as an ideal assassin, so Rapp is sent off to be trained by grizzled, ex-Navy SEAL Stan Hurley (Michael Keaton) at a no-nonsense boot camp in Virginia. When Rapp goes into the field to track down stolen weapons-grade plutonium, he's accompanied by another trainee, Victor (Scott Adkins), and a Turkish agent, Annika (Shiva Negar), and they eventually face a former American agent turned rogue mercenary (Taylor Kitsch) dubbed Ghost, who is brokering a plutonium-239 deal in Poland. Based on a series of pulp novels by the late Vince Flynn, and directed by Michael Cuesta, this is a formulaic, cliché-riddled film. Optional. (S. Granger)

American Made ★★★

Universal, 115 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Jan. 2



"Based on a true lie" that embellishes the facts, filmmaker Doug Liman's '80s-set thriller centers on real-life character Barry Seal (Tom Cruise), a hotshot TWA pilot from Baton Rouge, LA, who hid Cuban cigars in his luggage and enjoyed careening around the wild blue yonder. His antics catch the attention of shady CIA agent Monty Schafer (Domhnall Gleeson), who gives Seal his own Cessna and a monetary deal he can't refuse. Initially, Seal surreptitiously snaps surveillance photographs, but this leads to smuggling cocaine and AK-47s across the border into Central America. Working as a double agent, he consorts with Pablo Escobar of Colombia's Medellín cartel, Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, and the Nicaraguan Contras. *American Made* interweaves authentic news footage and touches on real-life corruption and a scandal that allegedly involved Lt. Colonel Oliver North and the National Security Council, along with President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan. Seal has no trouble convincing his wife (Sarah Wright Olsen) that she should be delighted with the cash coming in (all the closets in their house are stuffed with money, along with numerous duffels hidden in underground crypts), but a fly-in-the-ointment appears in the form

of Seal's rotten hillbilly brother-in-law (Caleb Landry Jones). An edgy, engaging, and twisted tale of America being the land of opportunity, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

Aquarius ★★★

Kino Lorber, 146 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



In a provincial Brazilian town, elderly but vigorous widow Clara (Sonia Braga) refuses to sell her seaside apartment to an ambitious developer who has already cleared the rest of the building. While that holdout premise might signal the start of a heavy-handed tearjerker, filmmaker Klever Mendonça Filho's *Aquarius*—anchored by Braga's ferocious performance—is instead a gritty study of senior determination. The reasons behind Clara's reluctance to give up the home she shared with her husband and children are dramatized in flashbacks to her past: the apartment represents her very identity, and abandoning it would mean losing herself. Clara's resolve is challenged as the nefarious grandson—a smirking business-school grad—of the building's owner employs increasingly threatening forms of harassment to frighten her into accepting his buyout offer, becoming a symbol of the endemic corruption in Brazilian society, which is shown here to reach from private businesses to the highest levels of government. At nearly two-and-a-half hours, *Aquarius* is epic length, and some digressions (especially legal ones) feel unnecessary, while the resolution is more grimly satisfying than truly triumphant. Even so, Braga's performance is compellingly fearless and passionate, serving up a powerful portrait of a resolute woman in this stinging critique of corruption in contemporary Brazil. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

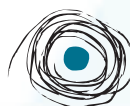
B&B ★★★

Breaking Glass, 87 min., not rated, DVD: \$21.99



This novel British thriller finds married gay couple Marc (Tom Bateman) and Fred (Sean Teale) returning to a bed-and-breakfast getaway whose Christian owner, Josh (Paul McGann), refused them service a year before. Marc and Fred successfully sued Josh, seriously damaging his livelihood and finances, and now they have come back to book a room and rub the defendant's face in their legal victory. At least that's certainly the case with aggressive Marc. Fred initially goes along with the plan, but then begs to back out as tables turn and needless revenge segues into potential danger. The arrival of a silent and possibly lethal Russian (James Tratas) suggests trouble ahead, while a confession by Josh's son (Callum Woodhouse) that he is a closeted

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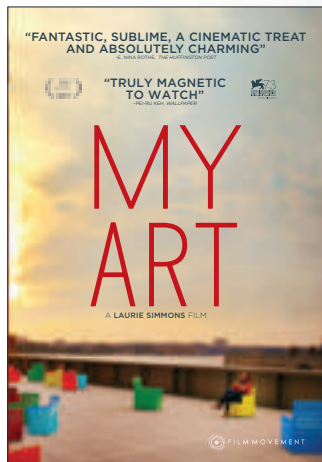
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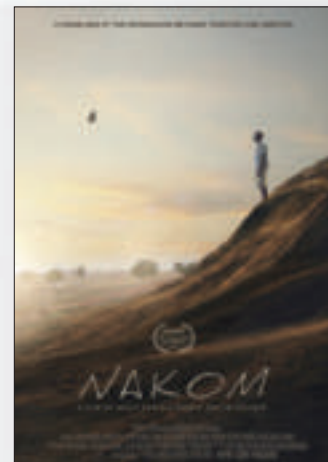
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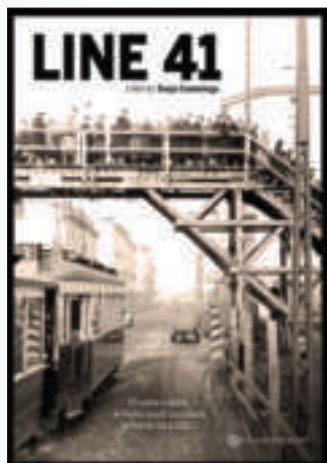


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gay adds another layer of complications. All of these elements intersect in a late-night rendezvous at a park, where antagonists are suddenly allies and no one is quite sure what anything means. Although *B&B* sometimes relies too heavily on disorienting images captured on cell phones and night-vision goggles, writer-director Joe Ahearne has created a strikingly original suspense story with neat twists. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Baby Steps ★★1/2

Gravitas Ventures, 102 min., in English & Chinese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$16.99



Actor Barney Cheng makes his feature debut as a writer-director with this comic tale, in which he stars as Danny, a gay man whose determination to become a father is complicated to no end by the machinations of his tradition-bound, meddling mother (Ah-Leh Gwa), a widow who has just broken up her older son's relationship with a girl she found unsuitable. "Ma" rushes from Taipei to Los Angeles after she learns of Danny's intent to hire a surrogate to bear his child, and she quickly takes charge, finding all of the possibilities unacceptable. She is also none too pleased to discover that her son has a partner—handsome Tate (Michael Adam Hamilton), whose ambivalence about becoming a daddy due to his own unhappy childhood further muddies Danny's plans. Eventually the scenario moves to Taiwan, where Ma insists that her son find a proper Chinese surrogate while keeping his relationship with Tate a secret because of societal prejudices and legal barriers. *Baby Steps* was obviously made on a shoestring budget, and Gwa's over-the-top performance is irritatingly shrill at times, but this good-natured film—clearly a labor of love for Cheng—has its moments. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Bad Batch ★★

Virgil, 118 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99



A spaghetti-Western-meets-exploitation thriller, Iranian-American director Ana Lily Amirpour's *The Bad Batch* stars British model-turned-actress Suki Waterhouse as Arlen, a mysterious young woman who walks out of prison and into a Texas wasteland designated for the "Bad Batch"—i.e., errant members of society. Almost immediately, bandits capture her, drag her to a post-apocalyptic encampment, knock her out, and remove most of her right arm and half of her leg. Denizens of the Bridge use body parts for food, and she isn't their first victim. The minute she gets the chance, she evades her captor and crawls away on a skateboard towards

the town of Comfort. A mute, sun-damaged hermit (an unrecognizable Jim Carrey) aids her in her efforts. Five months later, Arlen has acquired a prosthetic leg, but the amputations continue at another encampment where Miami Man (Jason Momoa)—a muscle-bound Cuban artist—does whatever it takes to feed his family. Through a dream-logic series of events, Miami Man's daughter Miel ends up under the care of Arlen and then drug kingpin Dream (Keanu Reeves), with the rest of the tale revolving around Arlen's survival and Miel's guardianship. Unfortunately, none of this turns out to be as interesting as it may sound. Optional. (K. Fennessy)

A Bad Moms Christmas

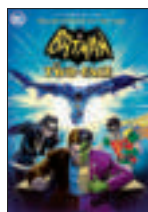
★★
Universal, 105 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99, Feb. 6



This shoddy, superfluous sequel begins with newly divorced Amy Mitchell (Mila Kunis) sitting on her stairs on Christmas Eve, viewing the wreckage of her home, and wondering what went wrong...as a camel wanders by. Flashback a few weeks to when Amy and her friends—chipper Kiki (Kristen Bell) and crass Carla (Kathryn Hahn)—are contemplating the chaos of the upcoming holiday season, feeling overworked and underappreciated. Their angst is amplified when their own respective "bad" moms unexpectedly show up. Amy's is domineering, demanding Ruth (Christine Baranski); Kiki's is sugary-sweet, yet suffocating Sandy (Cheryl Hines), and Carla's is Isis (Susan Sarandon), a pot-smoking, hedonistic gambler who has dropped by to borrow money. While the original *Bad Moms* (2016) delivered some disarmingly raunchy guffaws, this superficial exploration of complicated mother/daughter dynamics disappoints. Written and directed by Jon Lucas and Scott Moore, this is neither insightful nor amusing (on the contrary, it's embarrassingly vulgar), and it lacks the female bonding that characterized the first comedy, although to be fair, the film does feature a slyly comical scene in which Kiki and Sandy consult a therapist (Wanda Sykes) about establishing "boundaries." Still, this is small recompense for this otherwise trashy tinsel tale. Optional. (S. Granger)

Batman vs. Two-Face

★★★1/2
Warner, 72 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.99



The success of the 2016 DC animated film *Batman: Return of the Caped Crusaders*, featuring Adam West and Burt Ward (stars of the campy original 1960s TV series *Batman*) as the voices of Batman and Robin, and Julie Newmar reprising her purr as Cat-

woman, inspired this sequel made with the same mix of tongue-in-cheek humor, tortured puns, and crazy supervillain schemes delivered with straight-faced self-awareness. William Shatner voices the twin roles of District Attorney Harvey Dent, an egotistical but well-meaning public servant, and the villain Two-Face, created by a scientific experiment gone wrong. The character never appeared in the original series so his origin is sketched out in the opening minutes and the colorful credits sequence. There's not much to the story, a silly little lark that tosses in classic TV villains King Tut and The Bookworm, with bit roles for Joker, Riddler, and Penguin, but the filmmakers love the original show and honor it with tributes, including voice actors recreating the voices of classic villains, and Robin pounding his fist into his open hand to punctuate his verbal exclamations. Featuring the final screen performance of West, who passed away in June 2017, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Battle of the Sexes

★★★
Fox, 100 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99, Jan. 2



This sports drama serves up the empowering real-life story behind the famed 1973 exhibition tennis match between 29-year-old Billie Jean King and 55-year-old Bobby Riggs, who bragged that he could beat any woman player in the world. As reigning Wimbledon champion two years running, King (Emma Stone) was in her prime, while brash, gambling-addicted Riggs (Steve Carell) was Wimbledon's champion back in 1939. With great fanfare, King was carried like Cleopatra on a chaise into the Houston Astrodome, while Riggs, wearing a yellow Sugar Daddy jacket, arrived by rickshaw. At the net, King handed Riggs a squirming piglet, confirming his male chauvinist status. Squaring off for the \$100,000 prize, the match became a milestone for the women's liberation movement. At that time under the aegis of condescending Jack Kramer (Bill Pullman), women on the tournament circuit earned far less than men. So King was determined to win respect and equal pay for female players. Meanwhile, off the court, Billie Jean was experiencing a different dilemma: her sexual awakening. Although married to supportive Larry King (Austin Stowell), she was attracted to hairdresser Marilyn Barnett (Andrea Riseborough). Husband-and-wife directing team Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris cleverly capture the tenor of the time—even incorporating actual footage of Howard Cosell's insidiously sexist commentary—focusing on the social change that swept the country during the last quarter of the 20th century. Recommended. (S. Granger)

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TOM OF FINLAND

LGBT STUDIES | ART HISTORY | BIOPIC

The proudly erotic drawings of artist Touko Laaksonen, known to the world as Tom of Finland, shaped the fantasies of a generation of gay men, influencing art and fashion before crossing over into the wider cultural consciousness. But who was the man behind the leather? Dome Karukoski's stirring biopic follows his life from the trenches of WWII and repressive Finnish society of the 1950s through his struggle to get his work published in California, where he and his art were finally embraced amid the sexual revolution of the 1970s. Tom's story is one of love, courage and perseverance, mirroring the gay liberation movement for which his leather-clad studs served as a defiant emblem.

"Tom of Finland does an excellent job of illuminating one of the most influential artists of the 20th century."

— Benjamin Sutton, *Hyperallergic*



THE WOUND

AFRICAN STUDIES | ANTHROPOLOGY
LGBT STUDIES | DRAMA

Brimming with sex and violence, *The Wound* is an exploration of tradition and sexuality set amid South Africa's Xhosa culture. Every year, the tribe's young men are brought to the mountains of the Eastern Cape to participate in an ancient coming-of-age ritual. Xolani, a quiet and sensitive factory worker (played by openly gay musician Nakhane Touré), is assigned to guide Kwanda, a city boy from Johannesburg sent by his father to be toughened up, through this rite of passage into manhood. As Kwanda defiantly negotiates his queer identity within this masculine environment, he quickly recognizes the nature of Xolani's relationship with fellow guide Vija. The three men commence a dangerous dance with each other and their own desires and, soon, the threat of exposure elevates the tension to breaking point.

"Affecting and suspenseful. A potent drama of sexual identity and divided loyalty."—A. O. Scott, *The New York Times*



WALK WITH ME

DOCUMENTARY | BUDDHISM

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.**

"A moving and wonderful film – a great work full of love."

— Alejandro Iñárritu

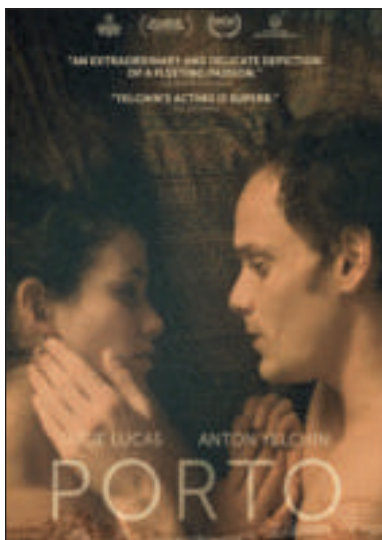


EVA HESSE

DOCUMENTARY | ART HISTORY
WOMEN'S STUDIES

Eva Hesse is one of America's foremost post-war artists. Her pioneering sculptures helped establish the post-minimalist movement. Dying of a brain tumor at 34, her mere decade-long career was dense with complex, intriguing works defying categorization. Eva Hesse makes superb use of the artist's voluminous journals, her correspondence with close friend Sol LeWitt, as well as interviews with fellow artists (among them, Richard Serra, Robert Mangold and Dan Graham) who recall her passionate, ambitious personality. Art critic Arthur Danto wrote her work is: "full of life, of eros, even of comedy... Each piece vibrates with originality and mischief." The documentary captures these qualities, but also the psychic struggles of an artist who was one of the few women to make work taken seriously in a field dominated by male pop artists and minimalists.

"Insightful and illuminating... Marcie Begleiter's intimate documentary...serves as a valuable primer about her life and artistic legacy."— Frank Scheck, *Hollywood Reporter*



PORTO

FILM STUDIES | DRAMA

Jake (Anton Yelchin) and Mati (Lucie Lucas) are two expats who experience a brief but intimate connection in the ancient Portuguese city of Porto. He's an American loner exiled from his family. She's a student from France embroiled in an affair with one of her professors. After spotting each other from a distance at an archeological site and then again at a train station and a café, Jake works up the courage to approach Mati and they embark on a night of carefree intimacy. This romantic encounter is viewed from years later, both characters still haunted by the powerful connection they shared. Using a mix of film stocks and art direction that evokes a bygone era of European cinema, *Porto* delivers a cinematic form of saudade – a Portuguese word that describes an emotional state of nostalgic longing for a person or place that one has loved.

"Ravishingly shot. A film that's in love with love, in love with cinema."

— Guy Lodge, *Variety*



THE DIVINE ORDER

WOMEN'S STUDIES | SUFFRAGE
POLITICAL ACTIVISM | HISTORICAL DRAMA

Set in Switzerland in 1971 where, despite the worldwide social upheavals of the previous decade, women were still denied the right to vote. When unassuming and dutiful housewife Nora is forbidden by her husband to take a part-time job, her frustration leads to her becoming the poster child of her town's suffragette movement. Her newfound celebrity brings humiliation, threats, and the potential end to her marriage, but, refusing to back down, she convinces the women in her village to go on strike...and makes a few startling discoveries about her own liberation. Uplifting and crowd-pleasing, this charming, captivating film is a time-capsule that could not be more timely.

"Inspired and inspiring... A model for the kind of political struggle that's now needed more than ever."

— Amy Taubin, *Film Comment*

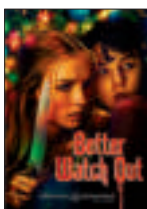
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Classroom rights: \$149 • With PPR: \$349 • DSL Streaming \$499

A KINO LORBER COMPANY
incorporated

Better Watch Out ★★

Well Go USA, 89 min., R, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99

The home invasion horror film genre receives a dash of holiday color in this film starring Levi Miller as 12-year-old Luke, who has a crush on his 17-year-old babysitter Ashley (Olivia DeJonge). Luke gets a chance to play hero when the house comes under attack from mysterious masked stalkers—or so it seems until the first twist reveals that there is something more insidious underway. The story unfolds in and around a cheery suburban home that is decked out in colored lights and Christmas decorations, which filmmaker Chris Peckover uses for counterpoint to the increasingly brutal and sadistic games played by the nihilistic mastermind behind the entire scheme. This plays out with the bouncy energy of a jazzy caper film and a dark sense of humor that is more unsettling than funny, which certainly sets it apart from the usual psycho-killer horror flick but doesn't offer anything more than a clever genre mash-up for its own sake, one with a disappointing finale. Genre fans may appreciate the unconventional take on a familiar theme, but this is not likely to become a Christmas classic. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



Blade Runner 2049

★★★1/2

Warner, 164 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99, Jan. 16

French-Canadian director Denis Villeneuve's belated sequel to Ridley Scott's legendary 1982 neo-noir thriller is set three decades into the future, once again in an ominously bleak, dystopian Los Angeles cityscape with constant rain and neon-lit grime. After upgraded Nexus 9 replicant LAPD officer "K" (Ryan Gosling) hunts down and kills an outdated Nexus 8 (Dave Bautista), he stumbles across a secret that his steely supervisor, Lt. Joshi (Robin Wright), fears will destroy the delicate human/replicant balance. Somehow, a previous generation of replicants were able to reproduce, and a child exists to prove it: the offspring of android Rachael (Sean Young) and Det. Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford). Creepy robot-manufacturer Niander Wallace (Jared Leto) and his replicant Luv (Sally Hoescks) are determined to discover how the Tyrell Corporation made their androids capable of procreation and then use that technology to increase production. In the interim, K experiences embedded memories, which are used to give replicants the illusion of human experience yet keep them subservient. While enduring his own existential crisis, K has a compliant AI companion, a hologram aptly named Joi (Ana de Armas), whom he thinks he loves. Once again taking up the



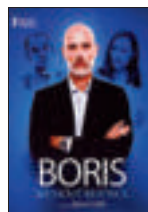
themes of Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Villeneuve's vision favors gritty style/production design over story. Surreal, visually striking, and lethargically paced, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Boris Without Beatrice

★★★1/2

KimStim, 93 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

A self-consciously mysterious tragicomedy with shadowy allusions to Greek mythology and Dante, Canadian writer-director Denis Côté's *Boris Without Beatrice* serves up a thin allegory about pride and the painful journey to redemption. James Hyndman stars as industrialist Boris, a captain of modernity who is out of sorts with a world that turns personal information into publicly available data. Boris is also ambivalent about a more dire situation: the descent of his wife Beatrice (Simone-Élise Girard)—an important figure in the prime minister's cabinet—into catatonic depression. Taking a leave of absence from his company, Boris remains at home to oversee Beatrice's care, which instantly sparks a crisis since he can't paper over his selfishness and inflexibility with his usual work and extramarital affairs. Galvanized by a brief cathartic romance with Beatrice's caregiver, estrangement from his young activist daughter, and a touch of magic realism in the form of a spectral figure (the always bizarre Denis Lavant) who accuses him of making Beatrice sick, Boris slowly begins to accept responsibility. While the cast is wonderful, the more the story drifts into self-aware and half-baked allusions to myth, the less emotionally effective the film becomes. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



Brad's Status

★★★ Universal, 102 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$26.98, Jan. 2

Writer-director-star Mike White explores privileged midlife crisis when a neurotic father takes his talented 17-year-old son on a New England college tour. Although he lives in a beautiful home in Sacramento, CA, with a supportive wife (Jenna Fischer), angst-riddled Brad Sloan (Ben Stiller) never stops whining and complaining. As an idealist, Brad has opted to work in the nonprofit sector, earning considerably less money than his Tufts University classmates: former White House press secretary-turned-author Craig (Michael Sheen), wealthy hedge-fund manager Jason (Luke Wilson), retired-in-Maui tech guru Billy (Jemaine Clement), and Hollywood director Nick (White), whose \$9 million mansion is on an *Architectural Digest* cover. "For them,

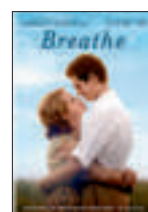


the world isn't a battlefield, it's a playground," Brad muses. Now Brad is off to visit East Coast colleges with his son Troy (Austin Abrams), a musical prodigy who had a good chance of being accepted at Harvard—if the date for his admissions interview had not been messed up. Determined to rectify the scheduling snafu, Brad tries calling his influential college classmates. Stiller has played similar malcontent roles before, but his totally self-absorbed Brad seems somewhat smarmy, given today's real-world problems. Eventually, Brad gets his comeuppance from Troy's flautist friend Ananya (Shazi Raja) but not before he imagines running off with bikini-clad Ananya and another nubile undergrad. Ultimately, it's hard to feel much sympathy for this resentful materialist. Optional. (S. Granger)

Breathe

★★★ Universal, 118 min., PG-13, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.98, Jan. 2

Producer Jonathan Cavendish's inspirational biopic about his parents begins in 1957 with love at first sight, as charming Robin Cavendish (Andrew Garfield) sees socialite Diana Blacker (Claire Foy). Despite Diana's family's misgivings, the pair marry and take off for Kenya, where Robin works as a tea-broker. Enjoying an idyllic life, Diana is pregnant when Robin contracts polio and becomes paralyzed from the neck down, only able to breathe through a ventilator. Determined to return to England, Claire relocates Robin to a polio ward, where he is strictly supervised by Dr. Entwistle (Jonathan Hyde). Miserable in that sterile confinement, Robin wants to go home but that seems impossible until Claire confers with Dr. Khan (Amit Shah) and discovers that Robin's respirator can work anywhere—although if it stops for just two minutes, he will die. Eager to improve his quality of life, devoted Claire has Robin moved to a country home that she has purchased, where he can not only be with his family but also his friends, one of whom is Oxford don/amateur inventor Teddy Hall (Hugh Bonneville), who builds Robin a wheelchair equipped with a portable respirator. In tandem with research foundation director Dr. Clement Aiken (Stephen Mangan)—after soliciting a grant from Lady Neville (Diana Rigg)—Robin and Teddy resolutely work to free other polio sufferers from prison-like hospital confinement, a groundbreaking achievement. Drawing on a glibly superficial, stiff-upper-lip script by William Nicholson, this debut feature from director Andy Serkis (who played Gollum in *Lord of the Rings*) is more manipulatively sentimental than insightful. Optional. (S. Granger)

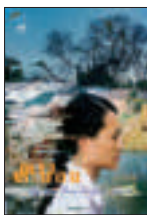


By the Time It Gets Dark

★★★1/2 KimStim, 105 min., in Thai w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Thai writer-director Anocha Suwichakorn-

pong's film takes its inspiration from the massacre of student protestors by the military and its rightist supporters at Bangkok's Thammasat University in October 1976. Her purpose is not to attempt to recreate the slaughter, but rather to suggest how difficult it is to understand it—and other past events—from a distant perspective. While the killings are briefly portrayed in one of three opening sequences (the others show a group of students meeting to discuss the political situation, and a couple walking romantically in the countryside), the setting is actually a soundstage, where a director is barking out orders to actors. Most of the film centers on a filmmaker named Ann (Visra Vichit-Vadakan), who interviews Taew (Rassami Paoluengtong), a survivor of the massacre, as research for the script that she is writing. Another plotline concerns an actor named Peter (Arak Amornsupasiri) who takes a part in the proposed film but is killed in a car crash during the shoot. The story later circles back to the interview sequences, but with different actresses now playing Ann and Taew, and a young girl (Atchara Suwan) watches from the sidelines throughout, taking different roles along the way. An explosion of found footage and brief experimental-film flourishes adds to the cryptic quality of this film that is visually arresting, but also decidedly esoteric and oblique. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

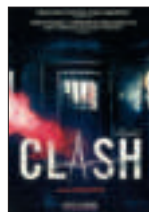


experiences. Sometimes that works, such as nonsensical interactions between fringe denizens of the neighborhood. But many scenes feature stale tropes (vertiginous images to signal somebody very high is walking down a street), while others are absurd, no-budget, primitive efforts to capture dark hallucinations. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Clash ★★★½

Kino Lorber, 98 min., in Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

A remarkable Egyptian drama featuring what (in a different context) could be called a B-horror-movie conceit, *Clash*—set in 2013 following the overthrow of Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi—is shot entirely within the tight confines of a police paddy wagon. In the opening scene, an Egyptian-born American journalist (Hany Adel) and his Egyptian photographer (Mohamed El Sebaey) are violently forced inside the empty truck by a throng of soldiers. Over time, a gaggle of people—including a family with a young son—are arrested during a rock-throwing riot by protestors and tossed within the vehicle, followed by a large number of counter-protestors who are also jammed inside. Trapped in the metal truck's sweltering heat without water, members of the Muslim Brotherhood clash, verbally and physically, with those who support the army (despite being detainees). Director Mohamed Diab finds fresh angles to shoot from inside the truck, framing group scenes or more intimate interactions with compelling ingenuity, but he also captures the extraordinary chaos and rage out in the streets—witnessed through the truck's small windows. That visual remove actually heightens the surreal violence, emphasizing just how vulnerable the truck's captives are in the middle of the action. As day becomes night and misery deepens, the characters vacillate between acknowledging their common humanity and being at each other's throats. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



Candy Apple ★★½

IndiePix, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

This occasionally interesting comedy-drama marking the directorial debut of actor-writer Dean Dempsey is set in the grittier corners of New York City's Lower East Side, and is built around a freak show of losers, pimps, drug dealers, crazy artists, and barflies. *Candy Apple* stars Dempsey as Bobby, a wannabe filmmaker who is trying, but failing, to make a movie starring his outsider neighbors. His morale is boosted by the presence of his father, Texas Trash (played by Texas Trash, Dempsey's real-life father), a heavily-tattooed, Stetson-wearing, double amputee who looks as weathered as the Grand Canyon. Trash is a recovering junkie looking for a new start and wanting to reconnect with his son. But he has no luck finding work, and falls into selling drugs—a secret he keeps from Bobby. Meanwhile, a broke Bobby resorts to sex work for income, a decision he neglects to mention to Trash. Ultimately, the two will have to balance their realities with dreams of a healthier relationship. That human dimension in the film indeed strikes a chord, but Dempsey is intent on pushing the envelope on extreme



Crown Heights ★★★

Broad Green, 100 min., R, DVD: \$29.99

In Matt Ruskin's fact-based *Crown Heights*, an innocent man convicted of murder suffers years of imprisonment before being freed by new evidence. Colin Warner (Lakeith Stanfield), a teen from Trinidad, was arrested in 1980 in the titular Brooklyn neighborhood and charged with killing a man in broad daylight on a busy street. Warner was found guilty on the testimony of a frightened boy who was pressured by police to identify the shooter after claiming, falsely, to have seen



the killing. Warner was sentenced to 15 years. All of this is portrayed in a gritty matter-of-fact style, as is the brutal reality of Warner's incarceration, ironically accompanied by inserts from news footage showing politicians making hay out of "tough on crime" pronouncements. Gradually, however, the focus shifts to Warner's friend Carl King (Nnamdi Asomugha), whose determination to free Warner leads King to become a process server and enlist the aid of a lawyer to help him discover exculpatory evidence—an effort that takes years while Warner's appeals fail and his behind-bars romance with a girl from the old neighborhood (Natalie Paul) appears to be going nowhere. A scalding portrait of a miscarriage of justice that is also a celebration of enduring friendship and commitment, this period piece that carries contemporary relevance is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Cult of Chucky ★★½

Universal, 91 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$22.99

This seventh installment in the *Child's Play* series is written and directed by Don Mancini, the man who originally came up with the idea for a doll possessed by the spirit of a serial killer back in 1988 and has scripted all five of the previous sequels (and directed the last two). This joke-laced gorefest serves as a sort of grand reunion, bringing back not only Brad Dourif—the voice of the snarky, homicidal toy from the beginning—but also Alex Vincent as Andy, the kid who the doll terrorized in the first three films, as well as Fiona Dourif as Nica, who was the chief victim in the last movie, and Jennifer Tilly, who has had the pleasure of being Chucky's bride Tiffany since the fourth installment. Most of the story is set in the asylum where Nica is kept after being framed for Chucky's most recent killings, and where Andy arrives for a final showdown with his nemesis. Through the power of voodoo, Chucky has managed to insert his malevolent soul into several other dolls even as the original's head sits back in Andy's apartment, where it can be periodically tortured. Fans of the series will probably enjoy the gleeful carnage—plenty of patients and staff die gruesome deaths—and be happy that the ending invites yet another sequel. But anyone unfamiliar with the series mythology will likely be bewildered by the goings-on. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Dunkirk ★★★★★

Warner, 106 min., PG-13, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99

WWII's "Miracle of Dunkirk" involved the epic rescue of more than 338,000 Allied troops from the beaches of Dunkirk, France—the biggest



evacuation in military history. From May 27 to June 4, 1940, the Allies were surrounded on all sides by German forces while the Luftwaffe buzzed and bombarded the beaches. Since the water was too shallow for destroyers to get close, brave British civilians volunteered to cross the English Channel in everything from fishing boats to barges to retrieve the troops—all while under constant bombardment. Director Christopher Nolan tells this suspenseful survival story from three meticulously interwoven perspectives. The terrified men on the beach are personified by Tommy (Fionn Whitehead), a fellow soldier (Aneurin Barnard), and an infantryman (Harry Styles) who are in a desperate fight to make it off the mole—an eight-foot-wide pier overseen by Naval Commander Bolton (Kenneth Branagh). The aerial perspective is provided by Farrier (Tom Hardy), a senior RAF Spitfire fighter pilot who has only one hour to take out Nazi planes, providing cover for the men on the ground and in the water. And sailing from England, a small wooden yacht is resolutely piloted by Mr. Dawson (Mark Rylance) with his teenage son Peter (Tom Glynn-Carney) and tagalong pal George (Barry Keoghan). With minimal dialogue and the elimination of backstories, Nolan relies on cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema's visual imagery coupled with Hans Zimmer's music to propel the taut, tension-filled visceral drama, ultimately delivering the most intense and immersive cinematic war story since *Saving Private Ryan*. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)

False Confessions

★★★1/2

Big World Pictures, 85 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



Late director Luc Bondy staged a modernized version of Pierre de Marivaux's 1737 comedy *Les Fausses Confidences* at Paris's Théâtre de l'Odéon in 2014, and during the day he filmed the production for French TV, using the theatre's rooms and hallways as his settings. The major draw here is Isabelle Huppert, who stars as Araminte, a wealthy widow secretly loved by Dorante (Louis Garrel), a penniless young man whose ex-valet (Yves Jacques)—now in Araminte's service—arranges to have him hired as her accountant so that he can win her hand. Araminte's mother (Bulle Ogier), however, wants her daughter to wed a wealthy nobleman instead, while her servant Marton (Manon Combes) falls for Dorante herself—and believes that Dorante loves her. Marivaux works out this complicated combination of deception and romance in suave fashion, and Bondy's conception may well have shone onstage, but in the cavernous spaces of the Odéon's interior it often feels leaden and dull (only a couple scenes are shot outdoors). As always, Huppert

is vivacious (and wears some striking costumes, including a shiny gold tracksuit), but the other actors—particularly the handsome but inexpressive Garrel—are nondescript (with the exception of the veteran Ogier, who brings bulldog ferocity to her role). A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

From the Land of the Moon ★★★

MPI, 121 min., in French, Spanish & German w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.99



Not your garden variety tale of frustrated desire and idealistic love gone awry, writer-director Nicole Garcia's *From the Land of the Moon* stars Marion Cotillard as Gabrielle, a young woman enduring a post-WWII coming-of-age in a rural French village where her overactive imagination and fairy-tale dreams of finding Mr. Right make her a mentally dubious character around town. Gabrielle's micromanaging mother quickly dashes her daughter's hopes when she forces Gabrielle to marry common field hand José, one of the family's loyal farm workers. But when Gabrielle is sent to a hospital in the mountains to recover from kidney stones, she meets handsome soldier André, who turns out to be the storybook man of her dreams. But soon after they agree to go away together following their release from hospital, the script begins an extended tug of war between truth and illusion. Was Gabrielle's steamy fling with this suave military man nothing but a fleeting fever dream of illicit passion? Even though Gabrielle is positioned as the victim of a conformist society, she is also in many ways the chief architect of her own unhappiness. A fine foreign drama, this is recommended. (M. Sandlin)

Girl Flu ★★★

Dreamscape, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Writer-director Dorie Barton deftly balances tricky tones in this drama-comedy about a mother and daughter who simultaneously have to face growing up in different but equally traumatic ways. Twelve-year-old Bird (Jade Pettyjohn) is the de facto adult in the chaotic home that she shares with her pot-smoking, childlike mother, Jenny (Katee Sackhoff). Frustrated by Jenny's unwillingness to let her do essential tasks (such as grocery shopping), Bird is in a constant state of misery, unmoored by the absence of grown-up guidance. Things escalate when Bird gets her first period during a school picnic and is humiliated by mean girls in front of boys. In a crisis mindset for the next several days, Bird is advised by Jenny's more grounded friend (Heather Matarazzo) on using tampons and pads, and she lashes out at her mother at the same time

that Jenny's decent, musician boyfriend (Jeremy Sisto) is asking serious questions about the future of their relationship. First-time director Barton draws razor-sharp performances from everyone, seamlessly blending a certain giddiness with powerful drama and moments of satirical whimsicality, and Sackhoff is especially impressive as a woman exhausted by her own impulsivity and ensuing guilt. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Glory ★★★1/2

Film Movement, 101 min., in Bulgarian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Frank Capra or Preston Sturges might have made *Glory* during the Golden Age of Hollywood. Consider the plot: a grizzled, impoverished, stuttering loner who repairs railroad lines finds a huge bundle of cash on a track, turns it in to the authorities, and then is pressured to become a media sensation in order to distract the public from a government scandal. But *Glory* is from Bulgarian filmmakers Kristina Grozeva and Petar Valchanov, and it speaks to post-Communist corruption in the former Soviet sphere that has led to extreme economic inequality. When the hirsute, eccentric Petrov (Stefan Denolyubov) goes to work and comes across millions in scattered euros, he does the right thing but also captures the attention of government PR flak Julia (Margita Gosheva). The latter puts the squeeze on Petrov to let her put him in a suit and receive a cheap watch—all of this before TV cameras, of course—as an award for his honesty. In the process, Julia takes Petrov's old Slava (Russian for "Glory") watch, inscribed by his father, and misplaces it. Petrov's distress over the loss ("Where is my Glory?" he demands—with a wonderful double-meaning) rises along with the destructive fallout on his life from the unwanted notoriety. *Glory* is a savage satire, farcical but not funny, and truly compelling. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Harold and Lillian: A Hollywood Love Story

★★★

Kino Lorber, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Harold and Lillian Michelson were Hollywood's best-kept secret for decades. Harold Michelson, who passed away in 2007, was an art director and storyboard artist on some of the greatest films ever made. Lillian Michelson ran a Hollywood research library that was an essential resource for hundreds of productions. Their work was strictly behind the scenes and they rarely received public credit for their contributions. Within Hollywood, however, they were legendary and beloved, not just for their work, but as teachers, inspirations, and friends. Documen-

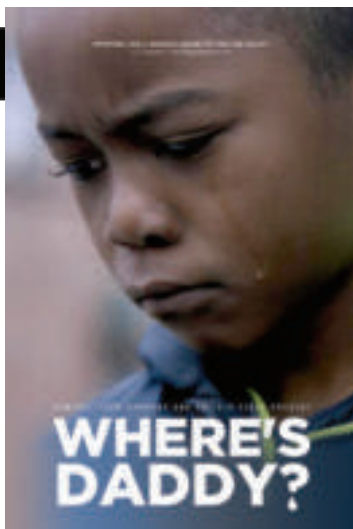
WHERE'S DADDY?

AVAILABLE
FEB 6th \$19.99 SRP

SEARING INDICTMENT OF
AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN
AND THE COURT SYSTEM

"RIVETING."

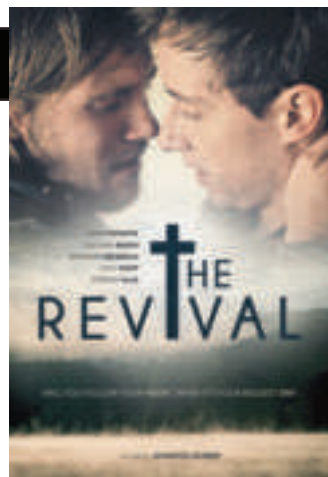
- WORLDSGREATESTCRITIC.COM



A POWERFUL AFRICAN-AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY



The question 'Where's Daddy?' may sound infantile, but it's as much an adult question as any that can be asked, especially when it comes to African-American men and the child support system. "Where's Daddy?" addresses perspectives on that system, and its specific effects and consequences to black families, with an emphasis on the experience of fathers as participants in the system. The film also examines legal challenges, social implications, cultural issues and the emotional impact of navigating the child support system as an African-American father.



THE REVIVAL

A RELIGIOUS LGBTQ ROMANCE

AVAILABLE
JAN 23rd \$24.99 SRP

When Eli begins preaching at his father's old church, his plans are quickly derailed when he strikes up a relationship with a fascinating drifter. Tensions soon come to a head, leading to a revival that will shake this sleepy Arkansas town to its core.

OFFICIAL SELECTION
OUTFEST - LOS ANGELES

"...EDGY, FEARLESS, AND POWERFUL"
- REVIEWS BY AMOS LASSEN



JESUS MEETS THE GAY MAN

A HILARIOUS DOCUMENTARY!

AVAILABLE
JAN 9th \$19.99 SRP

A story of reconciliation, forgiveness and renewal wrapped in Monty Python-like sketches and a jazzy dance number, this fun documentary will have you see Jesus in a new light, while at the same time convincing you to work on your abs!

OFFICIAL SELECTION
WHISTLER FILM FESTIVAL

IT'S NOT A CHRISTIAN FILM, IT'S NOT A HOMO
FILM, IT'S A HUMAN FILM!



THIRSTY

A HEARTFELT, MUSICAL DRAMA

AVAILABLE
FEB 6th \$24.99 SRP

Under the watch of Doris, his dysfunctional, single mom, Scott Townsend was prey to bullying and assault. He grew up to be the revered Cher impersonator drag queen, Thirsty Burlington. But even in the gay mecca of Provincetown, MA, being Thirsty comes at a price.

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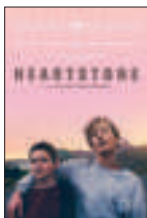
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tary filmmaker Daniel Raim, who met Harold in 1998 and became friends with the couple soon after, creates a loving portrait of the pair in this film celebrating the work of these two great Hollywood professionals. Grounded in interviews that Raim conducted over the course of 15 years, *Harold and Lillian* reveals the couple's unheralded work on such films as *The Graduate*, Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* and *Marnie*, and Brian De Palma's *Scarface*. But it also tells the story of a lifelong love affair, presenting a complex and nuanced portrait of a marriage that was both a personal and professional partnership. Both informative and emotionally moving, this lovely tribute is presented in a playful style that includes storyboard-like sketches to illustrate scenes from the couple's early life, complemented by comments from filmmakers. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Heartstone ★★★

Breaking Glass, 129 min., in Icelandic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$21.99

The Icelandic drama *Heartstone* opens with a scene of two pre-teen boys having fun at an unofficial graveyard for wrecked cars, smashing windows and denting hoods on a small patch of the endless, grassy fields surrounding their tiny coastal village. Pint-size Thor (Baldur Einarsson) and tall, lanky Christian (Blaer Hinriksson) are just doing what comes naturally in a wintry corner of the world, where there are few opportunities for constructive engagement for kids beyond chasing one another and ordering French fries at the sole convenience store. Add to that void Thor's and Christian's respective troubles at home, as the former is deeply frustrated by a feckless, single-parent mother, while Christian's emerging gay identity is squelched by his homophobic father. The boys rely heavily on one another, although strong hints of Christian's romantic longing for Thor unsettles the latter, who is stumbling through an awkward courtship with a self-assured girl. Writer-director Gudmundur Arnar Gudmundsson serves up a powerfully atmospheric tale while coaxing emotionally and physically demanding performances from his talented, youthful leads. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Hermia & Helena ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 87 min., in English & Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Argentinean director Matias Pinero has made a specialty of creating casually plotted, dialogue-heavy features that adapt Shakespeare to the modern era—after a fashion (albeit not in the



pop-Hollywood obvious manner of *10 Things I Hate About You* or *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*). Commonly a Folio play serves as a plot device: here it's a new Spanish-language translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that becomes a project for Buenos Aires theater director Camila (Agustina Muñoz). Going to New York for an artist's residency, she finds herself both homesick and torn between suitors, one being an American filmmaker who ardently courts her with a DIY found-footage collage. However, Camila bolts to Montana for an impromptu meeting with her late mother's old lover (portrayed by filmmaker and critic Dan Sallitt), an adventure that may reveal deep family secrets. This is not necessarily a linear, chronological storyline, and that adds to the freeform quality of the film, but it also sometimes borders on aimlessness. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Human ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 149 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.99

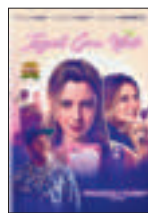
Yann Arthus-Bertrand's dauntingly ambitious production is one that largely realizes its vast goal of presenting a composite portrait of the entire human species, via individual stories distilled from some 2,000 interviews shot by Bertrand (a globetrotting photographer now in his 70s). His worldwide subjects are uniformly lit against a black background. In a variety of languages (all subtitled, including the English speakers), people of all ages and races speak of family, love (and sex), happiness, war, poverty, gender equality, homosexuality, oppression, forced migration, mental illness, and the meaning of life. Few identify themselves (one is Jose Mujica, former president of Uruguay, revered for his charity work and austere lifestyle). The faces and words sometimes give way to image interludes—startling vistas and near-abstract pictorials from around the world (a specialist in airborne environmental photography, Bertrand created the 1999 coffee-table mainstay *Earth from Above*). Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



Ingrid Goes West ★★★

Universal, 98 min., R, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

In this indie satire about social media obsession, Ingrid (Aubrey Plaza) crashes a wedding and attacks the bride who, it turns out, she has never actually met except through virtual interactions. This lands Ingrid in the psych ward, but after being released back out in the world she returns to social-media-stalking, latching on to Los Angeles Instagram celeb Taylor Sloane (Elizabeth Olsen), a new-agey



vegan whose posts are sunny and upbeat. Ingrid uses inheritance money to fly from Pennsylvania to insinuate herself in Taylor's well-manicured and obsessively-posted life. Plaza plays Ingrid with a mix of neediness, loneliness, and desperation—a truly damaged person who is so eager to be a part of the life reflected in Facebook posts that she adopts the interests and mannerisms of her obsession. O'Shea Jackson Jr. is Ingrid's likably nerdy landlord Dan, who falls for the quirky Ingrid, but she is too socially obsessed to notice his genuine affection and she abuses his friendship in order to further her relationship to Taylor (which is built on a series of lies). Behind the humor here lies a timely portrait of an empty vessel who subscribes to the fantasy of purportedly perfect lives presented on social media while neglecting genuine human connection. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Inheritance ★★1/2

Breaking Glass, 76 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

An interesting idea for a dysfunctional family drama is somewhat shortchanged in this sketchy feature written and directed by Jessica Kaye and Laura E. Davis. Set in Belize, the story finds Mara (Kaye) and her new boyfriend Aaron (Daniel Ahearn) visiting the former's childhood home, only to learn that her estranged father has suddenly died. Enduring shock and grief, Mara behaves predictably, given her complicated feelings about her dad, and Aaron gives her tender support. But then Mara's brother Ben (Mark Webber) shows up, and things become weird. Initially snarky with one another, Ben and Mara soon begin opening windows on the darker secrets of their relationship, especially in a scene where a semi-naked Mara intimately tussles with her brother beneath the surface of a lake. With emotions reaching a higher pitch at her father's wake, an overwhelmed Mara later seeks erotic catharsis in a sequence that reveals a painful and destructive sibling history. While the story is intriguing and promising, the film itself is so skimpy on detail and texture that it feels like an abridged novel. Still, there are affecting moments charged with forbidden sexual tension and the acting here is impressive. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



The Journey ★★1/2

MPI, 94 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.99

Director Nick Hamm's *The Journey* imagines a car ride during which Ireland's sworn enemies, Ian Paisley (Timothy Spall) and Martin McGuinness (Colm Meaney), begin to communicate after decades of hostility and vio-



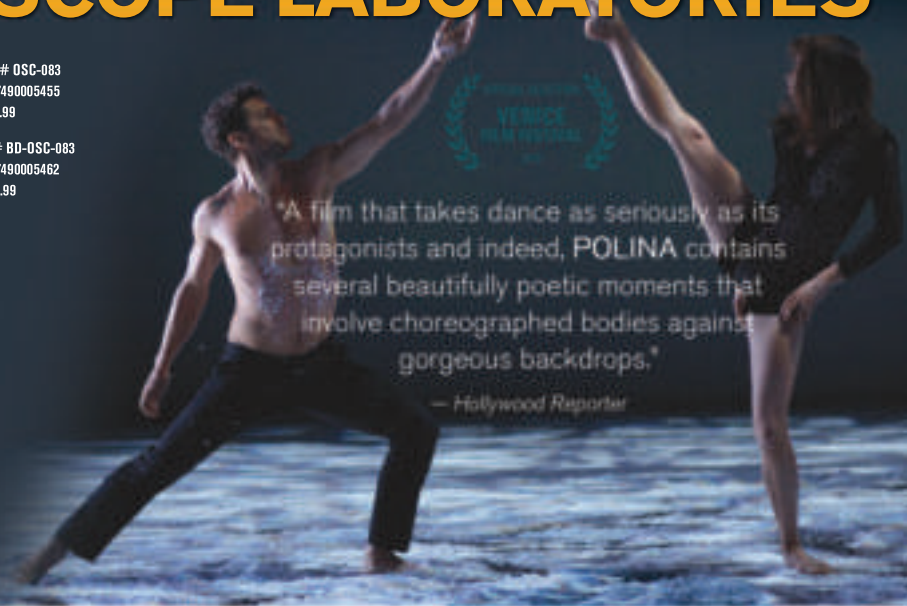
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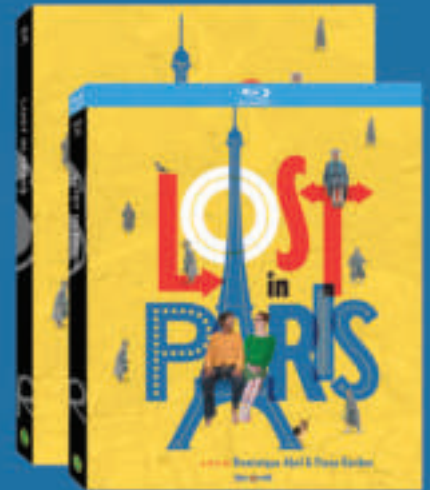


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lence in Northern Ireland. In October 2006, while working on what would become known as the "St Andrews Agreement," Rev. Paisley must fly from the famed Scottish golf resort to Belfast to celebrate his golden wedding anniversary with his wife. For security reasons, McGuinness insists on accompanying him. As various mishaps and delays lengthen the time it takes to make the 50-mile trip to the Edinburgh airport, the lifelong adversaries begin to converse for the first time. Taking a conciliatory position, garrulous McGuinness—former Provisional Irish Republican Army leader—initiates their interaction. At first, Paisley, the crusading 80-year-old founder of the Democratic Unionist Party, is overtly confrontational, exuding moral superiority. Eventually, his stern countenance softens, along with his vehemently anti-Catholic rhetoric. What they don't realize is that their Scots chauffeur (Freddie Highmore) is actually an undercover British agent, charged with monitoring their private conversation, which is being watched via secret camera by MI5 boss Harry Patterson (John Hurt) and Prime Minister Tony Blair (Toby Stephens). It's like eavesdropping on a historic conversation that would ultimately lead to the assumption of power by First Minister Paisley and Deputy First Minister McGuinness in 2007, except that in reality Paisley and McGuinness did not actually begin dialogue until six months after the Agreement was signed. While the two actors shine, the number of plot contrivances to extend the journey ultimately lessen the film's impact. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Kingsman: The Golden Circle ★★

Fox, 141 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

Filmmaker Matthew Vaughn's cynical sequel to 2014's *Kingsman: The Secret Service* continues the sassy, satirical, stylized spoof of James Bond spy stories. With her retro-1950s headquarters hidden deep in Cambodian rainforest ruins, megalomaniacal villain Poppy Adams (Julianne Moore) is the world's most successful—and demented—drug dealer, managing to destroy most of the Kingsman knights along with their Savile Row tailor shop, leaving only Gary "Eggsy" Unwin (Taron Egerton), the cheeky former London street kid-turned-spy who is in love with Sweden's Princess Tilde (Hanna Alström). Eggsy and gadget-wizard Merlin (Mark Strong) travel to America, finding allies at Kentucky's Statesman bourbon brewery: Champagne (Jeff Bridges), Tequila (Channing Tatum), Whiskey (Pedro Pascal), and tech-whiz Ginger Ale (Halle Berry). Meanwhile, Poppy has implanted a mysterious virus to infect and eventually kill every drug user in the world, intending to blackmail the President of the United States



(Bruce Greenwood) into bargaining for the antidote. But her plan backfires when the prez opts to double-cross her—to the chagrin of his chief of staff (Emily Watson). Having miraculously survived being shot in the eye, suave Harry "Galahad" Hart (Colin Firth) is suffering from "retrograde amnesia." Locked in a padded cell, he believes that he's a lepidopterist (a butterfly collector). And there's an extended cameo by Elton John as Poppy's piano-playing prisoner. Based on comic books by Mark Millar and Dave Gibbons, this disappointing follow-up relies on crude sex gags, maniacal action, and exaggerated CGI, but lacks the surprise and charm that made the original a success. Optional. (S. Granger)

Lemon ★

Magnolia, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.99

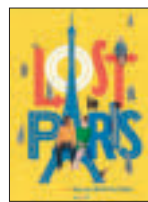
Nobody says "Asperger's syndrome" in the near-unbearable dramedy *Lemon*, but the central character—a drama teacher named Isaac (Brett Gelman, who co-wrote the script with his wife and director, Janicza Bravo)—appears to be on the spectrum. In any case, this is a dark, cringe-worthy movie that inhabits its own cynical vacuum, without any care for explanations. Isaac is increasingly estranged from his blind wife (Judy Greer), whom he semi-terrorizes with threats of serial-killer-level violence. As an acting coach, he constantly praises one student, Alex (Michael Cera), and derides the latter's scene partner, Tracy (Gillian Jacobs). He then tries to establish a social relationship with Alex, only to physically assault the younger man when Alex begins to find success as an actor. Isaac eventually begins to date a single mom (Nia Long) who sees something in him beneath his bizarre, inappropriate ramblings and poor impulse control. *Lemon* is built around idiosyncratic tone rather than any substantive, cinematic virtues, and Gelman's performance grows increasingly unhinged and annoyingly mannered. But the title is accurate. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)



Lost in Paris ★★★½

Oscilloscope, 84 min., in English & French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Writer-directors Dominique Abel and Fiona Gordon are modern masters of physical comedy in the tradition of Chaplin, Keaton, Tati, and Pierre Richard (who has a small role here). Fiona (Gordon) is an Olive Oyl-like Canadian librarian who travels to Paris to help her aunt Martha (Emmanuelle Riva), but winds up losing her absurdly large red backpack sporting a Canadian flag (and containing her passport), which is subsequently fished out of the Seine by Dom (Abel),



a disheveled tramp living in a little tent. Fiona and Dom eventually meet and together they search for the now-missing Martha, sharing plenty of madcap adventures along the way, including a hilarious dance sequence in a restaurant. Most of the humor here is slapstick, although the occasional bit of dialogue zings—such as a scene in which Dom offers up a hilariously inappropriate eulogy in a chapel. The City of Lights cinematography is naturally beautiful and the film revels in big and bold primary colors coupled with cartoon-y special effects (that are entirely human-produced—such as the exaggerated reactions of Canadian library staff members when the door opens to let in a wintry blast of air). A delightful, heartwarming romantic comedy, this is highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Luna ★★

BBC, 106 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Directed by Dave McKean, who is better known as a visual artist and comic book illustrator, *Luna* tells the story of two couples, once close but recently estranged, who reunite for a weekend to celebrate the 45th birthday of Dean (Michael Maloney), a successful artist and longtime friend of Grant (Ben Daniels) ever since they met at art school. Grant hasn't drawn since the death of his infant child, and his wife Christine (Dervla Kirwan) still has visions of the child who might have been, which McKean presents in dreamlike fantasy scenes and animated sequences. Dean is now with a younger woman (Stephanie Leonidas), which makes him self-conscious around his old friends. The film slips into emotionally heavy territory, exploring grief and guilt, success and disappointment, personal creativity and professional compromise, and the tensions of old friends with unresolved issues, and it plays like a chamber drama (set in an isolated beachside manor) with fantasy interludes. Unfortunately, while this is an earnest, personal film that explores the theme of art and creativity as healing forces, *Luna* lacks the dramatic nuance that would bring such complex conflicts to life. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



The Lure ★★★

Criterion, 92 min., in Polish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

The strangest take on the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale "The Little Mermaid" ever filmed, *The Lure* is a musical-horror-fantasy-romantic-tragedy from Poland about mermaid sisters who have a taste for human flesh. Like the Sirens in Homer's *The Odyssey*, these feral creatures lure male victims with their song, and devour



them with razor-sharp teeth. And then these aquatic vampire sisters take a detour to experience life on land as backup singers in a flashy disco nightclub act during which they hypnotize with their voices, strip, and then leap into a tank to expose their tails (which are slick and slimy like an eel) for the finale. While one sister maintains her predatory instincts, the other falls in love with a human and—as in the fairy tale—gives up her fins and voice for legs. Filmmaker Agnieszka Smoczyńska brings a feminist perspective to the story, observing how the women lose their power in a man's world on land and are exploited, and it also tosses in social satire (including a splashy musical number in a department store celebrating the joys of consumerism) and a visual style that bounces from glitzy showbiz set pieces to horror movie imagery to the drab world of life in modern Poland. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Mark Felt: The Man Who Brought Down the White House ★★

Sony, 102 min., PG-13, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99, Jan. 9

This timely biopic reminds us that one highly-principled person can make a big difference. Mark Felt (Liam Neeson), a trusted confidante and second-in-line to the FBI's director J. Edgar Hoover, is summoned by Richard Nixon's aides and asked how the president can fire Hoover. Tersely wording his reply, Felt tells them that every tidbit of gossip that comes to the Bureau—such as who is seen with a woman not his wife, or another man—is duly recorded and kept in Hoover's personal files. Oozing with righteous indignation, Felt insists that the FBI operates independently—without interference from anyone, including the White House and Department of Justice. But when Hoover suddenly dies, instead of promoting Felt, Nixon appoints an outsider crony with no law-enforcement experience, L. Patrick Gray (Marton Csokas), much to the dismay of Felt and his frustrated wife (Diane Lane). When the 1972 Watergate burglary of the Democratic National Committee occurs, Gray plays down its importance, giving Felt and his team only 48 hours before closing the case. Thankfully, Felt continues to investigate, communicating his suspicions to *Time* magazine's Sandy Smith (Bruce Greenwood) and *The Washington Post's* Bob Woodward (Julian Morris)—becoming the elusive tipster known as “Deep Throat.” Based on books by Felt and John O'Connor, this is superficially scripted by writer-director Peter Landesman, who fails to capture the compelling drama of *All the President's Men* (1976). And a counterculture Weather Underground subplot involving Felt's daughter goes nowhere. Optional. (S. Granger)



Marshall ★★1/2

Universal, 119 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Jan. 9

Set in Fairfield County, CT, this courtroom drama about a 1941 rape case centers on Thurgood Marshall (Chadwick Boseman), who was then a crusading civil rights lawyer for the NAACP. After Greenwich socialite Eleanor Strubing (Kate Hudson) accuses her African-American chauffeur, Joseph Spell (Sterling K. Brown), of raping her and pushing her off a bridge, Spell is arrested, and frightened white people begin firing their domestic workers. At the age of 32, Marshall already had a formidable reputation, traveling around the South defending African Americans in redneck towns, and he had argued before the Supreme Court. Arriving in Bridgeport, Marshall quickly realizes that Spell's “confession” was coerced and that Judge Foster (James Cromwell) sides with prosecutor Loren Willis (Dan Stevens). Foster rules that while Marshall may sit at the defense table as co-counsel, he cannot speak in the courtroom because he's from out-of-state. Instead, Spell's defense is articulated by Samuel Friedman (Josh Gad), a reluctant insurance attorney with no experience in criminal law. As the case proceeds, these two young lawyers—black and Jewish—bond, enduring both racism and anti-Semitism. Conventionally directed by Reginald Hudlin, who struggles to keep a consistent tone, *Marshall* does feature strong performances from Boseman and Gad. Marshall would go on to win the famous 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which desegregated public schools, and in 1967 became the Supreme Court's first African-American justice. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



The Midwife ★★1/2

Music Box, 117 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

The presence of screen icon Catherine Deneuve elevates Martin Provost's mawkish melodrama, in which she plays a dying woman who seeks out her estranged quasi-stepdaughter to make amends. Deneuve's Béatrice is actually a supporting character; the true protagonist is Claire (Catherine Frot), who has worked for years as a midwife in a small Parisian clinic. Béatrice is the free-spirited mistress whose sudden departure years before caused Claire's father to commit suicide, but she is unaware of his death and now that she is terminally ill with brain cancer wants to reconnect. Thus begins a halting rapprochement between the two women, with Béatrice having an immense impact on the uptight Claire. Although Claire remains something of a scold, her prim attitude

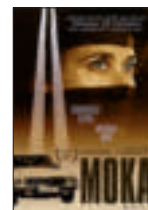


gradually breaks down, and she even begins a relationship with an earthy truck driver. Deneuve and Frot make a strong team, and even though *The Midwife* is just a slight tale of a woman who breaks free of a stifling life as a result of an unexpected encounter with her past, it offers the opportunity to watch two fine actresses joust. And for some that will be more than enough. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Moka ★★★

Film Movement, 90 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Emmanuelle Devos stars as a grieving mother who becomes obsessed with finding the driver who killed her young son in a hit-and-run accident in this mystery with an edge of revenge drama. Set in sister towns that lie just a ferry ride across Lake Geneva, the film opens with Diane (Devos) walking out of a sanitarium and leaving her home in Lausanne, Switzerland, for the French spa town of Évian, where she looks for the mocha-colored car driven by a blond woman who was described by the sole witness to the accident. Adopting a false name, she befriends the car's owner Marlène (Nathalie Baye), a middle-aged beautician with her own salon, and she gets close to both the woman's younger boyfriend and her angry, uncommunicative teenage daughter. Adapted from the titular 2009 novel by Tatiana de Rosnay, *Moka* is as much a character drama as a thriller, charting the strains on Diane as she starts to like her suspect, and the pressures on Marlène as an older woman struggling to hold together both a business and a personal life. Director Frédéric Mermoud creates slow-burning tension that builds to a satisfying emotional climax, and the film features superb performances from Devos and Baye. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



mother! ★1/2

Paramount, 121 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

In this macabre horror/melodrama, writer-director Darren Aronofsky blends *Rosemary's Baby* with his own *Requiem for a Dream*, making the cynical assertion that creative inspiration is more important than love or life itself. Opening with the image of a huge Victorian country house burning (along with its female inhabitant), *mother!* tells the tortured tale of a nameless archetypal couple (Jennifer Lawrence, Javier Bardem). He's a famous, self-absorbed poet who craves adoration and idolatry. Serving as his muse, she has renovated and restored his idyllic old house, which burned down before they met. Like a radiant albeit self-medicating Earth Mother, she is determined to make a



paradise for him. One evening a mysterious stranger (Ed Harris) knocks at their door, needing a room for the night, and the poet invites him to stay, much to the dismay of his timid, subservient, much younger wife. It turns out that their coughing, chain-smoking visitor is a doctor who is soon joined by his arrogant, predatory wife (Michelle Pfeiffer) and their two bickering sons (Domhnall and Brian Gleeson), one of whom kills the other. And then an unwelcome horde of other parasitic intruders arrive, along with relentless violence and increasing destruction. "Who are these people?" the wife (and viewers) asks. Cryptic biblical allusions abound in this abstract, would-be metaphysical allegory. A grim, grotesque, and pretentiously self-indulgent film, this is not recommended. (S. Granger)

Mune: Guardian of the Moon ★★½

Universal, 86 min., PG, DVD: \$22.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



This multiple award-winning French computer-animated feature has been dubbed into English with a terrific vocal cast that includes Rob Lowe, Nicole Provost, and Christian Slater. *Mune* is a fantasy adventure about trying to restore nature after a villain's deception destroys night and day. Here, the alternation of sun and moon happens because great beasts carry the orbs in and out. For generation after generation, responsibility for keeping them on track has fallen to the Guardians. When the day comes for Sohone (Lowe) to be accepted as the new Guardian of the sun and Leeyoon (Slater) as Guardian of the moon, Sohone is chosen but Leeyoon is passed over in favor of young, inexperienced Mune (Joshua J. Ballard). With Leeyoon unhappy and ready to subvert the new order, the underworld figure Necross (Davey Grant) sees an opportunity to blanket the world in permanent darkness. Sohone, Mune, and Glim (Provost)—a plucky girl made of wax—set off on a journey to undo Necross's damage. Filmmakers Benoît Philippon and Alexandre Heboyan have created a winning cross between creation myth and splendid adventure featuring a diverse cast of interesting characters who are capable of mistakes, failure, sacrifice, and redemption. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

My Little Pony: The Movie ★★½

Lionsgate, 99 min., PG, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95, Jan. 9



The My Little Pony toy line has been around for years and sparked a number of popular animated TV series. In this upbeat, colorful feature film, Twilight Sparkle (voiced

by Tara Strong)—Ponyville's squeaky-voiced Princess of Friendship—is preparing to mount a festival headlined by pop singer Songbird Serenade (Sia). Suddenly, a flotilla of hostile airships appears, bearing unicorn Tempest Shadow (Emily Blunt), who announces that her boss—the villainous Storm King (Liev Schreiber)—intends to conquer the city. Sparkle escapes along with her pals Applejack (Ashleigh Ball), Rainbow Dash (also Ball), Pinkie Pie (Andrea Libman), Fluttershy (Libman again), Rarity (Tabitha St. Germain), and dragon Spike (Cathy Weseluck), embarking on an odyssey to find the powerful hippogriffs and ask for their help. Along the way, they encounter a series of oddball characters—including a fast-talking con-cat (Taye Diggs) and a ship full of pirate birds led by Captain Celaeno (Zoe Saldana)—before reaching their destination and meeting hippogriff queen Novo (Uzo Aduba) and her sea pony daughter Skystar (Kristin Chenoweth). All return to Ponyville for a climatic showdown. Although the plot falls back on a standard-issue superhero template, the emphasis here is on making new friends and working together (presented with a succession of bland Disneyesque songs), while the visuals are agreeably old-fashioned—featuring bright, sunny colors. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Of Horses and Men ★★½

Music Box, 81 min., in Icelandic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99



Serving up an admirably quirky series of interrelated vignettes, filmmaker Benedikt Erlingsson's Icelandic comedy-drama centers on mythic connections existing between horses and humans. Set in a tiny community in a breathtaking part of the country, the film begins with proud horseman Kolbeinn (Ingvar E. Sigurdsson) riding a wary mare at a fast trot for all of his admiring neighbors to see. He stops for coffee at the estate of Solveig (Charlotte Bøving), with whom he shares a simmering courtship. All is civilized until the departing Kolbeinn finds himself trapped and humiliated because one of Solveig's stallions is mounting his mare—while Kolbeinn is sitting on her, a very public mortification. Erlingsson creates several similarly startling moments, including a man riding a horse all the way from a shore to a distant fish trawler, and a determined young woman retrieving a half-dozen escaped horses and leading them all back to where they belong. The various parts of the episodic narrative slowly connect, culminating in a grand finale featuring a staggering number of beautiful horses flowing together like ocean currents. A strikingly offbeat foreign film (and definitely not family entertainment), this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Patti Cake\$ ★★½

Fox, 108 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99



Jeremy Jasper's musical dramedy, about an overweight white New Jersey woman who wants to be a rapper, tries hard to be edgy, but ultimately proves to be a surprisingly conventional and rather bland movie about chasing one's dreams. The title character is Patricia Dombrowski (Danielle Macdonald), a chubby hip-hop devotee who lives in lower-class squalor with her slatternly, one-time singer mother Barb (Bridget Everett). Called Dumbo by her street nemesis—a pizza-guy-drug-dealer with rapper pretensions of his own—Patti works with her pal Jheri (Siddharth Dhananjay), a clerk at the neighborhood pharmacy, and a singer named Basterd (Mamoudou Athie), who is a brooding loner calling himself Antichrist, to make a demo CD that she hopes will be the key to her success. *Patti Cake\$* has its heart in the right place, and the cast is likable, with Macdonald earning a good deal of sympathy for her character's plight. And filmmaker Jasper's background in music videos definitely helps bring the musical numbers to life. Despite its virtues, however, the movie is more formulaic than it pretends to be. Still, it has enough going for it—especially Macdonald—to be worth a look. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Person to Person ★★

Magnolia, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.99



Writer-director Dustin Guy Defa's ensemble piece strands some good actors in a series of New York vignettes that go nowhere. In one, a collector (Bene Coopersmith) of rare jazz LPs is sold a phony copy of a Charlie Parker album by a con-man (Buddy Duress) and relentlessly tries to chase the crook down. In another, a guy (George Sample III) is pursued by the brother of his girlfriend, whose nude photos he has posted online. A third plotline follows a couple of reporters (Michael Cera and Abbi Jacobson) investigating the death of a man who might have been killed by his wife (Michaela Watkins). The journalists try to obtain the dead man's watch (which might hold a clue) from a shopkeeper (Philip Baker Hall) who has it for repair. Finally, teen Wendy (Tavi Gevinson) skips school to frolic with her chum Melanie (Olivia Luccardi), only to find herself attracted to River (Ben Rosenfield), a pal of Melanie's boyfriend Scott (Hunter Zimny). One might expect these tales to link up in some fashion, but for the most part they remain obstinately separate, each proceeding sluggishly to a flaccid end. Defa's writing has little sparkle, his direction is pedestrian, and even the look of the film—shot on 16mm to



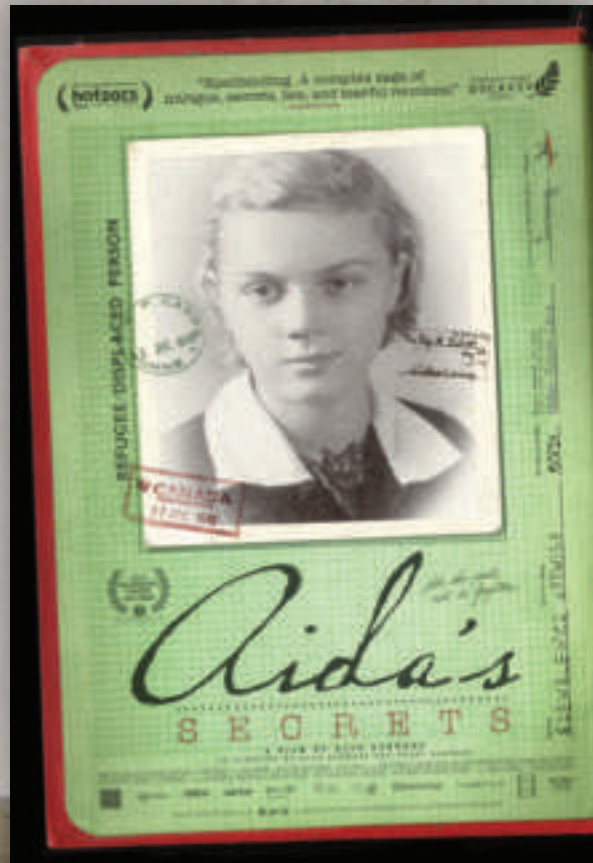
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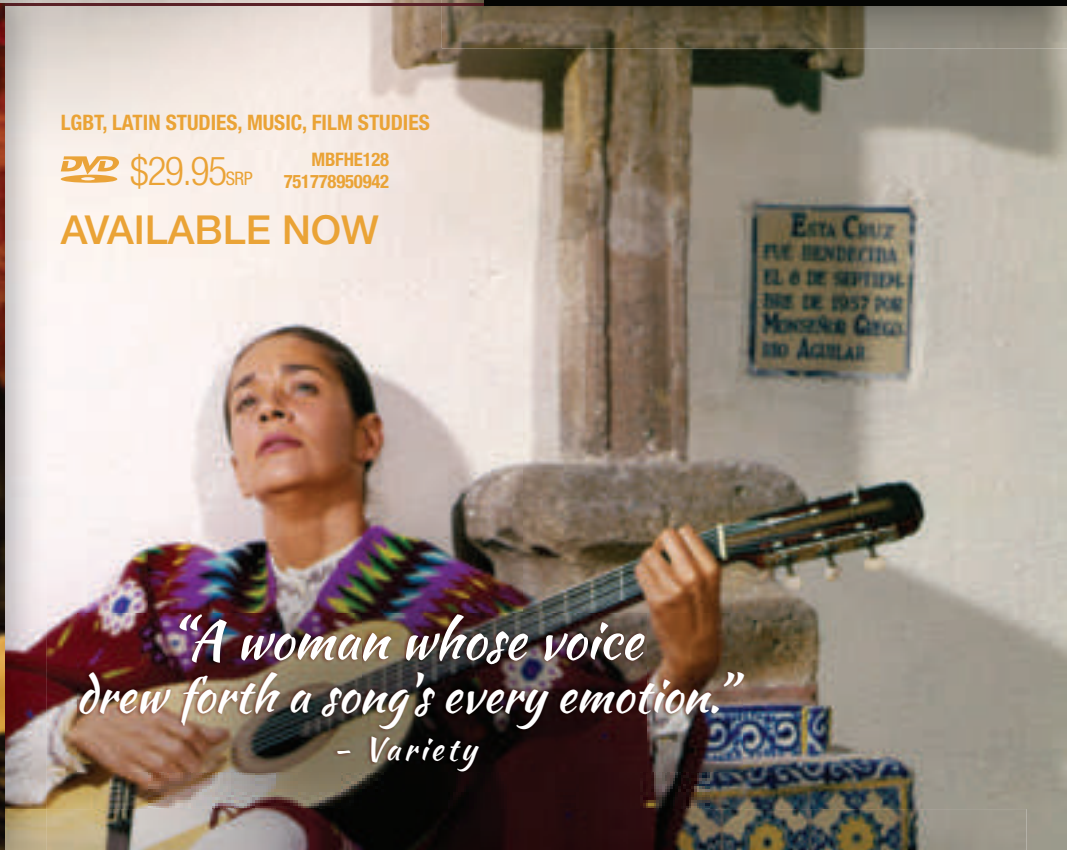
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mimic indies from the 1970s—is bland. *Person to Person* feels like a failed exercise, one that never achieves the human connectedness suggested by the title. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Pop Aye ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 102 min., in Thai w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99



The possibilities for a film whose central characters are a middle-aged Thai architect-turned-nomad and an elephant named after an American cartoon character would seem endless. However, newbie director Kirsten Tan only realizes some of this film's potential as a comedic interspecies "buddy" film. *Pop Aye* opens with frumpy malcontent Thana (Thaneth Warakulnukroh) setting off on foot with his pet elephant, Pop Aye, with seemingly no prospects other than just getting away from his deteriorating work life and slowly disintegrating marriage. "From now on it's just you and me," he tells his 10,000-pound walking companion while embarking on what will prove to be a very slow-going road trip to who-knows-where. The film does capture the discombobulating sense of infinite time characteristic of a long-haul drift, with occasional incidents occurring along the way, such as being hassled by the police for having a dubious permit for the elephant. And at one point Thana and Pop Aye end up stuck at a secluded tiki bar where Thana briefly befriends a smart-alecky transsexual karaoke singer. But while Tan clearly wants this to be more than just a quirky slice-of-life film about the difficulty of truly dropping out of society, *Pop Aye* never quite lives up to the premise's offbeat promise. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (M. Sandlin)

Professor Marston and the Wonder Women ★★★

Sony, 108 min., R, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$26.99, Jan. 30



This kinky, provocative comic-book superhero true "origin" story begins with a public burning of *Wonder Woman* comics and a stern interrogation of Harvard psychologist Dr. William Moulton Marston (Luke Evans) by Josette Frank (Connie Britton) of the Child Study Association of America, who grills the former about his subversive obsession with bondage. Flashback to when Marston and his even-more-erudite wife, Elizabeth Holloway (Rebecca Hall), were fascinated by human behavior, specifically the manipulative dynamics of his DISC theory (dominance-inducement-submission-compliance). While testing their new invention (aka the lie detector), they become besotted with a student, Olive

Byrne (Bella Heathcote), daughter of suffragette Ethel Byrne and niece of birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger. Open-minded Olive hides the Marstons in her sorority so they can observe ritualized hazing, while Olive enjoys sexual relations with both Marstons. Not surprisingly, this leads to their expulsion from Harvard. After moving to Rye, NY, both women bear William's children while continuing their penchant for costumed S&M role-play. In the 1940s, William starts writing stories, incorporating his psychological theories into the composite character of Wonder Woman/Diana Prince, a liberated role model with a radical sexual subtext, which intrigues comic book publisher M.C. Gaines (Oliver Platt). Writer-director Angela Robinson elicits memorable performances from her main trio (particularly Hall) in this film that is perfectly timed given that *Wonder Woman* was the pop culture hit of 2017. A solid companion to Jill Lepore's 2014 nonfiction book *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

Red Christmas ★1/2

Artsploitation, 81 min., not rated, DVD: \$17.99, Blu-ray: \$22.99



Many will be offended by writer-director Craig Anderson's horror movie just by the opening premise. A prologue shows a bombing at an abortion clinic, where the perpetrator rescues a still-breathing fetus. Years later, that disfigured survivor, named Cletus by his "father" and grown to full size, finds his way to the rural estate where his mother Diane (Dee Wallace)—who originally decided to abort because the fetus was diagnosed with Down syndrome—is hosting a family Christmas party. The group's reaction to Cletus is predictably hostile, which sets him off on a murder spree in an atmosphere made all the more toxic by the fact that one of Diane's sons-in-law is a clergyman and another of her children (Gerald O'Dwyer) also suffers from Down syndrome. The slayings grow more baroque as the corpses mount up, but the gore effects are so crude that the death scenes are more likely to elicit chuckles than screams. *Red Christmas* might win cult status among aficionados of bad cinema, but it will certainly not enhance the reputation of Wallace, so fondly remembered for *E.T.*, *The Howling*, and *Cujo*. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Rift ★★★

Breaking Glass, 111 min., in Icelandic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Creepy, tense, and atmospheric, the Icelandic drama *Rift* is an ambiguous suspense piece featuring horror tropes. Gunnar (Björn Ste-

fansson) receives a late-night call from former lover Einar (Sigurdur Thor Óskarsson) that leads the former to visit the latter at his family home in a remote, lonely area in the foothills of snow-topped mountains. Things go wrong from the start, but not necessarily because of unfinished business between the men. Einar seems haunted, given to sleepwalking and staring into the distance, although he does have some charged conversations with Gunnar. But there is also a middle-of-the-night knock on the front door, unnerving sounds in the dark, and a small figure in red who keeps appearing in the distance. Writer-director Erlingur Ottar Thoroddsen suggests that destiny is catching up with the two men, both of whom experienced traumatic sexual experiences in their youth that might have something to do with the unnatural happenings. A haunting film aided by excellent cinematography that captures not only the desolate beauty of the locale but also the nightmarish look of hollowed-out old buildings and car headlights on a field of snow, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Soul on a String ★★★

Film Movement, 142 min., in Tibetan w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



An enigmatic epic set on the vast, empty plains and treacherous mountains of Tibet, the visually entrancing *Soul on a String* is a combination of spiritual odyssey, revenge film, and redemption quest. Reluctant hero Tabei (Kimba), a former convict who turned his back on society as a wandering hunter, is sent by a High Lama on a quest to return a sacred stone to its place of origin in the mountains of Tibet. He is joined by a woman desperate to escape her lonely desert life, and a mute child with psychic powers, and is pursued by vengeance-fueled brothers, thugs after the stone, and a writer who wants to put Tabei's story to paper. Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yang directs from a screenplay that addresses Buddhist themes within a familiar quest drama that also features warrior action and mystical twists. It's overlong at 142 minutes and dissipates somewhat between the various stories presented, but the cinematography is gorgeous—with widescreen images of characters on huge open plains ringed by mountains—and the allegorical stories here take on mythic dimensions. Likely to appeal to viewers interested in Eastern themes and challenging, enigmatic stories, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Step ★★★

Fox, 83 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99

An uplifting documentary that is also realistic about the obstacles faced by its subjects, Amanda Lipitz's *Step* focuses on girls in the first class of the Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women, a charter high school that

aims to place each of its graduates in an institution of higher learning. Some time is devoted to the efforts of the administrators—principal Chevonne Hall and guidance counselor Paula Dofat—but the emphasis is on the school's extracurricular step dance program, which is designed to instill confidence and camaraderie while also encouraging strong classroom performance. Overseen by demanding but compassionate coach Gari McIntyre, primary subjects Cori Grainger, Tayla Solomon, and Blessin Giraldo practice for a local competition. Cori is a shy but smart high-achiever with a supportive family, Tayla is the daughter of a single helicopter mom, and Blessin is an extrovert who struggles with her studies as the result of a fractured home life. *Step* follows this trio as they prepare for the tournament while also aiming to earn a graduation robe and secure college admission, set against the backdrop of the city's racial turmoil following the death of Freddie Gray and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. While the film might have explained more about step—the actual creation of the team's routines gets short shrift—it does serve up a compelling feel-good success story even as it acknowledges that there is much more work to be done in education. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Stopover ★★★

First Run, 102 min., in French & Greek w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Although plenty of film dramas have centered on soldiers' experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, few have presented contemporary military life from the perspective of women serving in combat zones. Filmmakers Delphine and Muriel Coulin's *The Stopover* not only looks at the damaging psychological effects of war and readjustment to civilian life but also the traumatic experience of women coping with the realities of a testosterone-heavy environment. Marine (Soko) and Aurore (Ariane Labed) are members of a French Army group leaving Afghanistan who layover in sunny, touristy Cyprus for a few days of "decompression" and "debriefing." The soldiers are subjected to virtual reality technology designed to help them purge their war experiences before returning to France, but this newfangled mode of psychotherapy only makes things worse. The soldiers resent this unreal Cypriot touristic environment and begin to question what the "real" world really is. Worse, the male soldiers' postwar composure begins to slowly unravel. Initially, the men focus their displaced resentment and rage on the tourist community, but then it is the women in their group who end up bearing the brunt of



their abusive behavior. Offering a viscerally powerful exploration of the scourge of sexism and double standards in the military, this is recommended. (M. Sandlin)

The Student ★★★½

Passion River, 118 min., PG-13, DVD: \$59.99

Using Marius von Mayenburg's 2012 German play *Märtyrer* as a springboard, writer-director Kirill Serebrennikov transforms it into a darkly satirical commentary on what is happening in Russia under Vladimir Putin, particularly post-Communist Russia's lurch from official atheism to renewed religiosity. At a school in provincial Kaliningrad, teen Veniamin (Petr Skvortsov) becomes so affected by a course taught by an Orthodox priest that he embraces scriptural fundamentalism, protesting not only the overly revealing swimsuits of his classmates but the presentation of evolutionary theory in the biology class taught by Elena (Victoria Isakova). He also recruits a disciple, Grigoriy (Aleksandr Gorchilin), whose handicap—one of his legs is shorter than the other—Veniamin attempts to cure through the laying on of hands. Veniamin's newfound fanaticism drives his mother (Julia Aug) to distraction, and forces Elena to undertake such intensive study of the Bible in order to rebut his arguments that her boyfriend leaves in disgust. Meanwhile, the school administrators, anxious to avoid disorder, urge Elena to compromise by teaching creationism as an alternative. When the inevitable showdown between faith and reason arrives, it is not pretty (homophobia and anti-Semitism are added to the mix). While Serebrennikov's primary target is Putin's use of religion for political ends, he also raises numerous issues that, given the rise of fundamentalism in various forms across the globe, carry universal relevance. A bleakly funny and powerful film, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Survivalist ★★★

Shout! Factory, 104 min., not rated, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$22.99

Stephen Fingleton's grim, minimalist dystopian drama-cum-thriller (filmed in Northern Ireland) is fairly dialogue-lite. With a backstory about the starvation-collapse of civilization that is confined to an opening graphic, the narrative focuses tightly on a nameless man (Martin McCann) subsisting in the forest on a small farm but besieged by occasional marauders, who he summarily kills, despite being desperately low on shotgun shells. An aged mother (Olwen Fouéré) and her nubile daughter (Mia Goth) barter their way into dwelling with the survivalist, and naturally he looks to the girl for sex.



The visitors seem to be awakening a dormant humanity in the man, but these two seemingly defenseless women are also capable of deadly plotting. Long, moody shots, coupled with foreboding silences and nature sounds accentuate this tense, fatalistic narrative set in a brute environment of diminishing resources. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Tomorrow ★★★

Passion River, 120 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99

French actress Melanie Laurent (sharing co-directing credit with Cyril Dion) is the latest showbiz star—following Leonardo DiCaprio, George Clooney, etc.—to bemoan greed-inspired global warming and look for sustainable solutions using a well-thumbed passport. She finds bicycling-based cultures taking root in major European capitals, urban farming in blighted Detroit, and burgeoning recycling in San Francisco. Declaring that money is the root of the evil behind mass extinction and pollution, the filmmakers speak to "transition"-thinking economists about ways to roll back the march of big business and relentless consumerism, instill diverse currencies (as opposed to the Euro), and develop more responsible banks, better education, and representative-democracy political systems. The all-encompassing-manifesto-approach avoids falling back on easy emotional-trigger shots of sweltering slums, melting ice caps, destroyed rainforests, and drowning polar bears, in favor of talking heads (author Jeremy Rifkin is among the interviewees), charts, and economic spreadsheets. *Tomorrow* makes reasoned and intelligent arguments, and while it might be a trifle dry over the long haul, it also relies on upbeat pop ballads to liven up the proceedings. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



The Trip to Spain ★★★

Shout! Factory, 108 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99

The third installment of director Michael Winterbottom's improvisational *Trip* series—with comics Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon playing their semi-fictionalized selves traveling to different locales—is as humorous as the previous two (set in Northern England and Italy), but is also much darker. Like the earlier films, *The Trip to Spain* is a shortened version of a longer TV series, beginning with a few establishing scenes in England and aboard a ferry before the central duo reach Spain, where they drive across amazingly beautiful terrain, stay at gorgeous hotels, and eat succulent food at every stop. They also bicker endlessly, continually trying to outdo one another in shows of wit while blithely serving up commentary



on Spanish history and contemporary politics, with the latter ultimately bringing one of the men face to face with modern reality (a jaw-dropping moment). Melancholy undertones run throughout centering on aging and self-doubt, but despite that serious strain, the film remains a visually intoxicating travelogue that also offers a savory introduction to upscale Spanish cuisine, as well as another helping of delicious joint comedic routines by two masters of the craft. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Villainess ★★1/2

Well Go USA, 124 min., in Korean w/English subtitles and English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99



This South Korean action thriller that reworks the plot of *La Femme Nikita* (with some new twists) opens with an amazing action sequence shot from the point of view of an unseen fighter who is wiping out armies of thugs with bullets, knives, and bare hands—ultimately revealed (without a visible editing cut) to be a fierce young woman—kicking the film off with high energy and impressive style. Sook-hee (Kim Ok-bin) is arrested and immediately taken in by a covert organization that trains her to become an assassin with the promise of freedom at the end of 10 years of service...if she survives. Sook-hee agrees for the sake of her unborn child, whom she raises in the top secret facility until she graduates with a cover identity and an apartment in the city. Sook-hee's story unfolds in flashbacks that reveal a tragic past, with a previous life as a criminal assassin, and a dead husband who turns out to be alive and out to kill her. Director Byung-gil Jung serves up some thrilling, elaborately-choreographed action scenes while weaving past and present stories together to reveal twists and betrayals. But despite the clever plotting and mix of action and melodrama, the film is more visually impressive than dramatically gripping and our heroine is very much a blank slate. Still, this is likely to appeal to fans of action cinema. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

The Wizard of Lies

★★★1/2

HBO, 133 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99

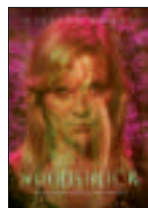


Journalist Diana Henriques's titular 2011 best-seller inspired filmmaker Barry Levinson's rueful HBO-aired drama about the Bernie Madoff financial scandal, a \$65 billion Wall Street Ponzi scheme that rocked the world financial community and brought special pain to Jews, including Holocaust survivors, who lost their life savings to Madoff. Robert De Niro portrays the mercurial, cryptic con-man being

interviewed in prison by Henriques (who plays herself). Flashbacks to the year 2008, when the scandal exploded in the headlines, mix with the fallout for Madoff's family, especially wife Ruth (Michelle Pfeiffer) and two ultimately doomed sons who are blindsided by it all. Along the way, Madoff offers excuses, evasions, and justifications for this vast financial fraud. A concluding verdict may well be that he is mentally ill (a charge that offends the onscreen Madoff in the extreme). Bolstered by excellent performances, this ripped-from-the-headlines drama is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Woodshock ★

Lionsgate, 100 min., R, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Filmmaker siblings Kate and Laura Mulleavy, who founded the successful haute couture firm Rodarte, here serve up a screen debut that offers a few striking individual images within a film that is opaque, repetitive, and dull. Kirsten Dunst stars as Theresa, who works in a medical marijuana shop. After she laces a joint with poison for her terminally-ill mother, she spirals into deep grief that even her handsome logger boyfriend cannot assuage. In her distraught, sleepless state she hallucinates and wanders about, and even occasionally—if what viewers see is to be literally believed—levitates amid the redwoods. Her distracted state leads her to make a terrible mistake when she prepares another fatal drug cocktail for a sad-faced customer but gives it instead to a young man. While this scenario might have been the basis for a modern noir, the only suspense the Mulleavys whip up is trying to decipher why anybody should care about dreary Theresa's plight. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Classic Films

Avanti! ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 140 min., R, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Filmmaker Billy Wilder's 1972 film version of the 1968 Broadway play by Samuel Taylor marks one of the director's attempts to adapt his trademark mix of wit, romance, and sex to the more permissive era of the 1970s. Jack Lemmon stars as Wendell Armbruster, Jr., an American visiting Italy to bring back the body of his father—who died in a car accident while on vacation. Wendell is demanding, carping, insensitive, and utterly unlikable, which is the polar opposite of chatty, optimistic British woman Pamela Piggott (Juliet Mills), come to claim her mother—who it turns out was having an affair with Wendell's father and also died in the car wreck. Lemmon, who

has played both a charming romantic lead and served as goofy comic relief for Wilder, here tackles the role of Ugly American, a tightly-wound, unpleasant businessman who slowly learns to enjoy life in the romantic surroundings of the vacation town, thanks to the influence of working-class Pamela. Clive Revill offers marvelous support as the hotel manager whose first duty is always to the client, a man as witty as he is efficient. Shot on location on the coast of Italy—a gorgeous setting of sunny beaches, brilliant blue water, and authentic old-world Italian streets—this is a classic romantic comedy in which the modern American world collides with the provincial Italian way of life, as the impatient corporate man learns to slow down and enjoy life. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include interviews with actors Mills and Revill. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Barry Lyndon ★★★

Criterion, 2 discs, 185 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

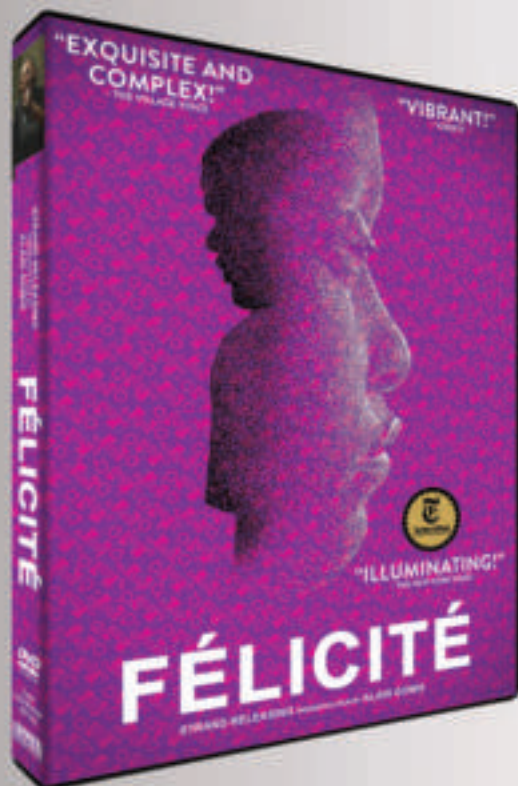


Stanley Kubrick's lavish 1975 historical drama—adapted from the 1844 novel by William Makepeace Thackeray about the rise and fall of a poor Irish lad—stars Ryan O'Neal as a country boy with no name or prospects whose destiny turns him into a master cad: a deserter, a cheat, and a philanderer who marries into a fortune and makes his wife (Marisa Berenson) miserable while squandering her money chasing a title. Kubrick directs the film with a measured pace and pays attention to every detail, from the painstaking compositions (his images resemble paintings, and he shot scenes by candlelight using NASA deep space lenses) and grandly-dressed sets, to the era's social manners and customs. *Barry Lyndon* is now recognized as a masterpiece but upon its initial release was criticized both for its slow pace and for the casting of O'Neal, who was accused of delivering a shallow performance, although his wide-eyed look of pained, guileless innocence actually serves the character well. Other Kubrick films remain more popular but this one took home four Oscars—for Cinematography, Score, Art Direction, and Costume Design—more than any other of his films except *Spartacus*. Newly remastered and presented in its original aspect ratio, this is now the definitive home video release, with extras including featurettes on the film and Kubrick, interviews with Kubrick collaborators, an archival TV clip on the film's costumes, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Children of the Corn ★★

Arrow, 92 min., R, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Fritz Kiersch's 1984 adaptation of Stephen King's 1977 titular short story about a couple who stumble upon a Nebraska farm town



FÉLICITÉ
*Senegal's Submission for the
Best Foreign Language Oscar*

Winner of the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, *FÉLICITÉ* follows a proud, free-willed woman whose life is thrown into turmoil when her son gets into an accident. To save him, she sets out on a race through the streets of electric Kinshasa - a world of music and dreams.

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129 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
In French & Lingala with English subtitles

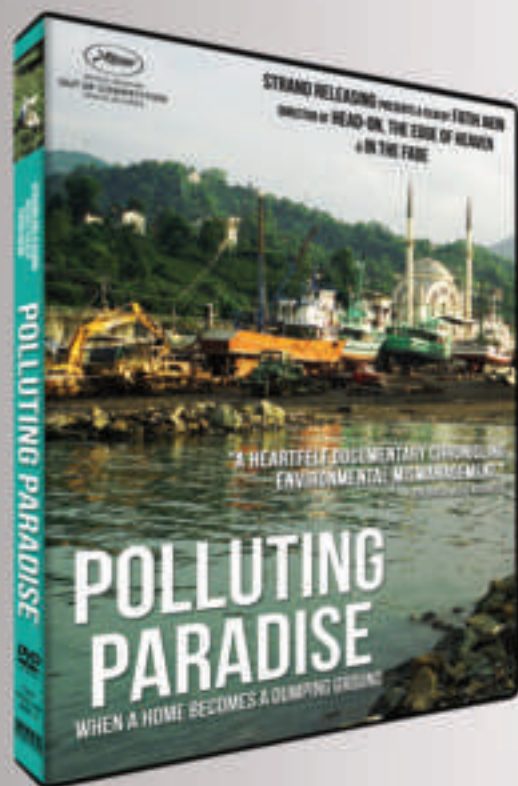
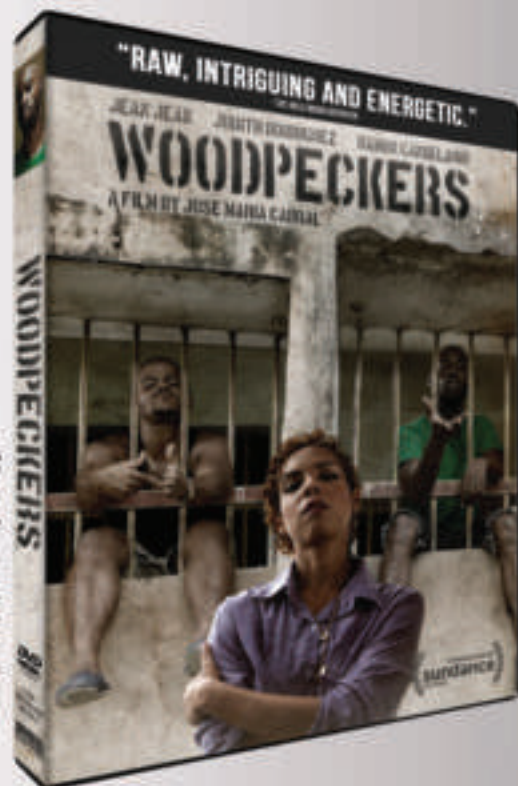
WOODPECKERS
*Dominican Republic's Submission
for the Best Foreign Language Oscar*

Nominated for Sundance Grand Jury Prize World Cinema, *WOODPECKERS* follows inmate Julián who finds love and a reason for living in the last place imaginable: the Dominican Republic's Najayo Prison. And his romance with prisoner Yanelly must develop from behind bars.

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



POLLUTING PARADISE
*From Acclaimed Director
Fatih Akin (The Edge of Heaven)*

From acclaimed filmmaker Fatih Akin (*The Edge of Heaven*, *Head-On*), this powerful environmental documentary chronicles the struggle of villagers in Turkey's Black Sea village Camburnu with the government's decision to turn their community into a garbage dump.

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85 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated
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FOAM PARTY!
"Unmissable!" -Queerguru

This romantic, sexy, feel-good comedy begins with one mass text that circulates among friends and then strangers...an invite to an orgy. They came searching for sex but what they discover is a party that has never been so filled with love.

Street date: Feb 13, 2018 | SRP: \$24.99

DVD # 3802-2 | UPC: 7 12267 38022 2

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



that has been taken over by sinister young worshippers of "He Who Walks Behind the Rows" is a cheesy movie, but it spawned no fewer than eight sequels as well as a TV remake, and has become a minor cult film. Peter Horton and Linda Hamilton star as unlucky outsiders Burt and Vicky, who discover that almost all of the adults in Gatlin have been eliminated by the local children, led by Isaac (John Franklin), a maniacally charismatic 12-year-old who is in turn kept in line by his ruthless enforcer Malachai (Courtney Gains). Crusty horror veteran R.G. Armstrong costars as a gas station attendant left alive because he supplies Isaac with fuel. *Children of the Corn* is by no means a good film, but this Arrow release is by far the best edition yet, with extras including two audio commentary tracks (one with Kiersch, co-producer Terrence Kirby, and stars Franklin and Gains; the other by journalists Justin Beahm and John Sullivan), interviews, behind-the-scenes featurettes, a storyboard gallery, and the first screen adaptation of King's story—a 1983 short titled *Disciples of the Crow*. Optional. (F. Swietek)



The Flamingo Kid

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 100 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Filmmaker Garry Marshall's class-conscious 1984 coming-of-age dramedy boasts pitch-perfect acting and writing. Set in 1963, the story centers on Brooklyn teen Jeffrey (Matt Dillon), who enjoys a sweet summer romance with Carla (Janet Jones), who hails from an affluent Long Island family. Jeffrey is equally smitten with the flashy poolside lifestyle of Carla's slick car-salesman father (Richard Crenna)—so different from his own blue-collar roots and plumber dad (Hector Elizondo). Jones is an alluring screen goddess, but the viewer's interest eventually shifts to the moral question of which father-figure Jeffrey will select as his role model. Despite critical praise, *The Flamingo Kid* enjoyed only mild audience success (especially compared to Marshall's hit *Pretty Woman*), but it gained popularity later in HBO reruns. Extras include audio commentary by actor/filmmaker Pat Healy and his brother, film curator Jim Healy, who share stories about Marshall. Highly recommended. (C. Cassady)



Holiday Inn

Universal, 101 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$19.99

Jim Hardy (Bing Crosby) and Ted Hanover (Fred Astaire) are showbiz chums about to retire in this beloved 1942 holiday musical

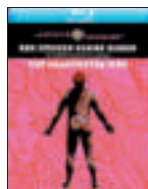


comedy directed by Mark Sandrich. Hardy's retirement winds up being short lived, due to dwindling finances, so he decides to convert his farm house into a theater/inn that is only open on holidays. This successful venture gives him considerable time to loaf, and provides an excuse for enough Irving Berlin tunes to fill three ordinary musicals (as well as a number of dazzling Astaire routines). Marjorie Reynolds and Virginia Dale costar as the romantic interests in this multi-Oscar-nominated film that took home a statue for the song "White Christmas" (the film was partially remade in 1954 as *White Christmas*). Presented in a 75th anniversary edition, the excellent extras include the option to watch the film in its original black-and-white or color, audio commentary by film historian Ken Barnes, a profile of Crosby and Astaire, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a separate disc featuring a full-length 2016 Broadway adaptation of *Holiday Inn*. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

The Illustrated Man

Warner, 103 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$21.99

Ray Bradbury's 1951 short story collection *The Illustrated Man* is built around the tale of a man whose tattoos come to life at night. This 1969 anthology film adapts three of the stories, expands the central character's narrative, and connects them all through casting. Rod Steiger stars as the surly circus worker who wanders Depression-era America with his dog, Claire Bloom is the artist who covers his body in "skin illustrations" (as he calls them), and Robert Drivas is the young drifter to whom he tells his stories. The three actors also play the major characters in "The Veldt," which is about a virtual reality playground that brings out the feral side of the children of a worried married couple; "The Long Rain," centering on interstellar travelers shipwrecked on an alien planet with constant rain; and "The Last Night of the World," a meditative piece about apocalyptic premonitions. The dusty landscapes of 1930s rural America contrast with the austere home of white surfaces in "The Veldt" (a very '60s idea of the future), the dense alien foliage of the claustrophobic "Rain" (the jungle is entirely fabricated in the studio), and the white tents and architecture out of ancient Greece in "Last Night." Steiger's performance is mannered and intense but the film fails to capture the horror inherent in the stories, making it yet another cinematic effort that misses the dark wonder of Bradbury's writing. Extras include an archival featurette. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



Innocent Blood

Warner, 115 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99

After gaining international attention as the lead in the sexy 1990 French action thriller *La*

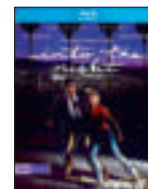
Femme Nikita, actress Anne Parillaud traveled stateside to star as the elegant vampire Marie in John Landis's mix of horror movie, mob war drama, and romantic twist on the buddy action thriller. Marie has two rules: never play with your food (in other words, no romantic entanglements) and always make sure your meal is finished (preferably by severing the head). She uses a mob war as the perfect cover for her latest feed but inadvertently leaves mob boss Sallie "The Shark" Macelli (Robert Loggia) unfinished and he rises from the dead with a sudden surge of strength and a craving for human blood. Anthony LaPaglia costars as Joe Gennaro, an undercover cop embedded in the mob whose identity is blown. Joe finds himself teaming up with Marie to put an end to Sallie's grand plan to make his made men into undead warriors. Landis has always been a fan of combining black humor and bloody spectacle; *Innocent Blood* isn't quite successful (Parillaud's voice-over is more flippant than witty) but it is often entertaining, and Landis piles on the Italian mob clichés (every thug listens to Sinatra) and has fun with Joe's frustrated attempts to arrest Marie for crimes that defy all human logic (he also casts Don Rickles as the mob's apoplectic lawyer). It's fun and sexy but never reaches the imaginative heights of Landis's horror-comedy *An American Werewolf in London*. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Into the Night

Shout! Factory, 115 min., R, Blu-ray: \$27.99

John Landis's 1985 romantic thriller was not a hit initially, but it is one of the best "neon noir" urban crime movies of its era. Jeff Goldblum (in his first starring role) downplays his often eccentric personality to portray suburban husband Ed Okin, a corporate engineer who sleepwalks through his days and can't sleep at night. Taking a midnight drive to shake it off, he's suddenly drafted as a getaway driver for a former model and jilted mistress named Diana (Michelle Pfeiffer), who is on the run from Persian gangsters willing to kill to retrieve an object that she smuggled in Los Angeles. It's a classic film noir situation—middle-class innocent jolted out of his protected but dull existence and plunged into a nightmarish odyssey through the urban underworld—with a charge of romance. Landis weaves in elements of black comedy and offbeat humor, some delivered by the director himself through his slapstick antics as a mute gangster, but he never ridicules the dangerous situation of the protagonists, and Goldblum is both likable and compelling as the Everyman who discovers his inner hero over the course of a long night. Set to an





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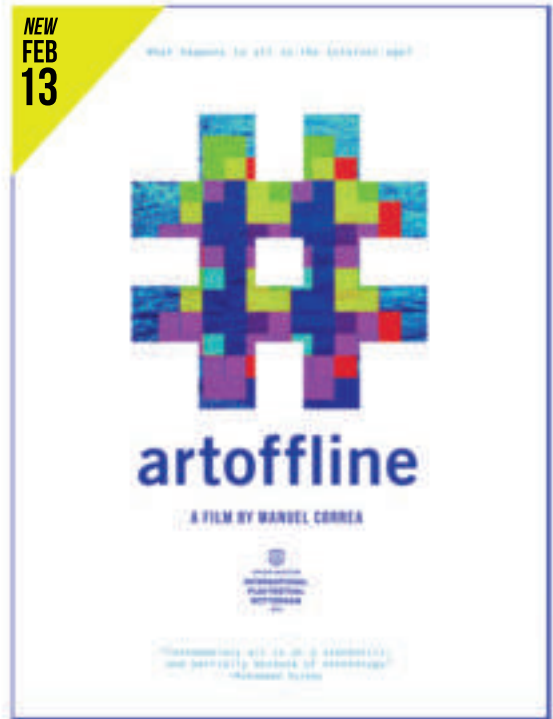
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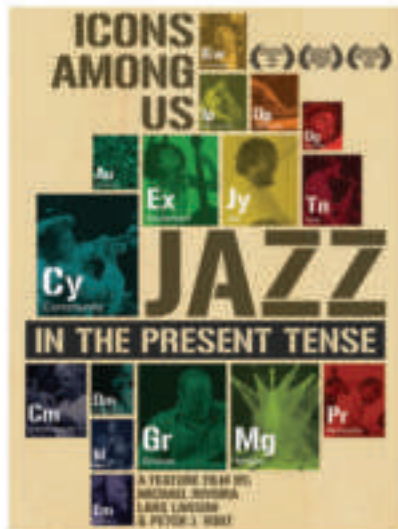
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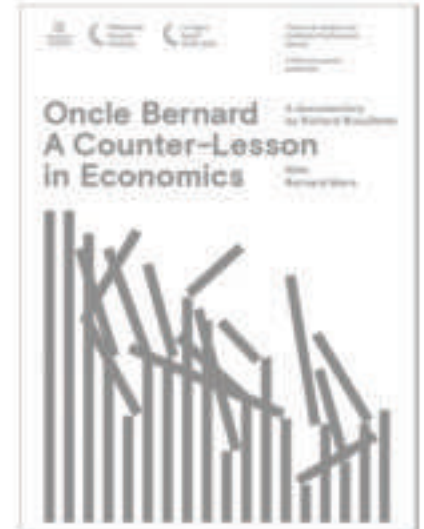


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'80s synthesizer score with guitar lines from blues legend B.B. King, *Into the Night* also features David Bowie (in a memorable supporting role as a grinning hitman), Richard Farnsworth, Vera Miles, Irene Papas, and Dan Aykroyd, as well as numerous filmmakers in cameos and small roles. Extras include new interviews with Landis and Goldblum, and a 1985 TV special on B.B. King. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Junior Bonner ★★½

Kino Lorber, 100 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



This elegiac 1972 rodeo drama starring Steve McQueen as an aging champion who returns to his hometown of Prescott, AZ, is the gentlest film directed by Sam Peckinpah, who was famed for his violent Westerns. Drifting loner Junior Bonner (McQueen) finds his childhood home abandoned, his hard-drinking father (Robert Preston) in the hospital, his mother (Ida Lupino) sick of her husband's irresponsible ways (but still fond of the old charmer), and his wheeler-dealer brother (Joe Don Baker) getting rich selling off the family land. The story is secondary to the portrait of Junior and his family in a small Western town that comes to life during the rodeo days. Peckinpah's signature use of telephoto lens, slow motion, and razor-sharp editing is notable in the rodeo scenes but this is really a character study, serving up a lyrical portrait about family, respect, and integrity in the face of adversity. McQueen's taciturn presence and guarded smile set him off as the last of the cowboy loners in a modern world of housing developments and high finance. Costarring Western movie icons Ben Johnson, Dub Taylor, and Don "Red" Barry, this quiet, intimate drama is one of Peckinpah's loveliest and most personal films. Extras include audio commentary by four Peckinpah historians, retrospective featurettes, a trivia segment, and image galleries. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Kill, Baby... Kill!

★★★½

Kino Lorber, 83 min., in Italian w/English subtitles and English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99

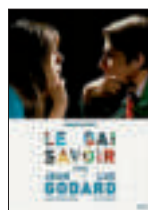


Mario Bava's 1966 Italian horror film is a gothic ghost story with haunting images and glorious style set in an oppressively provincial 19th-century mountain village in the grip of a curse. Or at least that's the explanation of the townspeople when city coroner Dr. Paul Eswai (Giacomo Rossi-Stuart) arrives to examine the latest victim in a long string of "suicides." The town is haunted by the specter of a homicidal adolescent girl, a creepy vision in white whose giggles become chilling as

she randomly chooses her victims and sends them to their gory deaths. The suspicious and terrified townspeople do everything they can to try to drive the coroner away. Erika Blanc costars as a local woman home from college whose past is tied up in the reign of terror. Bava sets a moody stage in the medieval village, with deserted streets blanketed in a swirling mist and flooded with primary colors. And he reverses the expectations of horror movie symbolism: the little girl in angelic white is the harbinger of death while the grim, raven-haired Ruth (Fabienne Dali), a "sorceress" who dispenses brutal protective magic, is the force of benevolence. One of the great Italian horror films of the 1960s, *Kill, Baby... Kill!* is a favorite of Martin Scorsese's and it inspired Fellini's sole horror movie, *Toby Dammit*. Newly remastered for this edition, extras include audio commentary by Bava historian Tim Lucas and interviews with Lamberto Bava (Mario's son) and leading lady Blanc. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Le Gai Savoir ★★½

Kino Lorber, 92 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



French New Wave pioneer Jean-Luc Godard evolved through the 1960s from playing with film conventions and genres, to deconstructing storytelling, to forgoing narrative completely in essay films that were devoted to his increasingly leftist ideas. *Le Gai Savoir*, which translates as "the joy of learning" or "the joy of knowing," is one of his first film essays—a mix of philosophical debate, cultural commentary, and political call to action. Shot completely in a black, featureless TV studio, the two performers (Jean-Pierre Léaud and Juliet Berto) are picked out of the darkness with a spotlight as they debate politics, language, and ideology over a series of meetings and come to the conclusion that language is a prison that must be broken down and recreated to serve the revolution. Their conversation is interspersed with film clips and stills, along with the whispering voice of Godard himself commenting on the soundtrack. It's both didactic and dynamic, cinematically austere and playful, and is an important step in the evolution of Godard's style and philosophy. That said, it will also have limited appeal for viewers other than hardcore cinephiles and film historians. Extras include audio commentary by film critic Adrian Martin, a short video by cinematographer Fabrice Aragno, and a booklet with essays. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

The Legend of the Holy Drinker

★★★½

Arrow, 127 min., in Italian, French & English w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

Rutger Hauer delivers a delicate, nuanced

performance as a homeless alcoholic in Paris in Ermanno Olmi's 1988 film of Joseph Roth's titular 1939 novella. Andreas Kartak (Hauer), who frequents taverns by day and sleeps under the City of Light's bridges by night, is an honorable man with a weak will. A stranger (Anthony Quayle) gives him 200 francs and requests that he repay it to a church dedicated to St. Therese. The gift seems to turn Kartak's life around and he finds temporary work and enjoys the comforts of society that he left following a tragedy (seen in flashbacks), but distractions and diversions (and sometimes just drink) prevent him from carrying out his promise. The film has the quality of a parable, a simple story rich with character and lovely moments—shot with a romantic eye on the streets of Paris. In one of his career-best performances, Hauer plays his role with a mix of dignity, vulnerability, naïveté, and pride as a man haunted by his past, yet—for all of his weaknesses—still generous and capable of embracing life. Winner of the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival, this is a quietly moving film that is directed with an understated lyricism. Extras include a new interview with Hauer and an archival interview with screenwriter Tullio Kezich. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)



Lost Horizon ★★½

Sony, 133 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$19.99



Frank Capra's 1937 black-and-white classic adaptation of James Hilton's bestselling 1933 novel sparkles in this restored 80th anniversary Blu-ray debut edition that uses still images paired with original audio to recreate missing scenes. Ronald Colman stars as British diplomat Robert Conway, who in the opening scenes flees revolutionary China in a plane with a handful of fellow travelers, including his brother George (John Howard), stuffed-shirt paleontologist Lovett (Edward Everett Horton), snarky swindler Barnard (Thomas Mitchell), and the ailing Gloria Stone (Isabel Jewell). Everyone believes they are headed for Shanghai, but the plane is shanghaied to Shangri-La, a remote magical utopia in the Tibetan mountains that is headed up by the mysterious High Lama (Sam Jaffe). Are Conway and his companions captives or very lucky people? Opinions amongst the group vary, although Conway finds himself being swayed by the luminous presence of Sondra (Jane Wyatt). *Lost Horizon* has aged a bit—the scene with Margo opening the plane door at 20,000 feet is unintentionally laughable, the reference to Chinese as "monkeys" is awful, and Howard's performance is borderline hysterical (not in the funny sense)—but the High Lama's wise advice to "be kind" is both

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timeless and timely. Nominated for multiple Oscars (including Best Picture) and winning for Editing and Art Direction, *Lost Horizon* is presented in a handsome digi-book edition, with extras including audio commentary, deleted scenes, an alternate ending, a restoration featurette, and a retrospective documentary featuring film historian Kendall Miller. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

The Man with Two Brains

★★★

Warner, 90 min., R, Blu-ray: \$21.99



Comedian turned actor and screenwriter Steve Martin and director and co-writer Carl Reiner reunited after the success of *The Jerk* and *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* for a third collaboration. *The Man with Two Brains* (1983) stars Martin as brilliant brain surgeon Dr. Michael Hfuhruhurr (the pronunciation of his name is a running gag), who falls for scheming sexpot Dolores Benedict (Kathleen Turner) after saving her life in a risky operation. Dolores has driven one husband to a heart attack and takes delight in tormenting her new hubby Michael, who soon falls in love with a disembodied brain in a jar (voiced by an uncredited Sissy Spacek) that was preserved by fellow brain surgeon Dr. Alfred Necessiter (David Warner). Like *Dead Men*, which took on old detective movies and film noir thrillers, this comedy drops the wild and crazy humor of Martin's standup comedy act into a spoof of old Hollywood sci-fi/horror films (from *Frankenstein* to *Donovan's Brain*), femme fatale melodramas, and impossible love stories. Reiner is a good directorial fit for this kind of humor—mixing deadpan absurdity and cartoonish visual gags—and he guides the supporting cast to play straight man to Martin's broad physical humor and Turner's over-the-top vamping. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Miracle Worker

★★★★

Olive, 106 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



From book to play to big screen, Helen Keller's autobiography has been an inspirational source for many over the years, and continues to be one of the truly great stories of personal triumph over physical handicaps. In this classic 1962 film from director Arthur Penn, Patty Duke stars as Keller, who was blind and deaf from an early age. Keller was a bit of a terror to her guilt-ridden parents until teacher Anne Sullivan (Anne Bancroft) arrived in Alabama in 1887 to school the rebellious child. Quickly assessing the situation, Sullivan asked to have Keller alone with her for a month, which led to battles that have now become screen legend, as Keller kicks, screams, and bites her way

around Sullivan, while the latter doggedly tries to teach Keller the alphabet. Returning home semi-defeated, Keller reverts to her old ways, purposely knocking over a water pitcher at the dinner table—prompting Sullivan, in anger, to drag her and the empty pitcher out to the water pump, where a miraculous breakthrough is finally achieved. Both lead actresses picked up much-deserved Oscars for their challenging emotional and physical performances, and the film was also nominated for Best Director and Screenplay. The film was remade for TV in 1979, with Duke in the role of teacher Sullivan, and again by Disney in 2000. Presented with an excellent transfer, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (R. Pitman)

The Old Dark House

★★★

Cohen, 72 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$25.99



James Whale followed up his iconic 1931 horror classic *Frankenstein* with the strange, sly, and sardonic 1932 film *The Old Dark House*—based on the 1927 novel *Benighted* by J.B. Priestley—which is part haunted house terror tale and part spoof executed with baroque style. Boris Karloff is given top billing in the supporting role of Morgan, a scarred mute butler with a penchant for drink and a vicious mean streak, but the film is really an ensemble piece. Melvyn Douglas is Penderel, the wisecracking romantic lead who along with traveling companions Philip (Raymond Massey) and Margaret (Gloria Stuart) takes refuge from a storm in the creepy old mansion lorded over by the gloriously flamboyant Horace (Ernest Thesiger) and his dotty, fanatical sister Rebecca (Eva Moore). They are joined by two other stranded passengers—William (Charles Laughton), whose Lancashire working-class accent and blunt manners set him apart from the social graces of his companions, and chorus girl Gladys (Lilian Bond). The five guests endure a stormy night of madness and mayhem as the batty old family reveals its mad secrets. Whale combines marvelous stylistic flourishes and witty drawing room dialogue, creating a film that is both macabre and sardonic. Newly restored for a theatrical re-release, extras include two audio commentaries (one by star Stuart, the other by historian and Whale expert James Curtis), a new interview with Sara Karloff (daughter of Boris), and an archival interview with filmmaker Curtis Harrington. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

OSS 117: Five Film Collection ★★

Kino Lorber, 3 discs, 526 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$59.99

After Sean Connery's James Bond made a splash with *Dr. No* in 1962, spy movies became all the rage, and the French Gaumont

Studios launched a series based on the novels of Jean Bruce about French-American aristocrat Hubert Bonisseur de la Bath, codenamed Agent OSS 117, who singlehandedly undertakes the most dangerous assignments. The first two films—*OSS 117 Is Unleashed* (1963) and *OSS 117: Panic in Bangkok* (1964), the former in black-and-white and the latter in color—are both directed by André Hunebelle, and star Kerwin Mathews in adventures that involve (respectively) uncovering a device that can track submarines, and foiling a plot to release a virulent virus. In the next two—*OSS 117: Mission for a Killer* (1965) and *OSS 117: Mission to Tokyo* (1966)—Frederick Stafford takes over the lead. In *Mission for a Killer*, also directed by Hunebelle, 117 searches for a potentially lethal drug, and in *Mission to Tokyo*, directed by Marcel Boissond, 117 is on the hunt for a weapon that can annihilate whole islands. In the final film, *OSS 117: Double Agent* (1968)—co-directed by Hunebelle, Renzo Cerrato, and John-Pierre Desagna, and also known as *Murder for Sale*—John Gavin plays the agent, who infiltrates a gang of assassins. The first four movies feature attractive locations—Corsica, Thailand, Brazil, and Japan—and while the Middle Eastern locale of the fifth seems more generic, all are visually decent productions. Unfortunately, the films are curiously slow-moving and the lead performances stiff, even in scenes with beautiful women whose dialogue is dubbed clumsily into French. Anyone expecting a foreign Bond here is bound to be disappointed. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



Planes, Trains and Automobiles ★★★

Paramount, 92 min., R, DVD: \$12.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$15.99



Best known for movies about kids (*Home Alone*) and teens (*The Breakfast Club*), writer-director John Hughes took on grown-up humor with 1987's *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, a mismatched-buddy comedy starring Steve Martin and John Candy as traveling businessmen who meet as strangers and end up stuck with one another during a hellish effort to get from New York City to Chicago by Thanksgiving. Martin plays Neal, who exits a marketing meeting in Manhattan to face a series of transportation disasters, made more aggravating by the insistent presence of garrulous Del (Candy), a shower-curtain-ring salesman. Over the next couple of days, the two bicker, share, and rescue one another repeatedly as plane flights are canceled, a train's engine blows out, and buses, rental cars, and pickups get Neal and Del only slightly closer to their destination. Hughes does a fine job of balancing broad



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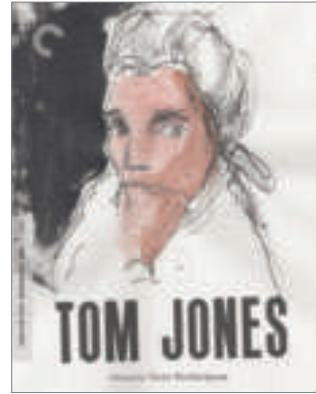
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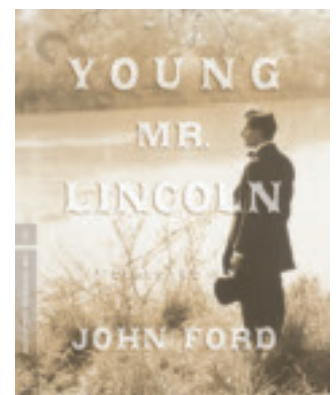
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comedy with genuinely human, nuanced characters—one a cynic who can't handle life's curve balls, and the other an amiable if reckless loner who secretly harbors fears about mortality. A winning film about what can happen when you go with the flow, this 30th anniversary edition features the same set of extras as the 2012 Blu-ray release, including behind-the-scenes featurettes, a tribute to John Candy, and a deleted scene. Recommended for those who don't already own the earlier edition. (T. Keogh)

Portrait of Jennie

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



William Dieterle's 1948 adaptation of Robert Nathan's titular 1940 novella might not have been a big hit, but it holds up as well as other supernatural love stories from the post-war era, such as *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. According to film historian Troy Howarth's detailed audio commentary, the David O. Selznick production was so expensive that it was always going to be a challenge to break even. Selznick's wife, Jennifer Jones, plays the mysterious Jennie opposite Selznick favorite Joseph Cotten as struggling New York artist Eben Adams. Eben's fortunes start to change after an appointment with self-proclaimed old maid Miss Spinney (a touching Ethel Barrymore), a gallery owner who sees something in his talent and buys one of his paintings, although she acknowledges that "there isn't a drop of love in any of these." Love enters Eben's life when he meets the effervescent Jennie in Central Park. It's a platonic relationship at first, which keeps impropriety at bay since she's underage, but every time they subsequently meet, she's a few years older. Jennie also refers to events from the past as if they were in the present. Dieterle never suggests that any of these characters are crazy. Miss Spinney, for instance, has doubts about Jennie's existence, but also feels that Eben's eventual portrait justifies her faith in his abilities. Dieterle aimed to make a swoon-worthy film and he succeeds thanks to nuanced acting, Dimitri Tiomkin's Debussy-inspired score, beautiful high-contrast cinematography, and Oscar-winning effects. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)

The Sissi Collection

★★★

Film Movement, 5 discs, 600 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$59.99



German writer-director Ernst Marischka made three films about Princess Elizabeth of Bavaria (1837-1898) and her husband, Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph (1830-1916). The first,

1955's *Sissi* (which was Elizabeth's nickname), recounts the couple's meeting and marrying over the objections of Franz Joseph's widowed mother Sophie; the second, 1956's *Sissi: The Young Empress*, focuses on Sissi's insistence on raising her first child herself, which again leads to conflict with Sophie; and the third, 1957's *Sissi: The Fateful Years of an Empress*, records how despite illness, Sissi was instrumental in gaining the support of the Hungarian and Italian provinces for her husband. All three films star Romy Schneider as Sissi (her signature role), Karlheinz Böhm as an incredibly upright Franz Joseph, and Vilma Degischer as the redoubtable Sophie, and all are lavishly filmed on gorgeous locations. Treating history very loosely, the trilogy feels like a sentimental operetta, although without music, save for Anton Profes's syrupy score. The *Sissi* films are bland costume soap operas with a royal background, but remain very popular in Europe, and while they are unlikely to achieve similar status in America, they still retain a certain value as curiosities. The most substantial extra here is the bonus DVD featuring *Mädchenjahre einer Königin* or *Victoria in Dover* (which, believe it or not, was originally released in the U.S. as *The Story of Vickie*), a film that Marischka and Schneider made in 1954 about the serendipitous courtship of Queen Victoria of England and her beloved husband Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg. Also included are 1962's *Forever My Love*, a condensation of the *Sissi* trilogy dubbed into English for American release (with a title song by Burt Bacharach and Hal David added), the vintage behind-the-scenes 1956 featurette "From Romy to Sissi", an excerpt from the 2006 documentary *Sissi: Enigma of an Empress*, and a booklet with essays. While none of these movies are great, together they represent a cinematic phenomenon in post-war Germany worth seeing. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Summer Night

Kino Lorber, 103 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



A bubbly romantic comedy shot through with softcore commingling and a soupçon of gender politics, the full title of Italian director Lina Wertmüller's 1986 film is *Summer Night with Greek Profile, Almond Eyes and Scent of Basil*. Trying to strike back at the backwater Sicilian terrorists who have made a mockery of the Milanese elite by blackmailing them for millions of dollars in ransom money, ice queen eco-industrialist Fulvia (Mariangela Melato) does the criminals one better when she arranges the kidnapping of their leader Giuseppe "Beppe" Catania (Michele Placido) with the help of the shady, vulture-like ex-Special Forces agent Cantalamessa (Robert Herlitzka). Keeping Catania holed up in her

opulent, secluded villa, Fulvia finds the tables being turned on her when she begins harboring sexual feelings for her repugnant captive. The culmination of her longing arrives when, after having Catania bound in chains and donned in a zippered domino mask, she fulfills his request to supply him with a trio of sexual partners...and then quietly joins in on the fray. While Wertmüller's script doesn't add any fresh insights into the push-and-pull mechanics of romantic magnetism, the film does feature numerous comedic exchanges and situations, ending on a pleasingly wry, screwball note. Extras include a booklet with an essay by film critic Simon Abrams. Recommended. (J. Cruz)

The Suspicious Death of a Minor

Arrow, 100 min., in Italian & English w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95



A hybrid of crime thriller, slasher film (*giallo*), and sexploitation drama, Sergio Martino's *The Suspicious Death of a Minor* (1975) is an Italian genre curio about a prostitution ring trafficking in minors. Claudio Cassinelli stars as Paolo Germi, who goes in search of a teenage hooker he met at an outdoor café. A cop with the Special Investigations Division on a deep cover case, Germi hires a genial, Vespa-driving purse snatcher (Adolfo Caruso) as his guide through the criminal underworld as he tries to find the hidden power behind the trafficking ring. Along the way, there's a mysterious assassin in mirrored glasses murdering witnesses, a bang-up car chase through the streets of Milan, and an inventive finale aboard a railroad flatbed transporting the assassin's car out of the country. Never before released in the U.S., the film is ultimately unsatisfying as either crime thriller or murder mystery. Cassinelli is an engaging hero, however, and the centerpiece car chase is beautifully choreographed and executed. Token American star Mel Ferrer has a couple of scenes as Paolo's boss but is dubbed in both the Italian and English language soundtracks. Extras include audio commentary by Italian genre movie expert Troy Howarth and a new interview with director Martino. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

Take the Money and Run

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 85 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Woody Allen stars as Virgil Starkwell, the most incompetent criminal to ever make the most wanted list, in Allen's official 1969 feature debut as a director. Narrated in the authoritative tones of the omniscient narrator (Jackson Beck, a veteran radio commentator) who reads comic lines with deadly serious gravity, it spoofs

documentary conventions as it tells the story of a bullied kid who graduates from petty crime to bank robbery in gag-laden skits. Along the way, the film parodies genres such as the prison drama, the caper film, and the prison break thriller, with chain gang scenes out of classic prison dramas from the 1930s up through *Cool Hand Luke*. While using the documentary format for humorous ends was popular in older Hollywood short subjects, Allen took the idea in new directions with cartoonish gags and verbal humor that mixed historical and literary references together with neurotic commentary and stand-up schtick, giving rise to a whole new genre of comedy: the mockumentary. It's hit-or-miss but hilarious at its best, full of throwaway gags (the identities of Virgil's parents are protected by goofy plastic novelty glasses). A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Titanic ★★

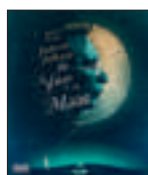
Kino Lorber, 88 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Made in Germany as the tide of World War II was turning against the Axis powers, this 1943 production presents the famous story of the sinking of the *Titanic* as a mix of disaster movie and propaganda piece. The lavish production frames the voyage as a business scheme by the greedy officers of the White Star Line to buy up the company stock at rock bottom prices and then cash in when their state-of-the-art new ship *Titanic* breaks the world record for the transatlantic crossing to New York. The first-class passengers are a veritable *Grand Hotel* of characters, including a notorious burglar, a Russian countess, and an American millionaire attempting to bankrupt White Star. Subplots include a doomed romance between a lowly crewman and a manicurist, and even a little drama in the overcrowded steerage section, where all of the poor and working-class passengers are basically locked in. *Titanic* paints the British and Americans as greedy and power-hungry, risking the lives of innocents for profit and then becoming cowardly when tragedy strikes, and the only authority figure to stand up to them and the irresponsible Captain (who buckles under the pressure of the company president despite warnings of icebergs) is the sole German officer in the British crew. The elaborate miniatures used for the special effects of the sinking of the *Titanic* are impressive and were reused in the 1958 British film *A Night to Remember*. While hardly the best film about the *Titanic*, this is an entertaining slice of disaster melodrama and it is fascinating as a piece of cultural propaganda from Nazi Germany. Extras include audio commentary by film scholar Gaylyn Studlar, and archival footage of the real-life *Titanic* and its sister ship *Olympic*. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Voice of the Moon ★★

Arrow, 121 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



Federico Fellini's final film, 1990's *The Voice of the Moon*, was neither well-received on the festival circuit nor released in America—quite a comedown for a one-of-a-kind director whose beloved classics *La Strada*, *La Dolce Vita*, and *8 1/2* helped establish a ravenous market for foreign films in U.S. theaters and on college campuses in the 1950s and '60s. A well-intended journey through perennial Fellini themes—including reckoning with one's past and present, the search for meaning in the face of mortality, and the absurd vanity of earthly concerns in an overwhelming cosmos—*The Voice of the Moon* stars Roberto Benigni as Ivo Salvini, a wide-eyed innocent who is indirectly constructing his own Romantic mythology. Ivo hears voices calling to him from a well, pines to be one with the Moon, and gazes starry-eyed at a sleeping woman he imagines is our lunar neighbor made flesh. *The Voice of the Moon* exists in a peculiarly Fellini-esque dimension where dreams, memory, and farce are combined, along with foggy ideas that are presented in obscure vignettes tinged with social satire that feels anachronistic (with one spectacular exception). Extras include the archival "making-of" documentary "Towards the Moon with Fellini," a photo gallery, and a booklet. Fellini completists will certainly want to add this, but for others it is an optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Whispering Shadows and The Devil's Assistant ★★

Undercrank, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95



This double feature presents two obscure silent films that were considered lost for many years. *Whispering Shadows* (1921) features a convoluted plot involving embezzlement, false accusations, a conveniently timed death, and a brave heroine fighting to clear her lover's good name with a little help from the recently deceased via occult communication. Emile Chautard's direction is stagy and laborious, moving the story along at an uncommonly lethargic pace. Far more entertaining is the short *The Devil's Assistant* (1917), in which an evil physician (we know he's evil because he briefly grows demonic horns when thinking wicked thoughts) gets his patients hooked on morphine. When a woman who spurned his romantic advances seeks treatment, his lascivious plans for her include drugs and an attempted sexual assault. The film features astonishing imagery, including a vision of drug addiction as a

red-tinted Hell complete with a winged Satan smacking the damned with his pitchfork. It also moves at a ridiculously fast pace, which is not surprising as this is an abbreviated version of a now-lost longer production. Andrew E. Simpson created the original organ scores for the films. Diehard aficionados of silent film may be drawn to this minor double-feature. Optional. (P. Hall)

The Woman in Red ★★1/2

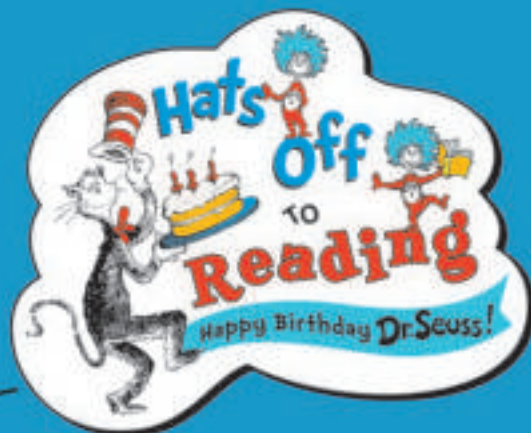
Kino Lorber, 87 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Cinematic funnyman Gene Wilder's third film as a director, *The Woman in Red* combines farcical elements with saucy frills and short shots of straight drama. Teddy Pierce (Wilder), a "director of information" at a San Francisco ad agency, spies the titular knockout (Kelly LeBrock) in her crimson dress one day in the parking garage and becomes instantly smitten. Despite the fact that he's "happily" married to a supportive wife (Judith Ivey) and is the father of two girls, Teddy can't help but reach out to the model, but unbeknownst to him his amorous phone call is received by another woman in his office, Ms. Milner (Gilda Radner). The universe seems to be out to best Teddy at every turn and deter him from his path: his pal Joey (Joseph Bologna) has been abandoned by his wife after she caught on to his womanizing ways, Teddy's attempts to make his date with the model—in actuality Ms. Milner—are constantly foiled by familial obligations and his own inherent guilt, and even after Teddy has formally introduced himself to the model and asked her out for dinner, their plans to rendezvous are further hampered by one surprising revelation after another. Wilder's script, an adaptation of the French film *Pardon Mon Affaire* (1976), constructs a duplicitous universe where just about everyone is engaged in some form of infidelity, amusingly supporting the notion that the heart is a fickle beast. Although somewhat hampered by a subpar Stevie Wonder soundtrack, this remains a reasonably entertaining film. A strong optional purchase. (J. Cruz)

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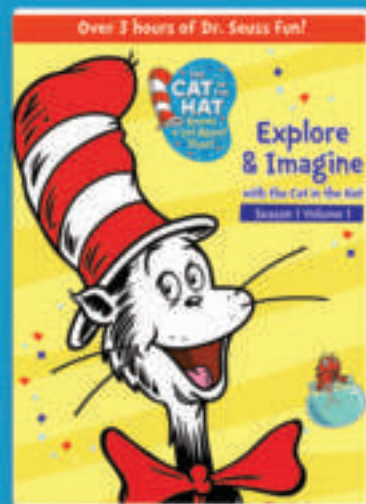


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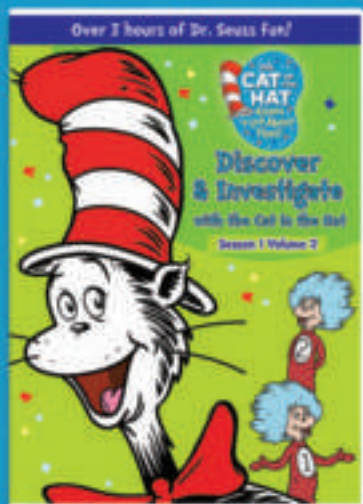
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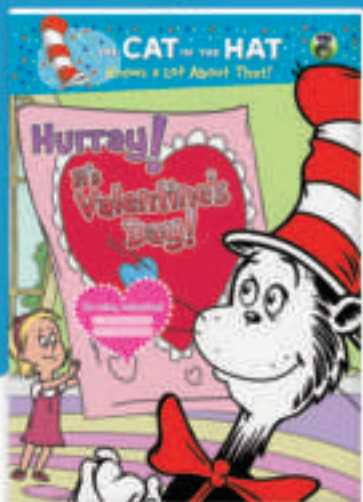
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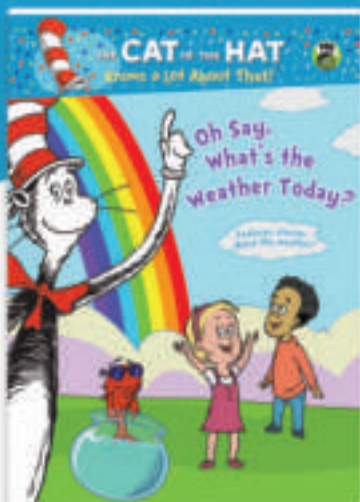
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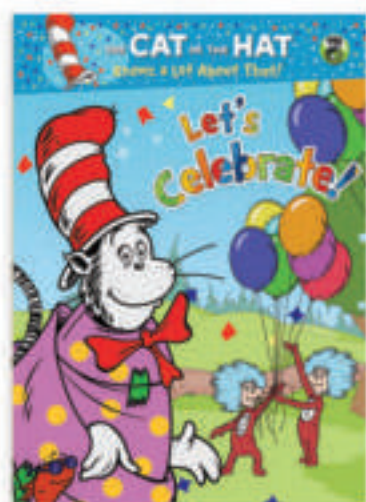
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19-2: Season 4 ★★★

RLJ, 2 discs, 354 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99



The fourth and final season of this award-winning Canadian cop drama sees the end of the narrative about departmental corruption and organized crime moving into Montreal, but the day-to-day stories of the beat cops in the dangerous neighborhood continue on. Partners Nick Barron (Adrian Holmes), the district veteran, and Ben Chartier (Jared Keeso), who moved to the city from a rural post, have overcome their personal conflicts to trust one another as they discover how deep the corruption runs, and the rest of the squad members have their own issues to confront. *19-2* offers a mix of edgy street drama, volatile personal stories, and a portrait of departmental politics and corruption—sometimes to the point of melodrama—but it's also a show that pulls no punches in its portrait of how working in a rough neighborhood of poverty and high crime takes its toll on the officers. Over the course of its run, the show took on alcoholism, domestic violence, PTSD, rage, abuses of power, and suicide, and it wraps up on a good day with a party that unites most (if not necessarily all) of the unit patrol officers—a satisfying close to this fine ensemble beat cop drama. Compiling all eight episodes from 2017, this is recommended. (S. Axmayer)

American Gods: Season One ★★★★★

Lionsgate, 3 discs, 449 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99



Based on the titular best-selling 2001 fantasy novel by Neil Gaiman, this Starz original series stars Ricky Whittle as an ex-con named Shadow Moon who agrees to work for the enigmatic Mr. Wednesday (Ian McShane). As Shadow plays driver and bodyguard to Wednesday, he is introduced to an underworld populated by the old gods, made irrelevant since traditional religions and beliefs have given way to the new gods: TV, social media, technology, and a commercialized Christianity. Meanwhile, Shadow's recently-deceased wife Laura (Emily Browning) is raised from the dead thanks to a lucky coin from a mad leprechaun (Pablo Schreiber) who wants his charm back. Gaiman draws from myths, legends, and folk tales, weaving them into stories of the modern world, and producer/showrunner Bryan Fuller gives the series an amazing visual design, mixing beauty, horror, and fantastical imagery within the material world. Gillian Anderson has a recurring role as Media (she first appears as Lucy from *I Love Lucy*, talking to Shadow from dozens of TV screens), and Bruce Langley, Orlando Jones, Peter Stormare, Corbin

Bernsen, Jeremy Davies, Kristin Chenoweth, and Crispin Glover appear as gods old and new. Presenting all eight episodes from the 2017 debut season, extras include audio and video episode commentaries, a production documentary, an interview with Gaiman, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Blue Eyes ★★1/2

MHZ, 4 discs, 351 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.99



This Swedish series focuses on two women wrapped up in right-wing politics and do-it-yourself murder investigations. Elin Hammar (Louise Peterhoff), a former chief of staff for the conservative Justice Minister, is brought back after her successor mysteriously vanishes. Sofia Nilsson (Karin Franz Körlof) is a young single mother and the daughter of a small-town politician from an extreme-right party. When Sofia's mother is murdered, she becomes involved in a Neo-Nazi movement with terrorist tactics. Sofia's growing xenophobia isolates her from her liberal brother, who has his own concerns about their slain mother being used as a martyr for an anti-immigrant political movement. Elin suspects that the disappearance of her replacement and the murder of Sofia's mother may be connected. *Blue Eyes* is not a dull show—indeed, it is stuffed with political conspiracies and criminal intrigue—but the story stereotypes right-wingers as nut jobs, and the ultimate resolution is something of a letdown. Still, the lead actresses bring real charisma and dynamic energy to their roles. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2014-15 miniseries, this is a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Camilla Läckberg ★★

MHZ, 3 discs, 320 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.99



The title is a bit confusing, because Camilla Läckberg is the novelist whose books were adapted into three standalone productions here for Swedish TV. Läckberg's tales take place in a small, idyllic coastal community that, not unlike the Cabot Cove of *Murder, She Wrote*, has a grotesquely high homicide rate. The crime solvers in this series are Detective Patrik Hedström (Niklas Hjulström) and his novelist fiancé Erica Falck (Elisabet Carlsson), who work as a team in solving the too-frequent mysteries that haunt their picturesque village. The three feature-length films collected here are *The Preacher* (2007), in which the eponymous theologian has more than a few skeletons in his closet; *The Stonecutter* (2009), where the discovery of a drowned child is initially presumed to be a tragic accident until an autopsy

sets off a murder investigation; and *The Jinx* (2010), centering on a fatal automobile crash that is initially (and mistakenly) considered to be a drunk driving mishap. For those weaned on American and British mystery series, these Scandinavian whodunits might seem a bit too leisurely paced, and the main characters bring very little charisma to their parts. Perhaps Swedish audiences felt the same way, as later adaptations feature different actors in the leading roles. Originally broadcast stateside via MHZ, this set is an optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Channel Zero—Candle Cove: Season One

★★★1/2

Universal, 2 discs, 260 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98



Creepypasta—the name for viral horror stories sent via e-mail chains or pasted (copypasta) on message boards—was a phenomenon among teen and young adult Internet users in the early 2010s, and were archived on websites. While many were anonymous stories developed through crowdsourcing, some were by professional writers. One of the most popular creepypastas, “Candle Cove” by Kris Straub, is the basis for the first season of this Syfy horror series. Child psychologist Mike Painter (Paul Schneider), haunted by the death of his twin brother in an unsolved serial murder spree during adolescence, returns to his childhood home as the killings begin again. The mystery revolves around an old children's TV show called *Candle Cove*, which aired at the time of the murders and reappears with Mike's arrival, although there is no evidence of the show existing outside of this town and no recordings were ever made. *Channel Zero—Candle Cove* launched to positive reviews around the time of Netflix's somewhat similar series *Stranger Things*, but it never received the same level of attention or enjoyed equal popularity (although a third season of *Channel Zero* is scheduled for 2018). It's darker, more unsettling, and less visually flamboyant than *Stranger Things*, but in its own way is even creepier, telling a complete, self-contained story like the anthology series *American Horror Story*. Compiling all six episodes from 2016, extras include deleted scenes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

Chicago Justice: Season One ★★

Universal, 3 discs, 555 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99



Chicago is enjoying a renaissance in primetime TV. After the success of *Chicago Fire*, producer Dick Wolf (of *Law & Order* fame) went all-in on a series of spin-off shows centered on Windy City civil

servants. *Chicago P.D.* premiered in 2014, followed by *Chicago Med* in 2015. Sadly, the newest spin-off failed to live up to its progenitor: *Chicago Justice* premiered in 2017 and was cancelled after a single 13-episode season. The series focuses on a team of prosecutors and investigators working in the State's Attorney's office (most have popped up before in other *Chicago* series) as they tackle high-stakes cases, primarily homicides, while navigating the city's complicated political and media landscape. Philip Winchester stars as Deputy Chief of Special Prosecutions Peter Stone, who leads the team despite occasional pushback from the State's Attorney (Carl Weathers). The show is a standard *Law & Order*-style police procedural that breaks no new ground, which is unfortunate since *Chicago* presents a prime setting to explore important issues related to crime, race, politics, and corruption. Not recommended. (P. Morehart)

The Collection ★★

PBS, 3 discs, 390 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$59.99

PBS's *Masterpiece* ordinarily maintains a high standard of quality, but this BBC series about machinations within the haute couture industry in post-World War II Paris is an exception. The main protagonist is Paul Sabine (Richard Coyle), who strives to make his family's firm the driving force behind France's return to leadership in the world of fashion. But his hopes are jeopardized by his family—manipulative mother Yvette (Frances de la Tour), independent-minded wife Helen (Mamie Gummer), and especially his gay brother Claude (Tom Riley), the company's brilliant designer, whose reckless hedonism threatens prospects for creating a new line. To add to Paul's problems, a gruff American reporter (Stanley Townsend) is looking into rumors of his collaboration with the Nazis during the occupation, and a police inspector (Allan Corduner) is asking pesky questions about a body found on the Sabines' rural property. Meanwhile, Paul hires the reporter's naïve photographer (Max Deacon), who in turn develops a romantic interest in beautiful seamstress-turned-model Nina (Jenna Thiam). Stuffed with subplots about mysterious secrets and characters that never really engage one's sympathy, *The Collection* is often lovely to look at—especially when the dresses are on display—but dramatically stilted. Compiling all eight episodes from 2017, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Optional. (F. Swietek)

The Crown: The Complete First Season

★★★★★

Sony, 4 discs, 599 min., not rated, DVD: \$45.99, Blu-ray: \$55.99

Claire Foy stars as Queen Elizabeth II in

Netflix's most expensive original series to date, which follows Elizabeth from her marriage to Philip, Duke of Edinburgh (Matt Smith), and her ascension to the throne in 1952 at the age of 25 up through her rapid learning curve over the decade. *The Crown* was created and written by Peter Morgan, who earned an Oscar nomination for his screenplay for *The Queen* (which was also about Queen Elizabeth), and he builds episodes around key moments in history for both Elizabeth and her country. The title cuts to the heart of the matter: it's about the woman who takes the crown but ultimately it is also about service and the sacrifices made to preserve a position of authority and symbolism. It's also a portrait of a post-war England that is still in the hands of old men governing the country but faced with a young royal couple who have more modern ideas. The tension between tradition and modernity, public appearances and private lives, is central to this drama—a sweeping, grand, handsome, and intelligent show that is also one of the best historical British series ever made. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2016 first season, extras include a photo gallery. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Axmaker)



The Durrells in Corfu: The Complete Second Season ★★

PBS, 2 discs, 280 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$49.99

The second season of this comic drama centering on a British family living on a Greek island—based on *The Corfu Trilogy* memoirs (1956-1978) by Gerald Durrell—finds financially-struggling widowed mother Louisa Durrell (Keeley Hawes) scrambling to establish some source of income while being romanced by British olive oil merchant Hugh (Daniel Lapaine), a development that makes an enemy of Hugh's hot-tempered ex-lover Vasilisa (Errika Bigiou), who is also the Durrells' new landlady. Eldest brother Lawrence (Josh O'Connor), whose first novel is published back in England, moves into his own apartment in town and ends up having a torrid affair with Vasilisa, boy-crazy sister Margo (Daisy Waterstone) continues to search for romance, Leslie (Calum Woodhouse) trades his hunting rifle for a camera and decides to become a professional photographer, and youngest child Gerald (Milo Parker), a burgeoning zoologist, does everything he can to avoid schooling. The season ends with three births, one being an otter that young Gerald has brought home to replenish the dying breed on the island. It seems curious that this British family chooses to make their new home in a for-



eign country yet they never bother to learn the language—suggesting a touch of British colonial arrogance that is never questioned. Shot on location on the island of Corfu, this is a gorgeous-looking lighthearted drama that will continue to find favor with fans of Brit TV. Compiling all six episodes from the 2017 second season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Ernie Kovacs: Take a Good Look—The Definitive Collection

★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 7 discs, 1,440 min., not rated, DVD: \$69.99

Ernie Kovacs was one of the great innovators of TV comedy. In the early days of TV he imagined things that no else had ever considered and created strange and surreal gags and skits with primitive tools. So it's rather fitting that the man who turned TV comedy on its head would spoof the "secret guest" panel show (like *I've Got a Secret* and *What's My Line?*) with surreal clues hidden in pre-taped skits, many of which are so obscure and confounding as to be useless to the celebrity panel. It is an absurdist twist on a staple of 1950s TV and the panel (regulars included Edie Adams, Cesar Romero, Hans Conried, and Carl Reiner) was in on the joke, even when they complained (good naturedly) during the shows (and Kovacs kept reworking the format to help the audience "get" the jokes). Banter aside, what makes *Take a Good Look* interesting are the offbeat skits created by and starring Kovacs (some were reused in his subsequent comedy specials), and the imaginative pantomime commercials shot for the show's sponsor, Dutch Masters Cigars. It's a minor TV landmark of interest largely to fans of vintage TV and Kovacs. Compiling all 49 existing episodes from the 1959-61 first and second (and last) seasons, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



The Good Karma Hospital: Series 1 ★★1/2

RLJ, 2 discs, 287 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

A familiar hospital drama set in an exotic locale, this British series opens with recent medical school graduate Dr. Ruby Walker (Amrita Acharia) deciding to pursue her residency at a state-of-the-art metropolitan hospital in India but ending up in an underfunded, understaffed hospital in a rural coastal town. British TV star Amanda Redman plays Dr. Lydia Fonseca, a veteran doctor and administrator who takes a no-nonsense approach to medicine in order to serve as many of the poor patients as possible. James Floyd costars as arrogant

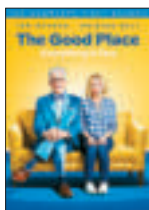


younger doctor Gabriel Varma, who is assigned to mentor Walker. For a series set in rural India, there are a substantial number of white British characters, including Neil Morrissey as the wheeler-dealer proprietor of a beachside bar and Phyllis Logan as a tourist with cancer who decides to spend her final days in India (much to the dismay of husband Philip Jackson, who prefers proper British beer and dreary English weather). The show features the usual medical drama clichés and stories as it follows the evolution of Walker as she becomes more confident and learns to love her new home. The only things setting this apart from similar fare is the tropical paradise full of impoverished citizens and a foreign culture that viewers discover through Walker's tour of duty. Compiling all six episodes from the 2017 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a photo gallery. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

The Good Place: The Complete First Season

★★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 2 discs, 375 min., TV-PG, DVD: \$19.99



One of the most inventive and imaginative sitcoms of the 2016-17 TV season, *The Good Place* is a comic afterlife fantasy in which a thoroughly inconsiderate, self-involved young woman named Eleanor (Kristen Bell) finds herself in what is essentially Heaven due to an identity mix-up and she turns to an ethics professor (William Jackson Harper) for lessons on how to be a good person. And that's just the first complication in this wild farce about a perfect community that starts unraveling due to Eleanor's presence. The comedy revolves around the efforts of her small support group—which includes Ted Danson as the host and engineer of the community, Jameela Jamil as a British socialite philanthropist, Manny Jacinto as an idiot hip hop dancer confused for a Buddhist monk, and a helper robot named Janet, played with chipper enthusiasm by D'Arcy Carden—to keep her secret and protect her from being sent to “the bad place.” The show was created by Michael Schur (*Parks and Recreation*), who excels at attention to character and rapid-fire delivery. *The Good Place* mixes slapstick comedy with sophisticated ideas, delving into ethical and philosophical issues through character humor and wild visual gags—kind of like a live-action cartoon about existential questions. While not a ratings champ, the series did earn rave reviews and has a devoted following. Compiling all 13 debut season episodes, extras include select episode commentaries, a cast table read, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a gag reel. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Green Acres: The Complete Series

★★★★★
Shout! Factory, 24 discs, 4,245 min., not rated, DVD: \$139.99



One of the numerous comedies with rural settings and cornpone humor that aired in the 1960s, *Green Acres* reverses the formula of *The Beverly Hillbillies*, sending a sophisticated couple from Manhattan to the hick farming community of Hooterville. Eddie Albert plays Oliver Wendell Douglas, a New York lawyer who just wants to be a farmer, and Eva Gabor is his Hungarian-born wife Lisa, a Park Avenue creature who reluctantly but loyally follows him to the ramshackle home and wreck of a farm he bought from the town con-man Mr. Haney (Pat Buttram). Their phone is on top of a nearby telephone pole, their home is constantly falling apart, and Lisa never learns to cook anything edible. The colorful cast of country characters include their enthusiastic but dim hired hand Eb (Tom Lester), a confused county agent (Alvy Moore), and a couple raising a pig named Arnold as their son. The series has a zanier streak of humor than its sister shows (such as *Petticoat Junction*), from the antics of Arnold (who was so popular he developed his own fan club) to running gags where Lisa can see the credits and subtitles appear on the screen, and Oliver and Lisa have a surprisingly passionate marriage for a '60s sitcom. It ran for six successful seasons and was still popular when it was cancelled by CBS in its purge of rural comedies in the early '70s. Compiling all 170 episodes from 1965-71, extras include a pilot episode audio commentary by pop culture historian Russell Dyball, a retrospective featurette with author Stephen Cox (*The Hooterville Handbook*), an appearance by Gabor and Albert on *The Merv Griffin Show*, episodes from the original radio show, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Grey's Anatomy: Complete Thirteenth Season

★★★★1/2
Buena Vista, 6 discs, 1,032 min., TV-14, DVD: \$45.99



It wouldn't be *Grey's Anatomy* if at least one character wasn't in the kind of trouble that would get them fired from any other hospital in the country. As the 13th season of this ABC medical drama begins, Karev (Justin Chambers) faces consequences for beating up DeLuca (Giacomo Gianniotti) after catching him with his fiancée, Jo (Camilla Luddington). DeLuca recovers and returns to work, but Karev's career hangs in the balance. In other developments, Meredith (Ellen Pompeo) and Maggie (Kelly McCreary) both fall for Riggs (Martin Henderson), estranged couple April (Sarah Drew) and Jackson (Jesse Williams)

become parents and start dating other people, and newlyweds Owen (Kevin McKidd) and Amelia (Caterina Scorsone) encounter a roadblock when it comes to children. New characters and guest stars include Jackson's long-lost father, Robert Avery (Eric Roberts), Dr. Leah Murphy (Tessa Ferrer), and Eliza Minnick (Marika Dominczyk), a consultant who revamps the residency program in a way that pits interns against attending physicians. Eliza clashes with Richard (James Pickens Jr.), who fears that she will replace him, but she strikes sparks with divorcee Arizona (Jessica Capshaw). Although Jerrika Hinton's role of Stephanie Edwards felt underused this season, a fire at the hospital gives the actress a chance to shine, while also marking the end of her run on the show. *Grey's Anatomy* remains watchable, and the ending suggests new story possibilities for Owen and Riggs, but the series' sense of treading water is impossible to ignore. Compiling all 24 episodes from the 2016-17 13th season, extras include outtakes and deleted scenes. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennesy)

The Heart Guy: Series 1

★★★

RLJ, 3 discs, 489 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99



Broadcast stateside on Acorn TV, this Australian series (known as *Doctor Doctor* in its native country) centers on heart surgeon Hugh Knight (Rodger Corser), who finds his career in Sydney jeopardized following an incident with drugs and alcohol. Placed on a one-year probation by the medical tribunal, Hugh returns to his rural hometown of Whyhope to work as a general practitioner. Naturally, life is anything but boring in the sticks, where Hugh faces a variety of predicaments and challenges ranging from his heroic work on patients with life-threatening injuries to the seemingly endless complications involving his dysfunctional family—most notably his politically ambitious mother (a wonderfully strident Tina Bursill) and an ex-girlfriend who married his younger brother. Much of Hugh's difficulties stem from his chronic inability to replace hubris with humility. Unfortunately, the show veers somewhat haphazardly between standard issue medical drama and rangy Australian comedy with increasingly predictable plot developments. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2016 debut season, this is an optional purchase. (P. Hall)

House of Cards: The Complete Fifth Season

★★★★★
Sony, 4 discs, 683 min., not rated, DVD: \$45.99, Blu-ray: \$55.99

The political skullduggery practiced by ruthless President Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey), a congressman who wormed his

way into the Oval Office through a succession of betrayals and crimes—including murder—reaches new heights as he and his equally ambitious wife Claire (Robin Wright), who is now second on the ticket, scheme to win a close re-election campaign by hook or crook. When exploiting the public's fear of terrorism and even fabricating supposed threats from an ISIS-like group prove insufficient during a final bid to retain power, the couple manage to disrupt the vote and get the decision thrown into the House of Representatives. But here too the outcome is in doubt, due to revelations about both Frank's prior misdeeds and skeletons in his rival's closet—equal-opportunity cynicism being the general principle at work here. Recent accusations of sexual harassment against Spacey resulted in Netflix cutting ties with the actor, but a sixth and final season of the show is in the works. Although more far-fetched than previous seasons, the fifth still provides the same sort of malicious political satire that has made *House of Cards* such nasty fun, even if the British original that inspired it had more subtle bite. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2017, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



iZombie: The Complete Third Season ★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 550 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

There's a zombie underground in Seattle, but unlike the mindless hordes of *The Walking Dead* these undead still have their memories and emotions and remain in control of their impulses (as long as they have a steady supply of brains). And they are building a private militia to protect themselves from a band of conspiracy nuts who have declared war on the hidden population. That's where the third season of this mystery-horror-comedy series begins, with undead assistant coroner Olivia (Rose McIver) working with Police Detective Clive Babiniaux (Malcolm Goodwin) to solve crimes using her zombie powers (she accesses the memories and personalities of dead victims when she ingests their brains), while also helping to keep the undead underground safe from human vigilantes. Meanwhile, the head coroner (Rahul Kohli) has developed a cure that wipes memories as a side-effect of becoming human again. Developed by Rob Thomas (*Veronica Mars*) from the Vertigo comic book series, the show uses the zombie twist to refresh the classic mystery procedural, with humor mined from Olivia's personality shifts under the influence of brains, all framed within an often poignant larger story of identity, disconnection from society, and prejudice. It all makes for an interesting and

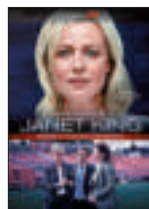


entertaining approach to the zombie genre. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2017 third season, extras include a 2016 Comic-Con panel, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Janet King: Series 3—Playing Advantage ★★★

RLJ, 3 discs, 466 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99

This third season of the Australian legal drama starring Marta Dusseldorp as Senior Crown Prosecutor Janet King focuses on a government investigation into illegal betting, match fixing, and organized crime connections to the world of professional cricket, a case that heats up with the suicide of one young player under suspicion and an arson attack on another. And that's only the beginning of this investigation that follows a trail of clues to experimental performance-enhancing drugs and the sexual abuse of a 16-year-old girl. Janet is less of a maverick here than in earlier series, when her ambition sometimes pushed her to cross lines, and it gets personal when she takes responsibility for the angry teenage girl who has been abused and abandoned, and reconnects with her estranged, emotionally distant father. The show also details the legal framework and procedures of building a case and working with the police, which is as interesting as the criminal conspiracy at the center of the investigation. The subculture of cricket may feel a bit obscure to American viewers, but the show helps out on that score—Janet knows nothing about the sport either—and the world of professional sports should look familiar to anyone with passing exposure to the culture of superstar athletes in baseball, football, or basketball. Compiling all eight episodes from 2017, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Jessica Jones: Season 1 ★★½

Buena Vista, 4 discs, 667 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$32.99

Airing on Netflix, the Marvel Comics series *Jessica Jones* is one of the best superhero dramas made for either TV or streaming networks. Krysten Ritter stars as Jessica Jones, a woman with super strength and shaky flying powers who has no interest in being a costumed hero, so she hangs out her shingle as a private detective. Jessica is cynical, smart-mouthed, prickly, and a survivor of a sociopath named Kilgrave (David Tennant), who uses his powers of mind control to turn his victims into slaves. She avoids confronting her trauma with alcohol, sex, and a reckless-



ness that lands her in a lot of fights. When Kilgrave returns to New York, she decides that to break free of his grip she has to stop him for good. Rachael Taylor costars as best friend Trish Walker and Mike Colter makes his debut as Luke Cage (with his own related spin-off series). The show was developed for Netflix by *Twilight* screenwriter and veteran TV producer Melissa Rosenberg (making it one of the few superhero projects helmed by a woman) and she gives the series an urban film noir style and a dark sensibility that melds tough-talking, hard-drinking private eye drama with superhero adventure, all the while grounding the super-powered characters in human stories. Ritter has the strength and sass to pull it off while letting us see the damaged soul beneath and the righteous anger that drives her to help other victims of Kilgrave. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2015 debut season, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Kevin Can Wait: Season One ★★½

Sony, 3 discs, 502 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.99

Stocky comic actor Kevin James's blue-collar CBS sitcom carries echoes of his previous series *The King of Queens*. Here, James plays Kevin Gable, a lumpen Long Island policeman who took an early retirement and now, with nothing much to do, tries out various part-time jobs and gets into semi-amusing exploits with his old buddies from the force and effete young Englishman Chale (Ryan Cartwright) who has (rather inexplicably) become the on-off fiancé of the eldest Gable daughter, Kendra (Taylor Spreitler). Erinn Hayes costars as Kevin's wife Donna. Harry Connick Jr., Ray Romano, and Adam Sandler appear in guest roles, and the season finale features Leah Remini—James's leading lady from *The King of Queens*—as a former precinct partner forced to masquerade as Kevin's wife in order to pull off a police sting. *Kevin Can Wait* is a mostly familiar sitcom that pretty much banks entirely on James's working-class-guy appeal. Presenting all 24 episodes from the 2016-17 debut season, extras include a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



Legend of Bruce Lee: Volume Three ★★

Well Go USA, 3 discs, 452 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

The final volume of this Chinese TV series on the life of Bruce Lee (Danny Chan) finds the martial arts champion attracting the attention of a Hollywood producer who believes Lee can become a barrier-breaking movie star. But Lee discovers quickly that the entertain-



ment industry is not eager to have a Chinese leading man, and after being deceived on a planned project, he returns to Hong Kong. The opportunity to costar in the TV series *The Green Hornet* entices Lee to give Hollywood a second try, but the show is cancelled after one season, and plans to shoot a film in India are aborted when the scheduled production is revealed to be a shady operation. Lee returns again to Hong Kong and finally achieves the cinematic recognition that eluded him in Hollywood. *Legend of Bruce Lee* offers a curious mixture of showbiz hagiography and martial arts worship that is unfortunately hampered by awful English dubbing. And while Chan is a physical dead ringer for Lee, he lacks the great star's charisma. Compiling the last 10 episodes from this 2008 series, this is an optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Loch Ness: Series 1

★★★1/2

RLJ, 2 discs, 275 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$49.99

Set in the rural Scottish highlands of Loch Ness, this British series stars Laura Fraser as Detective Sergeant Annie Redford, a small-town cop investigating her first murder, and Siobhan Finneran as DCI Lauren Quigley, a veteran detective from the city sent in when the coroner discovers that part of the victim's brain has been removed. As more bodies—and body parts—turn up, the pair realize that they are dealing with a serial killer and Quigley brings in a criminal psychologist/true crime author (Don Gilet) whose impulsive actions become a liability to the investigation. The beautiful location—a town of green, rolling hills under perpetually overcast skies—sets the show's atmosphere, and the killings stir up buried secrets, suspicious characters, and guilty behavior, which gives the police plenty of suspects. There's a doctor with a troubling interest in teenage girls, a mother keeping her son drugged in a state of perpetual paralysis, a young man hiding his adolescent past as a murderer, and other entertaining if also increasingly contrived complications. The detectives have no less messy lives, but they put their trust in each other to solve the murders. *Loch Ness* suffers some from being overly complicated and at times strains credulity, but it also features strong central performances and lovely location filming. Presenting all six episodes from the 2017 debut season, extras include cast interviews, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a photo gallery. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Madam Secretary: Season 3 ★★★

Paramount, 6 discs, 991 min., not rated, DVD: \$46.99

At a time when political drama on TV tends to be utterly cynical (*House of Cards*) or incredibly salacious (*Scandal*), this CBS series

starring Téa Leoni as principled, dedicated Secretary of State Elizabeth McCord instead hearkens back to the spirit of *The West Wing*. Admittedly, the plotlines allow for twists that involve political chicanery—the re-election of President Conrad Dalton (Keith Carradine) as an independent, for example, requires a final decision by the House of Representatives, which the candidate of Dalton's former party threatens to challenge until he is effectively blackmailed by the wily White House Chief of Staff (Željko Ivanek). For the most part, however, Dalton, McCord, and their colleagues act in a relatively upright fashion, attempting to address serious issues like climate change at home while using diplomacy to avert conflict abroad. Subplots address the Secretary's domestic life with her husband Henry (Tim Daly), a religion professor who by the end of the season has become a CIA agent, and their children. To be sure, some of the crises that McCord must deal with—like Russian action in Eastern Europe—can seem a mite implausible, but overall *Madam Secretary* is a solid political drama that does not insult the viewer's intelligence. And Leoni, Daly, Carradine, and Ivanek—along with Bebe Neuwirth as McCord's chief of staff, and occasional guest stars like executive producer Morgan Freeman and Eric Stoltz—anchor the show with strong performances. Presenting all 23 episodes from the 2016-17 third season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Marcella: Season One

★★★1/2

RLJ, 2 discs, 378 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99

ITV's downbeat detective series from Hans Rosenfeldt, Swedish creator of *The Bridge*, stars Anna Friel as Marcella Backland, a mother of two who returns to the police force when her marriage unravels. Her kids are at boarding school and the murder unit is working on a case that recalls the Grove Park murders that she investigated in 2005, so she picks up where she left off. Marcella reports to DCI Laura Porter (Nina Sosanya) and works with DC Mark Travis (Jack Doolan), who has been carrying a torch for her. London here appears as a photogenic if also treacherous place where everyone appears to be connected. Marcella's lawyer husband, Jason (Nicholas Pinnock), works for a powerful family that may have ties to the recent murders. Jason has been having an affair with Grace (Maeve Dermody)—the daughter of matriarch Sylvie (Sinéad Cusack)—who goes missing shortly after Marcella rejoins the force. Other threads involve a sex worker (Florence Pugh), a doctoral



student (Laura Carmichael), and a Polish cab driver (Emil Hostina). To add to the Nordic noir vibe here, Marcella has a fiery temper and suffers from episodes in which she loses track of time. Although it can be frustrating to watch vibrant actress Friel play such a dour character, *Marcella* is a reasonably engaging show. Presenting all eight episodes from the 2016 debut season, this is a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Modern Family: The Complete Eighth Season

★★★

Fox, 3 discs, 474 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99



Still one of the most popular sitcoms on TV after eight years, five-time Emmy-winner (for Outstanding Comedy) *Modern Family* remains true to its title as it charts the stories of the extended Pritchett/Dunphy families, reflecting diverse experiences in the contemporary American clan (divorce, adoption, gay marriage) through rapid-fire humor. It's the final year of high school for cousins Manny (Rico Rodriguez) and Luke (Nolan Gould), both good friends and fierce rivals after the intellectually-challenged Luke beats out the brainy but socially handicapped Manny for class president. Haley (Sarah Hyland) starts dating a much older guy (guest star Nathan Fillion), there's a wedding for Phil's (Ty Burrell) widower father (Fred Willard) that gets a blast of Dunphy theater, and Cam's (Eric Stonestreet) rustic sister Pam (Dana Powell) gives birth and moves in with him and husband Mitchell (Jesse Tyler Ferguson). The series begins with a Dunphy family vacation in New York and continues the holiday tradition of shows celebrating Halloween (the family pitches in to make Luke's party a success), Thanksgiving (with a visit to a petting zoo), and New Year's Day (Christmas is skipped in favor of a high school winter dance episode), ending on graduation day. Also starring Ed O'Neill, Sofia Vergara, and Julie Bowen, the show continues to coast along nicely on its well-established mockumentary format, with excellent character chemistry and confident comic delivery. Presenting all 22 episodes from the 2016-17 eighth season, extras include deleted scenes and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Murder on the Orient Express ★★★

RLJ, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99



Near the end of his successful run playing Agatha Christie's Belgian detective Hercule Poirot on British TV, David Suchet starred in this 2010 feature-length adaptation of the most famous of all Poirot novels. The impressive guest

cast includes Toby Jones as the shady murder victim, and Hugh Bonneville, Samuel West, Eileen Atkins, and American actresses Barbara Hershey and Jessica Chastain as a few of the suspects on the titular train where Poirot is investigating the crime. Although one of Christie's most well-known mysteries, this is only the third English-language screen adaptation of the novel, and it follows the same plot as both the Oscar-winning 1974 film version starring Albert Finney and the new adaptation from director/star Kenneth Branagh. The major difference, apart from the subdued British TV style, is the pronounced emphasis on Poirot's dilemma: his belief in law and justice versus the moral justice of the death of a child murderer who has escaped the punishment of law. Suchet makes that quandary—which is put into sharp relief during a conversation with the character played by Chastain—a central aspect here. A handsomely-made, intelligently-produced, and timely release (given the new Branagh film), this will appeal to fans of Christie and British mysteries in general. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Ned and Stacey: The Complete Series ★★

Shout! Factory, 6 discs, 1,035 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.99

Thomas Haden Church plays ambitious ad executive Ned Dorsey and Debra Messing is struggling journalist Stacey Colbert, strangers who clash on a blind date set up by his best friend (Greg Germann) and her sister (Nadia Dajani). Ned and Stacey end up marrying for purely practical reasons: he needs a wife in order to get a promotion and she can't afford a decent place to live. Ned is smug, cynical, and self-centered, while Stacey is idealistic and emotional with a touch of the bohemian and a taste for luxury. Both are free to date others—they have separate bedrooms and lead separate lives except when his job calls for a wife—and of course they constantly get on one another's nerves. That's the set-up for this short-lived sitcom from Michael Weithorn, who went on to create the much better *The King of Queens*. The series is notable largely for its two stars—Church came to the show from *Wings* and Messing went on to star in the popular *Will & Grace*—but otherwise it's a standard '90s sitcom without any distinctive character or stylistic freshness to differentiate it from the rest of the TV schedule. Compiling all 46 episodes from the 1995-97 first and second (and last) seasons, extras include audio commentary on the pilot episode, and a retrospective featurette. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

Orphan Black: Season Five ★★

BBC, 440 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.99

The fifth and final season of this BBC

America hit brings the story of the sisters—a group of women who discover they are all born out of an elaborate, sinister cloning experiment—to a conclusion as they finally confront the truth behind the shadowy multinational corporation Neolution and its enigmatic founder. Tatiana Maslany won an Emmy Award for her performance playing five major roles (and more supporting characters who came and went through the series) with distinctive personalities, including streetwise mother Sarah, suburban housewife Alison, brainy genetic scientist Cosima, trained killer Helena, and ruthless corporate schemer Rachel. Stephen McHattie costars this season as P.T. Westmoreland—a veritable cult leader who claims to be over 100—and various other heroes and villains from past seasons appear here. It makes for a complicated finale, full of conspiracies, revelations, and conflicted loyalties, and it is frankly confusing. But this last season also gives all of the sisters (including nemesis Rachel, who has always treated her genetic siblings as test subjects) and devoted members of the extended family (foster brother Felix, Alison's husband Donnie, Detective Art Bell) the opportunity to step up in solidarity, and the ending brings a satisfying act of outreach and healing. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2017, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Poldark: The Complete Third Season ★★

PBS, 3 discs, 570 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.99, Blu-ray: \$54.99

The shadow of the French Revolution hangs heavy over this PBS-aired third season of the BBC's popular British period drama based on the novels by Winston Graham. Adapting the fifth and sixth books of the series, *Poldark* finds Ross Poldark (Aidan Turner)—the erstwhile adventurer who returned to his native Cornwall to discover that his family fortune was ruined and personal hopes dashed—not only leading a raiding party into France to rescue friends taken prisoner when their ship is seized by Revolutionary forces, but also taking charge of a local militia tasked with defending the coast against possible invasion. Despite the international background, the emphasis remains on domestic affairs, with Ross deferring to the ambitions of his jealous rival George Warleggan (Jack Farthing), whose marriage to Elizabeth (Heida Reed)—Ross's true love—has resulted in the birth of a son (although the child's paternity is in doubt). The mutual animosity between the two men is heightened by the arrival of the brothers of Demelza (Eleanor Tomlinson), Ross's wife, who become targets

of George's wrath, and by the latter's decision to hoard grain despite scarcity in the district. An array of supporting characters—including a libidinous clergyman, a handsome military man, and an upright young doctor—add further plot complications, but by the end it is the women who have turned the tables. Sumptuously filmed in breathtaking locations, *Poldark* continues to be an addictive 18th-century soap opera. Compiling all nine episodes from the 2017 third season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Preacher: Season Two

★★★

Sony, 4 discs, 578 min., not rated, DVD: \$35.99, Blu-ray: \$45.99

The second season of this violent, black-humored AMC-aired series finds Jesse Custer (Dominic Cooper)—a bank robber-turned-priest with mystical powers—hitting the road with thrill-seeking former girlfriend Tulip (Ruth Negga) and wild, hard-drinking Irish vampire Cassidy (Joseph Gilgun) to look for God in New Orleans, where the missing deity has reportedly been sighted in jazz clubs. Here, they face a demonic, eternal gunfighter called the Saint of Killers, who has been sent by a vengeful angel to kill Custer, and they encounter a secret organization that knows God is missing from Heaven and wants rogue preacher Custer to play the Messiah until the creator can be found. Meanwhile, an innocent kid (Ian Colletti) accidentally sent to Hell joins forces with a repentant Hitler (Noah Taylor) in order to survive. Based on the graphic novel by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, *Preacher* is not your usual TV show about faith and religion (and it is definitely not aimed at the faithful), as it is brimful of rude humor, violent heroes, potentially sacrilegious depictions of holy figures, and a Catholic hit squad that uses ruthless tactics to protect the faith from any and all threats. But this will continue to appeal to fans of caustic satire and fantasy action. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2017 second season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Riverdale: The Complete First Season ★★

Warner, 3 discs, 555 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$39.99

Certainly not the wholesome classic Archie Comics pals and gals from my own youth, this loose adaptation featuring characters from the long-running franchise takes a dark and sexy turn. Within the first 15 minutes, Betty and Veronica are making out in front of a crowd....not exactly the squeaky clean antics familiar to readers. *Riverdale* follows Archie Andrews (KJ



Apa), an Everyteen at the epicenter of the small titular town's goings-on, whether it is his affair with teacher Miss Grundy (Sarah Habel), the love triangle with girl-next-door Betty Cooper (Lili Reinhart) and posh NYC transplant Veronica Lodge (Camila Mendes), contention with longtime best friend Jughead Jones (Cole Sprouse), or his relationship with his separated parents (played by *Beverly Hills, 90210*'s Luke Perry and '80s teen idol Molly Ringwald). A major narrative here finds the town being rocked by the disappearance of school quarterback Jason Blossom, whose vicious twin sister Cheryl (Madelaine Petsch) wreaks icy havoc on everyone in her search for justice. Mainly alike in name only, the characters are far departures from their ink-and-paper counterparts, but this update definitely works as a racy dramedy, so long as you take it tongue-in-cheek. Featuring all 13 episodes from the 2017 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, a 2016 Comic-Con panel, unaired scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (J. Williams-Wood)

Silicon Valley: The Complete Fourth Season

★★★

HBO, 300 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$18.99



The fourth season of HBO's comedy about the San Francisco Bay business culture of tech start-ups follows the development of the Pied Piper company as it pivots to begin marketing the software creation of its founder Richard Hendricks (Thomas Middleditch), a programming genius with poor social skills and little business savvy. What was originally envisioned as a music app has by now been transformed into a video-chat app using the same sophisticated compression algorithm, but after one too many missteps, Richard steps aside and nominates Dinesh (Kumail Nanjiani) to take over as company CEO while he goes in search of his next project...which inevitably brings him back to his old crew. Everything nearly crashes and burns when Richard crosses ethical and legal lines in his desperation, but blind luck (and a little bit of leftover karma) saves the team once again, setting up a fifth season. Created by Mike Judge (*King of the Hill*) and executive-produced by Alec Berg (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*), the show satirizes stereotypes of the nerdy culture of computer coders as well as the egos of tech millionaires and start-up investors as it contrasts the conflicts and challenges of the scrappy start-up with the power struggles at a Google-like behemoth also ousting its founder (Matt Ross). Along the way, it delves into the unintended consequences of applications in the real world and the legal weeds of software copyright. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2017 fourth season (and final one for T.J. Miller, who plays the stoner landlord of the "incubator" homebase),

extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Taken: Season One ★★

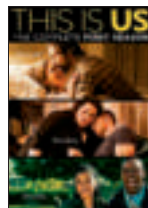
Lionsgate, 3 discs, 440 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



Inspired by the *Taken* trilogy of action movies starring Liam Neeson as Bryan Mills, an ex-CIA operative forced to use his skills to rescue members of his family kidnapped by revenge-seeking enemies, this NBC series serves as a sort of prequel, with Mills beginning his espionage career, only in the present day. Clive Standen takes over from Neeson as the younger Mills in this debut season, which begins when Mills's sister is killed in a shootout aboard a train—a murder engineered by drug lord Carlos Mejia (initially played by Louis Ferreira and later by Romano Orzari), whose son Mills had killed earlier in Colombia. Seeking vengeance, Mills joins a team associated with the National Intelligence Office headed by Christina Hart (Jennifer Beals). After being trained in the ways of the trade, Mills plows through a series of missions against terrorists and drug kingpins—many including torture scenes and rescues—en route to an inevitable showdown with Mejia, who has abducted Mills's girlfriend Asha (Brooklyn Sudano) and is holding her on a plush Mexican estate. Ultimately, *Taken* is fairly generic action fare and Standen's Mills is an unremarkable hero. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2017 first season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Optional. (F. Swietek)

This Is Us: The Complete First Season ★★★★★

Fox, 5 discs, 775 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99



In an age where cable TV has overtaken networks as the home of the best, smartest, and most innovative drama, *This Is Us* is a rare network primetime show that is both a critical and popular favorite, earning stellar ratings and winning two Emmy awards. The narrative weaves together past and present, telling the story of the three adult Pearson siblings and their experiences growing up as the children of Jack (Milo Ventimiglia) and Rebecca (Mandy Moore). Sterling K. Brown plays Randall, the adopted African-American son raised in a white family, who has become a successful corporate accountant and tracks down his biological father in the opening episode. Justin Hartley is Kevin, a frustrated sitcom actor who attempts to reinvent himself on the New York stage. And Chrissy Metz is Kate, Kevin's fraternal twin and devoted assistant who struggles with serious weight issues. Created by veteran screenwriter Dan Fogelman, the drama explores complicated family relationships over time, contrasting present

day stories with what happened during the siblings' formative years. This clever construction teases mysteries throughout the series (including the death of Jack sometime in the past), but the focus always remains on the characters and their relationships. The finely tuned balance of family drama, TV melodrama, storytelling ingenuity, and unabashed emotionality has earned *This Is Us* a devoted following. Presenting all 18 episodes from the 2016-17 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes post-episode featurettes. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. (S. Axmaker)

Veep: The Complete Sixth Season ★★★

HBO, 2 discs, 285 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$18.99



The sixth season of HBO's savage satire of American politics follows Selina Meyer (Julia Louis-Dreyfus)—the first female vice president, and, briefly, president—as she adjusts to life outside of elected office. Still stinging from an election loss that saw another woman go down in history as the first elected female president, Selina embarks on writing her memoirs and creating her Presidential Library while living on an allowance from her daughter Catherine (Sarah Sutherland), who is now married to Selina's former Secret Service bodyguard (Clea DuVall). While Selina endures the indignities of being treated without the respect she so desires, her former assistant Amy Brookheimer (Anna Chlumsky) grows exasperated as a hardball player with a softball crew running her fiancé's congressional election campaign, staffer Dan Egan (Reid Scott) battles network egos and media politics as co-host of a popular morning show, and former advisors Ben (Kevin Dunn) and Kent (Gary Cole) are miserable working for the incompetent and self-aggrandizing congressman Jonah Ryan (Timothy Simons). Winner of multiple Emmy awards, including Outstanding Comedy (its third win) and Lead Actress (Louis-Dreyfus's sixth win in a row), *Veep* continues to serve up a portrait of American party politics that would be dispiriting if it wasn't so funny (and at least the displays of ego and insensitivity here are fictional). Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2017 sixth season, extras include cast and crew episode commentaries. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during January and February, including: *Anne of Green Gables: The Good Stars*, *Chicago Med: Season Two*, *Chicago P.D.: Season 4*, *D.C. Follies: The Complete Series*, *Humans 2.0*, *Inspector Winter*, *Reign: The Fourth and Final Season*, and much more!



The following list, selected and compiled by *Video Librarian* staff, honors the best new documentaries reviewed in the magazine and online during 2017. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors.

All of Me (Strand, 90 min., in Spanish w/ English subtitles, DVD: \$24.99). Filmmaker Arturo González Villaseñor's documentary focuses on the work of the Patronas, a group of Mexican women who every day (starting in 1995) make food that they toss to migrants as "The Beast" northbound train rushes by. (VL-5/17)



Among the Believers (First Run, 84 min., in English & Urdu w/English subtitles, DVD: \$24.95 [\$295 w/PPR from www.firstrunfeatures.com]). Fanatical Pakistani cleric and Taliban supporter Abdul Aziz Ghazi's recruitment of young students to the jihadist cause is examined in this documentary from directors Hemal Trivedi and Mohammed Ali Naqvi. (VL-1/17)



The B-Side: Elsa Dorfman's Portrait Photography (Virgil, 76 min., DVD: \$19.99). Director Errol Morris's charming documentary focuses on Elsa Dorfman's prolific work using the extremely rare Polaroid 20x24 camera. (VL-11/17)



Bending the Arc (Tugg [edu.tugg.com], 102 min., DVD or Blu-ray: \$95: public libraries & high schools; \$395: colleges & universities, DRA). Filmmakers Kief Davidson and Pedro Kos's documentary celebrates the work of Paul Farmer, Jim Yong Kim, and Ophelia Dahl, who in 1987 founded Partners in Health, a



non-profit organization that brings health-care to the poorest citizens in undeveloped countries. (VL-11/17)

Command and Control (PBS, 120 min., DVD: \$24.99 [\$54.99 w/PPR from teacher.shop.pbs.org]). Aired on PBS's *American Experience* series, director Robert Kenner's cautionary tale of freak accidents, near misses, human fallibility, and extraordinary heroism exposes the terrifying truth about the management of America's nuclear arsenal. (VL-3/17)



Dogtown Redemption (TurningTime [www.dogtownredemption.com], 94 min. DVD: \$85: public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities). In their sobering documentary, co-directors Amir Soltani and Chihiro Wimbush profile a community that has developed around a recycling center in West Oakland where the homeless exchange plastic bottles and aluminum cans for cash. (VL-1/17)



Frame by Frame (Collective Eye [www.collectiveeye.org], 85 min. DVD: \$50 [\$125 w/PPR]: public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities, DRA). Filmmakers Alexandria Bombach and Mo Scarpelli's documentary looks at a free press that is struggling to take root in occupied Afghanistan, profiling four local photo-journalists who face skepticism, hostility, and threatened violence while trying to document events. (VL-3/17)



Gimme Danger (Sony, 109 min., DVD: \$30.99). The rise and fall of the legendary Ann Arbor punk rock band The Stooges, fronted by Iggy Pop, is chronicled in filmmaker Jim Jarmusch's music documentary. (VL-5/17)



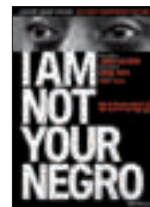
Growing Up Coy (Outcast Films [outcast-films.com], 82 min., DVD: \$29.99: individuals; \$325: institutions, DRA). Director Eric Juhola's film documents efforts by the parents of 6-year-old transgendered Coy Mathis to ensure in their conservative Colorado town that Coy's school treats her like any other girl. (VL-5/17)



Hot Type: 150 Years of The Nation (First Run, 93 min., DVD: \$24.95 [\$295 w/PPR from www.firstrunfeatures.com]). Director Barbara Kopple's documentary offers an in-depth look at the U.S.'s oldest continuously published weekly magazine, *The Nation*. (VL-1/17)



I Am Not Your Negro (Magnolia, 94 min., DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99). Director Raoul Peck's documentary serves up an engrossing and timely biography of the great African-American writer James Baldwin. (VL-5/17)



Jackson (Girl Friday Films [www.jacksonthefilm.com/educational-use], 93 min., DVD: \$95: public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities). Barbara Ehrenreich co-executive produced filmmaker Maisie Crow's Showtime-aired documentary about abortion rights in the Deep South, focusing on the struggles of Mississippi's last abortion clinic. (VL-9/17)



O.J.: Made in America (Team Marketing, 5 discs, 463 min., Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.98). Director Ezra Edelman's five-part Oscar-nominated documentary looks at the sports career and notorious murder trial of football star Orenthal James Simpson, who was accused of killing his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman in 1994. (VL-3/17)



Obit. (Kino Lorber, 96 min., DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95 [\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com], DRA). Director Vanessa Gould's documentary goes behind-the-scenes with obituary writers at the *New York Times*, serving up an enlightening portrait of how the staffers in one of the "Gray Lady's" key departments approach their work. (VL-9/17)



Off the Rails (Passion River, 89 min., DVD: \$24.95 [\$350 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com]). Filmmaker Adam Irving's documentary profiles Darius McCollum, an NYC native with Asperger's syn-



Collective Eye Films



DRIVING WITH SELVI
THE STORY OF SELVI INDIA'S FIRST FEMALE TAXI DRIVER

Feminism, Human Rights - 74 min
Former child bride, Selvi, escapes her violent marriage and goes on to become South India's first female taxi driver.

"This is a story that can spark a change in someone's life."
Women for Women International



RIVERBLUE
NARRATED BY JASON PRIESTLEY

Environmental, Fashion - 95 min
An in depth exploration into the destruction of some of the world's most vital rivers exposes the high cost attached to low cost fashion.

"Informative, eye opening"
Newport Beach Indy

CollectiveEye.org

drome whose love of public transportation has compelled him to illegally commandeer subway trains and buses for most of his life. (VL-1/17)

Political Animals (Gravitas Ventures, 86 min., DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray: \$19.99 [\$125 w/PPR: public libraries; \$350 w/PPR: colleges & universities from The Video Project, www.videoproject.com], *DRA*). Director Jonah Markowitz's powerful documentary centers on four lesbian members of the California assembly who united to take early stands on LGBT discrimination. (VL-5/17)



Salero (Cinema Guild [www.cinemaguild.com], 76 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities). Filmmaker Mike Plunkett's haunting documentary focuses on Moises Chambi Yucra's solitary work on Bolivia's Salar de Uyuni, an enormous salt flat that was once routinely harvested by generations of workers (saleros) but is now being mined for lithium by big business. (VL-11/17)



Sherpa (Lionsgate, 96 min., DVD: \$19.98). Filmmaker Jennifer Peedom's human rights documentary looks at an ill-fated 2014 expedition up Mount Everest, capturing the stories of the arguably exploited titular Nepalese guides. (VL-1/17)



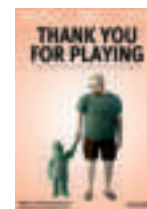
Solitary: Inside Red Onion State Prison (Good Docs [www.gooddocs.net], 82 min., DVD: \$129: public libraries; \$349: colleges & universities, *DRA*). Kristi Jacobson's HBO-aided documentary takes viewers inside segregation units at Red Onion State Prison, a supermax facility located in rural Virginia. (VL Online-9/17)



Stray Dog (Icarus, 102 min., DVD: \$24.98 [\$390 w/PPR from Bullfrog Films, www.bullfrogfilms.com]). Debra Granik's PBS-aided *Independent Lens* documentary profiles Vietnam vet Ron "Stray Dog" Hall, who manages an RV park in Branson, MO, and takes a trip by motorcycle to Washington, D.C. (VL Online-3/17)



Thank You for Playing (Kino, 80 min., DVD: \$29.95 [\$300 w/PPR from Film Platform, www.filmplatform.net], *DRA*). Filmmakers Malike Zouhali-Worrall and David Osit's heartbreaking documentary centers on video game designer Ryan Green's creation of *That Dragon, Cancer*, a 3D game depicting in metaphorical terms Green's young son Joel's struggle with terminal cancer. (VL-3/17)



Tower (Kino Lorber, 69 min., DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95 [\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com], *DRA*). In an age when school shootings are depressingly frequent, Keith Maitland's powerful animated documentary looks at the first major incident, when a sniper on the observation deck of a University of Texas building took aim at pedestrians below, killing 14 and wounding another 31, on August 1, 1966. (VL-5/17)



The Vietnam War (PBS, DVD: 10 discs, \$99.99; Blu-ray: 10 discs, \$129.99 [\$299.99 w/PPR from teacher.shop.pbs.org]). Ten years in the making, co-directors Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's landmark documentary series on the titular conflict features eyewitness testimony, archival footage, historic TV broadcasts, and original music by composers Trent Reznor and Yo-Yo Ma. (VL-9/17)



Visitor's Day (New Day Films [www.newday.com], 75 min., DVD: \$100: public libraries; \$150: community colleges; \$350: colleges & universities). Filmmaker Nicole Oppen's haunting documentary follows several boys at a Mexican youth residential treatment center as they proceed through a comprehensive work/training program while being helped to deal with emotional fallout from being neglected by family members. (VL Online-7/17)



Zero Days (Magnolia, 114 min., DVD: \$26.98). Filmmaker Alex Gibney's Showtime-aided documentary looks at the covert world of computer hacking, focusing on the creation of the "Stuxnet" virus, which was apparently written with the goal of destroying or delaying Iran's nuclear program. (VL-3/17)





FIRST RUN FEATURES PRESENTS



QUEST

105 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917544D
COMING TO HOME VIDEO ON FEBRUARY 27

Filed with vérité intimacy for nearly a decade, Jonathan Olshefski's documentary *Quest* is the moving portrait of the Rainey family living in North Philadelphia during the Obama years. A Sundance Film Festival premiere, *Quest* has won awards at ten film festivals so far, including RiverRun and Full Frame. Epic in scope, *Quest* is a vivid illumination of race and class in America, and a testament to love, healing and hope.

"Quiet eloquence...shows a kinship with Hoop Dreams and Boyhood in the way it makes subtle and powerful use of the passage of time." -A.O. Scott, The New York Times

"Superb. A living, breathing, stunning documentary." -Variety



"Sweeping and intimate."
-Indiewire



AMONG THE BELIEVERS

84 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917131D
NOW AVAILABLE

Firebrand cleric Abdul Aziz Ghazi, an ISIS supporter and Taliban ally, is waging jihad against the Pakistani government with the aim of imposing Shariah law. His primary weapon is his expanding network of Islamic seminaries for children as young as four. The film follows Aziz's personal quest and charts the lives of two of his students who are pawns in his ideological war.

"A superb documentary, at once deeply scary and thoroughly enlightening." -AM New York

HOT TYPE: 150 YEARS OF THE NATION

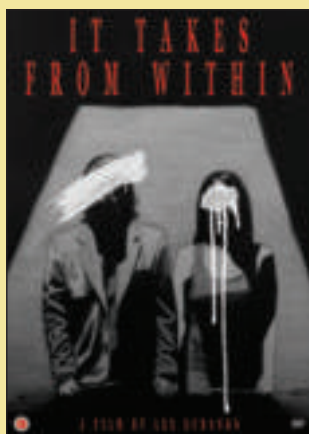
92 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917100D
NOW AVAILABLE



Directed by two-time Oscar winner Barbara Kopple, *Hot Type* is a vivid look at America's oldest weekly magazine.

Featuring Rachel Maddow, Bill Moyers, Victor Navasky, Katrina vanden Heuvel, Amy Wilentz, Eric Alterman, Rick Perlstein, Betsy Reed and more.

"Purely enjoyable! A spectacular, crowd-pleasing masterwork." -Rogerebert.com



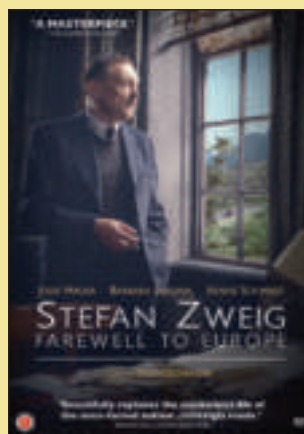
IT TAKES FROM WITHIN

95 minutes, B&W, \$24.95, FRF 917537D
STREET DATE: JANUARY 30

Inspired by arthouse films of the 1960s, director Lee Eubanks creates a menacing world of dread, isolation, and unease in his feature film debut, a cryptic journey into the dark void between reality and nightmare.

"A stark portrait of morbid dread."
-Icons of Dread

"Anyone who appreciates challenging, avant-garde/experimental cinema will find the film constantly intriguing."
-Film International

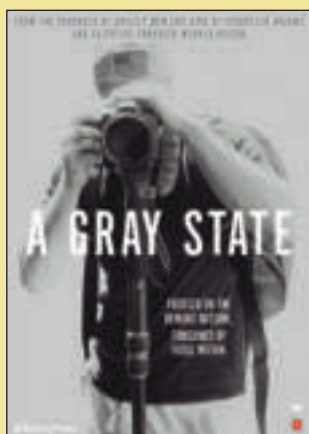


STEFAN ZWEIG FAREWELL TO EUROPE

106 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917483D
NOW AVAILABLE

Maria Schrader's emotionally powerful film explores the painful dilemma of whether to speak out or remain silent in the face of tyranny. Stefan Zweig was one of the most famous writers of his time, but struggled to find the right stance towards Nazi Germany. Driven to emigrate to South America at the peak of his worldwide fame, Zweig fell into despair at the sight of Europe's downfall.

"Beautifully captures the mysterious life of the once-famed author. Intellectually involving and strikingly made." -LA Times



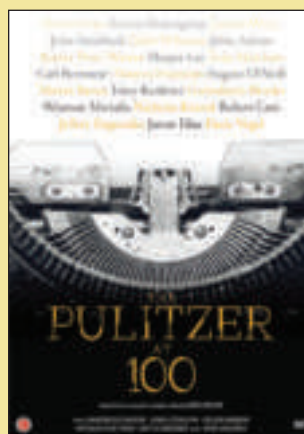
A GRAY STATE

93 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917520D
NOW AVAILABLE

This provocative documentary explores the life of David Crowley, an Iraq war veteran and aspiring filmmaker who was also a charismatic voice in the fringe politics of the Tea Party and nascent alt-right.

His trailer for a dystopian thriller called *Gray State*, in which civil liberties are trampled by an unrestrained federal government, was widely viewed. But then he was found dead, along with his family, in a gruesome crime scene. Suicide...or conspiracy?

"A riveting combination of political commentary and true crime story." -Hollywood Reporter



THE PULITZER AT 100

91 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917490D
NOW AVAILABLE

This new film celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Pulitzers – the revered national award for excellence in journalism and the arts.

Featuring an impressive array of journalists, authors, and musicians such as Toni Morrison, Robert Caro, Junot Diaz, Nicholas Kristof, Tony Kushner, Carl Bernstein, David Remnick, and Wynton Marsalis, the film also brings Pulitzer-winning works to life through readings by John Lithgow, Helen Mirren, Liev Schreiber, Natalie Portman and Martin Scorsese.

"Dazzles us with luminaries!" -Village Voice

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

Adventure Time: The Complete Seventh Season ★★★★★

(2017) 3 discs. 286 min. DVD: \$24.98. Warner Bros. Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Adventure Time has always struck me as this century's *Yellow Submarine* thanks to its fantastical landscapes and surreal characters and situations. I watched it with my then-young teenaged son, and considered it fine for his age, but continue to wonder what younger viewers make of the bizarre adventures of Finn the Human and his talking dog Jake in the Land of Ooo. Concerns about mild language and a reliance on weapons in their battles are balanced by the show's mature storytelling and wordplay that rewards repeat viewing (I didn't originally get everything I saw with Rocky and Bullwinkle either). Season seven boasts a couple of series benchmarks, including the award-winning "Bad Jubies," a stop-motion episode set during a storm that isolates Jake, Finn, Lumpy Space Princess, and BMO in a storm shelter. Also notable is "Stakes," an epic eight-episode arc in which vampire queen Marceline seeks a cure from Princess Bubblegum that will free her from being immortal. But the cure unleashes Marceline's vampire essence and revives several of her formerly vanquished nemeses. *Adventure Time* continues to immerse viewers in its unique universe. Compiling all 25 episodes from the 2015-16 seventh season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes,

mini-episodes, song demos, and art galleries. Recommended. Aud: P. (D. Liebenson)

Albert: A Small Tree with a Big Dream ★

(2016) 43 min. DVD: \$14.99. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This Nickelodeon animated film is a ridiculously violent production for a holiday title aimed at the kindergarten crowd. And it's not the insightful violence of Disney's *Bambi* or *Beauty and the Beast*, but rather gratuitous, mean-spirited damage that is not mitigated by the story's superficial follow-your-dream moral or last minute redemption of a horrible, would-be killer character. Albert (voiced by erstwhile *Saturday Night Live* star Bobby Moynihan) is a tiny pine tree who yearns to be the decorated centerpiece in a city square. Escaping a greenhouse with his tree friend Maisie (Sasheer Zamata), Albert embarks on a long journey to be discovered, encountering obstacles along the way. The worst of these is a pathological cactus (Rob Riggle) with a grudge against Christmas. Stalking Albert over miles, he makes several attempts to murder him, including a traumatic scene at a wood mill. The animation is fine if hardly memorable, although there is something awkward about the image of potted trees hopping everywhere. It would be easy to forgive *Albert's* weaknesses and missteps if there was anything genuinely redeeming about the film, but there isn't. Not recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

I'm New Here ★★★★★

(2017) 12 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1520-079-035.

Although it might have been more effective if actual children had read the speaking parts instead of adult narrators Tim Pabon and Adriana Sananes, this iconographic-animated adaptation of au-

thor-illustrator Anne Sibley O'Brien's 2015 picture book does a fine job of exploring the struggles of young students from various countries trying to assimilate in the United States. *I'm New Here* focuses on three kids: Maria from Guatemala, Jin from Korea, and Fatimah from Ethiopia. From learning words that sound different when heard on the playground ("throat heerr!" for "throw it here," etc.) to variations in reading and writing methods, the short also looks at emotional issues, such as the sadness and confusion the children face while trying to fit in. Ultimately, they make new friends, learn from others, and share some of their own culture in this inspirational title that ends on a positive note. Also featuring a read-along option and an author's note from Chicago-born O'Brien (who grew up bi-culturally in Korea), this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille ★★★★★

(2017) 25 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1520-079-745.

A Helen Keller quote kicks off this imaginative profile of inventor Louis Braille. Based on author Jen Bryant and illustrator Boris Kulikov's 2016 picture book, this iconographic-animated adaptation tells the story from little Louis's perspective ("I was always a curious child...")—from the accident with an awl that ultimately led to infection and blindness, to his acceptance at the Royal Institute for Blind Youth in Paris at the age of 10, and his improvement of the previous system of reading bumps on a page (taking inspiration from military cryptography patterns). At times indistinctly drawn on purpose—the black background and light overlay to depict things Louis could hear but not see—this is a solid portrait of the teen inventor. Narrated by Pete Cross, *Six Dots* also features an author's note with Q&A, and read-along options. Recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



Gobi: A Little Dog with a Big Heart ★★★★★

(2017) 14 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1520-083-643.

Based on a true story, this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2017 picture book by author Dion Leonard and illustrator Lisa Manuzak—featuring narration by Gildart Jackson—follows the Gobi Desert trek of runner Leonard as he participates in an 80-mile race and is trailed by a random stray dog who chases along with him over the sandy dunes. The lonesome pup is excited at the opportunity to follow "so many friends," but sticks especially close to Leonard, who names her "Gobi" and shares his rations and tent. Overcoming obstacles including the 120-degree heat and the navigation of a rushing river, the duo make it to the finish line where they are hailed with cheers. Also featuring an author's note outlining the real events—including a search party for Gobi when she goes missing and a first meeting with Leonard's cat—as well as a read-along option, this upbeat tale (which has been optioned for a movie by Fox) is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

InnSaei: The Power of Intuition ★★1/2

(2016) 78 min. DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmakers Hrund Gunnsteinsdottir and Kristin Olafsdottir embark on a global journey in this somewhat unfocused documentary about a theme that is inherently subjective in nature: the role of intuition in our lives. Starting with the premise that our ever-escalating information culture is evolving humans away from intuitive ability, the directors pursue multiple definitions of intuition from various angles. An expert in neuroscience defines the left brain/right brain divide between our analytical and intuitive powers, noting that the latter could actually shrink over time if that part of the brain goes unused. Performance artist Marina Abramovic says the only way to really create something original is to let intuition take over and explore the unknown. Spiritual leaders, educators, and others add their voices to the conversation, but while some of the core ideas make sense here, *InnSaei* can't quite make a unified, coherent case with a clear trajectory, and it suffers some from redundancy. Extras include deleted scenes and bonus interview footage. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

There Is a Place ★★1/2

(2016) 17 min. DVD: \$89. Terra Nova Films. PPR.

Tania Ku's documentary short focuses on Lior Tsarfaty, an Israeli-born singer-songwriter who offers music therapy sessions for Alzheimer's patients at San Francisco-area memory-care facilities. Arriving with a guitar and a suitcase full of other instruments, he quickly brings his audience into a circle of music-minded participants who engage in exercises ranging from Native American-style tribal drumming to a sing-along of old favorites like "You Are My Sunshine." Working at 15 to 20 venues per week, Tsarfaty acknowledges the emptiness felt when patients pass away, but he also talks about participants' joy in hearing about his experience of becoming a new father. Ku's film captures the energy and enthusiasm that the patients experience during a Tsarfaty session, with several individuals playfully hamming for the camera with their instruments. And his presence is a welcome distraction from the physical and emotional difficulties that they face. One elderly man laments that he struggles to get through each new day, but later takes a moment to praise Tsarfaty's instruments, observing, "That suitcase does a lot of magic." A fine tribute to one very special individual who brings immeasurable happiness to others through music, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Come Before Winter ★★★

(2017) 75 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

A thoughtful docudrama, *Come Before Winter* serves up parallel narratives concerning two World War II figures who were among Hitler's staunchest enemies: the German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and British journalist and master propagandist Sefton Delmer. Both stories are presented in a series of dramatic scenes that are punctuated by reflections from various experts detailing how and why each man approached resistance to the Nazis in their own ways. While Bonhoeffer (Gus Lynch) struggled with finding a moral Christian basis for joining efforts to assassinate Hitler—eventually concluding that faith requires one to be fully in the world and not apart from it—Delmer (Aubrey Wakeling) artfully constructed lies broadcast to German radio that were meant to delude or lower morale. While the Bonhoeffer drama is moving and powerful, the Delmer sections are admittedly more fun, featuring colorful, even glamorous side characters, including a pre-James Bond Ian Fleming and actress-cabaret singer Agnes Bernelle, who would go on to perform in Brecht premieres and record with Elvis Costello and Tom Waits. The common ground between Bonhoeffer and Delmer lies in the fact that both men did technically "wrong" things for the right reasons. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Last Days of Jesus ★★1/2

(2017) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0034-8.

While the general story of Jesus Christ is

universally known, the chronicle of Christ's ministry, pilgrimage, and martyrdom is filled with gaps and ambiguities. Filmmaker Peter Oxley's PBS-aired documentary looks at the last days of Jesus, and the birth of Christianity. The film suggests that Jesus's family was middle class, not poor, with Jesus perhaps employed early as a skilled stonemason, not a carpenter. Always in the background lay the conflict with Judea's Roman conquerors. The Jew Herod Antipas yearned to be recognized as "king of the Jews," and he was willing to wheel and deal with the Romans to accomplish this goal. The martyrdom of Jesus's cousin John the Baptist at the hands of Herod accelerated Jesus's ministry. Experts describe the Roman system of oppressive taxation, the gulf between ordinary Jews and the high priests in Jerusalem, and the unspeakably cruel, lingering death of Rome's enemies by crucifixion. Jesus's legendary challenge to temple moneychangers threatened the established order for both Rome and the Jewish religious establishment. The argument is made that Pontius Pilate was a brutal, murderous occupying governor, rather than the relatively benign figure depicted in the New Testament. The most startling claims advanced here concern the possible reasons for Judas's betrayal of Christ, and the belief that the trial, imprisonment, and execution of Jesus spanned weeks or months, rather than the single week depicted in the Bible, with intrigue and power plays between Rome and Jerusalem being a deciding factor (the Resurrection of Jesus is not covered here). Combining dramatic re-enactments with insightful interviews, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

A Man Named Martin, Part 3: The Movement ★★1/2

(2017) 73 min. DVD: \$14.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

A little on the dense and dry side compared



500: The Impact of the Reformation Today ★★1/2

(2017) 103 min. DVD: \$19.99. DRA. Vision Video (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Dale Ward's fascinating documentary combines interviews and archival materials to provide an overview of Martin Luther's 16th-century, then-radical religious ideas and their continuing impact on Western culture and society. *500* (a reference to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation) begins with the familiar story of Luther's rejection of an increasingly top-down, authoritarian, ritual-based Catholic Church that championed celibacy over procreation and marriage. He also threw cold water on the church's emphasis on suffering as the cost of redemption (unless the sinner had the money to buy indulgences from the church—money that helped pay for St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican). Luther maintained that anyone could live a holy life outside the clergy and Rome's rules—notions that were regarded as heresy, but have prevailed through the centuries. Despite violent divisions between branches of the Reformation that led to bloody conflicts, Luther's core principles—including God's care for both our body and soul—ultimately played a role in the formation of capitalism and the American principle of separating church and state. A fine examination of the wide-ranging, continuing impact of the Reformation on contemporary life, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

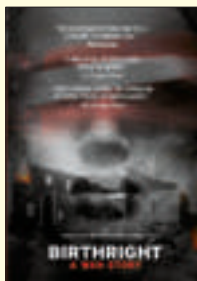
to the first two titles in this trilogy—*A Man Named Martin, Part 1: The Man* (VL-5/16) and *A Man Named Martin, Part 2: The Moment* (VL-1/17)—this third entry serves up a number of interview clips from a host of Reformation history experts. The documentary begins with the story of Martin Luther's "95 Theses" and the subsequent dissemination of his ideas throughout Europe via the invention of the printing press. And it ends with the Peace of Westphalia—a series of treaties in 1648 that followed decades of holy wars in Europe stemming from the spread of and divisions within the Reformation long after Luther. Between these two points lies a blur of facts and theological parsing in a film that feels as if it were designed as a jumping-off point for discussions between church parishioners and pastors rather than as part of a biographical portrait of the titular subject. Still, there is plenty of food for thought here and viewers who have seen the first two installments will most likely be drawn to this third and final entry. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

Celling Your Soul ★★★1/2

(2017) 48 min. DVD: \$250. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-941545-85-8.

As astute observers of the human condition, comics were among the first to launch a backlash against the growing reality that many people experience much of the world through their mobile devices. Joni Siani, an instructor at the New England Institute of Art, is moving beyond jokes, requiring her students to go through a "digital cleanse" for one week. Inspired by John Mayer (who coined the phrase "digital cleanse" as marking his own first step in recovering from some rough communications and PR patches in his life), Siani decided to pursue the cleanse idea after she saw how obsessed her students were with their digital devices. Young people admit to their "addiction" to mobile phones—checking on social media, sending their status updates, and experiencing events through tiny screens instead of their own eyes. Many describe it as a "love/hate" relationship. Some talk about mishaps with texting hurtful messages to the wrong people, and even sexting that went awry. Yet most were apprehensive about giving up their phones for any amount of time. *Celling Your Soul* follows students as they go through their digital cleanse, via log entries and post-cleanse interviews. It is interesting to see how their attitudes towards technology evolve when they are not tethered digitally. In Siani's words: "I believe that before we teach our children how to talk to a million people in a fraction of a second, we should first teach them how to talk to just one." How likely or possible this approach



Birthright: A War Story ★★★1/2

(2017) 100 min. DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$16.99. Gravitas Ventures (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Civia Tamarkin's searing documentary begins with the shocking true tale of a married couple in Nebraska who experienced much misery when the state's ban on abortions past 20 weeks of pregnancy prevented the woman from an induced labor, despite her fetus's imminent death and lethal danger to the mother. This horrifying story of a state law based on emotion and dubious science trumping a medical emergency is a perfect lead-in for this excellent, well-organized, and generally balanced

look at the ways in which abortion rights—and women's reproductive rights in general—are being chipped away by hundreds of new laws at all non-federal, regional government levels. *Birthright* offers detailed, extensive histories of these uphill battles for women to wrest control of reproduction decisions (including contraception) from powerful men, only to see their rights methodically taken away by anti-choice advocates and lawmakers looking for end runs around *Roe v. Wade* and the right to medical privacy. The Hyde Amendment (cutting off Medicaid coverage of abortions for poor women), 20-week limits, burdensome new regulations on abortion providers, threats to de-fund Planned Parenthood, arrest of women with miscarriages, establishment of legal "personhood" for the unborn, and more have resulted in the needless deaths of women. *Birthright* avoids outright, pro-choice advocacy—letting both sides speak here—while also offering a clear-eyed view of what is really happening in the country. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

might be is quite debatable, but the film does shine a light on a controversial aspect of contemporary life. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)

Constructing the Terrorist Threat

★★★1/2

(2017) 55 min. DVD: \$34.95; public libraries; \$280; community colleges; \$350; colleges & universities. DRA. Media Education Foundation. PPR. ISBN: 1-944024-96-4.

Are the United States government and mainstream media exaggerating the threat posed by radical Islamic terrorism? Yes, says Deepa Kumar, an associate professor of media studies and Middle East studies at Rutgers University, in this filmed lecture. Kumar repeatedly raises the point that acts of violence by white supremacists pose a greater risk to the American public. "Jihadi terrorism does pose a threat, but it is a very, very limited threat," she says, ignoring the mass shootings in Orlando, San Bernardino, and Fort Hood, as well as the thwarted shoe bombing on a plane bound for Detroit, not to mention the 9/11 attacks. Kumar rightfully condemns the Trump administration for pushing an irrational argument that gives the impression that a great number of Muslims are terrorists. Sadly, the forcefulness of her argument is diluted by her strident presentation and the film's cheap production values. While framed as a lecture, Kumar is filmed standing in front of a screen, reading from a laptop and glancing in various directions, although viewers never see whether she is speaking to an audience or herself. Still, the timely subject matter makes this a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Containment ★★★

(2016) 82 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$95; public libraries & high schools; \$395; colleges & universities. DRA. Tugg. PPR.

Using nuclear energy for any purpose, whether in weapons or to generate power, involves disposing of radioactive waste that will remain toxic for thousands of years. Filmmakers Robb Moss and Peter Galison's documentary *Containment* visits places that are already affected by contamination—the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, where plutonium was produced for atomic bombs beginning in the 1950s, and Fukushima, Japan, where a 2011 tsunami struck a nuclear plant, not only resulting in the evacuation of the entire district, but also requiring a massive cleanup campaign that will result in the destruction of another region where the mountains of waste will ultimately have to be buried. The major focus here, however, is on the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant outside Carlsbad, NM, where thousands of drums of nuclear waste were entombed in storage rooms carved out of a geological salt formation more than 2,000 feet underground before a drum breach brought a temporary halt to operations in 2014. Local boosters of the project enthusiastically cite the economic benefits that it has brought to the region, but the film draws attention to the efforts of a government-appointed group of futurists who are tasked with devising warnings against disturbing the site that will be intelligible to earthlings—or even extraterrestrial visitors—some 10,000 years from now. Paradoxically, the fact that Washington is taking such action is both comforting and frightening. A thought-provoking documentary about a

millennia-long problem, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Dalya's Other Country ★★½

(2017) 52 min. In English & Arabic w/English subtitles. DVD: \$129; high schools & public libraries; \$349: colleges & universities. DRA. Good Docs (avail. from www.gooddocs.net). PPR. Closed captioned.

Dalya is a teenage Syrian refugee living between two worlds. She and her family fled civil-war-torn Aleppo. Her mother and older brother relocated to Los Angeles, while her father moved to Turkey, taking a second wife. Filmmaker Julia Meltzer's PBS-aired POV documentary looks at Dalya's life over a period of several years. In many ways, Dalya is a typical teenager, playing school basketball and soccer, texting, going to the mall, and experimenting with makeup. On the other hand, she is the only Muslim student in an all-girls Catholic school, she wears a hijab head covering at all times, and she obeys her mother's rules about not mixing socially with boys. Dalya yearns for the family to be together, but she is also realistic about her father, who has firm ideas about male supremacy. Her father does come to Los Angeles to try for a reconciliation with his first wife, but finds America too modern and alienating, and finally returns to Turkey. Dalya speaks frankly about her life in America, as well as her hopes for higher education and a career. A moving and insightful microcosmic portrait of America's recurrent immigration odyssey, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Estate: A Reverie ★★★

(2015) 83 min. DVD: \$375. Grasshopper Film. PPR.

Viewers who followed the hit working-class U.K. soap opera *Eastenders* will find themselves literally immersed in the real disadvantaged East End of London in Andrea Luka Zimmerman's lyrical documentary, although some viewers may wonder if this also constitutes a certain art-house brand of romanticization. The Haggerston public-housing estate in the borough of Hackney was constructed in the 1930s as a solution to the ills of the wretched slums. Over time, however, the low-income estate itself grew neglected and reputedly crime-infested. Inhabitants staged rent strikes for basic upkeep and resisted longstanding schemes to have the place demolished. Zimmerman (who grew up on the estate herself) sympathetically focuses on various residents, from seniors who remember WWII deprivation (and seemingly never recovered) to optimistic immigrants from Africa and the West Indies—urban outcasts trying to persevere even as their flats (some quite cozy and neat, others squalid) are systematically emptied. Council authorities running Haggerston re-

main offscreen, not offering their side of the story (all displaced tenants had other housing offers). *Estate* effectively pays tribute to a hardscrabble mini-community—unfairly stereotyped as undesirables—who are being destroyed by time and opportunities for gentrification. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Forgotten ★★

(2017) 53 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

Looking at homelessness on the streets of Los Angeles, the grim and haphazardly organized documentary *Forgotten* is an impressionistic mess that allows homeless individuals to speak for themselves. Filmmaker Nadia Beddini trains the camera on individuals living on the streets of Hollywood, Venice Beach, and Skid Row, letting each tell often convoluted stories about hard times, police oppression, dreams of normalcy, drug use, and a lack of city services. But Beddini offers no context or thesis for any of this, and if the film's purpose was merely to start a conversation about homelessness everywhere without offering any particular point-of-view, society has moved well past that need and is desperate for solutions beyond criminalizing indigence. The obvious mental health issue for many of the people in *Forgotten* is a large part of their tragedy, but aside from the remarks of a sympathetic cop who explains the reasons that some homeless individuals resist services, there is nothing particularly constructive or instructive about *Forgotten*. Optional. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Good Postman ★★★

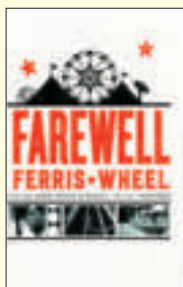
(2017) 80 min. In Bulgarian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.95. FilmRise (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Filmmaker Tonislav Hristov's fly-on-the-wall documentary about a tiny village on the border of Bulgaria and Turkey, *The Good Postman* finds in that hamlet a microcosm of the ongoing debate throughout Western Europe and America about how to deal with Syrian refugees. The Bulgarian village of Golyam Derwent is often the first European place that refugees encounter after the hardships of crossing Turkey. The community is divided over what to do about these strangers in need, and that anxiety is reflected in a mayoral election in which Golyam's trusted postman, Ivan, is running against an apparent ne'er-do-well (his name is not revealed until late in the film) who lives with his mother and looks like a burned-out rock star. Neighbors vacillate in their feelings about the Syrians, often swayed by whichever candidate they last heard from. While the results of the election suggest wider political dynamics going on, the film does effectively capture Ivan's decency and the populist provocations of his rival. It also beautifully renders the bucolic, rural character of Golyam Derwent and its surroundings, where villagers traverse grassy hills instead of roads. An interesting film about the local impact of an issue that is causing so much friction in the West, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Gulistan, Land of Roses ★★★

(2016) 86 min. DVD: \$250. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

A remarkable documentary that human-



Farewell Ferris Wheel ★★½

(2016) 70 min. DVD: \$24.99. PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0344-8.

Filmmakers Jamie Sisley and Miguel "M.i.G." Martinez's provocative documentary centers on the personnel aspect of the U.S. carnival industry. According to this film, 80 percent of all carnival workers are Mexicans who receive temporary residency status via the H-2B visa program. Carnival owners say the reason there is such a lopsided reliance on Mexican labor is because U.S. workers are often unreliable or unwilling to do this type of work. But the owners have a peculiar way of showing their appreciation:

paying low wages distributed in erratic schedules while workers are forced to live in substandard housing that often lacks electricity or running water. Efforts by nonprofit groups representing the rights of migrant workers to improve their way of life have been stymied by the steamroller lobbying efforts of the carnival industry, as lobbyists work the halls of Congress to get backing from legislators. Sisley and Martinez offer a deeply moving portrait of the stoic Mexicans who work hard and live uncomfortably, all so their families back home can enjoy a slightly higher standard of living. The filmmakers also interview Jim Judkins, who singlehandedly processes 81 percent of the H-2B visas for carnival workers and who frequently travels to Mexico in search of new labor. Judkins can be charming, but his casual defense of the exploitation of Mexicans will leave many viewers uneasy. Offering a sobering portrait of unfair labor practices, this is highly recommended. [Note: this is also available with public performance rights for \$99.95: public libraries and \$350: colleges and universities from The Cinema Guild, www.cinemaguild.com.] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Machines ★★½

(2016) 71 min. In Hindi & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

An enormous textile factory in Gujarat, India, is the subject of the visually mesmerizing and topically unsettling documentary *Machines*. Filmmaker Rahul Jain's camera explores the bowels of the complex like a phantom presence, gliding—in lengthy, uncut, largely smooth shots—through a maze of spaces. Viewers see rooms for storing fabrics, mixing paints, applying prints, incinerating garbage, soaping chemicals off workers' bodies, and much more. Men and boys, most stripped to the waist in this hothouse, perform repetitive tasks in daily, brutal 12-hour shifts for wages that barely keep them and their families alive. Once the irony of the film's title sinks in—this is really about poverty and people who are treated like machines in the global economy—Jain's focus begins to shift to the laborers, who talk freely about their exploitation and the obstacles they face in trying to organize a union. The film also features comments from a desk-jockey manager who speaks contemptuously about employees, claiming they would become relaxed and lazy if he raised wages. *Machines* is a disturbing portrait of the way things really are in cheap labor markets—truly a prison for millions. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



izes a population which America has sometimes taken for granted in its Iraq-based wars against Saddam Hussein and, more recently, ISIS, *Gulistan, Land of Roses* focuses on a group of Kurdish women fighters. Filmmaker Zaynê Akjol travels deep into the hills of Southern Kurdistan (in Northern Iraq) to encounter a female squadron of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), who have surrendered their civilian social lives to wage war against the Daesh (ISIS). The extraordinary thing that Akjol captures on film is how much—despite intense training, exercises, and protocol (they address one another as “comrade”)—these soldiers remain gentle, accessible, and warm. Even while fighting alongside male counterparts and dealing with injuries and death, or preparing for a morning battle with ISIS, these women seem stunningly normal, not at all like some TV drama version of a hollowed-out warrior. One woman speaks about the pain of saying goodbye to her mother, while another talks in a hushed, almost sensuous way about how a facial scar from battle could make her more beautiful. Capturing the small, day-to-day sacrifices that the PKK women make while also bolstering their morale through song and shared experiences, this interesting film about an anti-ISIS contingent is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

If You Could Walk in My Shoes ★★½

(2016) 27 min. In Spanish & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$60: public libraries; \$225: colleges & universities. DRA. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

Filmmaker Ricardo Caruso's short documentary presents a profile of Ecuadorian immigrant Roberto Marquez, a cobbler who has plied his trade in New York City for over a decade. Marquez discusses his hopes and dreams as he works behind the counter making and repairing shoes. Shot over four years,

the period sees Roberto's wife Maria giving birth to a daughter (whose delivery Roberto missed because he had to work) who grows from infancy to toddlerhood. Throughout, Marquez expresses the same sentiments: he works hard to support his family, hopes to own the business someday, urges his sons to study so that they can eventually enter a profession and see a better future, and worries about laws that prevent him from becoming a citizen. The film is technically very simple—for the most part a static camera simply records Marquez talking while he cuts off bits of rubber soles or taps nails, with obvious edits that stitch together the individual pieces of footage. Still, the documentary does effectively convey Ricardo's determination to make a good life for his wife and children despite all of the difficulties he has to overcome. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Motherland ★★½

(2017) 94 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Ramona S. Diaz's *cinéma vérité* documentary immerses viewers in the controlled chaos of Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital, the busiest maternity clinic in the world. Located in Manila, Fabella treats hundreds of young Filipino women—struggling with poverty, lack of education, a cultural bias toward large families, and no birth control—with unplanned pregnancies. Eschewing interviews or contextual explanations, Diaz lets Fabella's relentless activity speak for itself, as medical staff deliver one baby after another (many premature), jam patients two to a bed in overcrowded conditions, try to help clueless first-time moms, and also counsel women with frequent pregnancies to accept an IUD or tubal ligation. Nearly all of the women seen here come to the clinic alone and are

not visited by husbands or boyfriends, often because their partners are broke or make excuses. Diaz's fly-on-the-wall approach brings her very close to intimate situations: not only deliveries but also breastfeeding guidance and a technique for warming a newborn by snuggling the child inside an extended tube top worn by the mother (the underfunded facility lacks incubators). Crises occasionally crop up, but some truly stand out—such as a harrowing scene in which staff and a neglectful mother cannot identify which of two babies belongs to the latter. Diaz's camera is both unobtrusive and urgently present throughout, allowing these overlapping stories to tell themselves. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

My Brothers and Sisters in the North

★★★

(2017) 109 min. DVD: \$79: public libraries; \$350 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

South Korean-born filmmaker Sung-Hyung Cho has created a video diary of life in North Korea. Allowed entry into the country because she carries a German passport—South Korean citizens are barred from visiting the North except with special permission—Cho is taken on an extensive guided tour of the capital city of Pyongyang and a few surrounding areas. On a visit to Baeddu Mountain, she has her photo taken with groups of North Korean soldiers and inspects the birthplace of former dictator Kim Jong-il. In Pyongyang, she visits an indoor water park and spends time at the family apartment of a young male employee. Cho also sits in on an elementary school classroom's English lessons, visits a collective farm, and is taken to a garment factory, where she watches female employees engage in a daily calisthenics session. Cho does not provide critical commentary on life in North Korea, but the film offers visual clues: wide streets in Pyongyang conspicuously absent of automobiles, the collective farm's single tractor, a requirement by the water park's staff to bow to a statue of Kim Jong-il prior to their daily duties, and TV propaganda broadcasts that play in an apartment to minimal viewer interest. Although it is a shame that Cho could not have a more honest conversation with her guests, her view of life in North Korea is both timely and insightful. Aud: C, P. Recommended. (P. Hall)

The Occupation of the American Mind

★★★

(2016) 84 min. DVD: \$34.95: public libraries; \$280: community colleges; \$350: colleges & universities. DRA. Media Education Foundation. PPR. ISBN: 1-932869-92-1.

Filmmakers Loretta Alper and Jeremy Earp's documentary makes the argument that over the past 35 years the Israeli government has conducted a sophisticated propaganda campaign—most recently following a play-

book fashioned by American pollster Frank Luntz—to maintain support in the United States even as it has continued repressive policies toward Palestinians. Commentators (including Noam Chomsky) note here that during the Jewish state's early years American support (and positive media coverage) for an underdog Israel, surrounded by hostile Arab regimes, was natural. The situation changed in 1982, however, when Israel's invasion of Lebanon (and the massacre of Palestinians in two refugee camps) were critically reported in the U.S. Realizing that American support might be endangered, the Israeli government began to develop strategies derived from the public relations and marketing industries to emphasize its supposed willingness to negotiate but especially its right of self-defense against what was portrayed as an intransigent terrorist movement—all the while continuing to construct settlements in disputed territories and conducting massive reprisals in response to isolated Palestinian provocations (which were not unlike the methods used by Zionist activists in the 1940s). The disinformation campaign—coupled with a major lobbying effort in the U.S.—have succeeded not only in keeping policymakers strongly supportive, but also in seducing American news organizations into following the Israeli line. But the rise of social media is now threatening to negate the younger American audience's susceptibility to the Israeli message. A provocative film with a decided agenda that will unquestionably spark debate—especially in the wake of President Trump's extremely controversial decision to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem—this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Ramped Up ★★★½

(2017) 17 min. DVD: \$69; high schools & public libraries; \$169; colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57448-435-9.

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law, with one of its key objectives being to make buildings accessible to those with mobility challenges. While all new buildings are required to meet ADA requirements, many older structures have still not made any changes. This lack of access has impacted many Americans, including wheelchair-bound Robert Kalani, who has filed at least 60 lawsuits against businesses that have not complied with ADA rules for access. Some see Kalani (a former fireman) as a hero activist, while others view his efforts as frivolous. In one case, a lawsuit resulted in one restaurant closing after many years of business because the owners could not afford to make the required modifications to the building. Filmmaker Reid Davenport's *Ramped Up* provokes thought about the great need for accessibility and the attendant costs, as well as the methods Kalani and others employ to make the issue visible. In one scene, we see a citizen telling legislators that the

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local capital building itself is not ADA compliant; in another, a motorist is captured in a filmed altercation calling a disabled person a “sue-happy motherfucker.” Offering an insightful look at a thorny subject, this is highly recommended. [Note: also available are two other films about disabilities by filmmaker Davenport—*A Cerebral Game* and *Wheelchair Diaries: One Step Up*.] Aud: C, P. (C. Block)

The Shelter ★★★

(2014) 82 min. In English, French, Romanian, Spanish & Wolof w/English subtitles. DVD: \$300. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from www.filmplatform.net). PPR.

The subjects of filmmaker Fernand Melgar's *cinéma vérité* documentary congregate each night to try to gain entrance to a shelter (or *l'abri*) in Lausanne, Switzerland, that residents call a “bunker” because it appears to spring from the side of a hill. There is so much demand that staffers prioritize women and children since they can't house everybody. The jostling for spots can lead to heated scuffles, and the watchmen double as bouncers, but when they say they can only admit 50 people, they mean it. After a Romanian family fails to gain admittance, they shuffle off to sleep in their car, and the following day head into town to panhandle. Others walk off forlornly into the rain-sodden dark, seeking whatever dry spots they can find. Amadou, who hails from Mauritania, complains that the city fines people who sleep in public, even when they have nowhere else to go. Amadou just wants to earn enough money to return home, while Spanish couple César and Rosa hope to find work at a ski resort. Like many, the latter came to Switzerland in hopes of a better life, only to face new hardships. As

César puts it, “stress and fatigue accumulate” after too many nights on the streets. The shelter does what it can: once it starts to snow, for instance, they increase the capacity to 60, and they also give blankets to a few who are left out in the cold. Melgar captures good times, as well, such as staffers joking around while fixing meals, and Roma people dancing with abandon. But overall this is a sobering profile since prospects for most of these immigrants don't appear to be bright. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

What Is Philanthropy? ★★★

(2016) 86 min. DVD: \$15.99, Blu-ray: \$22.99: individuals; DVD: \$139.99, Blu-ray: \$159.99: institutions. Indiana University Press. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-253-02916-5 (dvd).

Both a primer about the meaning of philanthropy and a general call to voluntary service for others, this documentary by Salvatore Alaïmo, who teaches at Michigan's Grand Valley State University, seeks to move beyond the notion that philanthropy merely refers to donating money to particular causes, expanding the definition to broader terms suggested by the word's Greek root of “love of mankind.” While not ignoring the role of large and small foundations in providing funding to artistic and social endeavors of special interest to their founders (interviewees appear here from the worlds of business, the arts, and sports), *What Is Philanthropy?* sees evidence of the philanthropic spirit in any activities where people give their time and energy, whether volunteer programs or activist movements such as the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s. While investigating the varied motives, religious or practical, that can lie behind philanthropic efforts,

the film not does ignore the potentially negative aspects of “doing good,” such as a sense of paternalism, a desire to promote one's own reputation, and an unequal distribution of resources among many worthy causes—let alone the unethical practices of some nonprofits. Although technically rather homespun, *What Is Philanthropy?* could certainly be effectively employed in courses dealing with social responsibility (or nonprofit management), but also might well appeal to more casual viewers. Extras include an interview with Alaïmo, and featurettes on philanthropy's impact, money-raising, and a tribute to Robert Payton, who was a pioneering professor of philanthropic studies at Indiana University. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The World Awaits ★★1/2

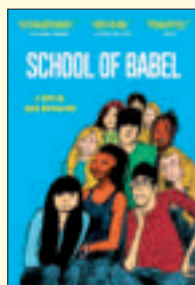
(2016) 99 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

Calling for greater international efforts to reduce our global nuclear threat, this documentary features interwoven interviews of three marquee-name critics of U.S. and international defense policies: physician and activist Helen Caldicott, philosopher-linguist Noam Chomsky, and David Krieger, founder of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Filmmaker Don Haderlein unfortunately allows each to drone on and on (the low-key, monotone Chomsky and robotic Krieger are particularly hard to take for long stretches), interspersed only with archival footage of atomic bomb tests and historic speeches by past presidents. Most of the conversation here is fairly familiar, although Haderlein does address some historical mistakes that nearly launched Armageddon, and Caldicott's discussion about the harmful effects from radiation on fetuses is certainly frightening. Overall, this well-intentioned and timely documentary is a strong optional purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

School of Babel ★★★1/2

(2013) 89 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.98 (\$348 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (available from most distributors).

Shot over the course of a year at a Paris secondary school where immigrant students in a special “reception class” experience French immersion and are taught other subjects to encourage assimilation—all in preparation to advance to regular classes—Julie Bertuccelli's documentary serves up an affecting portrait of youngsters struggling with their new lives. Some are political refugees seeking asylum, such as a Jewish boy from Serbia whose family has fled neo-Nazi persecution. Others came to France for professional opportunities, including a young cellist from Venezuela who hopes to continue his musical education. Still others have emigrated to be with their mothers—a girl from Senegal had been mistreated by her father's family back home, and another from China lived with her grandmother for a decade until her hardworking mother could save the funds for her fare. Regardless of their countries of origin or family circumstances, all face similar obstacles—with some reacting to setbacks better than others—as their compassionate teacher Brigitte Cervoni tries to deal with each student sensitively, including during parent-teacher conferences recorded here. *School of Babel* ends on a note of triumph, as the students enter a film they collaboratively made about their class into a local contest. Extras include a where-are-they-now follow-up featurette, and an interview with Bertuccelli. A revealing portrait of the immigrant experience, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



LAW & CRIME

Life on Parole ★★★

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0310-3.

Most who go to prison end up back on the street eventually. But before they can resume their life, reconnect with family, and get a job, former prisoners must undergo the parole process. Filmmaker Matthew O'Neill's PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary (produced in collaboration with the *New York Times*) follows four individuals over a year and a half as they go through parole, which is not the same as freedom, but rather a “measure of freedom.” Always there are rules: no drug use, limited alcohol consumption, no contacts with crime victims or fellow defendants. In one case, a parolee can't associate with his

girlfriend, because she reported him to the police when he stole her TV set. Ex-prisoners have to learn to deal with feelings of guilt, anger, and frustration over their inability to find a job or pay child support. All too many succumb to the lure of drugs and alcohol, falling into bad habits, and even unwisely texting and posting their drug and alcohol use on social media. They can even become a "return customer" to lock-up by making a forbidden visit to a convenience store to buy cigarettes. Parolees often become fed up with the rules of parole boards and halfway houses, resuming their old ways and angering parole officers (who say that they "make a living on second chances"). As the film comes to a close, most of these four prisoners are still hanging on, barely. And one parolee sums it up best by claiming that "parole is a noose that you tighten yourself." Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Big Pacific ★★½

(2017) 2 discs. 265 min. DVD: \$29.99 (\$59.99 w/ PPR), Blu-ray: \$34.99 (\$59.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0204-5 (dvd), 978-1-5317-0223-6 (blu-ray).

Gorgeous underwater photography is the primary draw for this five-part PBS-aired nature documentary miniseries, filmed in some 20 countries, and narrated by Daniel Dae Kim. But *Big Pacific*—made by Natural History New Zealand—also offers a wealth of information on various species found in and around the Pacific, which encompasses fully

a third of the planet and is surrounded by a "ring of fire" of volcanic activity. The opening episode "Mysterious" concentrates on Pacific mysteries, beginning with the annual migration of sea turtles to the beaches of Costa Rica to lay their eggs and continuing with other forms of sea life, some newly-discovered, such as the puffer fish that makes sand circles on the ocean floor. "Violent" centers on the struggle for survival in the ocean, and the relevant dangers posed both by and to humans. "Voracious" looks at how species satisfy their need for sustenance, and "Passionate" explores how they reproduce (the female octopus usually kills the male with whom she mates, and a species of seahorse actually changes gender for procreative purposes). Throughout, the human crew are occasionally glimpsed, but they take center stage in the final episode, which is essentially an extended "making-of" featurette. Filled with fascinating facts and breathtaking visuals, this is exemplary nature documentary filmmaking. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Real Story: Close Encounters of the Third Kind ★★★

(2011) 45 min. DVD: \$14.99. Smithsonian Channel (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0229-8.

After World War II, reports of UFO sightings increased, culminating in the 1961 claim by New Hampshire couple Barney and Betty Hill that they were taken aboard an alien spacecraft and examined before being released. In 1952, "Project Blue Book" was launched to try to determine if there was intelligent life out there, and if aliens

were trying to contact us. Using Steven Spielberg's classic 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* as a touchstone, this Smithsonian Channel-aired documentary looks at scientific facts, wild theories, and sheer speculation regarding whether a case can be made for extraterrestrial visitations. Along the way, numerous theories are analyzed to explain claims of alien abduction—ranging from swamp gas to recovered memories. Alleged alien "encounters" are divided into types, with the third being actual contact with aliens. One question everyone wants to know is, if aliens are truly visiting us, are their intentions friendly or not? In Spielberg's *E.T.* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the aliens were friendly; in *War of the Worlds*, not so much. But with at least 100 billion planets in the Milky Way galaxy, chances are good that intelligent life exists elsewhere. Meanwhile, the SETI radar program (dramatized in the Jodi Foster film *Contact*) continues to scan the skies. Offering a solid mix of science and entertainment, this is recommended. [Note: *The Real Story: Scream* is also available.] Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Safe Harbor ★★★

(2016) 28 min. DVD: \$39; public libraries; \$59; high schools; \$99; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. SDH captioned.

This short documentary centers on cooperation between researchers and oyster farmers who are working together to keep the Wellfleet Harbor off Cape Cod Bay healthy in biodiversity. The win-win arrangement ensures that the delicate synergy between various species and the health of the harbor and wetlands is managed properly. Director Richard Elson looks at various experiments and best practices for keeping oysters going, which also entails taking care of horseshoe crabs (a strange creature actually related to spiders), terrapins, and clams. Along the way, viewers learn about the processes by which the harbor helps itself through the critters that keep it clean. Enlivened by fine cinematography of the grassy wetlands and beautiful birds, as well as underwater shots of skittering animal life, this engaging environmental nature documentary is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)



Life Is One ★★★½

(2016) 52 min. DVD: \$25; public libraries & high schools; \$49; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. SDH captioned.

This is a story about the re-introduction of three orphaned sun bear cubs (two females and one male) in Borneo, Indonesia, and their relationship with documentarian Patrick Rouxel. Inspired by Wendy (who he met as a tiny cub, but saw again five years later exhibiting symptoms of stress in zoo captivity), Rouxel decides to help save another orphaned cub named Boom Boom by acting *in loco parentis* to protect her from a fate like Wendy's. He stays in Indonesia and lives with her in the wild in a national park until she is mature enough to care for herself. Seeing young Boom Boom take to the wild is remarkable—within minutes, she goes from taking her first tentative steps on an unfamiliar forest floor to scampering up high in the trees with monkeys, and burrowing in old logs below to find food. Rouxel's self-appointed job was to act as Boom Boom's parent: accompanying her daily during her explorations (and keeping her safe from predators in the process), bonding with her in the evening, and locking her safely in a large cage so both could sleep soundly at night. One day Rouxel went into town and left Boom Boom in the care of animal-loving neighbors, but she disappeared. With Boom Boom apparently lost (perhaps to predators), Rouxel met two other young cubs named Bernie and WaWan who he also aimed to rescue (this time using microchip transmitters that could help him find the animals if they became separated). These two have the benefit of discovering their forest world together. *Life Is One* offers a rare glimpse of the lives of animals given a second chance of life in the wild—opportunities that can lead to success or tragedy. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Brainstorm ★★★

(2017) 55 min. DVD: \$29; public libraries & high schools; \$299; colleges & universities. DRA. Stacia Kalinoski (avail. from www.brainstormdocumentary.com). PPR.

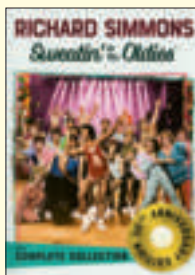
Minneapolis filmmaker Stacia Kalinoski, who was diagnosed with epilepsy in college, here looks at seizures from a personal perspective. Describing a seizure as a "surge of electrical activity in the brain," Kalinoski notes

that seizures take various forms, including generalized, focal aware, and focal impaired. She compares her own condition with those of a local football coach and a grade school student. A former TV news reporter, Kalinoski once suffered a seizure in which she behaved in a sexual manner while on the job—an incident that led to her firing, even after her doctor verified that she had no control over the situation. Kalinoski, who also relates incidents in which she experienced seizures while running and conducting interviews, eventually undergoes brain surgery in order to reduce their frequency. Jerry Kill, who coaches football at the University of Minnesota, has suffered seizures while on the field. Since his episodes have been in full view of audience members, some have made disparaging comments via e-mail. A newspaper editorial even called for his dismissal, but he persevered and became Big Ten Coach of the Year in 2014. But when his seizures return after a two-year break, he has to decide whether to remain or to retire. Ten-year-old Billy, the son of Atlanta-based CNN sports writer Wayne Drash, has fallen down stairs and suffered other injuries while experiencing seizures. His family considers Coach Kill a personal hero and the two meet in a YouTube video, after which Billy receives an offer for a procedure to alleviate his symptoms. Although all three subjects have suffered from memory loss—which Kalinoski finds particularly upsetting—each ends the documentary in better shape than when they began. An insightful film about epilepsy, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Mixed Match ★★

(2016) 96 min. DVD: \$50 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; DVD or Blu-ray: \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye Films. Closed captioned.

Director Jeff Chiba Stearns, a Canadian filmmaker of European and Japanese descent, serves up a lively look at a serious topic: bone marrow and stem cell transplants for people of mixed race. Stearns interviews researchers, patients, and donors, but spends most of his time with Athena Asklipiadis, who encourages mixed-race individuals to add their names to donor registries. Asklipiadis—who has Japanese and Greek heritage—lost an aunt who was unable to find a match in time. She was inspired to form the organization Mixed Marrow by cases such as baseball player Rod Carew's unsuccessful attempt to find a match for his daughter, Michelle, and Krissy Kobata, who has been looking for a match for nine years. After meeting Asklipiadis, Stearns added his own name to the Canadian bone marrow registry. Although the registry is a start, 50% of matches decline to follow through with their pledge, but given that a successful match has one in a million odds, the more names the better. Stearns also speaks with Alex Tung and Imani Cornelius, who seek bone marrow transplants. If Cornelius doesn't find a match, her myelodysplastic syndrome



Sweatin' to the Oldies: The Complete Collection—30th Anniversary Edition ★★½

(2017) 6 discs. 440 min. DVD: \$39.95. Time-Life (avail. from most distributors).

Richard Simmons first rose to prominence in the fitness world when he opened an aerobics studio in Beverly Hills in 1974. But he truly became a household name during the 1980s as the star of a series of exercise videos centered on low-impact, high-enthusiasm aerobics. Perhaps the most entertaining entry in Simmons's oeuvre was the five-episode *Sweatin' to the Oldies* series, compiled in this 30th anniversary edition. For sheer nostalgia value, this is a hilarious half-forgotten video time capsule featuring a squad of good-natured participants in various degrees of physical condition clad in the decade's ghastly-chic workout clothing while jumping and swaying to a nonstop train of '50s and '60s pop tunes performed by a decent cover band. Simmons keeps the action rolling while encouraging his students and viewers to keep moving. And while he is a far cry from today's image of the super-buff personal trainer, the wiry and bushy-haired dynamo is a master showman in his indefatigable jubilation. Extras include a new interview with Simmons, testimonials and success stories from students, and a booklet. For those wanting to take a break from CrossFit, this classic aerobicize set is a winner. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (P. Hall)

could lead to leukemia, and Tung needs cord blood in order to have a chance at beating cancer. Valerie Sun, another subject, finds only a partial match, but has to take a range of medications that have caused additional problems, confirming the importance of a perfect match. As Dr. Eneida Nemecek points out, "Race is a part of medicine." Presented in both a full-length version and a 56-minute abridged edition, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Opioids: Addiction, Overdose and Death

★★★

(2018) 18 min. DVD: \$149.95 (study guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-101-8.

Shorter than but similar to a recent entry from Human Relations Media on the subject (*The Opioids Epidemic: How I Became a Heroin Addict*, reviewed in VL-1/17), this guidance title features recovering drug addicts (including one I recognized from the previous entry) who share their experiences. A young host explains the difference between opiates such as morphine or codeine and the mixed bag opioids including fentanyl, oxycodone, vicodin, heroin, and Percocet. Using graphics to illustrate how the drugs work in the body, the program covers the dangers of suppressed organ systems, the trauma of withdrawals, and painful issues with families, as well as isolation (one interviewee talks about how drugs eroded "my sense of being a human") and suicide attempts. Viewers are cautioned to look for non-opioid options for handling pain, and given the always-good advice to "stay alive." Bonus features include a PDF teacher's resource book. While not as comprehensive as the earlier mentioned title, this is still a solid and timely program that addresses an epidemic crisis. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Qi Gong for Anxiety ★★★

(2017) 37 min. DVD: \$29.95. YMAA Publication Center.

I am not usually drawn to the mumbo jumbo banter of enlightened fitness programs, but instructor and host Lee Holden's calm is downright infectious in this how-to title that includes both short and long routines for qi gong. Following an introduction explaining how "it's important to take time to nourish ourselves," *Qi Gong for Anxiety* features Holden offering voiceover discussion of moves that he performs in the middle of the woods on a sandbar in a rushing river, backed by soothing, unobtrusive music and chirping birds. Featuring wave breathing exercises and cleansing breaths, chi massage techniques, attention to acupressure points, and stretches and head-rolls, movements include "Drop and Shake" and "The Boa" (along with some that may remind viewers of the dancers in Madonna's "Vogue" video). Recommended. [Note: also newly available are: *Introduction to Qi Gong*, *Qi Gong for Energy & Vitality*, and *Qi Gong for the Upper Back & Neck*.] Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Syndrome ★★★

(2017) 86 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Meryl Goldsmith's documentary—based on research done by her journalist cousin Susan—focuses on a fascinating and important subject: shaken baby syndrome (SBS), which is now referred to as abusive head trauma. The diagnosis, which has been employed by law enforcement agencies to bring charges against those caring for babies who inexplicably died, was championed by a trio of influential pediatricians, but more recently some medical professionals have concluded that it is little more than a myth

that has been used to convict parents and caretakers of homicidal abuse when falls, among other accidents, were the more likely cause of death. The doctor who is presented as the chief critic of the SBS concept is John Plunkett, a Minnesota forensic pathologist who has testified in court cases that have resulted in acquittals. His calm, reasonable demeanor is contrasted with the almost frantic stances of the most powerful proponents of the diagnosis—Drs. David Chadwick, Robert Reece, and Carole Jenny—who, it is suggested, have profited from its widespread acceptance. (Their credibility is also assailed by pointing out their stances as key backers of the ritual Satanic abuse theory during the 1980s that resulted in long prison sentences for some daycare workers, but has since been debunked.) *The Syndrome* is by no means an objective presentation of the arguments: it unabashedly champions Plunkett and his crusade. But it also raises important medical and legal issues and will encourage discussion and debate. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Unsupersize Us ★★½

(2017) 83 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$250 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

A “sequel” to his own 2014 inspirational weight-loss documentary *Unsupersize Me*, ecstasy-dealer-turned-fitness-guru Juan-Carlos Asse’s *Unsupersize Us* charts Asse’s latest attempt to change the lives of overweight Floridians through a vegan diet combined with copious amounts of exercise. Asse’s DIY ethic is charming, but his subjects for experimentation—including a writer with both Crohn’s and celiac disease, a tennis pro worried about becoming diabetic, and two other thirtysomethings flirting with obesity—are not nearly the miracle cases of recovery and weight loss as the lone subject of his first documentary: a 345-pound, 29-year-old woman who shed 200 pounds under Asse’s supervision. To his credit, Asse pedals no miracle cures or controversial dietary advice, and he provides examples of the horrific effects of

non-exercise-based weight loss solutions such as gastric bypass. His approach favors plant-based nutrition over an animal-protein-based diet, coupled with an hour of cardiovascular work six days per week—fairly commonsense stuff. Although Asse offers up lots of practical examples of his dietary philosophy in this scrappy production, his monotonous presentation skills and his film’s by-the-numbers feel tend to make this more of an infomercial than the human-interest story at the center of *Unsupersize Me*. Still, the dietary advice shared here is sound, so consider this a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (M. Sandlin)

What About ME? ★★★

(2017) 85 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

The ME here refers to Myalgic Encephalomyelitis—sometimes referred to as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)—an inflammatory illness of the central nervous system, brain, and spinal cord that is associated with muscle pain. Debate over CFS has raged for 60 years, with some health organizations defining it as a neurological/biological disorder, while others claim that it is a psychological disorder. Although there have been reported “cluster” outbreaks (such as 200 cases reported in Incline Village, NV, in 1984), and a Centers for Disease Control study resulted in no answers, no consensus has been reached on what exactly people are experiencing. Many ME sufferers are interviewed here—with symptoms ranging from minor fatigue to being bedridden and even struggling to speak. One interviewee describes it as feeling like “all the energy has been taken out of your body.” Those seeking treatment are often dismissed by the medical profession, insurance won’t cover their illness, and jobs are lost. Many of those interviewed sound quite credible—including doctors, lawyers, professors, and other professionals who describe symptoms (and treatments that have failed) with sometimes chilling precision. Clearly an advocacy documentary, this film provides an interesting look at a mysterious

phenomenon. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Block)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

From This Day Forward ★★★

(2015) 76 min. DVD: \$350. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-941545-83-1.

“Gender fluidity” is the increasingly common term for a spectrum of sex identification that rejects the traditional notion of being either male or female. In this illuminating documentary, filmmaker Sharon Shattuck explores the familial ramifications when a loved one is transgender. Shattuck tells the story of how her father Michael’s—now Trish—revelation that she is transgender has affected their family over decades. What emerges is a portrait of a family bond strengthened by facing rather than avoiding challenges, while also accepting that there might not ever be a definitive answer about how best to live with contradictions. Shattuck lets this profile slowly blossom, moving beyond a pleasing surface to discover stories of damage and strength. Trish turns out to be enormously likable, a talented painter, musician, landscape architect, and more, with a self-effacing humor and quite a wardrobe of both men’s and women’s clothing. Shattuck recounts the mortification and estrangement from Trish that she felt while in school, and Trish shares honest feelings about living on “the fence,” alternating between masculine and feminine personas. Shattuck’s mother, Marcia, a doctor who knew early on in their courtship that Michael/Trish sometimes wore women’s clothing—and who remains married to Trish—gradually emerges as a conflicted but stalwart partner who genuinely remains in love with her spouse, while Trish feels the same. Offering an eye-opening look at the complex realities behind one family’s acceptance of a transgendered member, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Sexuality, Intimacy and Dementia in Residential Care Settings ★★★

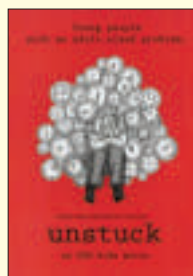
(2017) 78 min. DVD: \$149. Terra Nova Films. PPR.

Author and educator Daniel Kuhn speaks to caregivers in this simply-produced five-part series. In the first section, Kuhn talks about dementia, which can lead to fear, loneliness, boredom, and helplessness. He shares video of a couple named Everett and Betty; the latter has Alzheimer’s disease, although sex is still part of their relationship. If anything, Betty says she feels “a little greedy,” possibly because she knows that it can’t last. When the interviewer catches up with them six years later, sex is no longer an option due to Betty’s loss of cognitive abilities. Kuhn next looks at hypersexuality, with caregivers in the audience giving examples of times they witnessed such behavior. One woman, who was 17 at

Unstuck: An OCD Kids Movie ★★½

(2017) 22 min. DVD: \$69: high schools; \$79: public libraries; \$129: community colleges; \$179: colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Offering a succinct, heart-tuggingly honest look at school-aged kids with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), directors Kelly Anderson and Chris Baier’s documentary focuses on six young people. The children—who talk about and draw examples of issues they face—include Vanessa, who worries about sickness and poison from unreasonable sources; Holden, who has a fear of bodybuilding and strength-oriented visual content; and Ariel, who thinks people may come to harm if she doesn’t perform rituals (such as with clothing tags). From confusion, to feeling outcast, to effects on the family, *Unstuck* does an excellent job of putting a personal face on OCD, while being ultimately hopeful as the kids get help from professionals and learn how to break cycles. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



the time, was almost sexually assaulted by a resident, but instead of discouraging her from continuing with residential care, she took it as a cue to work to help prevent these kinds of incidents. Kuhn encourages caregivers to inform their supervisors and to document misbehavior, especially for liability reasons. In the third section, he talks about dementia patients who think other residents are their partners when they actually already have spouses. Kuhn believes that it is more harmful to discourage these alliances than to let them run their course. As he puts it, "For two people to find each other can be very calming." In the final two sections, Kuhn discusses spousal and family responses and nonconsensual intimacy. Although this title is clearly aimed at caregivers, any viewers who are dealing with dementia in the family are sure to find helpful information here. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Meat ★★

(2017) 75 min. DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

A curiously pointless documentary featuring hard-to-follow English spoken with thick, New Zealand accents, the documentary *Meat* will leave many viewers struggling to understand much of what is being said by various animal farmers, a freeze worker (someone who freezes meat), and a hunter. Each explain what they do and why they do it, and they come across as hardworking folk behind the scenes of an industry that many take for granted (although the hunter seems a little weird, even as he makes a valid point that carnivores should know that their food comes from nature and that slaughter isn't pretty). Filmmaker David White sets out to display what happens on the largely invisible end of meat production, but his determined neutrality on moral and ethical questions—while certainly defensible—makes *Meat* a somewhat rudderless documentary (with some rather grisly scenes). Extras include audio commentary by White and cinematographer/editor Paul Wedel. Optional. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Wasted! The Story of Food Waste ★★★

(2017) 95 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This unexpectedly lively and upbeat documentary about food waste begins with globe-trotting chef Anthony Bourdain complaining that he hates the whole idea of the film. Why? Because he'd rather take a darker, harsher, and more scolding tone about the destructiveness of food waste on the environment, economics, and the world's starving population. But filmmakers Anna Chai and Nari Kye opt to focus on what is being done around the world

to combat the issue, although they do share some scary statistics and facts, including: 40% of food production in the U.S. ends up in landfills, the average family spends \$1,500 a year on food that is eventually tossed out, and landfills create an enormous amount of methane gas that contributes to climate change. Co-executive producer Bourdain articulates a core value of his kitchen career: waste nothing, use everything. That approach to cooking would address much of the problem of food waste, and several famous chefs (Dan Barber and Mario Bartali among them) here pick up the theme, demonstrating how every part of vegetables and animals can be turned into something delicious. Viewers also see ingenious methods for recycling waste (the unused whey from the production of Greek yogurt can generate methane, which can then be used to power the factory) and for encouraging people to cut back on discarded food (in South Korea, one is charged for kilos of kitchen waste). In one segment, an activist named Christopher Collins reveals how he globalized a recipe for making beer from, among other things, unused bread—with the profits going toward anti-waste projects. *Wasted!* is a foodie film with a vision and purpose. Extras include bonus interviews and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Oncle Bernard: A Counter Lesson in Economics ★★1/2

(2015) 79 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors).

French economist and writer Bernard

Maris was one of the staff members of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo* slain in a terrorist attack in Paris in January 2015. In March 2000, Maris was interviewed by Canadian director Richard Brouillette for his award-winning 2008 documentary *Encirclement* (also available at the same price) and the full interview is the crux of this production, which is both invigorating and baffling. Maris speaks at length on general economic topics rather than issues distinctive to France or the wider European Union, and his ability to simplify difficult issues with casual wit helps enliven what could have been a dry subject. "The economy is not complicated," he explains. "Whoever is holding the knife gets to cut the cake." He also admonishes the French concept of pension funds by pointing out the failings in their American counterparts, saying, "Pension funds are a system that lets us believe that American retirees will be rich—it's not true! The commercial banks reap the profits." Maris is articulate and charming, so it's a shame that Brouillette shot the film in a grainy 16mm black-and-white format with Maris seated behind a table amidst the muffled noise of the *Charlie Hebdo* office. A visually dreary presentation of an insightful and droll monologue, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

So You Want to Be An Architect? ★★★

(2017) 25 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

Teenage host Herschel Bronfman looks at a career in architecture in this snazzily produced Canadian short in which Bronfman meets with students and teachers at the University of Toronto, and tours several sites around the city. Bronfman asks questions



Abacus: Small Enough to Jail ★★★

(2017) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0220-5.

New York City's Chinatown is a vibrant community with special business and cultural needs. But many immigrants feel alienated from banks, although they need mortgages and credit loans. In 1984, former lawyer Thomas Sung founded the Abacus Bank to cater to NYC's Chinese-American community, but his American Dream eventually became a nightmare when the bank was accused of selling mortgages to Fannie Mae based on false documentation. Filmmaker Steve James's PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary looks at the trial of Abacus Bank, a small fish and "easy prey" caught up in the nation's fiscal crisis of 2008. When one of its employees was accused of money laundering, the bank did what they felt was the right thing to do by firing the employee, but they had attracted the attention of New York's District Attorney, Cyrus Vance Jr. Much of Chinese banking is based on trust and close community ties, and residents felt targeted when some employees were paraded and publicly humiliated in a "perp walk." Sung's adult daughters, including one working in the D.A.'s office, rallied to Sung's defense. *Abacus* follows the ensuing five-year investigation, which included the question of tax evasion, and the Chinese understanding of gifts vs. loans. After litigation that cost more than \$10 million and resulted in a lengthy, contentious trial, Abacus was found not guilty on most charges. The only U.S. bank tried for mortgage fraud since 2008, the evidence suggests that they were selected as a tempting target while the big fish went free. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

about inspiration, follows a team as they work together on a library project, and talks about the requisites needed, such as a good degree and up to 10 years of study. Along the way, viewers see fine architectural examples during visits to the CN Tower, the private resident Integral House (meeting its co-designer Brigitte Shim), and the Aga Khan Museum. Offering an engaging behind-the-scenes look at a dream job, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

After Circus ★★½

(2016) 78 min. DVD: \$79; public libraries; \$350 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

What happens to people who have “the circus” in their blood but are aging out of their physically demanding crafts? Filmmaker Viveka Melki’s documentary *After Circus* focuses on trapeze artists on the wrong side of 50, particularly a graceful aerial artist named Dolly Jacobs, who is approaching 60. Living on a meager income while working for years at a circus in Sarasota, FL, these performers have remained in terrific physical shape but still face a future in which retirement is uncertain (in many senses). And there’s a nagging sense that the public takes acrobats for granted, considering them as something less than true performing artists. Melki shows us how these folks turn to one another for appreciation and support, as well as what circus life is like on a daily basis between shows—the conversations, practice, and

costume enhancements. But while often charming, the film’s unstructured approach makes this feel longer than its relatively short 78-minute running time. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

THE ARTS

Big Voice ★★★

(2017) 83 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries & high schools; \$295: colleges & universities. DRA. *The Video Project*. PPR. Closed captioned.

Santa Monica High School choir teacher Jeffe Huls intimidates his students almost as much as he inspires them (at least until they become better acquainted). As he puts it in filmmaker Varda Bar-Kar’s optimistic if also evenhanded documentary *Big Voice*, “I’m a tough cookie.” Huls oversees two madrigal groups, one mixed-gender and the other an all-female ensemble. During rehearsals, Huls is a perfectionist, but he also has a sense of humor and is clear about what he wants. Like the best teachers, Huls aims to mold the character of his students and not just teach them new skills, and he has no tolerance for racism, sexism, or homophobia. Huls says that he himself felt different as a kid, a sentiment echoed here by some of his students, including Amy, who says, “I feel like a loner,” and Joe, who confesses, “I like spending time by myself.” The students also tend to be ambitious, taking AP classes and engaging in other extracurricular activities such as wrestling and producing the school paper. Aside from singing and music-reading, Huls teaches them

exercises to relieve tension and he takes them on retreats in order to eliminate distractions and encourage bonding. When Amy’s family faces eviction, choir becomes for her a form of escape, so it is fortunate that the community believes in Huls’s program, because their fundraising efforts pay for everything except his salary and that of his accompanist. Huls’s students know they may never live up to his expectations, but they see that as something to aspire to rather than something to lament. Presented in both a full-length version and a 53-minute abridged edition, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Dawson City: Frozen Time ★★★

(2016) 120 min. DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95 (\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

Bill Morrison’s films straddle film history and avant-garde expressionism, mining the wealth of silent film history while exploring the abstract beauty of decaying nitrate film—a particularly volatile medium that breaks down over time. *Dawson City: Frozen Time* celebrates the “Dawson Film Find” of 1978, which uncovered thousands of reels of film buried in the permafrost, and it also tells the history of the titular Yukon town founded during the 1890s Gold Rush. Dawson City was the end of the line for some 500-plus silent films out of distribution—considered worthless to the studios—which were stored and finally buried in an old swimming pool. The film features no narration and only a few interviews; instead, the story is told almost entirely through archival photos and film clips (both dramatic fiction and newsreel/home movie) with the briefest of explanatory captions on the screen accompanied by an atmospheric musical soundtrack. Along with unexpected connections to film history (the entrepreneurs behind the Pantages theatre chain and Grauman’s Chinese Theatre in Hollywood got their start in Dawson City), this work celebrates the power of cinema as a time capsule and features numerous clips from films recovered in Dawson (every one duly identified) that help tell the story of the city and illustrate the wonders of the world that films brought to citizens in the 1910s and ‘20s (including rare footage of the infamous 1919 World Series). Extras include original Dawson City film reels, an interview with Morrison, a postscript to the film, and a booklet with essays by author Lawrence Weschler. A compelling production that serves up a slice of 20th-century film history, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Axmaker)

The Founders ★★★

(2017) 89 min. DVD: \$14.99 (\$350 w/PPR from www.thefoundersfilm.com). DRA. Mighty Fine Pictures (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmakers Charlene Fisk and Carrie Schrader’s warm-hearted documentary focuses on the women who founded the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). Of the original 13, only four remain, but they are as passionate as ever about the sport that brought them together. The outspoken Shirley Spork started out in Detroit, the reserved Louise Suggs hails from Atlanta, the sweet-natured Marilyn Smith transitioned from softball to golf in Wichita, and the precocious Marlene Bauer Vossler and her sister, Alice, were taught to play by their father in Eureka, SD. “I was kind of an oddity,” Marlene says. “We both were.” After introducing themselves, the ladies talk about the co-founders of the LPGA, most notably Olympian Babe Didrikson Zahariis (her name brought attention, but the women believe she was—at least initially—more interested in promoting herself). As players, they faced racism, sexism, and even class barriers since golf was a rich man’s game, and it was hard to make an impact without club membership. World War II also put a crimp in their plans as men went off to fight, while women stepped into the jobs they left behind. Some also served at home, but golf took a backseat for a few years. The precursor to the LPGA came into being in 1944 with the formation of the Women’s Professional Golf Association, but it didn’t last long, whereas the LPGA has been around since 1950. The first few tours involved long drives between small towns, but the ladies attracted enthusiastic audiences and even after Babe’s untimely passing in 1956, they continued to grow and persevere. Rounding out the profile with comments from star players like Renee Powell and Nancy Lopez, this engaging women’s sports history documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)



Deconstructing the Beatles: Sgt. Pepper ★★★

(2016) 95 min. DVD: \$19.95. DRA. *Deconstructing the Music* (www.beatleslectures.com). Closed captioned.

There are Beatles fans and then there is Scott Freiman, who might be called a Beat-

The Champion ★★★

(2017) 2 discs. 117 min. DVD: \$19.98. Milestone/Oscilloscope (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Marc J. Perez's titular documentary short anchors this double-disc set profiling the cinematic legacy of Fort Lee, NJ, which for a brief period during the silent era was one of the centers of American filmmaking. As movies matured from nickelodeon distraction to big business but before Hollywood became the center of the filmmaking industry, New York City was the moviemaking hub. To meet the demands of bigger and more ambitious films, filmmakers looked to Fort Lee for its variety of locations (wilderness, seashore, and city streets within easy travel distance) and inexpensive real estate on which to build larger studio sets. Based on the 2004 book *Fort Lee: The Film Town* by Richard Kozarski, *The Champion* focuses on Champion Studio, one of a dozen studios that flourished in Fort Lee in the 1910s, but its overall scope encompasses the history and culture of the town's brief reign as a filmmaker center. Also included here is the newly-restored 1935 silent short documentary *Ghost Town: The Story of Fort Lee*, a wistful survey of the city, the countryside locations, and the abandoned studios of the former film center after its decline. And the set features five short films made between 1910-13 by Champion Studios, along with two additional shorts made at Fort Lee (including the first American version of *Robin Hood* from 1912), and the 1918 "melodramatic comedy" feature *The Danger Game* with Madge Kennedy. With new music scores by Ben Model, Donald Sosin, and Rodney Sauer, this tribute to early American cinema is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Axmaker)



les-ologist. Freiman has assiduously collected facts about the composition and recording of the legendary group's songs, which he presents along with an analysis of the music itself in lectures nationwide. Freiman's goal, as he says in a bonus interview with film critic Janet Maslin, President of the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville, NY (where this talk on the seminal 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was filmed), is to "pick apart the creative process" that resulted in the Beatles' classic albums. After warming up the audience with a quiz (inviting them to identify songs from short snippets), Freiman launches a multimedia presentation that offers a general introduction to the band's evolution over time before proceeding one by one through the album's cuts, which include classics such as "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," "A Day in the Life," and "With a Little Help from My Friends." While some songs are passed over briskly, others are given extensive treatment outlining their genesis, development, and the innovative techniques used to record them. The individual contributions of John, Paul, George and Ringo are carefully catalogued, but Freiman is also at pains to emphasize the contributions of the group's long-time producer George Martin, sometimes referred to as the fifth Beatle. Devotees of the band will obviously be Freiman's main audience, but others should also appreciate his application of musicological expertise to pop music. Other extras include an audience Q&A and five additional "mini-deconstructions" of Beatles songs. Also available in the *Deconstructing the Beatles* series are: *Revolver*, *Rubber Soul*, and *The White Album*. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Divine Divas ★★1/2

(2017) 110 min. In Portuguese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Brazilian actress and filmmaker Leandra Leal pays tribute here to an octet of transvestite performers on the occasion of their 50th anniversary as stars of Rio de Janeiro's Rival Theater, serving up a combination of interviews, archival materials, and new footage of the group preparing for a return show—although not always getting along in the process. Historical anecdotes about performing during dangerous days in Brazil (a military dictatorship ran between 1964 and 1985) and traveling the world together are presented along with hints about the appeal of cross-dressing for some of the men involved, including a sense of youthfulness that they feel when wearing a dress. Much of the cinematography is blurry, unfortunately, and Leal's pacing is somewhat uneven. Still, the film closes on a high note with a fun and triumphant performance by the eight divas. Extras include bonus interviews and behind-the-scenes footage. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Finding Kukan ★★★

(2016) 75 min. DVD: \$95: high schools & public libraries; \$325: colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-57448-440-3.

"Kukan," which translates from the Chinese as "heroic courage under bitter suffering" was a 1941 documentary commissioned by Li Ling-Ai and photographed by an American named Rey Scott, described here as an "Indiana Jones kind of guy." Li Ling

wanted the film to alert the American people to the plight of China's population, who were being subjected to mass murder and rape by the invading Japanese army. Director Robin Lung crafts a detective story about how one independent Chinese woman, playwright, and producer mounted this previously long lost film (winner of an honorary Oscar), but ultimately was overlooked, her contribution merely credited as a technical advisor. Li Ling is presented as a determined and shrewd "drama queen," hocking her family's jewelry to finance the film, securing an audience with President Roosevelt, and exploiting her connection with Robert Ripley of *Believe It or Not* fame to gain publicity. Li Ling comes across as a still peppery and outspoken figure in a 1990s interview (she died in 2003), and her comments are accompanied by contemporary interviews with family members, restoration experts, and film critics (including *Video Librarian* contributor Phil Hall). The original documentary *Kukan*, screened in recent years in China, is notable for highlighting the war contributions of Chinese women, and it features some vivid shots of the Japanese bombing of Chungking, but it remains a curio and historical footnote, one that touts the democratic future of China, but fails to recognize the rise of the insurgent Communist army. But Lung's *Finding Kukan* pays fine tribute to a "little woman" who became a "big hero." Extras include full-length and abridged versions of 1941's *Kukan*. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Jean-Michel Kibushi: Palabres Animées du Griot ★★★

(2017) 72 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$34.95: individuals; \$320: institutions. DRA. Documentary Educational Resources. PPR.

This is a collection of animated shorts by Jean-Michel Kibushi Ndjate Wootto, a pioneer of African animation who is widely regarded as the premier Congolese animator. Based on a folktale, *The Toad Visits His In-Laws* (1991) follows the titular amphibian and a group of friends he meets along the way to his in-laws' village, where they fight over a spoon when the Toad's relatives serve a meal—killing one another in the process. The companion short *The White Orange* (1992) centers on Toad's grieving widow, who seeks to bring her husband and the others back to life with a ceremony that, according to a wise old shaman, requires a white orange. The third film, the black-and-white *Kinshasa, Black September* (1992), uses a children's drawing style to recount the 1991 rioting by unpaid soldiers in the capital against then-president Mobutu, while *Muana Mboka* (1999) looks at endemic corruption from the perspective of a young boy who is pressured by adults to hand over a reward that he received from a government minister whose car he helped free from a muddy road. While these four films employ

traditional hand-drawn animation, the fifth and final film, *Prince Loseno* (2004), is a claymation tale about a childless king who takes a young new bride to sire an heir and later dies during the son's coronation. A fine introduction to a major voice in African animation, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Joe's Violin ★★½

(2016) 26 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-7815-1560-2.

This Oscar-nominated documentary short tells a wonderful story about building a bridge between worlds that could not be more different. The "Joe" of the title is Joseph Feingold, a 91-year-old Holocaust survivor who endured six-and-a-half years in a Siberian labor camp and, later in a displacement camp following World War II, traded a carton of cigarettes for a violin. Playing it, he says to filmmaker Kahane Cooperman, helped soothe him after the long trauma and reminded him of the home that he had lost. Immigrating to the U.S., Feingold held on to his violin, donating it almost 60 years later to a school for girls in the Bronx, where 12-year-old Brianna Perez, reeling from the divorce of her parents, is chosen to receive the instrument due to the emotion with which she plays. The parallel tales of Joe's history, the school's, and Brianna's finally merge when Feingold meets her and she plays for him. After an initial awkwardness dissipates, the emerging bond between the two speaks volumes about the ways that very distinct individuals can connect, and perhaps help each other heal. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Lost City of Cecil B. DeMille

★★★½

(2017) 88 min. DVD: \$14.99. Random Media (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Cecil B. DeMille's first foray into biblical spectacle was his 1923 epic *The Ten Commandments*, which features a recreation of ancient Egypt—complete with 20 sphinxes and four massive statues of Ramses—built on the beaches of the town of Guadalupe in California's Santa Barbara County. When production was completed, DeMille worried that his massive sets would be commandeered by rival filmmakers, so he buried them in the sands. Over the years, this earlier version of *The Ten Commandments* was forgotten in favor of DeMille's 1956 remake. In 1982, filmmaker Peter Brosnan was tipped off that the 1923 DeMille set still lay intact beneath the sands, thus launching a 33-year odyssey as Brosnan battled local government agencies, mercurial Hollywood financiers, and a gnawing sense of futility as he struggled to locate DeMille's lost cinematic Egypt. This delightful video diary follows Brosnan and collaborators as they search for evidence of the silent film set while also interviewing local townspeople who worked as extras on the mammoth production. Brosnan was forced to shut down his expedition on three occasions, but was ultimately rewarded when he finally uncovered impressive artifacts from the elaborate set. Also featuring clips from the 1923 version of *The Ten Commandments*, this wonderful slice of cinema history and archaeology is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Now More Than Ever: The History of Chicago ★★★

(2016) 113 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Peter Pardini's CNN-produced documentary serves up a thorough history of Chicago, the long-running, self-described "rock and roll band with horns" founded in 1967 and still going strong. Featuring an unusual lineup of brass and more typical rock band instruments (plus three lead vocalists and—like the Beatles—no designated frontman), Chicago brought together saxophonist Walter Parazider, guitarist-singer Terry Kath, drummer Danny Seraphine, trombonist James Pankow, trumpet player Lee Loughnane, keyboardist-singer Robert Lamm, and bassist-singer Peter Cetera. Appearing here are surviving and still active members Lamm, Pankow, Loughnane, and Parazider, along with the ousted Seraphine and several other players who entered and exited the group through multiple personnel changes. Separately and together they tell the story of a band of brothers who found a sound and rolled out hit record after hit record, touring constantly and pushing the envelope in terms of artistic ambition and political awareness. And then, inevitably, the excesses of the 1970s took their toll: drug use; being ripped off by their longtime producer; the death of Kath; and roiling internal dynamics when Cetera and a new producer decided that the former should be the new focus of the group along with a softer, cheesier sound. This is a tale of contrasts: triumph and defeat, loyalty and expediency, survival and loss—one with much to celebrate, including Chicago's entrance into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2016—all backed by the band's memorable music. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Last Laugh ★★★

(2017) 88 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

Although one has an innate sense going into this documentary that there is no simple answer to the question of "Can we joke about the Holocaust?" there does seem to be a discernible consensus that is eventually arrived at: namely, it's okay to make jokes about the Final Solution but only if they're *really* funny. Director Ferne Perlstein's impressive interviewee list of comedians and performers includes Carl and Rob Reiner, Sarah Silverman, Mel Brooks, Robert Clary, and Judy Gold, among others, who all chip in with fairly predictable opinions on the subject. But it's the Holocaust survivors—such as Renee Firestone—whose wizened perspectives hold the most weight for obvious reasons. Firestone herself remembers moments of laughter and humor among the hellish suffering of the concentration camps and has fairly open-minded views on jokes about the Holocaust. However, she does find most contemporary comedians' attempts at racy ethnic jokes—Larry David's and Silverman's in particular—to be lame and unfunny. And many of her fellow Holocaust survivors feel that the Final Solution should be kept a taboo subject. If any sort of guiding principle can be taken away here it's that jokes about the Nazis themselves (Mel Brooks's *The Producers* being a shining example) work better than jokes (like Silverman's) that would seem to ridicule the victims. Even though it sometimes raises more questions than answers, *The Last Laugh* is an often fascinating exploration of a controversial subject. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)



Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World ★★½

(2017) 102 min. DVD: \$29.95. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

American popular music has always been a blend of disparate cultural influences that evolve into something unique and new. Much has been said about the merger of Western European, Mexican, and African musical roots in jazz, country, blues, and rock and roll. The exciting documentary *Rumble* reveals the unheralded influence of Native American singing, chanting, and drumming on much beloved music. The jumping-off point in co-directors Catherine Bainbridge and Alfonso Maïorana's film is Link Wray, the dazzling guitar player whose 1958 hit "Rumble" not only introduced the power chord but also has the odd distinction of being the only instrumental banned from radio (due to fears that it could incite juvenile delinquency). The late Wray was Shawnee, and the film makes a strong case that those chords resemble the kind of indigenous chanting that he grew up hearing. Wray and "Rumble"—the song—

Monkey Business: The Adventures of Curious George's Creators ★★★

(2017) 82 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

For over 70 years the *Curious George* picture books have been a staple of children's bookshelves, not to mention library story hours. Children love the tales of this mischief-making monkey, who always gets into trouble, but manages to wriggle free in the end. Actually, these high-spirited stories were born against the horrible backdrop of WWII, as viewers will learn in this documentary directed by Ema Ryan Yamazaki and narrated by Sam Waterston. Hans and Margret Rey—German Jews who were friends and neighbors—united over a deep mutual respect as much as love. Born in Hamburg, Hans was easily bored at school, and was always drawing. He and Margret were in many ways temperamental opposites. Hans was friendly and accessible, while Margret was blunt to the point of rudeness, and admitted that she didn't care much for children. When Hans went to Brazil to work in the family business, Margret, who felt that Hans was not living up to his potential, followed him and convinced him to return to Europe. After marrying, the couple went to Paris and, after visiting zoos, Hans came up with the idea of George (who the publisher initially suggested be named Fifi). As German troops approached Paris, the Reys fled on bicycles, seeking refuge with strangers and casual acquaintances, finally landing in America in the fall of 1941. Margret was Hans's best critic, sketching out the stories while Hans drew the art. Margret was also a marketing pioneer, promoting George with stuffed toys, games, and animated films. Eventually, the *Curious George* series was published in 25 languages, with 75 million copies sold. Grown neighborhood children here remember Hans warmly, while literary agents and publishers describe a uniquely American success story. Now over 70 years old, George still appeals to the child in all of us. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



sparked the imaginations of future guitar gods such as Steven Van Zandt of the E Street Band, Wayne Kramer of the MC5, and Slash of Guns N' Roses, all of whom, along with many other musicians, critics, and historians, are interviewed here. Wray's personal sources for his sound have become ingrained in the rock and roll ecosystem over decades, and would perhaps be hard to sort out unless identified—which is exactly what *Rumble* does. The same is true for 1930s jazz singer Mildred Bailey, who grew up on the Couer d'Alene Reservation and integrated a gliding vocal style into her sound that would deeply influence Ella Fitzgerald and Tony Bennett (who appears here). The music of Charley Patton, Jimi Hendrix, Robbie Robertson, Jesse Ed Davis, John Trudell, Redbone, Buffy Sainte-Marie, and others—all part or full-blooded Native American—is also explored here, while other interviewees include Martin Scorsese, Iggy Pop, and Jackson Browne. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

America: Promised Land ★★★

(2017) 180 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$19.98. Lionsgate Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

It is frequently observed that the United States is a nation of immigrants. This two-part History Channel-aided documentary underscores that dictum through stories of individuals from various ethnic groups who

have become part of the national mosaic over the centuries. From Dutch traders who blazed trails in the wilderness, to English religious dissidents fleeing persecution at home, to Irish emigrants escaping famine, to Chinese laborers brought in to work on the railroads, to Poles who took jobs in the Midwestern steel industry, and Italians who found their communities blighted by criminal gangs with roots in their homeland, *America: Promised Land* not only serves up numbers and graphs that illustrate density statistics in different areas of the country, but it also focuses on specific examples of the contributions that members of each group have made to society. A Chinese man whose court case established the principle of birthright citizenship and helped build San Francisco's Chinatown, an Italian police detective who waged war on the Black Hand in New York, a Ukrainian Mennonite who carried a hearty strain of wheat to Kansas, and a Frenchman who established the first pharmacy in New Orleans are among those profiled via archival materials and recreated scenes, while descendants express admiration for their ancestors. Inevitably, this celebration of the immigrant experience in America carries special resonance because of the present debate over immigration policy in the U.S. (Hispanics play a prominent role here). But the documentary does not proselytize, instead allowing the stories to speak for themselves, which they effectively do. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

And Then They Came for Us ★★★1/2

(2017) 47 min. DVD: \$20: individuals; \$50: public libraries & high schools; \$125: community colleges; \$195: colleges & universities. Social Action Media. PPR.

Filmmakers Abby Ginzberg and Ken Schneider's documentary focuses on the controversial 1942 executive order by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to relocate some 120,000 Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast into internment camps during World War II. This since-much-maligned decision was spurred by hysterical worries that this demographic was home to saboteurs eager to continue the havoc wreaked by the Japanese military at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Japanese-Americans were forced to sell their homes and businesses with very short notice and give away their pets before being transported to distant camps where they lived behind barbed wire under armed guard. Some of the evacuees were not released until 1946, a year after the war was over. Many survivors of the experience, most notably actor George Takei, provide firsthand accounts of their struggles here, and the film features previously unseen photographs by Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams that documented the people who were impacted. Oddly, no mention is made of Dave Tatsuno's secretly shot 16mm color film inside the Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah, although the documentary does note an Army propaganda film justifying the internments. Where *And Then They Came For Us* falters a bit is in its attempt to link events of the 1940s with the post-9/11 experiences of Muslims in the United States, most recently seen in President Trump's efforts to enact a travel ban. While there is definitely unconscionable mistreatment of Muslim-Americans going on, the documentary overlooks the genuine threat of al-Qaeda and ISIS-inspired individuals to foster domestic harm, which was not the case with Japanese-Americans during WWII. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Germans & Jews ★★★1/2

(2016) 76 min. In English & German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Janina Quint's thoughtful documentary examines Germany's obligation to reflect upon and remember its responsibility for the Holocaust. But the film's approach—interviewing some 30 people, including historians, journalists, and a representative of the American Jewish Committee—and findings reveal that the subject is not so much straightforward as it is a Rubik's Cube of multiple contradictions. The documentary is anchored by a dinner party in which Jewish Germans and Jewish Americans converse with non-Jewish Germans, discussing everything from anxiety over anti-Semitism to the question of how contemporary Germans should feel about their grandfathers who fought in World War

II. From there, the topics expand to include a look at the balance between the need to teach and remind young Germans about the nation's Nazi past and an impulse to move on as a society from guilt; Germany's 1952 reparation payment to Israel (called "blood money" by some); the 1961 trial of "Final Solution" architect Adolf Eichmann; the student rebellion of 1968, in which young people demanded that the older generation's silence about Hitler be broken; and the impact of the German TV broadcast of the 1978 American miniseries *Holocaust*. Exploring morally complex issues that present no easy answers, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Growth of a Nation: Securing the Republic ★★½

(2017) 32 min. DVD: \$49. Media Rich Learning. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9857262-3-2.

Part of the *Growth of a Nation* series, *Securing the Republic* covers the period of 1800–1814, focusing on issues that arose during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, including the war of 1812. As the new century dawned, the United States was not even a teenager yet (the country was 11 years old at that point, with only 15 stars and stripes on the flag). Those who consider today's politics divisive will find the struggles of the early founders illuminating, where sharp divisions on the best way to govern led to great distrust and hostility between the Federalist and Republican parties, resulting in a vicious battle for the White House (with Jefferson winning his office by a slim margin). In addition to Jefferson, the two opposing parties, and the War of 1812, the bite-size segments here

explore a number of other topics, including the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark expedition, and Tecumseh's War. Other titles in the series include *Democracy in America*, *Expansion and Reform*, and *Manifest Destiny*. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)

Mysteries of China ★★½

(2016) 40 min. 4K/Blu-ray Combo: \$29.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Soporifically narrated by Avery Brooks, director Keith Melton's *Mysteries of China* is a "filmed for IMAX and giant screen theatres" documentary centering on archaeological digs in China that uncovered the famed Terracotta Warriors and the Tomb of the First Emperor. Interweaving the story of Qin Shi Huang, the third-century B.C. ruler credited with uniting China, and the major archeological excavation that followed a 1974 discovery of a stone head by farmers working in a field, this beautifully-lensed film explores how the subterranean finds—including almost 2,000 warriors and horses—have helped scholars piece together the life of Qin (who died of mercury poisoning following seriously bad advice from court physicians), and also learn about the weapons and clothing wielded and worn by his army. In addition to uniting China, Qin was responsible for one of the great architectural feats in the history of the world: the Great Wall of China. Presented in both 4K (which does indeed look handsome) and Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. An intermittently interesting film about ancient China meant to showcase visuals as much as provide information,

this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (R. Pitman)

Negritude ★★★½

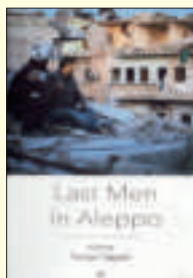
(2015) 59 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$80, Blu-ray: \$100: public libraries; DVD: \$300, Blu-ray: \$400: colleges & universities. DRA. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

The subtitle to filmmaker Manthia Diawara's documentary is "A Dialogue Between Wole Soyinka and Senghor," but the film actually offers parallel commentary tracks between Senegal's first president Léopold Sédar Senghor, who is seen in newsreel interviews from the 1950s through the 1970s, and a contemporary interview with the Nigerian Nobel Literature Prize winner Soyinka. The time gap creates a startling balance between Senghor offering confident and, perhaps, too-serious exultations over the Pan-African focus of the literary movement Negritude—a black intellectual philosophy founded in France in the 1930s—and Soyinka providing a wry dissection of the movement's triumphs and failings via 20/20 hindsight. Senghor, in his leadership role as both Senegal's founding father and one of the first major global figures of the post-colonial African independence era, spoke at length on the richness of the African culture while only casually acknowledging the instability that the new African republics experienced after being cut loose from European control. Soyinka places Senghor's cultural lectures in a more grounded perspective, lamenting the problems that modern Africa has faced with democracy (or, in too many cases, the lack thereof) and immigration concerns within the continent, coupled with the exodus of many Africans to other continents. Viewers with little knowledge of post-World War II African history will be at a disadvantage here, but those who are familiar will appreciate this commentary on post-colonial Africa's highs and lows. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Last Men in Aleppo ★★½

(2017) 104 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities. Grasshopper Film. PPR. DRA.

While a number of powerful documentaries about the tragic civil war in Syria have already appeared, filmmaker Feras Fayyad's is one of the most viscerally affecting. Shot under dangerous conditions in 2015–16, *Last Men in Aleppo* follows members of the White Helmets—volunteers with the rebel Syrian Civil Defense force—who try to survive and enjoy semi-ordinary lives with their families in their devastated city while also rushing to rescue victims from the rubble produced by bombardment from government and Russian aircraft. Burly extrovert Khaled tries to rally his squad's morale in the face of brutal realities as the team recovers corpses and dismembered limbs, but also occasionally a survivor. His partner, former philosophy student Mahmoud, is more morose but no less dedicated. The film offers glimpses of both men's private lives along with their heroic efforts in the field: Khaled tries to provide a stable environment for two young daughters even as he debates whether they should escape to Turkey; Mahmoud is concerned with protecting his younger brother while assuring his parents that both of them have already left Aleppo. This is an emotionally wrenching, often heartbreaking film that ends with a personal tragedy that only accentuates the sense of mindless loss that the war represents. It does not offer much larger context on the conflict (one must look elsewhere for a full history of the Syrian disaster), but it provides an incredibly powerful and intimate look at the war's impact upon individuals. A remarkable cinematic achievement—winner of the Best in Show award at the 2017 National Media Market conference—this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



The Ride ★★★

(2017) 104 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries; \$375: colleges & universities. Grasshopper Film. PPR. DRA.

In 1890, a massacre took the lives of 150 Lakota Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee, on what is now the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The atrocity was committed by a U.S. Cavalry regiment that had been sent only to disarm the Sioux. These murders continue to haunt the Lakota people today, a legacy that can't be shaken but can be somewhat healed. Filmmaker Stephanie Gillard's often gorgeous and engaging documentary *The Ride* follows one important healing ritual: an annual, 300-mile horseback ride taken by Lakota cowboys, war veterans, and young people to Pine Ridge in remembrance of the long migration of the Lakota that originally brought them to

the spot where they were slaughtered. With a straightforward narrative line—the long ride to a final destination—the filmmaker is free to witness and capture various sights, resulting in a wealth of beautiful shots of an extensive line of horses and riders traversing grassy plains and snowed-over hills at higher elevations. When the travelers stop for a night of rest, it is generally at a reservation where they spend time with children, telling stories, singing traditional songs, and doing what they can to bolster Native American identity. A fine documentary about coming to terms with an historic tragedy, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Travel Safe, Not Sorry: Discover Mexico

★★★1/2

(2016) 45 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned.

A companion to *Travel Safe, Not Sorry When Travelling* (VL-11/17), this travelogue follows engaging host Tobias Scott to various locales throughout the Yucatan. A big chunk of the program is devoted to Scott's free-diving preparation in a deep cenote underground cavern with a French guide. Other activities include perusal of the Casa del los Venados 3,000-plus folk art collection of John Ventator (with a heavy focus on Dio de los Muertos traditions), visiting a cave full of bats, and embarking on a dizzying climb of Mayan ruins in the Calakmul archaeological excavation site. Noting precautions including having mosquito netting for bedding, packing bug repellent, and making a habit of shaking out shoes for scorpions, this is clearly aimed at more active and adventuresome travelers (how many of us are going to spend time preparing for a 50-foot underwater swim?). A somewhat off-the-beaten-path look at various activities for visitors to Mexico, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Weekend in Havana ★★★

(2017) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0192-5.

Produced before the recent downturn in U.S.-Cuban relations, this PBS-aided documentary hosted by Geoffrey Baer looks at contemporary life in Havana, a colorful historic city in a country that is coming out of 50 years of isolation and struggling to find its place in the modern world. Cuba has a history of being dominated by foreign powers, first Britain, then Spain, and finally by the Soviet Union. One third of its population descended from slaves, and the African influence is still strong, not only in music and dance, but also in the practice of Santería, an African religion. Music and dance represent a joyful expression of Cuban life and a way of surviving stressful conditions. At night, Havana's residents flock

to the historic waterfront Malecón, simply known as "Havana's living room," where everyone seems to know one another. In recent years, Cuba's Communist economy has relaxed its rules on free enterprise, resulting in small family-run restaurants and hotels, often located in private homes. Cuba shares a love for baseball with America (Baer notes one of Cuba's cultural paradoxes: trading cards of revolutionary figures are as eagerly sought as sports cards). This cultural travelogue also highlights Havana's historic architecture and the prevalence of vintage America cars, repaired and kept running through ingenuity and necessity during the long trade embargo. The locals do not apologize for Cuba's revolutionary past, but are filled with hope and humor as they face the future in this "faded jewel" of the Caribbean. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

BIOGRAPHY

Art of the Prank ★★★1/2

(2015) 85 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$295: colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

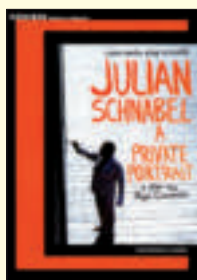
When it comes to pulling media hoaxes, few tricksters have been more prolific and inventive than Joey Skaggs, a New York City artist who has been plying his unlikely trade for a half-century. Filmmaker Andrea Marini's documentary looks at Skaggs's talent for fooling print and broadcast journalists, which began in the late 1960s with performance-art-level events that included bringing a busload of hippies as tourists to visit the blue-collar neighborhoods in Queens, and crashing Manhattan's fabled Easter Parade by

carrying an oversized statue of a skeleton crucified on a cross (Skaggs claims that he barely escaped arrest for the latter prank). In the 1970s, he scored a major hoax coup by claiming to run a "cathouse for dogs," i.e., a canine brothel where dog owners could bring their pooches to copulate while they watched and partied. One New York TV station believed the story and its coverage won an Emmy Award for news reporting. Skaggs would turn up over the years with a variety of disguises and false names, most amusingly as a priest bicycling around with a portable confession booth that he dubbed the "Portofess," and more recently in a YouTube video claiming to have grown razor teeth after being injected with shark stem cells. Skaggs turns serious when he talks about how he is now living with his elderly mother at her home in Kentucky, but he says little about his non-prank art career or where his revenue stream comes from. Regardless, his charm is infectious and it is fun to watch him fool the media. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Aviatrix: The Katherine Sui Fun Cheung Story ★★★

(2016) 40 min. DVD: \$20. From the Heart Productions (avail. from www.aviatrixmovie.org).

Combining archival photos and footage together with interviews, director Ed Moy's documentary looks at the life and impact of Chinese aviatrix Katherine Sui Fun Cheung (1904-2003). Interwoven throughout with an interview of Cheung herself, *Aviatrix* focuses on Chinese immigrant Cheung's supportive upbringing, move to Los Angeles where she was impressed with planes at Dyer Airport, and her eventual rise as a skilled pilot who became acquainted with Amelia Earhart. Featuring comments from author Judy Yung,



Julian Schnabel: A Private Portrait ★★★1/2

(2016) 85 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99. Cohen Media Group (avail. from most distributors).

A beautiful documentary about the man behind a decades-long, controversial-artist-persona, filmmaker Pappi Corsicato's *Julian Schnabel: A Private Portrait* eschews the standard biographical format in favor of a mosaic approach to understanding the bearish, worldly, and ambitious superstar and his work, drawing on his own words as well as the reflections and memories of his grown children, past and present wives, gallery owners, critics, and friends such as Al Pacino and Willem Dafoe. Schnabel had

a sheltered childhood in New York, the youngest child of his family. He considered his mother to be his best friend—she took him to galleries, museums, and movies, and encouraged his artistic expression—laying the foundation for his teen years in Texas, where he mostly inhabited an inner world and knew, without question, what he wanted to do with his life. Schnabel discusses the importance of surfing during his formative years on his sensibilities (in early footage he is seen impressively riding the waves), and he weighs in on the topic of his ascendance in the 1980s Manhattan art scene. He also speaks movingly about his long friendship with the late Lou Reed, and about fellow artists (Basquiat, Warhol, etc.) he admired and paid tribute to in well-received films including *Basquiat* and *Before Night Falls*. Generous clips from Schnabel's movies together with ample footage of him as he works on enormous canvasses inside and outside studios round out this thoughtful portrait. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Congresswoman Judy Chu, stunt pilot Jacquie Warda, and LAX info specialist Ethel Pattison, among others, the documentary also details how Cheung's story became the basis for several short films, plays, and even a comic strip. Bonus features include additional photos, deleted scenes, shorts, and interviews. An interesting slice-of-life portrait of a little-known pioneer in female aviation, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Behind the White Glasses ★★★

(2017) 107 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

First-time filmmaker Valerio Ruiz pays life-achievement tribute to Italian cinema icon Lina Wertmüller, accorded respect by critic John Simon (a key tastemaker in the U.S. for popularizing Wertmüller's work in the mid-1970s) as the 20th century's most outstanding woman director besides Leni Riefenstahl. The aged, outspoken Wertmüller—seen here still working steadily on scripts and proposals—says she started out as a substandard assistant director to Fellini, and was fortunately likeable enough to break through to directing on her own. Her portrayals of class struggle, southern-Italian ways, and battles-of-the-sexes (often combined) informed a slew of '70s hits, including *The Seduction of Mimi*, *Swept Away*, *Love and Anarchy*, and *Seven Beauties*. The 1978 misfire *End of the World* (in *Our Usual Bed*, in a *Night Full of Rain*)—working for Hollywood in English—ended the infatuation of American distributors. Casual cineastes may not know that Wertmüller has long work associations with Sophia Loren, and enjoys a sideline as a singer-songwriter. Even with interview clips featuring Loren, Harvey Keitel, and Rutger Hauer, the more recent material may be a bit esoteric for those without a background in Italian arts and pop-culture, but this affectionate homage reacquaints viewers with a living legend who is still active, although out of the Yankee limelight for decades. Extras include behind-the-scenes footage. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Dries ★★★

(2017) 90 min. In English & Flemish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99 (\$280 w/PPR from www.kimstim.com). KimStim (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Reiner Holzemer's documentary on Belgian designer Dries Van Noten will likely find favor with Van Noten's fans and/or fashion aficionados, offering an up-close look at this private artist's working process over the course of a year. Viewers will see Van Noten prepare for runway shows, experiment with combining different patterned fabrics to create his trademark "shock and contrast" look, engage with a small army of employees and collaborators, and comment on video footage of his work dating back to the 1980s. Dries

can be compelling as he explains his state of mind while designing one or another look for past shows. It's also fascinating to see miles of fabrics spread out on the floor of a hangar-like room, with Van Noten closely studying all of it. While this is unlikely to appeal to wider audiences due to its insular subject matter, the target audience will surely appreciate it. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Mario Lanza: The Best of Everything ★★★

(2017) 85 min. DVD: \$19.99, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Alan Byron offers a loving tribute here to bestselling recording artist and Hollywood star Mario Lanza (1921-1959), the tenor whose meteoric rise was quickly followed by a demoralizing fall and early death. Born Alfred Coccozza to working-class emigrant parents in Philadelphia, Lanza exhibited strong vocal ability at an early age, and his mother (whose family name he adopted) worked additional jobs to pay for his professional training. At the very beginning of his career, in 1947, he was signed by MGM to a studio contract and began making movies in 1949, enjoying a double triumph in 1951 with his first million-selling record "Be My Love" and starring role in the screen smash *The Great Caruso*. But the next year Lanza was dismissed (and sued) by MGM after he walked off the set of *The Student Prince*, after which his already-recorded songs were lip-synched by a replacement star. For the rest of his life, Lanza battled weight gain with extreme diets, and although he resumed a film career and went on concert tours, he died suddenly at the age of 38. Byron covers Lanza's life with archival and newsreel footage, movie clips, and interviews with admiring opera singers (Lesley Garrett, Richard Watson, and Joseph Calleja), voice experts, and Lanza's daughter Ellisa Lanza Bregman, who recalls how her mother Betty died shortly after her father. A solid portrait, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Mr. Gaga ★★★

(2015) 100 min. In Hebrew & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$26.98. Icarus Films Home Video (available from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Tomer Heymann's documentary profiles innovative Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin, who devised a freewheeling style of extemporaneous movement for ordinary folks called "Gaga." Despite the title, there is relatively little treatment of the technique here, apart from scenes of a crowd gyrating rhythmically, and a testimonial from actress Natalie Portman. The focus instead is on Naharin's extraordinary career in modern dance, which is covered through archival material—including home movies and rehearsal footage—accompanied by interviews with Naharin. Not all that he

says can be taken literally: after explaining that as a boy he began dancing to rouse his autistic brother, he later acknowledges that the entire story was an invention. More verifiable are his upbringing in a kibbutz, army service, turning to dance at the age of 22, unsatisfying years with Martha Graham and Maurice Béjart in New York, and 1990 move (along with his then-wife Mari Kajiwaru, a principal in Alvin Ailey's troupe) to Tel Aviv to assume directorship of the Batsheva Dance Company. At Batsheva, his unorthodox approach, which blended naturalistic movement, repetition, multimedia, and sociopolitical commentary, initially antagonized audiences, but over time his adventurousness won him admirers at home and abroad. And Naharin's rigorous standards—demanding of his dancers and dismissive of authority (he withdrew from a national gala rather than accede to a costume change)—have made him a celebrity maverick even outside his field. Extras include bonus footage of interviews, rehearsal excerpts, and performances. Offering an often fascinating portrait of a man of uncompromising vision, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Newman ★★★1/2

(2017) 88 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from most distributors).

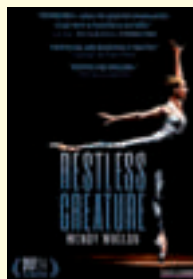
In the 1980s, Joe Newman—autodidact

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Restless Creature: Wendy Whelan ★★½

(2016) 93 min. DVD: \$29.95. (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmakers Linda Saffire and Adam Schlesinger's documentary serves up a bittersweet portrait of prima ballerina Wendy Whelan, who danced with the New York City Ballet for three decades before retiring in 2014. During her childhood training, Whelan was diagnosed with scoliosis at age 12, requiring her to wear a back brace to continue dancing. After a long career in which she worked with luminaries such as George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins, Whelan had an accident in 2012 that necessitated reconstructive hip surgery and threatened to make a return to the stage impossible. The filmmakers were given wide access to Whelan during this period, and viewers see her keeping up good spirits even as she endures recuperative therapy and perceives that long-time colleagues are already anticipating her departure. Nonetheless, despite great pain she prepares for a final performance that is co-choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon and Alexei Ratmansky. The directors take their title from a work that is made up of duets Whelan fashioned with four young choreographers that the five together have since performed on tour. And even post-retirement from the NYCB, Whelan continues to defy the odds, doing what she admits she loves most. One cannot help but be inspired by her story, which is lovingly told in this revealing and sensitive film. Extras include a conversation with Whelan and colleagues, four additional short dances, and Whelan's curtain call during her final performance. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



inventor and backwoods eccentric—began to gain notoriety for a “perpetual motion” machine that seemed to produce more energy than it expended. By exploiting certain magnetic field principles, Newman came up with a homemade generator that essentially defied the laws of thermodynamics. This was supposedly such a revolutionary concept that if mass-produced it could have literally changed the world. Director Jon Fox tells Newman's story with a riveting rise and fall arc: such a potentially game-changing invention should have made getting a patent a cinch, but what at first seems like a simple case of a patent officer's ignorance in rejecting Newman's idea eventually leads to all-out war against the U.S. government that takes on the dramatic magnitude of a 1970s paranoid thriller. Newman becomes embroiled in a David vs. Goliath struggle that eventually threatens to break him both financially and mentally. And viewers are left asking whether it was Newman's crackpot eccentricities or a governmental conspiracy that led to the final outcome. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Sandlin)

Unstoppable ★★½

(2017) 80 min. DVD: \$15.99. Documentary Go (avail. from www.lifeismymovie.us).

Almost every day on South Beach in Miami, aspiring country music singer and songwriter Robert Kraft (nicknamed “Raven”) engages in a workout that has now become a cause. Accompanied by his girlfriend “Miracle” and a band of followers, Kraft and other runners race eight miles a day, regardless of the weather. Kraft appears to be obsessive, living in a cluttered

apartment where he is surrounded by over 50 volumes of his mostly unpublished, unsold song lyrics. Although he admits that it can be a “lonely life,” he has good friends who try to help him overcome what they perceive to be his hoarding habit. While grizzled, the sixtiesomething Kraft looks astonishingly fit, but he complains of back pain and shortness of breath (a subsequent heart exam gives him a clean bill of health). Friends say that Kraft has a fear of losing control, and Kraft himself admits to having a one-track, highly-focused mind. Co-directors Mary Beth Koeth and Wallace Cruz's *Unstoppable* includes insights from acquaintances, fellow runners, and Kraft's girlfriend, who seem to have an unending supply of fondness and patience for his eccentricities. Kraft finds his life's meaning in songwriting and running and seems unlikely to quit any time soon. An offbeat portrait, this is recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during January and February, including: *Brotherhood of the Popcorn*, *Dali's Last Masterpiece*, *The Fish on My Plate*, *From Business to Being*, *Happy Collaborator: George Stoney*, *The Hadza: Last of the First*, *Lewis Black: Black to the Future*, *Poldark Revealed*, *Roadtrip Niger*, *Supergirl*, *Tickling Giants*, *Walk with Me*, *The Weight of Honor*, *Woman on Fire*, and much more!

Series Update

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

Featuring Spanish narration by Miriam Colón, and footage of Old San Juan, lighthouses, and more, **Visions of Puerto Rico** (55 min., DVD: \$24.99) is a 2006 program from PBS Video's *Visions of*... armchair travelogue series. See review of *Visions of Germany* in VL Online-5/07.



Recently released by Shout! Factory is **Power Rangers Jungle Fury: The Complete Series** (630 min., DVD: 4 discs, \$19.98), the 2008 16th season of the long-running live-action martial arts series for children. See review of *Power Rangers Zeo, Volume One* in VL-1/14.

Universal Studios Home Entertainment has released **Bob the Builder—Mega Machines** (63 min., DVD: \$16.99), featuring friendly handyman Bob and his crew as they join up with the Mega Machines to build a dam for Spring City in this computer-animated addition to the long-running franchise that also includes sing-along music videos. See review of *Bob the Builder: A Christmas to Remember* in VL-11/03.

PBS Video is releasing the 2017 fourth season of the illuminating genealogical series **Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: Season 4** (600 min., DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99), exploring the family trees of notable figures including Bernie Sanders, Carly Simon, Ava DuVernay, Larry David, Questlove, Garrison Keillor, Amy Schumer, and Dr. Phil. See review of *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* in VL Online-11/12.

PBS Video has also released **Craft in America: Borders & Neighbors** (120 min., DVD: \$24.99), the most recent addition to the Peabody Award-winning series, here focusing on artists, objects, techniques, and origins of craft work connecting Mexico and the United States. See review of *Craft in America: Messages* in VL-11/11.



Castle in the Sky ★★★

(1986) 125 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.95. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).



Compared to other anime films by Hayao Miyazaki such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Spirited Away*, and *Ponyo*, 1986's *Castle in the Sky* is in a slightly lesser league. Still, there is a lot to like in its tale of a young princess possessing a magical medallion, who is joined by a noble boy in an effort to keep the necklace from a duplicitous government official. And the range of animated locations—a small, rural village; a steampunk blimp that serves as a flying war machine; a jungle of tree roots that obscures a powerful stone—is dazzling and creative. The titular castle's name, "Laputa," has a literary provenance in *Gulliver's Travels*—a reference to a floating island-city. Yet for all that, *Castle in the Sky* feels more self-referential than enchanting, largely because the narrative is heavily influenced by *Star Wars* (country boy rescues princess, teams up with a buccaneer to stop a power-mad strongman, etc.) rather than Miyazaki's more deeply-felt collisions of the ordinary and mystical that lead to revelations of hidden worlds through which his troubled protagonists journey. The English-dubbed version features a vocal cast that includes Anna Paquin, Mark Hamill, and Cloris Leachman. Presented in dual-language DVD and Blu-ray/DVD Combo editions, rated PG, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, feature-length storyboards, and a booklet. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Code Geass: Akito the Exiled ★★

(2012) 5 discs. 290 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).

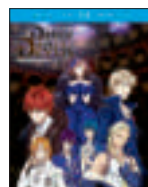


This compilation presents five OVA (original video animation) episodes from 2012 connected to the popular *Code Geass* series, which centers on a near-future world war taking place in an alternative timeline where the planet is divided between the Holy Britannian Empire representing the Americas, the Chinese Federation supporting Asia, and the combined European-African continents functioning under the Europa United banner. In these episodes, Leila Malcal is the commander of her own special European army unit called W-O. Leila, who was a Britannian aristocrat before joining the other side, is paired with a squad of Japanese teenage terrorists in their battle against the Britannian army. Complicating matters is the presence of Akito Hyuga, a blue-haired lieutenant under Leila's command who has a fairly important secret. The episodes feature lots of laborious mecha-inspired mayhem and violent warfare, and this offering doesn't complement the

well-established story flow of the *Code Geass* franchise all that well, nor does it hold up as a satisfactory standalone piece because so much of its convoluted plot is dependent on the original source material. Diehard fans of *Code Geass* may want to seek this out, but others can pass. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, rated TV-14, extras include select episode commentaries. Not a necessary purchase. (P. Hall)

Dance with Devils ★★

(2015) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This anime series centers on Ritsuka Tachibana, who attends a school featuring a fairly unusual student body. Most of her classmates are either devils or vampires, and their interest in Ritsuka stems from their belief that she has knowledge of the whereabouts of a grimoire (sorcery text). Getting Ritsuka to confirm that she knows where the grimoire is involves some rather unpleasant business: her mother is kidnapped, her grandfather's home is burned down, and she is physically and emotionally assaulted in what feels like a nonstop attack on her body and soul. Unfortunately, *Dance with Devils* has so many plot twists and convoluted backstories for nearly every character that it feels as if five different series were sandwiched into this single production. Perhaps this might have still worked if Ritsuka was resourceful or even sympathetic, but she is presented here as a cipher and this creates a personality void at the center of this stylishly animated series. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2015 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, rated TV-14, extras include episode commentaries. Optional. (P. Hall)

Handa-kun: The Complete Series ★★★

(2016) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.99. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).

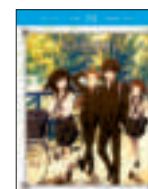


Teenager Sei Handa has something like a mythic rock-star/athlete status in school because of his penmanship and renderings. Yet, for some reason, he constantly misconstrues the hero-worship as bullying and underhanded malice. In individual episodes, a geeky street-poet tries to gain popularity by impersonating Handa; Handa helps a shy student librarian revitalize her collection (she becomes hopelessly obsessed with him, like all of the co-eds); and Handa is cast in a play for a culture festival. In the opener, Handa's worshipful corps (the "Handa Force") of admirers are so busy discussing the new anime that there isn't enough time to finish the episode. These metafiction touches make for a fairly funny series. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD

Combo edition, rated TV-14, extras include an episode commentary. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Hyouka: Part One ★★

(2012) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$59.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This anime series focuses on a group of high school students who engage in solving mysteries. The central character is Houtarou Oreki, who joins the school's classic literature club when it faces closure for lack of activity. Houtarou and three of the club's members—Eru Chitanda, Satoshi Fukube, and Mayaka Ibara—initially engage in a rather mild mystery of determining how someone without a key could gain access to a locked club room, but the series then graduates into a prolonged storyline involving mysteries surrounding Eru's uncle and missing books from the school's library. Following successful resolutions, the four students are recruited by classmates to explore a situation involving a film script authored by a writer who became ill and abandoned the work before it was completed. *Hyouka* is a rare anime centering on teens facing intellectual challenges (not aliens and robots). Unfortunately, it's also a bit dull—the storylines meander, and the ultimate payoffs to the mysteries are not exactly mind-bending. Presenting the first 11 episodes from 2012 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, rated TV-14, extras include a bonus OVA. Optional. [Note: *Hyouka: Part Two* is also newly available.] (P. Hall)

In This Corner of the World ★★★

(2016) 128 min. DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$22.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).



Adapted from the acclaimed manga by Fumiyo Kōno, this anime feature film charts civilian life in Japan from 1934 through 1946 as seen through the eyes of a young woman. Suzu is a teenage schoolgirl in Hiroshima who marries a boy she barely knows and becomes part of his family in Kure, a nearby town with a major naval port. The story quickly jumps through the years to World War II, a conflict that initially seems remote but comes closer as the tide turns and friends and family members die in combat, while air raids become increasingly frequent. Through it all Suzu tries to be a good wife to her gentle husband and a devoted daughter to her in-laws, finding ways to stretch a meager pantry as food rations grow smaller, while also enduring devastating attacks on her home. Illustrated in the traditional hand-drawn style of classic Japanese animation, the film takes a reflective approach to Suzu's story. While direct-

or Sunao Katabuchi never denies the loss and destruction of the war, he mostly steers clear of addressing the militancy within Japanese culture that drove the country to war, focusing instead on the civilian experience, particularly the spirit of survival within families and communities. Presented in separate dual-language DVD and Blu-ray/DVD Combo editions, rated PG-13, extras include filmmaker interviews and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Joker Game ★★

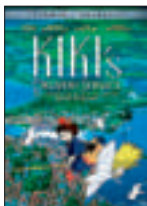
(2016) 4 discs. 300 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



This World War II-set anime series based on novels by Koji Yanagi begins with the establishment of the D-Agency spy network and its initial investigation of an American who might be engaged in espionage against the Imperial Army. Unfortunately, *Joker Game* quickly becomes a bit too ambitious, sending its characters into the European and Chinese frontlines, while the level of historic revisionism regarding Japanese behavior during the war detracts from the melodramatic cloak-and-dagger adventure. Add to this a rather drab animation style and a quotidian screenplay and this series that tries very hard to be different comes up somewhat short. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, rated TV-MA, extras include a two-part bonus OVA. Optional (P. Hall)

Kiki's Delivery Service

★★★★★
(1989) 102 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

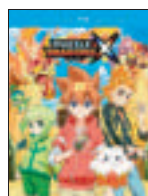


Hayao Miyazaki's classic 1989 Studio Ghibli anime centers on 13-year-old witch Kiki (voiced in the 1998 English dub by Kirsten Dunst), who leaves home to spend a year in a different city and improve her powers. Accompanied by her familiar—a black cat named Jiji—Kiki discovers that settling into a new locale isn't easy, especially when people are often indifferent, rude, and cruel (although some are kind, too). Taking a room above a bakery, Kiki begins a delivery service, flying around on her broom with boxes and baskets destined for recipients. When a boy who is sweet on her invites Kiki into his world of friends and fun, the less-than-confident witch becomes mercurial and slips into a genuine depression. Miyazaki presents his young protagonist realistically, capturing the self-doubt and insecurities experienced by adolescents. On a visual level, *Kiki's Delivery Service* is compellingly detailed, with an urban setting that looks like a dazzling fusion of different European and Japanese cities, along with scenes

of nature (such as a raging crow protecting her nest). Presented in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, rated G, extras include feature-length storyboards, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and cast and crew interviews. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. (T. Keogh)

Puzzle & Dragons X: Part One ★★½

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



Based on a mobile video game that was an *Angry Birds*-type sensation in Asia, *Puzzle & Dragons X* has a strong *Pokemon* vibe, centering on a lad named Ace, who lives in a world where humans dubbed Dragon Callers must tame monster dragons to help them battle evil. After some dire dragon incidents awaken Ace's latent ancestral powers as a Dragon Caller, he enrolls in an academy for training, where he faces a series of tests to become a full-fledged member of the Dragon Caller Guild. Fights, challenges, quests, and duels ensue, with little to offend, but also not a whole lot to truly engage anime fans. Presenting the first 13 episodes from this 2016 series in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, rated TV-PG, this mildly entertaining title is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Regalia: The Three Sacred Stars ★★½

(2016) 4 discs. 305 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Offering another trip to the well of the anime "mecha" genre—here placing kewpie-doll cute little heroines into giant robot combat chassis—*Regalia* is neither better nor worse than much similar fare. The setting is the island nation of Rimgarde, victim of a massive attack 12 years ago that was fought off by Empress Yui in the form of a "Regalia"—a huge humanoid fighting machine. Now more *Regalia* appear, seemingly trying to provoke the godlike powers that are latent in Yui and her adopted sister Rena while also seeking out more superhumans like them. And even more *Regalia* appear on the scene while a 2,000-year story arc behind the mayhem suggests that all of this is rooted in present-day experiments run amok in the area of weapons technology. Animation-wise, squiggly lines predominate in the ever-escalating battle scenes, while the characters trend towards the whinier end of the spectrum. *Regalia* does avoid the raunchier fan-service of many female mecha series, but it also fails to stand out in any notable way. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2016 in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Tamako Love Story ★★

(2014) 85 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo \$39.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



This feature-length anime title is based on the fey 12-episode anime series *Tamako Market*. In the film version, Tamako is a high school student who works in her family's mochi (Japanese rice cake) shop, located in a busy shopping arcade. Tamako, now in her third year of high school, faces uncertainty over the next step in her life. Complicating matters is Mochizo, a male friend planning to leave for film school, who surprises Tamako by unexpectedly declaring his interest in her. For anyone familiar with the earlier *Tamako Market*, this film will be somewhat disappointing due to the absence of the scene-stealing Dera, the bizarre talking bird from a distant country who winds up living in Tamako's family store and helping himself to the rice cakes. Dera's zany personality helped keep the series wonderfully off-kilter. But even for those unfamiliar with the earlier series, the story here is not particularly compelling, playing like a teen soap opera with emotions that are anvil-level obvious. Presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, this is an optional purchase. (P. Hall)

Tsukiuta—The Animation: The Complete Series ★★

(2016) 4 discs. 325 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$54.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors).



Tsukiuta is one of the various "idol" genre anime series that center on Japanese teens who moonlight as pop musicians. This particular title, a hit in the Far East, is a multimedia-platform franchise, with music CDs, video games, manga, and even live stage extravaganzas. But occidental viewers may well wonder what all the fuss is about, as two six-man bands (Six Gravity and Procellarum)—comprised of idealized schoolboy types—practically ooze teamwork and positivity as they perform on stage and engage in character-building exercises when out of the spotlight. Antics range from the mundane (running for class president, acting in a play, meeting fans as "manager for a day" at the record store vending their music) to the...only slightly less mundane (going on a trip that turns into a tongue-in-cheek monster hunt à la Scooby-Doo, dealing with female associates who have somehow transformed into toy bunnies). It's a harmless but also mostly weightless series. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2016 in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo edition, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-14, this is an optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Black Sabbath: The End

★★★

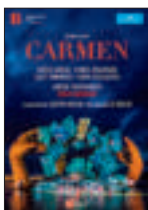
(2017) 109 min. DVD: \$19.98 (audio CD included), Blu-ray: \$24.98 (audio CD included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



The Ozzman cometh one last time (presumably) as frontman for '70s heavy metal pioneers Black Sabbath in this February 2017 swan song concert featuring founders Ozzy Osbourne on vocals, Tony Iommi on guitar, and Geezer Butler on bass, with backup from Tommy Clufetos on drums and Adam Wakeman on guitar and keyboards. The 16-song set (which includes some medleys) draws heavily from the group's first four LPs, with hits/faves including "Fairies Wear Boots," "War Pigs," "Iron Man," "Children of the Grave," and their signature hit "Paranoid." Even without the likely added audio sweetening in the studio, Ozzy sounds a bit fuzzy (when not downright garbled) and his stage moves are mostly limited to rocking back and forth in front of the mic. Still, the enthusiastic crowd head-banging along in Birmingham, England's Genting Arena are clearly enjoying this show from the early bad boy rockers (remember this line from "After Forever"—performed here—"Would you like to see the Pope at the end of a rope?"). Well, it's the end of an era, as they say. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a bonus disc with the five-song "Angelic Sessions," which includes the beloved "Sweet Leaf," and the still-haunting "Changes." Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Carmen ★★★

(2017) 124 min. In French w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$31.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



A visually spectacular production of Bizet's ever-popular opera performed on the huge lake stage of the 2017 Bregenz Festival, *Carmen* stars Gaëlle Arquez, who cuts an alluring figure (vocally and acting-wise) as the tempestuous seductress who drives hapless soldier Don José (Daniel Johansson) to distraction and, in doing so, sets tragedy in motion. By contrast, Johansson is good but, frankly, not Arquez's equal—neither in voice or dramatically. And while Scott Hendricks preens effectively as the toreador Escamillo, his singing is mediocre (but Elena Tsallagova makes Micaëla, the village girl who loves José, touching). The Vienna Symphony and the chorus, sequestered offstage (with actors lip-synching to the choristers' singing), offer a spirited rendition of the score under Paolo Carignani. But it is the visuals that dominate: Es Devlin's set consists of two huge, surrealist hands holding playing cards (as well as a cigarette), and as these cards revolve to

represent different characters and emotions (Carmen is the Queen of Hearts, José the Jack of Clubs), the actors actually scramble and leap from level to level. Director Kasper Holten also uses Lake Constance as part of the action—one dance is staged in shallow water, a corpse is dumped from a boat into the lake, and José doesn't simply strangle Carmen, he drowns her. And there are literal fireworks during the colorful bullfight scene. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include interviews with Holten and Devlin, along with a time-lapse featurette on the set construction. A fine rendition of a repertory warhorse, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Friar Alessandro: The Voice from Assisi ★★★

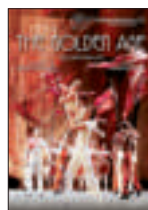
(2016) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0155-0.



Handsome young Franciscan friar Alessandro Brustenghi has become a popular performer, both on CD and TV, using his strong tenor for recitals of sacred songs that many find inspiring. In this 2016 concert, filmed at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, where the titular saint is buried and millions of tourists visit each year, Alessandro is accompanied by the Basilica choir, as well as the Aurora Children's Chorus, and the Chamber Orchestra of Perugia. The 11-song program ranges from such familiar Catholic pieces as "Panis angelicus" and "Ave Maria" (along with a rendition of the Lord's Prayer in Latin) to hymns like "Amazing Grace" and songs derived from Francis's poems. Alessandro performs with obvious commitment, although compared to operatic tenors, his voice is not especially refined, but it is big and booming, and he obviously speaks to the spiritual needs of a great many listeners. Alessandro offers brief introductions to some of the selections, and the roving camera provides glimpses of the church's beautiful interior, which includes frescoes by such painters as Giotto. Presented in stereo, extras include an interview with Alessandro. Likely to appeal to those with a love of sacred music, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Golden Age ★★★

(2016) 103 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



In its 1930 premiere at Leningrad's Kirov Theatre, Dmitri Shostakovich's ballet was a pro-Communist satire about a Russian football team that travels to the capitalist West, only to be duped and mistreated by various bourgeois villains before

uniting with the local workers to overthrow the exploitative regime. Shortly after its debut, however, it was suppressed by Stalinist censors, supposedly because of its inclusion of decadent Western dances and tunes like "Tea for Two." Apart from an orchestral suite, the work was largely forgotten until choreographer Yuri Grigorovich revived it in 1982 for Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet, set to a new libretto by Isaak Glikman that recast the tale as a romantic triangle centering on Rita (Nina Kaptsova), who dances at a ritzy nightclub as Margot, partner of Jacques (Mikhail Lobukhin). But Jacques moonlights as Yashka, leader of a gang of cutthroat thieves, and when honest fisherman Boris (Ruslan Skvortsov) becomes his rival for Rita's affections, the outcome is never in doubt. Grigorovich also fiddled with the score, dropping numbers and adding the slow movements of Shostakovich's piano concertos for two elaborate *pas de deux*. The Bolshoi company delivers a fine rendition of Grigorovich's version in this 2016 Moscow revival, with the dancers, conductor Pavel Klinchev, and stage designer Simon Virsaladze collaboratively creating a vibrant portrait of Soviet Russia during Lenin's New Economic Policy, when a tolerance of capitalism supposedly led to criminality and disorder. While it would still be nice to see Shostakovich's ballet as he originally envisaged it, this is an enjoyable reworking. 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)

Hans Zimmer: Live in Prague ★★½

(2016) 138 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



In an interview, prolific film composer Hans Zimmer once said that his scores—even for epics such as *Gladiator* or superhero franchises like *The Dark Knight*—were based on very simple devices and themes. And his point is proven in this May 2016 concert at the O2 Arena in Prague featuring Zimmer, a group of hand-picked instrumentalists, an orchestra, vocal soloists, and a chorus. Although a broad range of films are represented—*Driving Miss Daisy*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Madagascar*, *Crimson Tide*, *Angels and Demons*, *Gladiator*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Lion King*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *True Romance*, *Rain Man*, *Man of Steel*, *The Thin Red Line*, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, *The Dark Knight Trilogy*, *Interstellar* and *Inception*—many of the selections consist of short motifs that are endlessly repeated with layers of sound added along the way. The effect can be momentarily hypnotic, but is rarely melodically memorable. Zimmer is, however, a master of orchestration, and his employment of different instruments often results in striking combinations. Moreover,

he can also work in a more song-like vein, as is clear from *The Lion King* pieces. Zimmer offers brief introductions to the numbers, often including background information on their composition, and frequently calls out members of his band for special recognition. Throughout, the large audience responds enthusiastically, and Zimmer fans will probably share their reaction. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and Dolby Atmos and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

I Due Foscari ★★★

(2016) 122 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



Since Plácido Domingo has moved from tenor to baritone roles, one of his favorite vehicles has been this 1844 opera by Verdi, which pits a father's love against a demand for justice. Francesco Foscari (Domingo), the elderly doge of Venice, is being pressured to exile his son Jacopo, who is falsely accused of murder. Despite the pleas of Jacopo's wife Lucrezia, the doge feels compelled to enforce the court's decision, and even though the real killer confesses, it comes too late to save Jacopo, who dies on the prison ship. A 2014 Covent Garden production starring Domingo and Francesco Meli as Jacopo has already appeared on disc (VL-9/16), and this 2016 mounting at La Scala in Milan also teams Meli with Domingo, who both again sing superbly, with Meli's tenor ringing out sonorously and Domingo's voice defying his 75 years, even if a few of the lower notes are weak. The other principals are new, but Anna Pirozzi as Lucrezia and Andrea Concetti as Foscari's enemy Loredano are the equals of their London counterparts, while the company's orchestra and chorus perform strongly for conductor Michele Mariotti. On the visual side, Alvis Hermanis's staging is busier than Thaddeus Strassberger's was in the dank, gloomy Covent Garden production, with lots of video projections, moving panels, and even statues (like the St. Mark Lion) roaming the stage, but is not much more effective. In sum, the two *Foscari*s are fairly equal, and with Domingo headlining, either or both are desirable. Presented in DTS 5.1 on DVD (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, extras include an interview with Domingo. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Jeff Beck: Live at the Hollywood Bowl ★★★

(2016) 97 min. DVD: \$32.98 (audio CDs included), Blu-ray: \$32.98 (audio CDs included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Grammy-winning British guitarist Jeff Beck celebrated 50 years in the

business here by recognizing the country that influenced his sound the most. Aside from the choice of venue—the venerable Hollywood Bowl—most of his collaborators for this 2016 concert hail from the United States. His band members include Jonathan Joseph on drums, former Prince associate Rhonda Smith on bass, and Carmen Vandenberg from the U.K. duo Bones on guitar. Special guests include Buddy Guy, Beth Hart, Jimmy Hall (of Wet Willie), Billy F. Gibbons (ZZ Top), and Steven Tyler. Famed keyboard player Jan Hammer marks an exception to the mostly-American guest rule since the former Mahavishnu Orchestra player (and *Miami Vice* composer) hails from the Czech Republic, although he's lived in the U.S. since 1968. Rosie Oddie, Vandenberg's vocal partner, wearing a *Top Gun*-style jumpsuit, also sings on three songs that she co-wrote, including "The Revolution Will Be Televised," in which she contributes a spoken word rap by way of a bullhorn. Beck's generous 20-song set also includes three Yardbirds numbers (with the solid, if unspectacular Hall on vocals), several solo selections, a range of covers, and three Hammer compositions. Highlights include "Beck's Bolero," a showcase for the more experimental side of his style, and "Let Me Love You," on which Guy shares guitar duty with Beck (they were touring together at the time). The lowlight, disappointingly, is the Yardbirds' hit "Shapes of Things," to which Tyler adds an especially shouty vocal. The concert wraps up with an all-star jam on Prince's "Purple Rain," which goes on a bit longer than necessary but works surprisingly well considering the number of vocalists. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include two bonus audio CDs. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Jonah: The Musical

★★★

(2017) 116 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

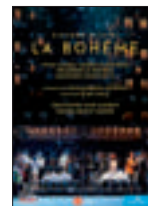


The biblical story of Jonah inspires this elaborate musical taped during a 2017 performance at the Sight & Sound Theatres in Lancaster, PA. Here, Jonah is a beleaguered village loner who is made uncomfortable by the seemingly endless praise connected to his prophecy favoring his kingdom's strength and security. When God calls on Jonah to travel to Nineveh to prophesize its doom, he instead flees by boat to distant Tarshish. Of course, we all know what happens to Jonah on his Mediterranean cruise, but the challenge here lies in turning a provocative tale of responsibility and repentance into family-friendly entertainment that features lots of light comedy without diluting the religious context. For the most part, the show succeeds, thanks to imaginative stage effects—most

notably in Jonah's violent expulsion from the ship and the arrival of the ethereal giant whale that serves as his captor for three days. Rodney Coe is an appealing Jonah who finds himself baffled and bothered by an overbearing mother, an uncooperative donkey, drunken sailors who turn on him in stormy weather, and a Nineveh population who are a bit too eager to break into song and dance. There is also a surprise appearance of a central New Testament character who was definitely not in the Book of Jonah. Presented in 5.1 surround sound, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (P. Hall)

La Bohème ★★★

(2016) 112 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



The chief distinction of Àlex Ollé's 2016 Turin staging of Puccini's ever-popular opera—commemorating its premiere 120 years earlier in the city under the baton of Toscanini—is its updating from 1830s Paris to what appears to be one of the more rundown areas of the present-day City of Light. Otherwise, the production is rather traditional, which is somewhat surprising given that Ollé is a director of the Catalan group La Fura dels Baus, whose earlier opera mountings have been grandiose affairs crammed with special effects. Fortunately, the relative simplicity of his approach here allows the pathos of the doomed romance between penurious painter Rodolfo and pretty Mimi to come through affectingly. While neither Irina Lungu as Mimi nor Giorgio Berrugi as Rodolfo will efface memories of better-known exponents of the roles, they sing well and make a touching couple (especially when she reveals the baldness that her wasting disease has caused). The other soloists are also fine, as is the work of the company orchestra and chorus under the sensitive baton of Gianandrea Noseda, who takes pains to reveal niceties in the score that most other conductors miss. It would be hard to favor this *La Bohème* over starrier stagings from more prestigious venues, but this one is an effective rendering of a tear-jerker that, even after more than a century, understandably remains an audience favorite. Presented in DTS 5.1 on DVD (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Richard M. Sherman: Songs of a Lifetime

★★★1/2

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-5317-0253-3.



Nearly 90, songwriter Richard Sherman (and his late brother Rob-

ert) crafted songs for many of Walt Disney's most popular films, including *The Parent Trap*, *The Jungle Book* and, most notably, *Mary Poppins*, the latter earning him Academy Awards. Filmed at L.A.'s EastWest Studios in 2015, this PBS-aired concert peppered with reminiscences serves up a slew of Sherman's hits—including "The Wonderful Thing About Tiggers," "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," and "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," performed by the tunesmith and guests. The son of a Tin Pan Alley songwriter, Richard's first published song was performed by cowboy star Gene Autry, and he followed this with diverse tunes performed by Louis Prima, Louis Armstrong, and Angela Lansbury. When a couple of his songs sung by former Mouseketeer Annette Funicello proved to be hits, Walt Disney took notice, and Sherman became the great man's favorite composer. Most of Sherman's songs are marked by humor and clever wordplay, as in "Ugly Bug Ball," and "Chim Chim Cher-ee." His whimsical side is displayed here in what he calls his "smash flop" songs, providing upbeat ditties on the *Hindenburg* and *Titanic* disasters. In between film gigs, Sherman wrote songs for the Disneyland and Walt Disney World theme parks, including—to the great irritation of many—"It's a Small World." Although Sherman's singing voice is now raspy, he generously shares the stage with energetic rising stars, including Ashley Brown (star of Broadway's *Mary Poppins*). Presented in 5.1 surround sound, extras include an interview with Sherman and a photo slideshow. Offering a valuable record of a great career, this is highly recommended. (S. Rees)

Slipknot: Day of the Gusano ★★

(2015) 91 min. DVD: \$17.99 (audio CD included), Blu-ray: \$26.98 (audio CD included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Iowa heavy metal band Slipknot made a splash with its 1999 debut album, although the group has gone through so many personnel changes over the years it's hard not to think of Slipknot as more of a concept than a cohesive ensemble. Slipknot made their first trip to Mexico City in 2015, an experience captured in this documentary that is directed (in the loosest sense) by the band's percussionist, Shawn Crahan, who employs the usual template for concert movies, alternating performance clips with interviews of band members and gushing fans. (Weirdly, or perhaps just cheaply, there are no English subtitles in scenes with Spanish-speaking fans.) The aging musicians of Slipknot, who still wear the group's trademark masks on stage, are seen in their free time talking about a variety of subjects including the travel benefits of being in a touring band, shopping in an outdoor market, watching acrobats in a surreal performance, and—in

the only interesting sequence—visiting the impressive Pyramid of the Sun. As for the music, Slipknot's chunka-chunka-chunka death metal on hits during a 17-song set—including "Sarcastrophe," "Psychosocial," "Duality," "The Heretic Anthem," and "Wait and Bleed"—will prove monotonous to all but diehard fans, and certainly doesn't compensate for the boredom-inducing offstage footage. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a bonus audio CD. Optional. (T. Keogh)

Sting: Live at the Olympia Paris ★★½

(2017) 102 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Former Police frontman Sting performs a crowd-pleasing 17-song set in Paris's relatively intimate Olympia music hall in this April 2017 concert. Rocking bass guitar, the fluent-in-French Sting shares some small talk with the locals (with no subtitles), but these interludes are brief as he serves up Police songs and solo career hits, including several drawn from his 2016 return-to-rock-roots release *57th & 9th*. Kicking off with the solid Police numbers "Synchronicity II" and "Spirits in the Material World" (with a bit too much of the reggae "e-yo-yo"—almost a parody of the Police), Sting is joined by a fine backup band that includes guitarists Dominic Miller and Rufus Miller, drummer Josh Freese, and accordionist Percy Cardona, along with special backing vocal guests Joe Sumner (Sting's son) and two members of The Last Bandoleros. Sting fans will appreciate the excellent renditions of faves such as "Englishman in New York," "Fields of Gold," "One Fine Day," and "Fragile," while Police aficionados will be overjoyed with the band rocking out on "Message in a Bottle," "Roxanne" (with a beautifully interwoven Bill Withers's "Ain't No Sunshine"), and the ultimate creepy stalker megahit "Every Breath You Take." The only serious misstep here is an insultingly jokey version of the punk hit "Next to You," from the Police's 1978 debut album *Outlandos d'Amour*. But forget the caveats; this will find huge favor with Sting fans. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include bonus songs by openers Sumner and The Last Bandoleros. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

The Who—Tommy: Live at the Royal Albert Hall ★★

(2017) 143 min. DVD: \$15.98, Blu-ray: \$21.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Technically, this performance by The Who of their seminal 1969 rock opera *Tommy*

may be presented "live in its entirety for the first time in [The Who's] long and illustrious career," but the content difference between this April 2017 Royal Albert Hall concert and *The Who: Tommy and Quadrophenia Live*—featuring a 1989 performance of *Tommy*—is musically miniscule, aside from a handful of guest singers on the earlier production. The more notable differences are the absence of the late John Entwistle here, the sight of guitarist Pete Townshend trying to read sheet music while pushing his sliding glasses back up his nose, and the often ragged vocals and deeply diminished mic-twirling antics by 73-year-old frontman Roger Daltrey. Simply, and hopefully not unkindly, put—The Who are getting too old for this stuff. Still, the new concert is for a good cause (Teenage Cancer Trust), and once the pressure of performing *Tommy* in toto is over, the two rock legends seem to relax as they serve up an encore round of hits, including "I Can't Explain," "Who Are You," and "Won't Get Fooled Again." Nostalgic Who fans may still enjoy hearing less-than-optimum renditions of *Tommy* classics such as "Amazing Journey," "Pinball Wizard," and "I'm Free," performed with a solid backup band that includes Simon Townshend on guitar and Zak Starkey on drums, but this one is mostly for diehard fans only. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include behind-the-scenes rehearsal footage. Optional. (R. Pitman)



Definitive Monterey Pop

Criterion has released the definitive Blu-ray edition of *The Complete Monterey Pop Festival* (147 min., not rated, Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$69.95), capturing the landmark 1967 concert. Originally reviewed in *VL-1/03*, the set includes three films by D.A. Pennebaker: *Monterey Pop* (1968), featuring The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Otis Redding, Simon and Garfunkel, The Mamas and the Papas, Eric Burdon and The Animals, The Who, Big Brother and the Holding Company with Janis Joplin, Ravi Shankar, Jefferson Airplane, Canned Heat, and Country Joe and the Fish; *Jimi Plays Monterey* (1986); and *Shake! Otis at Monterey* (1986). Extras include audio commentaries, interviews, a photo essay, archival promo materials, and a booklet. But the big addition is the bonus disc "The Outtake Performances," featuring more songs from the above bands, as well as The Association, Buffalo Springfield, The Blues Project, The Byrds, The Electric Flag, Laura Nyro, The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Al Kooper, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Tiny Tim.



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

Bullfrog Films

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

The Cinema Guild

115 W. 30th St., Ste. 800
New York, NY 10001
Tel: (800) 723-5522
Web: cinemaguild.com

Collective Eye Films

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

Documentary Educational Resources

101 Morse St.
Watertown, MA 02472
Tel: (800) 569-6621
Web: der.org

Dreamscape Media

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

Film Movement

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

First Run Features

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

Grasshopper Film

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

Green Planet Films

P.O. Box 247
Corte Madera, CA 94976
Tel: (415) 377-5471
Web: greenplanetfilms.org

Human Relations Media

59 Kensico Dr.
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
Tel: (800) 431-2050
Web: hrmvideo.com

Icarus Films

32 Court St., 21st Fl.
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Tel: (800) 876-1710
Web: icarusfilms.com

Indiana University Press

Herman B Wells Library 350
1320 E. 10th St.
Bloomington, IN 47405
Tel: (800) 842-6796
Web: iupress.indiana.edu

IndiePix

3101 Vernon Blvd., 1st Floor
Astoria, NY 11106
Tel: (212) 684-2333
Web: indiepixfilms.com

KimStim

417 13th St. #2
Brooklyn, NY 11215
Web: kimstim.com

Kino Lorber Edu

333 W. 39th St., Ste. 503
New York, NY 10018
Tel: (800) 562-3330
Web: kinolorberedu.com

Media Education Foundation

60 Masonic St., #A
Northampton, MA 01060
Tel: (800) 897-0089
Web: mediaed.org

Media Rich Learning

3 Cypress Ln.
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Tel: (312) 337-6000
Web: mediarichlearning.com

Music Box Films

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

National Film Board of Canada

P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3H5 CANADA
Tel: (800) 542-2164
Web: nfb.ca

Naxos of America

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

New Day Films

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

Passion River

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

PBS Video

2100 Crystal Dr.
Arlington, VA 22202
Tel: (800) 344-3337
Web: pbs.org

Seventh Art Releasing

6579 Pickwick St.
Los Angeles, CA 90042
Tel: (323) 259-8259
Web: 7thart.com

Social Action Media

2600 Tenth St. #610
Berkeley, CA 94710
Tel: (510) 367-3499
Web: socialactionmedia.com

Terra Nova Films

9848 S. Winchester Ave.
Chicago, IL 60643
Tel: (800) 779-8491
Web: terranova.org

Third World Newsreel

545 Eighth Ave., 5th Fl., Ste. 550
New York, NY 10018
Tel: (212) 947-9277
Web: twn.org

TMW Media Group

2321 Abbot Kinney Blvd.
Venice, CA 90291
Tel: (800) 262-8862
Web: tmwmedia.com

Tugg

4210 Spicewood Springs Rd., Ste. 200
Austin, TX 78759
Tel: (855) 321-8844
Web: edu.tugg.com

The Video Project

145 Ninth St., Ste. 102
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (800) 475-2638
Web: videoproject.com

Vision Video

P.O. Box 540
Worcester, PA 19490
Tel: (800) 523-0226
Web: visionvideo.com

YMAA Publication Center

P.O. Box 480
Wolfeboro, NH 03894
Tel: (800) 669-8892
Web: ymaa.com

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Best Docs

We are busily putting final touches on the *Video Librarian* website revamp (www.videolibrarian.com), which will include a dedicated section featuring 13 years worth of "Best Documentaries" selections. This year, after watching over 200 titles, we have once again come up with a list of 25 (see page 49), bringing our grand total to 325.

Each year, the list features a mix of higher-profile documentaries (past entries have included *Blackfish*, *Citizenfour*, *The Cove*, *Grizzly Man*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Inside Job*, *The Jinx*, *Man on Wire*, *March of the Penguins*, *Murderball*, *No End in Sight*, *Project Nim*, *Searching for Sugarman*, *Sicko*, *Taxi to the Dark Side*, *The Unknown Known*, *Waiting for Superman*, and *Weiner*) and less well-known titles (such as *51 Birch Street*, *112 Weddings*, *Best Kept Secret*, *Big Enough*, *Big Men*, *The City Dark*, *Dear Zachary*, *Four Seasons Lodge*, *The House I Live In*, *How to Dance in Ohio*, *The Learning*, *A Life Without Pain*, *Menstrual Man*, *Monster Camp*, *Nursery University*, *The Revisionaries*, *Sister Helen*, *Somm*, and *Sunset Story*).

This year's picks range across a wide variety of subjects, both contemporary and historical, although the latter often bring into focus hot-button topics that continue to make news today.

Ezra Edelman's *O.J.: Made in America* on the life and controversial murder trial of O.J. Simpson, and Raoul Peck's *I Am Not Your Negro* profile of outspoken African-American writer James Baldwin both resonated deeply during a year that saw an ugly resurgence of white supremacist activity and a corresponding commitment by activist groups such as Black Lives Matter to demand justice in the anything-but-United States.

The weight of history was also felt in Keith Maitland's animated documentary *Tower*, a dramatic re-creation and reflection on the first mass shooting in America on August 1, 1966 when a sniper on the observation deck of a University of Texas building fired on pedestrians below. On October 1 of last year, another sniper would shoot into a crowd gathered at a country music festival in Las Vegas, amassing a much higher body count.

"Body count" is a key phrase in Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's *The Vietnam War*, a gut-wrenching revisiting of a war that would not only radically change America, but also usher in the age of unconventional wars that seem to go on with no end in sight, seen today in the fight against ISIS.

And in a year of nuclear saber-rattling on the part of two madmen—our own President Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong-un—Robert Kenner's *Command and Control*, on the

history of nuclear proliferation and near-catastrophic accidents, offered a stark reminder of just how close to the apocalyptic precipice we stand.

And consider Maisie Crow's *Jackson* on abortion rights in the Deep South; Eric Juhola's *Growing Up Coy* on a 6-year-old transgender girl whose story played out in the national news, and Kristi Jacobson's harrowing *Solitary: Inside Red Onion State Prison* on life in a supermax facility—all are films dealing with issues that continue to pit Americans against one another.

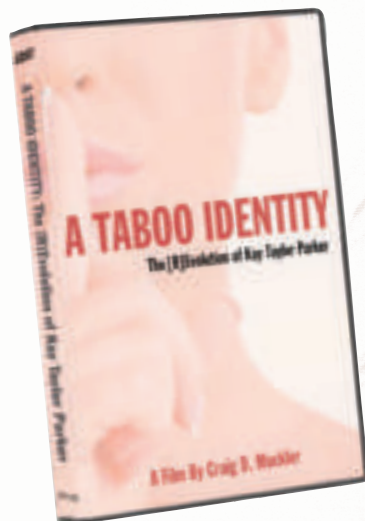
Even though these documentaries address heavy subjects, they also carry messages of hope, often have moments of disarming humor, and invariably underscore the complex and even contradictory nature of the human experience.

Case in point: I probably smiled the most this year watching Vanessa Gould's *Obit.*, which profiled obituary writers for the *New York Times*—a group who deal with death on a daily basis, but find the beauty, wonder, and dignity in life.

With 2017 in the rear view mirror, we are all looking forward to seeing what next year brings in the way of great documentaries.

Happy viewing to all in 2018!

Randy Pitman



A TABOO IDENTITY

KAY PARKER'S JOURNEY OF STRUGGLE, CONFLICT, AND RE-DISCOVERY FROM ADULT FILM LEGEND TO TODAY.

A Taboo Identity explores Kay Taylor Parker's journey from being an adult film legend to her current work as a metaphysical counselor. It addresses today's challenges of identity and the now common issue of past vs. present; a struggle faced by many in our changing times of social media and internet access to personal history.

Social psychologist, David W. Wahl introduces the viewer to Kay and the evolution of her sexuality to her newly evolved identity. Joining the discussion are longtime Kay Parker friends and associates including Seka, Howie Gordon, Bill Margold, Eric Edwards, Jill Schoelen, and Leon Isaac Kennedy.

A Taboo Identity provides viewers with a long and unflinching look at the actualization of Kay Taylor Parker.

SELLING POINTS

1. Kay Taylor Parker starred in 50 films including the acclaimed *Taboo* series before her early retirement from the Adult industry in the latter half of the 80s.
2. Kay was named to the AVN Hall of Fame and has received numerous awards including: Lifetime Achievement (Adult Film Association 1990), Lifetime Achievement (X-rated Critics Assn. 1990), Class Act Award for Outstanding Achievement as Adult Industry Ambassador 1985, Best Supporting Actress ("Careful He May Be Watching" 1987), and was named as one of 25 top legends at the Silver Anniversary of Adult Entertainment.

ORDERING INFO

UPC #760137081999

Item #: PP100 / SRP \$24.95

61 minutes / 16x9 / Not Rated / Stereo

Language: English w/Closed Captioning for the hearing impaired.

National Release Date: February 13, 2018

Available through all major distributors/

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THE LAST LAUGH

Featuring:

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Gilbert Gottfried
Rob Reiner
Judy Gold
& Many More!



History shows that even victims of Nazi concentration camps used humor as a means of survival and resistance. Still, any use of comedy in connection with this horror risks diminishing the suffering of millions. If the Holocaust is taboo, what are the implications for other controversial subjects – 9/11, AIDS, racism – in a society that prizes freedom of speech? Star-studded, provocative and thoroughly entertaining, THE LAST LAUGH dares to ask uncomfortable questions about just how free speech can really be, with unexpected and hilarious results that will leave you both laughing and appreciating the importance of humor even in the face of events that make you want to cry.

Documentary | Comedy | American Studies | Jewish Studies
85 min. | UPC: 602573452028 | SRP: \$59.95 | PPR: \$299.00
Exclusively Available For Libraries



DINA

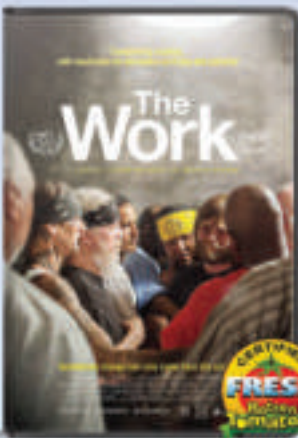


"Its lead gives the best performance of the year in the story of her life"

Indiewire

Dina, an outspoken and eccentric 49-year-old in suburban Philadelphia, invites her fiancé Scott, to move in with her, getting married in a few weeks and there's still so much to do. She has to move her boyfriend from his parents' house to her apartment, and settle him in to only the second home he's ever had, all while juggling his schedule as an early morning Walmart door greeter. Having grown up neurologically diverse in a world blind to the value of their experience, the two are head-over-heels for one another, but shacking up poses a new challenge.

Documentary | Biography | Disability Studies | Romance | Family Studies
103 min. | UPC: 888608667708 | SRP: \$24.95 | PPR: \$299.00 | Closed Captioned



THE WORK



Runner Up

'BEST DOCUMENTARY of 2017'



"The Work is enlightening yet also punishing."

The New York Times

THE WORK follows three men from outside as they participate in a four-day group therapy retreat with level-four convicts. Over the four days, each man in the room takes his turn at delving deep into his past. The raw and revealing process that the incarcerated men undertake exceeds the expectations of the free men, ripping them out of their comfort zones and forcing them to see themselves and the prisoners in unexpected ways. THE WORK offers a powerful and rare look past the cinder block walls, steel doors and the dehumanizing tropes in our culture to reveal a movement of change and redemption that transcends what we think of as rehabilitation.

Documentary | Criminal Justice | Rehabilitation | Therapy
89 min. | UPC: 888608667715 | SRP: \$150.00 | PPR: \$350.00
Exclusively Available for Libraries



44 PAGES

Exclusive Access Into Widely-Renowned
Highlights Magazine



"A good reminder that...Highlights helped shape a good portion of us modern day pop-culture nerds."

A.V. CLUB

Following the creation of the cultural phenomenon's 70th anniversary issue, from the first editorial meeting to its arrival in homes, and introducing the people who passionately produce the monthly publication for "the world's most important people,"...children. Along the way, a rich and tragic history is revealed, the state of childhood, technology, and education is explored, and the future of print media is questioned. Family-owned since its inception in 1946 and never containing a single advertisement, Highlights stands alone in the magazine publishing world and has become an American icon, with over a billion issues delivered to children worldwide.

Documentary | History | Education | Childhood Studies
97 min. | UPC: 602573452127 | SRP: \$69.95 | PPR: \$325.00
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