

July-August 2016

Video Librarian

VOL. 31 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 4



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Marguerite | Meet the Hitlers | Normal Is Over | The Sex Trade | Murder of a President | Jackie Robinson | War & Peace

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Marguerite ★★ ★
Cohen, 129 min., in French w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99, Aug. 2



Florence Foster Jenkins, a real-life 20th-century opera-loving socialite who insisted on giving recitals despite a manifest lack of talent, is clearly the inspiration behind filmmaker Xavier Giannoli's biting yet also strangely affectionate period piece. *Marguerite* Dumont (Catherine Frot) is a wealthy French baroness who holds private concerts in order to raise funds for worthy causes, appearing herself—following performances by gifted musicians—in near-regal splendor to sing demanding coloratura pieces, blissfully unaware of the screeches emanating from her throat. *Marguerite*'s industrialist husband (André Marcon), a genteel philanderer, is embarrassed by his wife's avocation, but she is protected from derision by her loyal butler (Denis Mpunga). When a gate-crashing reporter (Sylvain Dieuaide) wryly extols the truthfulness of *Marguerite*'s voice, this backhanded compliment persuades her to not only plan a recital in the opera house, but also hire an over-the-hill tenor (Michel Fau) in desperate need of money as her vocal coach. Although there are some struggling subplots—including a romance between the journalist and a young soprano—*Marguerite* for the most part deftly walks a fine line be-

tween farce and tragedy, never simply ridiculing the needy, childishly ebullient baroness or turning her into a totally pathetic figure. Part of this success is due to Frot's ability to make her character touchingly infantile. Visually, *Marguerite*'s alabaster sheen is a treat for the eye, while the score is quite lovely—apart from the baroness's deliberately painful shrieks. Music lovers in particular should find it quite engaging. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Ten days after *Marguerite* debuts on home video, *Florence Foster Jenkins*—filmmaker Stephen Frears's (*The Queen*, *Philomena*) latest bio-pic—will open in theaters (Aug. 12).



Based on the life of the woman who inspired *Marguerite*, the film stars Meryl Streep in the title role as the New York heiress who dabbles in amateur opera, despite being a terrible singer. Hugh Grant costars as Jenkins's husband and manager St. Clair Bayfield, with Simon Helberg (*The Big Bang Theory*) playing Cosmé McMoon, Jenkins's newly employed accompanist on piano.

Cover photo: Catherine Frot in *Marguerite*. Courtesy of Cohen Media Group.

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

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DVD PICKS

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Video Newsbriefs

Altman, Richardson, and Welles Headline Criterion's August Slate

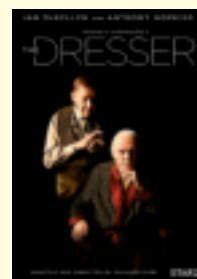
The Criterion Collection's impressive August slate kicks off August 9 with Robert Altman's brilliant 1971 deconstructed Western *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), starring Warren Beatty as an enterprising gambler and Julie Christie as a bordello madam—both newcomers to a raw Pacific Northwest mining town. Coming August 16 is director Stig Björkman's 2015 Swedish documentary *Ingrid Bergman: In Her Own Words* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), a revealing new tribute to the legendary actress, featuring letters and diary entries (read by Alicia Vikander), photos, and archival footage. Arriving August 23 is Tony Richardson's 1961 British New Wave benchmark *A Taste of Honey* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), starring Rita Tushingham as a disaffected teenager finding her way amidst the economic desperation of industrial Manchester. Also slated for August 23 are new DVD and Blu-ray editions of Hiroshi Teshigahara's radical 1964 art-house sensation *Woman in the Dunes* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), featuring Eiji Okada as an amateur entomologist who misses his bus back to civilization and is persuaded to spend the night with a young widow (Kyoko Kishida) in her hut at the bottom of a sand dune. Coming August 30 is Orson Welles's 1966 Shakespeare nod *Chimes at Midnight* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95)—for decades one of the world's most sought-after lost films (presented here in a gorgeous new restoration)—which focuses on the Bard's ultimate rapsallion, Sir John Falstaff (played by Welles with looming, lumbering grace). Also bowing on August 30 is Welles's first color film and final completed fictional feature, 1968's *The Immortal Story* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), a moving and wistful adaptation of a tale by Isak Dinesen starring Welles as a wealthy merchant in 19th-century Macao, and costarring Jeanne Moreau.

"The Dresser" with Anthony Hopkins and Ian McKellen Slated for July 12 Release from Anchor Bay

Academy Award-nominee Ian McKellen and Academy Award-winner Anthony Hopkins star in *The Dresser* (DVD: \$24.98), coming July 12 from Anchor

Bay Entertainment. Adapted from the classic 1980 West End and Broadway play by Ronald Harwood (previously made into an award-winning 1983 film starring Albert Finney and Tom Courtenay),

this wickedly funny and deeply moving story of friendship and loyalty also stars Academy Award-nominee Emily Watson and Vanessa Kirby. One fateful night in a small English regional theatre during World War II, a troupe of touring actors stage a production of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Bombs are falling, sirens are wailing, and the curtain is going up in one hour, but the actor/manager known as Sir (Hopkins)—who is playing Lear—is nowhere to be found, leaving his dresser Norman (McKellen) scrambling. Sir will ultimately reflect on his lifelong accomplishments and seek to reconcile his turbulent friendships with those in his employ before the final curtain.



Clarence Thomas Bio-Pic "Confirmation" Coming August 2 from HBO Home Entertainment

On August 2, HBO Home Entertainment will release the critically acclaimed *Confirmation* (DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98), detailing the explosive Clarence Thomas Supreme Court nomination hearings that brought the country to a standstill and forever changed the way we think about sexual harassment. In July 1991, President George H.W. Bush nominated Judge Clarence Thomas to fill Justice Thurgood Marshall's seat on the U.S. Supreme Court. In October, during the final days of Thomas's confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, both *Newsday* and NPR broke the story that one of Thomas's former employees, law professor Anita Hill, had accused him of sexually harassing her 10 years earlier. These revelations triggered a maelstrom of events, with both Hill and Thomas testifying about the allegations before a stunned and riveted television audience. Starring Wendell Pierce as Thomas and Kerry Washington as Hill, costars include Greg Kinnear, Jeffrey Wright, and Jennifer Hudson. Bonus features include a discussion with Pierce and Washington on the historical impact of the hearings, and a "Character Spot" featurette.

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Dark Side of the Full Moon

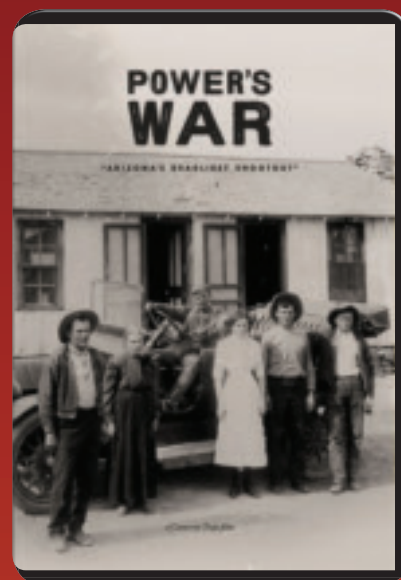
- **1 in 7 women will suffer from a maternal mental health complication**

Dark Side of the Full Moon tells the intimate story of maternal mental health complications and the failings to treat more than 1.3 million mothers suffering each year in the United States.

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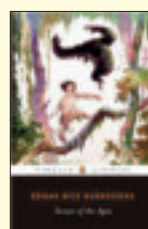
The following films based on books are slated to open during July and August. Movie release dates are subject to change.

Coming in July

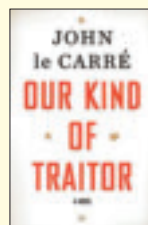
The BFG (July 1) is an adaptation of prolific author Roald Dahl's 1982 children's book. Directed by Steven Spielberg, the fantasy-adventure film features Mark Rylance, Ruby Barnhill, Penelope Wilton, and Bill Hader.



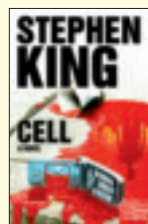
The Legend of Tarzan (July 1) is based on the classic character created in 1912 by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Directed by David Yates, the action-adventure film stars Margot Robbie, and Alexander Skarsgård as Tarzan.



Our Kind of Traitor (July 1) is adapted from the 2010 novel by John le Carré. Directed by Susanna White, this spy thriller stars Ewan McGregor, Naomie Harris, Stellan Skarsgård, and Damian Lewis.



Cell (July 8) is based on Stephen King's 2006 apocalyptic horror novel. Directed by Tod Williams, the sci-fi film stars John Cusack, Samuel L. Jackson, Isabelle Fuhrman, and Stacy Keach.



The Infiltrator (July 13) is based on Robert Mazur's 2009 autobiography, subtitled "My Secret Life Inside the Dirty Banks Behind Pablo Escobar's Medellín Cartel." Directed by Brad Furman, the DEA crime drama stars Bryan Cranston.



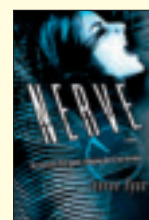
Tulip Fever (July 15) is an adaptation of Deborah Moggach's 1999 period novel. Directed by Justin Chadwick, this Netherlands-set drama stars Alicia Vikander, Dane DeHaan, and Christoph Waltz.



Into the Forest (July 22) is based on Jean Hegland's 1997 dystopian feminist novel. Directed by Patricia Rozema, the sci-fi drama stars Ellen Page, Evan Rachel Wood, Max Minghella, and Callum Keith Rennie.



Nerve (July 27) is based on Jeanne Ryan's 2012 YA thriller. Co-directed by Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman, the film stars Emma Roberts, Dave Franco, Juliette Lewis, Samira Wiley, and Emily Meade.



Indignation (July 29) is based on the 2008 Philip Roth novel set at an Ohio college during the Korean War. Directed by James Schamus, the film stars Logan Lerman, Sarah Gadon, and Tracy Letts.

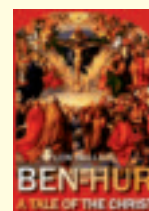


Coming in August

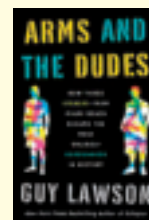
The Little Prince (Aug. 5) is adapted from French aristocrat Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's classic 1943 novella. Directed by Mark Osborne, this stop-motion/computer-animated adaptation features the voices of Jeff Bridges, Rachel McAdams, Benicio del Toro, and Ricky Gervais.



Ben-Hur (Aug. 19) is based on Lew Wallace's 1880 novel *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*. Directed by Timur Bekmambetov, this historical epic stars Morgan Freeman, Toby Kebbell, Nazanin Boniadi, Rodrigo Santoro, and Jack Huston as Jewish prince Judah Ben-Hur.



War Dogs (Aug. 19) is based on Guy Lawson's 2011 *Rolling Stone* article and subsequent 2015 book *Arms and the Dudes*. Directed by Todd Phillips, this arms dealer drama stars Miles Teller, Jonah Hill, and Bradley Cooper.





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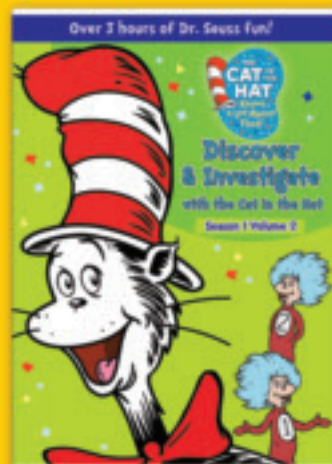


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Mixed Media features new release information on upcoming video games and TV series on DVD/Blu-ray, as well as notable older titles that are re-priced or new to DVD/Blu-ray.

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.

July 3—July 9

Rocket League (505 Games, PS4/XOne: \$29.99, Rated: E). Soccer meets driving in this futuristic sports-action game in which players are equipped with booster-rigged vehicles that can be transformed into balls for incredible goals or epic saves in multiple arenas.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms XIII (Koei Tecmo, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). In this long-running, turn-based, tactical role-playing simulation strategy game inspired by the Chinese historical novel, players engage in epic battles in a quest to unify 2nd-century China.

July 10—July 16

Ghostbusters (Activision, PS4/XOne: \$49.99, Rated: E10+). In this third-person action game set after the events of the 2016 feature film, players suit up as ghostbusters, exploring Manhattan while blasting ghosts and trapping runaway ghouls.

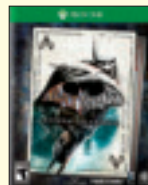
Resident Evil 5 (Capcom, PS4/XOne: \$19.99, Rated: M). In this high-definition remastered edition of the third-person survival-horror franchise entry, players control protagonist Chris Redfield, who is sent to Africa to investigate a deadly new menace.



Song of the Deep (Insomniac, PS4/XOne: \$14.99, Rated: RP). In this third-person underwater action-adventure game—an exclusive Gamestop (www.gamestop.com) release—young Merryn pilots a submarine and explores in a diving suit while searching for her missing father.

July 24—July 30

Batman: Return to Arkham (Warner, PS4/XOne: \$49.99, Rated: T). Two of the most critically acclaimed third-person action titles of the last generation—*Batman: Arkham Asylum* and *Batman: Arkham City*—are presented here in fully remastered editions.



Fairy Fencer F: Advent Dark Force (Idea Factory, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this remastered and expanded edition of the third-person fantasy role-playing game *Fairy Fencer F*, players are offered three new story paths, facing off against members of an evil organization in turn-based battles.

Super Dungeon Bros (Wired Productions, PS4/XOne: \$19.99, Rated: E10+). In this rock 'n' roll-themed third-person dungeon brawler, a band of mighty rock bros navigate a hellish fantasy realm, fight hordes of the undead, and gain epic loot while uncovering the legends of lost rock stars.

August 7—August 13

No Man's Sky (Sony, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). This highly-anticipated third-person adventure game lets players explore an infinite universe, where they will discover unique planets and lifeforms, and make choices whether to fight, trade or explore—decisions that will have consequences.

August 21—August 27

Deus Ex: Mankind Divided (Square Enix, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this sequel to the popular third-person action-adventure game, players once again step into the role of Adam Jensen, now in the year 2029, as humankind is divided and augmented humans are treated as outcasts.



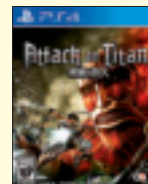
The King of Fighters XIV (Atlus, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). This latest entry in the popular tournament fighting game franchise features a total of 50 fighters facing off in a variety of settings.

Madden NFL 17 (EA, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). The most popular football franchise is back with new mechanics and a fresh authentic defensive artificial intelligence system.

August 28—September 3

Assetto Corsa (505 Games, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). This racing simulation game features over 100 cars and 20-plus tracks with a focus on pure physics realism for meticulous car handling.

Attack on Titan (Koei Tecmo, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). This third-person action-adventure game based on the popular anime series pits players against multiple enemies in various scenes from the series.



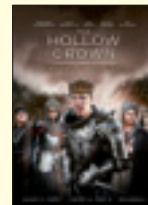
God Eater 2: Rage Burst (Bandai Namco, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: RP). Three years after the events of the original action-adventure game, players are sent to investigate a mysterious red rain that sparks the fatal pandemic called the Black Plague in this third-person action-RPG.

Hatsune Miku: Project Diva X (Sega, PS4: \$49.99, Rated: T). In this rhythm game starring digital singer Hatsune Miku, players perform 30 tracks in a narrative that centers on Miku and her friends, who take various requests as they explore the five clouds that make up their world.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.98). This 2016 three-part miniseries includes adaptations of Shakespeare's history plays *Henry VI, Part I* and *Part II*, and *Richard III*, featuring Sophie Okonedo, Tom Sturridge, Michael Gambon, Benedict Cumberbatch, and Judi Dench.

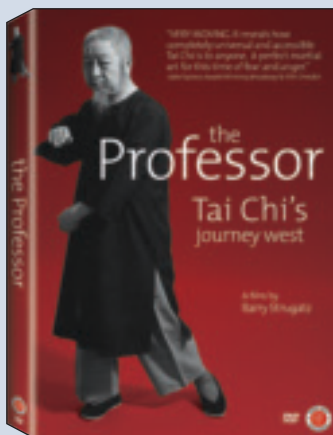


How to Get Away with Murder: The Complete Second Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). The mystery swirls around the culprit who shot criminal defense attorney Annalise Keating (Viola Davis in an Emmy-winning role) in this 2015-16 sophomore season featuring Alfred Enoch and Charlie Weber.

Power: The Complete Second Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Aired on Starz, this 2015 sophomore season of the Manhattan



FIRST RUN FEATURES PRESENTS



"East engagingly meets West in this affectionate documentary portrait of Cheng Man-Ching, the Chinese master who brought Tai Chi to New York during the groovy but stressed-out '60s."

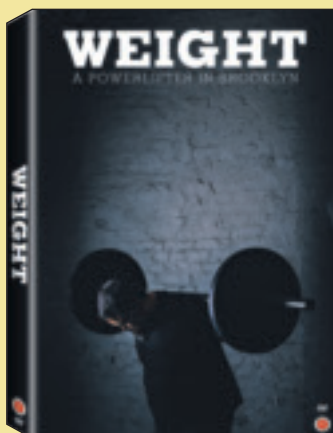
-LOS ANGELES TIMES

THE PROFESSOR TAI CHI'S JOURNEY WEST

72 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917025D

STREET DATE: JULY 12

THE PROFESSOR is a feature documentary about Tai Chi and one of its greatest masters, Cheng Man-Ching, a man who brought Tai Chi and Chinese culture to the West during the swinging, turbulent 60s. Featuring a rich array of vintage archival footage, the film tells the story of his remarkable life and features Tai Chi as a martial art and a spiritual practice.



WEIGHT A POWERLIFTER IN BROOKLYN

86 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917018D

STREET DATE: JULY 12

You beat the weight or the weight beats you - it's the test every powerlifter faces when approaching the bar. But the weight that's been pressing down on coach and gym owner Paul Steinman is something far more challenging than sport.

Bombing out on his squats at the 2012 American Open was just one more failure for Paul. It had been a bad stretch for him both in and out of the gym - now it's time to make good. A dramatic, character-driven documentary set in Brooklyn, Weight follows Paul over a challenging year.



SPRING & ARNAUD

67 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 917032D

STREET DATE: JULY 12

This documentary about two unique characters is also an unforgettable look at art, love and mortality.

Photographer Arnaud Maggs, turning 85, embarks on a series of self-portraits that wryly depict his life's work. Spring Hurlbut, knowing her husband's time is limited, creates haunting works about mortality. Each grapples with the nature of an artist's creativity where the drive for invention and discovery resists life's finite reality.

"Cinematically gorgeous. A breathtakingly tender and intelligent love story." -Hot Docs



MEET THE GUILBYS

83 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917049D

STREET DATE: AUGUST 9

Claire and Maurice, both survivors of previous marriages, have to take their whole family on a road trip to Claire's father's funeral. This tightly knit family is composed of Claire's vegetarian son, Alex, who's secretly fond of Maurice's daughter, Lucie, the teenage rebel. Meanwhile Claire's brother, a poet living under his sister's roof, is along for the ride. And of course don't forget young Prune, Claire and Maurice's daughter, who will develop a passion for the country's emblematic cows. Will this family of misfits survive the trip?



DARK DIAMOND

115 minutes, color, \$19.95, FRF 917056D

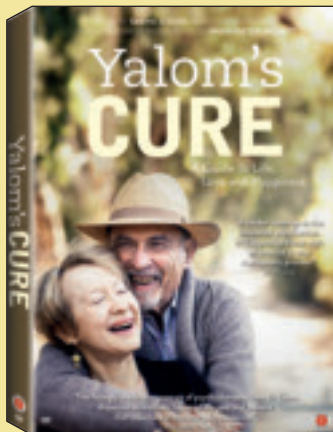
STREET DATE: AUGUST 9

A thriller about a man who attempts to destroy his family's diamond business, which he thinks killed his father.

Pier blames his extended diamond-dealer family for his father's tragic life - and death. To take revenge, he insinuates himself back into the family enterprise, with an elaborate caper in mind.

"This visually striking heist thriller displays a keen insight into its milieu. Terrific performances."

-The Hollywood Reporter



YALOM'S CURE

74 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916981D

NOW AVAILABLE

Bestselling author and noted scholar Irvin Yalom is one of the most influential psychotherapists living today. In this cinematic documentary, we embark on an existential journey with Yalom through the layers of the human mind, navigating the depths and shallows of our psyche. Along the way we learn about Yalom's groundbreaking work, and listen as he reveals some of his most fundamental insights and wisdom.

"A tender homage to the renowned psychiatrist...will appeal to those with an interest in the therapeutic process."

-LA Weekly



TROUBLEMAKERS: THE STORY OF LAND ART

72 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916983D

NOW AVAILABLE

Troublemakers unearths land art in the late 1960s when a cadre of renegade artists sought to transcend the limitations of painting and sculpture by producing earthworks on a monumental scale in the desolate desert landscape of the American southwest. Today these works by Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria and others continue to astound and amaze us for their breathtaking audacity.

"A film that takes its place among the great art documentaries of the past half-century." -The Wall Street Journal

nightclub drama from executive producer Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson stars Omari Hardwick, Naturi Naughton, La La Anthony, and Victor Garber.

Underground: Season One (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$45.99). Slaves plan their departure from a Georgia plantation in this 2016 debut season of the WGN America-aired historical series starring Jurnee Smollett-Bell, Aldis Hodge, and Christopher Meloni.

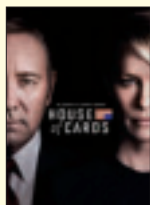
Vinyl: The Complete First Season (HBO, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$59.98). Aired on HBO and executive produced by Mick Jagger and Martin Scorsese, this 2016 first season of the 1970s-set series profiling a New York music executive stars Bobby Cannavale, Max Casella, Olivia Wilde, and Juno Temple.



July 5

Death in Paradise: Season Four (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Two fresh recruits join DI Humphrey Goodman (Kris Marshall) and his Caribbean crime-solving team in this 2015 fourth season of the BBC black comedy series.

House of Cards: The Complete Fourth Season (Sony, DVD: 4 discs, \$55.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$65.99). Kevin Spacey is back in his Screen Actors Guild and Golden Globe award-winning role as the newly-elected President in this 2016 fourth season of the Netflix drama series that also features Robin Wright and Neve Campbell.



Saving Hope: The Complete Second Season (Entertainment One, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99). The spirit of a surgeon in a coma watches over his fiancée and hospital co-workers in this 2013-14 sophomore season of the Gemini Award-winning medical drama series starring Erica Durane, Michael Shanks, and Daniel Gillies.

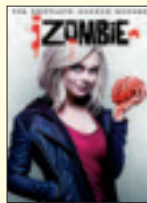
July 12

Colony: Season One (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Extraterrestrials occupying L.A. in the near future serve as the backdrop for this 2016 debut season of the sci-fi USA Network drama starring Josh Holloway and Sarah Wayne Callies.

The Defenders: Season One (Shout! Factory, DVD: 8 discs, \$44.99). Starring E.

G. Marshall and Robert Reed as father and son defense attorneys, this 1961-62 first season of the courtroom drama features guest appearances by William Shatner, Richard Thomas, and Julie Newmar.

iZombie: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Seattle corner's office worker Olivia Moore (Rose McIver) uses her newfound zombie skills to solve crime in this 2015-16 sophomore season of the horror dramedy show loosely based on the titular comic book series.



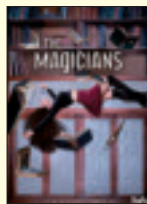
Slasher: Season One (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$27.99). The first original series from the Chiller channel, this debut 2016 season of the horror anthology series centering on a woman's quest to solve the murders of her parents stars Katie McGrath, Brandon Jay McLaren, Patricia Garrow and Wendy Crewson.

July 19

The 100: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Based on the YA sci-fi trilogy by Kass Morgan, this 2016 third season following teen nuclear apocalypse survivors stars Eliza Taylor, Bob Morley, Paige Turco, Christopher Larkin, and Devon Bostick.

Bitten: The Final Season (Entertainment One, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Protagonist werewolf Elena discovers a secret family and goes up against a vicious Russian pack in this 2016 third and final season of the Canadian fantasy drama series based on the *Women of the Otherworld* books by Kelley Armstrong.

The Magicians: Season One (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$44.98). Aired on Syfy, this 2015-16 first season of the fantasy series based on the 2009 novel by Lev Grossman is set at a magical college and stars Jason Ralph, Stella Maeve, Olivia Taylor Dudley, and Arjun Gupta.



Orphan Black: Season Four (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.98). The past and present meet as a new clone is introduced in this 2016 fourth season of the Canadian sci-fi thriller starring Tatiana Maslany in multiple roles.

Person of Interest: The Fifth and Final Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$44.98). The Cold War is finished but the team must still gear up for a final battle in this 2016 fifth and final season of the drama series starring Jim Caviezel, Michael Emerson, and Sarah Shahi.

Royal Pains: Season Eight (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$26.98). A concierge doctor and his team bring things to a close in this 2016 eighth and final season of the USA Network medical dramedy starring Mark Feuerstein, Paulo Costanzo, and Brooke D'Orsay.

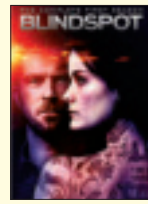
Sisters: Season Five (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.95). Siblings (Swoosie Kurtz, Sela Ward, Patricia Kalember, and Julianne Phillips) experience trials and triumphs in this 1994-95 penultimate fifth season of the dramedy series.



August 2

The Blacklist: The Complete Third Season (Sony, DVD: 5 discs, \$65.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$75.99). This 2015-16 third season of the action thriller finds former criminal turned FBI helper Red Reddington (James Spader in a Golden Globe-nominated role) on the lam, and also stars Megan Boone and Diego Klattenhoff.

Blindspot: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$54.98). A heavily-tattooed amnesiac "Jane Doe" found in Manhattan's Times Square is at the center of this 2015-16 first season of the crime drama starring Sullivan Stapleton, Jaimie Alexander, and Marianne Jean-Baptiste.



Key and Peele: The Complete Series (Paramount, DVD: 10 discs, \$64.99). Sketch comedy duo Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele are showcased in this collection from the 2012-15 Comedy Central series that re-releases the first three seasons and includes season four (currently not available separately).

The Knick: The Complete Second Season (HBO, DVD: 4 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$34.95). The lives and careers of medical staff at New York's Knickerbocker Hospital are the focus of

Best Sellers & New Releases from KINOLORBEREDU.COM



HOOLIGAN SPARROW

Ye Haiyan (a.k.a Hooligan Sparrow) is labeled a troublemaker by the Chinese government – someone who embarrasses the state with public protests, for example, involving the human rights of sex workers. In this tense and entertaining documentary, she travels to Hainan Province to protest a case in which the sexual mistreatment of elementary school students by their principal goes unprosecuted. And in the darkly twisted world of Chinese politics, it is Sparrow who faces intimidation, harassment and even prison for her activities.

“...deserves as wide an audience as possible.”

-Cinevue

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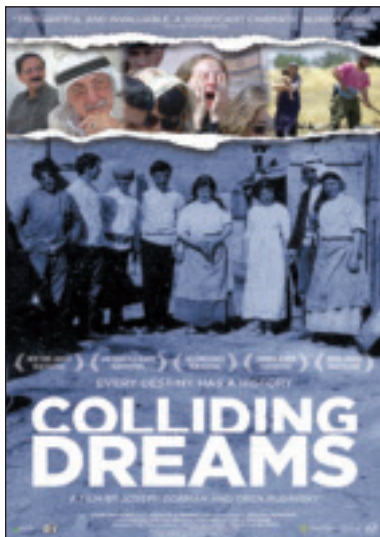
HIERONYMUS BOSCH: TOUCHED BY THE DEVIL (AVAILABLE JULY 30)

The late-medieval artist Hieronymus Bosch caused uproar 500 years ago with his fantastical and unique paintings. In preparation for a contemporary exhibition of his work, a team of sedate Dutch art historians crisscrosses the globe to unravel Bosch's secrets, and to borrow his works. As they shuttle between world-class museums, they encounter a seemingly impenetrable tangle of red tape, ego, and conflicting interests in this witty and illuminating documentary about ancient art and modern preservation.

“The diabolical visions of Bosch remain beguiling and more popular than ever.”

-New York Times

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COLLIDING DREAMS

With roots that began in noble ideals, Zionism has spawned both the state of Israel and one of the world's most desperate and long-running political conflicts. The Zionist idea remains little understood and its meanings often distorted. Has it been coopted by extremists? Is it intrinsically unjust? Or can the needs of all people in this troubled region somehow be reconciled? Bold and powerful, *Colliding Dreams* is a gripping, in-depth exploration of Zionism's history and future, rendering a moving portrait of its people and controversies.

“A thoughtful and invaluable cinematic document that will prove particularly enlightening. Stands as a significant cinematic achievement.”

-The Hollywood Reporter

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ON MEDITATION: DOCUMENTING THE INNER JOURNEY (AVAILABLE JULY 30)

Explore the deeply personal practice of meditation in all its myriad forms. Thousands of years old, meditation is at once profound and simple: the focused attempt to move beyond conditioned thinking into a deeper state of awareness. But what does the journey inward really look like? *On Meditation* conveys first-hand experiences of those who have developed meaningful practices and are willing to share their experiences – teachers, celebrities and everyday people.

Featuring Peter Matthiessen, The Venerable Metteyya, David Lynch, Russell Simmons, and more

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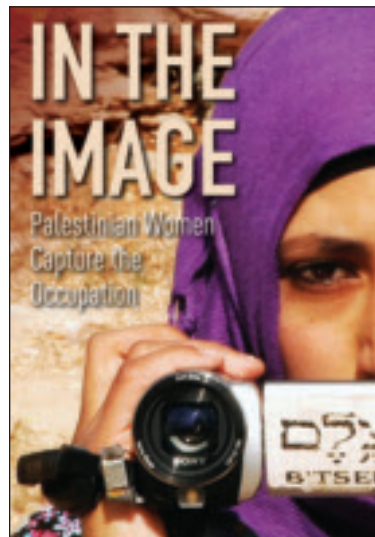
HOMELAND: IRAQ YEAR ZERO

In his epic and engaging documentary of life in Baghdad before and after the US invasion of 2003, Iraqi filmmaker Abbas Fahdel acquaints us with a moving portrait of his own family and friends as they struggle in the advent and the uncertain aftermath of war. Displaying courage, grace and even humor after decades of deprivation through conflict, international sanctions, and totalitarian government, their optimism is all the more heart-breaking as they prepare for possible devastation, then witness the descent of their country into chaos.

“...demands both patience and empathy...worth every second.”

-Variety

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IN THE IMAGE: PALESTINIAN WOMEN CAPTURE THE OCCUPATION

Ayat, Salam, and Nariman are three of the participants in *The Camera Project*, an initiative launched by the Jerusalem-based human rights organization B'Tselem. In this unique collaboration, Palestinian female volunteers are given video cameras to capture the human rights violations and brutality to which Israelis routinely subject them. Putting themselves and their families at great risk, they capture shocking and often violent abuses in the hope of social and political change that will pave the way for peace.

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this 2015 sophomore season of the HBO-
aired early-20th-century period drama
starring Clive Owen, André Holland, and
Juliet Rylance.

Murdoch Mysteries:

Season 9 (Acorn, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$59.99). The titular detective (Yannick Bisson) and his doctor wife, Helene Joy, work on their dream home while solving 19th-century Toronto crimes in this 2015-16 ninth season of the Canadian period police procedural.



Silent Witness: The Complete Season Three (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). Forensic pathologist Sam Ryan (Amanda Burton) is back in this 1998 third season set of episodes from the British crime drama series.

Thirteen (BBC, DVD: \$29.98). Exploring the aftermath when an abducted woman escapes from more than a decade of captivity, this five-part 2016 BBC miniseries stars Jodie Comer, Aneurin Barnard, and Natasha Little.

August 9

11.22.63 (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Based on the novel by Stephen King and executive produced by J.J. Abrams, this 2016 miniseries centering on a time travel plot to stop JFK's assassination stars James Franco, Chris Cooper, and Sarah Gadon.



Code Black: Season 1 (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.98). First-year residents navigate a busy L.A. emergency room in this 2015-16 first season of the medical drama starring Marcia Gay Harden, Bonnie Somerville, Luis Guzmán, and Boris Kodjoe.

Halt and Catch Fire: The Complete Second Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98). Set in 1985 in Texas's "Silicon Prairie," this 2015 second season of the AMC-
aired tech drama series stars Lee Pace, Scoot McNairy, and Mackenzie Davis.

Line of Duty: Series 3 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Members of the AC-12 anti-corruption unit examine the behavior of an armed response sergeant in this 2016 third season featuring Keeley Hawes, Vicky McClure, Martin Compston, and Daniel Mays.

Maude: The Complete Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$26.99). Bea Arthur takes a curtain call in her Emmy-winning role as outspoken feminist Maude in this 1977-78 sixth and final season of the Norman Lear sitcom, featuring guest appearances by Roscoe Lee Browne and Mary Louise Wilson.

NCIS: New Orleans—The Second Season (Universal, DVD: 6 discs, \$55.98). Scott Bakula, CCH Pounder, and Lucas Black star in this 2015-16 second season of the military crime procedural spin-off set in the Big Easy.

Supergirl: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.98). The cousin of Superman, young Kara Zor-El (Melissa Benoist), hones her heroic powers in this 2015-16 first season of the action series, also starring Mehcad Brooks, Chyler Leigh, and Calista Flockhart.



The Tunnel: The Complete First Season (PBS, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Detectives from both the U.K. and France join forces when a politician is murdered at the border in this 2013 first season of the PBS-
aired crime-drama series starring Stephen Dillane, Clémence Poésy, and Cédric Vierira.

August 16

The Affair: Season Two (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.98). A murder and a betrayal are at the center of this 2015 second season of the Golden Globe-winning drama series starring Dominic West, Ruth Wilson, Maura Tierney, and Joshua Jackson.



Gotham: The Complete Second Season (Warner, DVD: 6 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$54.98). This 2015-16 second season of the Batman prequel chronicling the "Rise of the Villains" stars Ben McKenzie, Donal Logue, and Erin Richards.

Lou Grant: The Complete Second Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.98). The titular newspaper city editor (Ed Asner) works on controversial assignments in this Peabody Award-winning drama series' 1978-79 second season, featuring guest appearances by Russell Johnson, G.W. Bailey, and Charles Robinson.

Once Upon a Time: The Complete Fifth Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$79.99). King Arthur (Liam Garrigan) joins forces with villains in this 2015-16 fifth season of the fantasy drama series starring Ginnifer Goodwin, Josh Dallas, and Robert Carlyle.

The Vampire Diaries: The Complete Seventh Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.98). Based on the books by L. J. Smith, this 2015-16 seventh season of the supernatural series follows the vampire dealings of the Salvatore brothers (Paul Wesley and Ian Somerhalder).

August 23

Ash vs. Evil Dead: The Complete First Season (Starz, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Set three decades after the first *Evil Dead* movie trilogy, this 2015-16 debut season of the Starz-
aired comedy horror series finds Bruce Campbell reprising his longtime role as a zombie hunter—with a chainsaw for a hand.



Brooklyn Nine-Nine: Season Three (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Detective Jake Peralta (Andy Samberg in a Golden Globe-winning role) and the rest of the team are back in this 2015-16 third season of the comedy series, featuring guest appearances by Bill Hader, Katey Sagal, and Dennis Haysbert.

Castle: The Complete Eighth and Final Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). Author Richard Castle (Nathan Fillion) becomes a private investigator while his wife Kate Beckett (Stana Katic) becomes captain in this 2015-16 eighth and final season of the crime dramedy series.

DC's Legends of Tomorrow: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98). DC Comics characters unite against a new threat in this 2016 debut season of the action-adventure series featuring Victor Garber, Arthur Darvill, Brandon Routh, and Ciara Renée.



Endeavour: The Complete Third Season (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Conceived as a prequel



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"...etches a tantalizing portrait of a beautiful and talented workaholic, possessed of a restless, self-challenging spirit." -TV Guide



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"...leaves the viewer with one impression: she was a luminously beautiful and talented woman whose early death was untimely and tragic."
- Librarian Video



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"This documentary has more compassion and information, and less exploitation and condescension, than most Monroe documentaries."
-Philadelphia Inquirer

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to *Inspector Morse*, this 2016 third season of the *Masterpiece Mystery!* series follows Constable Morse (Shaun Evans) in episodes including "Ride," "Arcadia," "Prey," and "Coda."

Inspector Lewis: Series 8 (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.99). This eighth season of the *Inspector Morse* spin-off series starring Kevin Whately and Laurence Fox includes the 2015 episodes "One for Sorrow," "Magnum Opus," and "What Lies Tangled."

Lucifer: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Based on a comic book character co-created by Neil Gaiman, this 2016 first season of the fantasy police procedural finds biblical fallen angel Lucifer (Tom Ellis) offering consulting services to the LAPD.

NYPD Blue: Season 10 (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$34.95). The 2002-03 10th season of Steven Bochco's crime drama series features guest appearances by Katt Williams and Joyce Van Patten.

Roots (Lionsgate, DVD: 3 discs, \$26.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$29.99). Produced by the History channel, this 2016 remake of the acclaimed, groundbreaking 1977 miniseries based on Alex Haley's legendary family saga stars Malachi Kirby, Forest Whitaker, Anna Paquin, Laurence Fishburne, and Jonathan Rhys Meyers.



Scandal: The Complete Fifth Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 5 discs, \$45.99). Kerry Washington is back as DC fixer Olivia Pope in this 2015-16 fifth season of the Peabody Award-winning political thriller series from showrunner Shonda Rhimes, costarring Darby Stanchfield.

Superstore: Season One (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). The escapades of employees at St. Louis big-box store Cloud 9 are highlighted in this 2015-16 debut season of the workplace comedy series starring America Ferrera, Ben Feldman, Lauren Ash, and Mark McKinney.

The Walking Dead: The Complete Sixth Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 5 discs, \$69.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$79.99). Survivors face attacks from scavengers and zombie walkers in this 2015-16



sixth season of the wildly popular AMC series starring Andrew Lincoln, Norman Reedus, and Lauren Cohan.

August 30

19-2: Season 2 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99). This English-language version of the French-Canadian series about cops working in a rough neighborhood of Montreal stars Adrian Holmes and Jared Keeso.



Arrow: The Complete Fourth Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$54.98). Wealthy Oliver Queen (Stephen Amell) attempts to leave behind his past as superhero Green Arrow in this 2015-16 fourth season of the DC Comics universe action series, costarring Katie Cassidy.

The Bureau (Kino Lorber, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.95). Taken from real-life stories by former French spies, this 10-episode foreign language drama stars Mathieu Kassovitz and Zineb Triki.

Chicago Fire: Season Four (Universal, DVD: 6 discs, \$44.98). Set in Chi-town, this 2015-16 fourth season of the firefighting series stars Jesse Spencer, Taylor Kinney, and Monica Raymund. Also newly available is the Dick Wolf spin-off **Chicago Med: Season One** (DVD: 5 discs, \$44.99), featuring Oliver Platt.

Grey's Anatomy: Complete Twelfth Season (Buena Vista, DVD: 6 discs, \$45.99). This 2015-16 12th season of the drama set at Seattle's Grey-Sloan Memorial Hospital stars Ellen Pompeo as Chief of General Surgery and features guest appearances by Patrick Fabian and Nicole Sullivan.

Shameless: The Complete Sixth Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). The South Side Chicago Gallagher family continue their dysfunctional lives in this 2016 sixth season starring William H. Macy, Emmy Rossum, Jeremy Allen White, Ethan Cutkoskey, and Shanola Hampton.



Looking Ahead

Slated for September are the debut seasons of *The Catch* and *Quantico*, the second season of *The Flash*, the third seasons of *The Originals* and *Reign*, the fourth seasons

of *Longmire* and *Ripper Street*, the fifth season of *2 Broke Girls*, the sixth season of *Newhart*, the ninth season of *The Big Bang Theory*, and the 11th season of *Supernatural*. Slated for October are the first and second seasons of *Prey*, the sophomore season of *Death Valley Days*, and the third season of *The Musketeers*.

Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

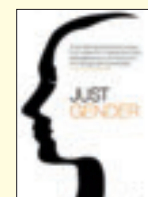
Brown Bread (Alive Mind, DVD: \$29.95). Newly re-priced for home video, filmmaker Sarah Gross's documentary (VL-11/15 ★★1/2) explores the interracial family dynamics born out of a decision by her white parents in the 1970s to adopt four children of color who were younger than Sarah and her brother—culminating with a sibling reunion at the Gross's 50th wedding anniversary.

The Frank Sinatra Collection (Eagle Rock Entertainment, DVD: \$9.98 each). Reviewed in (VL-5/11 ★★1/2), crooner Frank Sinatra is spotlighted in a series of specials: *A Man and His Music / A Man And His Music Part II*, *A Man and His Music + Ella + Jobim / Frank Albert Sinatra Does His Thing / Sinatra*, and *Sinatra and Friends / The Man and His Music*. Also newly available is *Concert for the Americas with Buddy Rich* (VL-1/11 ★★1/2).



Gabo: The Creation of Gabriel García Márquez (Icarus, DVD: \$29.98). Filmmaker Justin Webster's profile (VL-3/16 ★★) of the late revered writer Gabriel García Márquez—winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982—interviews stars of the South American literary firmament Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza and Juan Gabriel Vásquez, as well as former President Bill Clinton. Bonus features include deleted scenes.

Just Gender (Alive Mind, DVD: \$29.95). Narrated by Bebe Neuwirth, director George Zuber's documentary (VL-3/14 ★★) takes a serious look at the pain and paradoxes suffered by transgendered individuals in contemporary society. Bonus features include extended interviews. Also newly available at the same price is *Invitation to Dance* (VL-5/15 ★★).



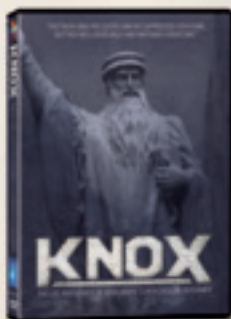
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The Stranger is a 40-minute documentary film produced by Emmy-award winning producer Linda Midgett. It profiles three immigrant stories and includes interviews with local and national leaders. By highlighting compelling stories of immigrants and addressing some common economic and political misconceptions, *The Stranger* seeks to mobilize us to respond to immigrants and to immigration policy in ways that are consistent with moral principles. Documentary, 40 minutes.

#501679D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01679 5



Knox

Renegade. Reformer. Revolutionary. Five centuries after his birth, the influence of John Knox can still be felt across his native Scotland and throughout the world. Presented by Scottish actor Phillip Todd, *Knox* takes another look at the life and legacy of one of Christianity's great reformers. Incorporating dramatic animations and interviews with leading experts, the story of John Knox is brought to you as you've never seen it before. Documentary, 77 minutes.

#501677D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01677 1



World War I Military Chaplains

Military chaplains found themselves facing the gruesome reality of modern warfare. Serving side by side with soldiers in the trenches, chaplains became essential to the spiritual and psychological needs of those under their care. This four-part series takes you inside the lives of military chaplains who served during the Great War. Dramatic reenactments and interviews with key experts shed new light on an often overlooked but important role. Documentary, 100 minutes.

#501664D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01664 1



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John Hus — this scholar who lived 100 years before Martin Luther spoke out against the corruption of the Church.

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The Shirley Temple Collection — includes *The Little Princess*, *Dora's Dunking Donuts*, *Merrily Yours*, and *Pardon My Pups*. Over 2.5 hours total.

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The Jackie Cooper Collection — includes *The Streets of New York* (also known as *The Abe Lincoln of 9th Avenue*), *Peck's Bad Boy*, and *School's Out*. Over 2.5 hours total.

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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

10 Cloverfield Lane

★★★

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



Fans of producer J.J. Abrams's 2008 *Cloverfield*, a found footage hit about monsters invading Manhattan, have been eagerly awaiting a sequel. This isn't it. While *10 Cloverfield Lane* is in the same sci-fi genre, Abrams purposely did not title it *Cloverfield 2* (and he has ditched the found footage gimmick), instead calling this psychological thriller a "spiritual successor." Fleeing from a romantic break-up in New Orleans, Michelle (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) is knocked unconscious in a horrific car crash on a winding country road somewhere in rural Louisiana. When she awakens, she finds herself shackled to a wall in an underground bunker belonging to an intimidating, conspiracy-theory-obsessed survivalist named Howard (John Goodman), who claims that he pulled her from the wreckage and saved her life. Paranoid Howard tells her that the Russians—or maybe the Martians—dropped the proverbial bomb, making the Earth's surface radioactive, contaminated, and uninhabitable for at least a year. Scared, confused, and skeptical, Michelle is actually not the only captive. Creepy, enigmatic Emmett (John Gallagher Jr.) is a local lad who sought refuge in the subterranean shelter but now seems to want to escape as much as Michelle does. A character-driven, tension-filled tale of terror, directed by Abrams's protégé Dan Trachtenberg, the palpable dread here is amplified by Jeff Cutter's cinematography and composer Bear McCreary's foreboding score. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Aferim! ★★★★★

Big World, 105 min., in Romanian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

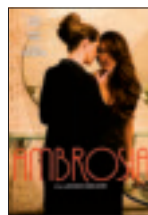
The title, a Turkish exclamation meaning

"Bravo!," well suits Radu Jude's extraordinary film, a sort of Romanian Western set in Wallachia, circa 1835, which was then dominated by Ottoman and Russian overlords. Costandin (Teodor Corban) is an aging constable charged by a nobleman with tracking down runaway gypsy slave Carfin (Cuzin Toma), who seduced his master's wife. Alternately rowdy and morose, world-weary Costandin is accompanied by his teenage son Ionita (Mihai Comanionu), a soft-hearted lad who is learning about the realities of the world. *Aferim!* plays like an episodic picaresque tale, following father and son as they cross paths with various characters whose observations—such as the diatribe of a viciously racist priest—often carry an undercurrent of dark humor. But the film's essence lies in its portrait of the cruelty that marked Romania's past, where gypsy slavery wasn't completely outlawed until the 1850s. Not only do the lawmen here treat all gypsies with casual contempt, but when Carfin is eventually caught and returned to his lord, he is punished savagely despite Costandin's pleas for mercy. In Costandin's ruminations about how he might be judged by future generations, the filmmaker also asks viewers to think about the lingering effects of past injustice. Beautifully shot in luminous wide-screen black-and-white, *Aferim!* presents the Romania of the early 19th century in all its coarseness and bigotry, but with occasional glimmers of honor, while reminding viewers of the scars that remain from the acts of ancestors. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Ambrosia ★★1/2

Film Movement, 79 min., in English & Persian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Leila (Sahar Biniaz, a former Miss Universe Canada) is a beautiful fashionista and, well, the wife of a pizza maker named Ali (Camyar Chai). A clash is inevitable, and it arrives when Leila is offered a plum job as a dress designer at one of the top houses. Ali has been trying to grow his business for a decade but is watching it head toward bankruptcy, while Leila—whose education in design Ali financially and emotionally supported—is on the ascendance. Leila does still hustle over to the pizza joint to help out every day after work, but the distance between them is clearly growing, and it is complicated by sexual attention toward Leila from her boss (Heather Doerksen). Writer-director Baharak Saeid Monir has delivered an interesting but also often tepid and synthetic-feeling film about the way that partners can be pulled apart by wildly different visions, agendas, and temptations. Oddly, the most interesting material here involves

little moments that occur on the sides of the main conflict: a meal between co-workers at Ali's restaurant, or Ali sitting with an air of resignation inside a camper. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

The Boss ★★

Universal, 99 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, July 26



Melissa McCarthy stars as brash Michelle Darnell, a self-made financial guru—"the 47th wealthiest woman in America"—who is arrested and convicted for insider trading. When she's released from prison, Michelle is so broke that she's forced to bunk with her former assistant, Claire (Kristen Bell), a hard-working single mom who lives in a cramped second-floor apartment with her 'tween daughter, Rachel (Ella Anderson). When Michelle takes Rachel to her Dandelion (think Girl Scout) troop meeting, she winds up tangling with another mother and, subsequently, concocts a plan to have the girls sell Claire's delicious "family recipe" brownies instead of cookies—and take home some real profit. Territorial integrity prompts a violent street brawl (shot in slow-motion) between the Dandelions and Michelle's recruits, Darnell's Darlings, and the film also features a romantic subplot involving a rival entrepreneur (Peter Dinklage). Raised in a Catholic orphanage after being rejected from a series of foster homes, self-reliant Michelle firmly believes that human relationships—aka family—are an unwanted burden, as is a sense of compassion. Co-scripted by McCarthy, and directed by her husband, Ben Falcone, *The Boss* is an uneven episodic comedy that serves up a vulgar, zany riff on female empowerment. Optional. (S. Granger)

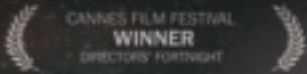
The Brothers Grimsby ★

Sony, 83 min., R, DVD: \$26.99, Blu-ray: \$30.99



After *Borat* and *Bruno*, filmmaker Sacha Baron Cohen pushes vulgarity to a new level in this British spy spoof, revolving around two vastly different brothers, who were born in the Northern England seaport of Grimsby and then separated for 28 years after their parents' death. Dimwitted Nobby (Cohen) is a heavily-tattooed, working-class bloke/soccer fanatic with a libidinous wife (Rebel Wilson) and 11 foul-mouthed kids. When Nobby discovers that his long-lost younger brother Sebastian (Mark Strong) is a suave MI6 agent, the siblings team up to combat a global crime syndicate, journeying to South Africa to apprehend Rhonda George (Penelope Cruz), who is planning a lethal terrorist attack at the World Cup final in Chile. At one point while being chased by assassins, the brothers hide

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With Sicily as his backdrop, Messina navigates the story of the strange relationship between two women from different generations. **Academy Award®-winner Juliette Binoche** stars as Anna, who is meeting her son Giuseppe's French girlfriend, Jeanne, in the lead up to Easter festivities.

CAT # OSC-069
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STREET: JULY 26TH

inside an elephant's vagina—and a male elephant arrives on the scene; in another coarse bit, a computer-generated Donald Trump accidentally contracts HIV. The one comedic scene that registers is when a beautiful British spy (Tasmin Egerton) tries—in vain—to seduce Nobby. Unfortunately, Cohen's real-life wife—talented comedienne Isla Fisher—appears only briefly, as Sebastian's MI6 Money-penny-like contact. Similarly, the talents of Barkhad Abdi and Gabourey Sidibe are wasted as a heroin dealer and portly chambermaid, respectively. Episodically directed by Louis Leterrier, the film is a grab-bag of scattershot jokes about excrement, pedophilia, crack addiction, and HIV-AIDS. Gross? Yes. Funny? No. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

By the Sea ★

Universal, 123 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98, July 5

When Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt got married, they spent their honeymoon making this humorless vanity project, fully aware that Brangelina publicity would guarantee its eventual release. Set in the 1970s, the story begins as blond-mustached Roland Bertrand (Pitt) and his vain wife Vanessa (billed as Jolie Pitt) are driving through the French countryside in a vintage Citroën convertible. After arriving at a picturesque seaside resort, they unload a stack of Louis Vuitton luggage, filled with her diaphanous couture clothes, indicating a lengthy stay. Roland is planning to work on a novel as they try to resolve some traumatic marital issues. He boozes and she gulps pills, so there's not much progress—until they become voyeurs, spying through a peephole on honeymooners (Melanie Laurent, Melvil Poupaud) in a neighboring suite, and vicariously sharing their sexual encounters. Trying for a triple play as writer, director, and star, Jolie Pitt flounders here, after adroitly directing the Louis Zamperini bio-pic *Unbroken* (2014). Tepid and pretentious, *By the Sea* is a film that sinks in slow-paced self-indulgence. Not recommended. (S. Granger)



Cemetery of Splendor

★★★

Strand, 122 min., in Thai w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Blu-ray: \$32.99

Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul has attracted a small but enthusiastic following for his enigmatic, lyrical films (including *Blissfully Yours* and *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*). *Cemetery of Splendor* focuses on a rural hospital where a group of soldiers are being treated—all are victims of a mysterious coma from which they sporadically awake before relapsing. Among the volunteers is kindly but disabled Jenjira (Jenjira Pongpas), who develops a



bond with Itt (Banlop Lomnoi), one of the narcoleptics. The pair go out occasionally when Itt is awake, and Jenjira is visited by a couple of goddesses, who inform her that the hospital sits atop an ancient cemetery and that those buried there might be feeding on the patients' spirits. A medium also arrives who claims to be able to converse with the comatose men; she acts as a conduit between Jenjira and Itt while he's asleep. But these threads never coalesce into anything like a conventional narrative, nor is the relationship between Jenjira and Itt an incipient romance—she has an American boyfriend. Weerasethakul's primary interest is in building a dreamlike mood, marked by long, static shots in which lighting changes color, or totally inexplicable moments such as a brief scene in which an amoeba is superimposed over a cloudy sky. Fans of the director and art house films in general will likely be enchanted, although others will find their patience tested. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Club ★★½

Music Box, 97 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Four disgraced priests and one defrocked nun live in exile in a small house in a quiet beach town in this drama from Chilean filmmaker Pablo Larraín. The residents are ostensibly serving penance for their sins through a life of prayer and ritual, but have been basically pushed out of sight by the Catholic Church. They live in denial and so does the church, until the arrival of a fifth priest upsets the balance, after one of his victims outs him as a pedophile. Larraín, who has consistently confronted the legacy of Chile's past under Pinochet in his films, shifts the focus here to the Catholic Church, although this isn't Chile's answer to *Spotlight* (there is no catharsis from justice being served). Rather, the story explores the psychology of denial and self-delusion, which has simmered into a state of self-righteous martyrdom. The characters are often confined to the drab, claustrophobic house, where a counselor sent by the church interviews the five members of the household. An unsettling act of violence in the third act puts Larraín's theme of the destructive effects of burying and denying corruption and crime in stark terms. *The Club* has a hint of gallows humor, but it's a demanding film that confronts difficult and controversial subject matter. Winner of the Grand Jury Prize in Berlin and a Golden Globe nominee, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Confession of a Child of the Century

★★★

Cohen, 120 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

As the real-life lead singer in a group

called the Libertines, Peter Doherty might have seemed the perfect choice to play Octave, a dissolute young Frenchman who falls for an attractive widow in Sylvie Verheyde's film adaptation of Alfred de Musset's 1836 novel.

Unfortunately, his acting ability seems limited to looking forlorn, fidgeting, and playing with his fashionable hat. Even engaging actress Charlotte Gainsbourg—who plays Brigitte, the attractive older woman who rekindles Octave's emotional fire after he's been cheated on by a former fiancée (a betrayal that culminates in a duel with her seducer)—is unable to rouse him; their scenes together simply fizzle. To be fair, the fault isn't entirely Doherty's: Verheyde's adaptation is flat, depending overmuch on insipid English dialogue and pedestrian staging in which even the sequences depicting Octave's debauchery come across as ridiculously timid. The bland visuals—including some ill-advised handheld cinematography—and a tinkling music score only add to the general malaise, while the dreadful pop song over the closing credits ends things on a particularly low note. A pallid, tedious film, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)



Crush the Skull ★★½

Breaking Glass, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Not funny enough to be a parody or scary enough to be an actual horror movie, *Crush the Skull* lies in genre limbo, but is somewhat redeemed by strong performances and the occasional exchange of quirky dialogue. Co-writer and director Viet Nguyen crafts a story that seems to be generic torture-porn fodder: four thieves break into a house only to discover that it belongs to a serial killer—with hidden walls and rooms for committing atrocities on his victims. This discovery comes too late, however, as the robbers end up being separated and picked off one at a time. What lightens the dire subject matter is that the criminals are a bunch of lunkheads who have stumbled their way into this failed break-in for a lot of wrong reasons. Riley (Tim Chiou) angered his girlfriend, so he wants to make up for it by buying her the breast implants she wants. Connor (Chris Riedell) is a poor leader but needs to prove he can organize a big score. And his sister, Blair (Katie Savoy), is trying to watch out for Connor while also giving her boyfriend, Ollie (Chris Dinh), a chance to redeem himself after a botched job. Added to the mix are one of the monster's still-living victims (Lauren Reeder) and, inevitably, a doomed cop (Lincoln Hoppe). A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



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VINCENT WANTS TO SEA

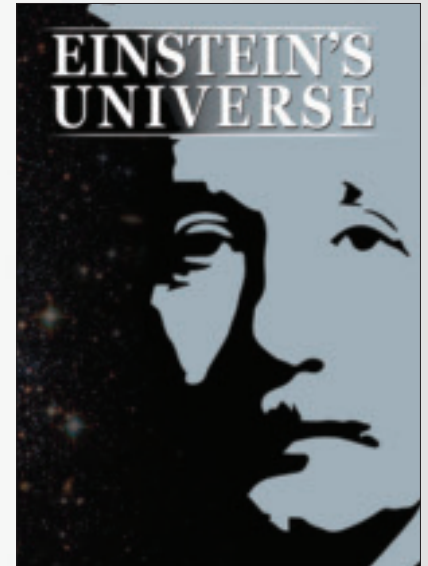
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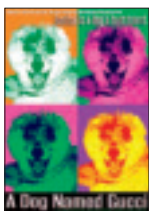
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A Dog Named Gucci

★★★

Music Video Distributors, 84 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95



For animal lovers, this informative documentary is both painful and a joy to watch. Essentially offering a history of the evolution of animal-abuse laws in the Southern U.S. over the last 20 or so years, *A Dog Named Gucci* focuses on several dogs whose suffering rallied activists to get behind protective legislation. The first case involves Gucci, a Chow-mix puppy who was hanged from a tree, beaten like a piñata, and set ablaze. The team of goodhearted people who saved Gucci despite his severe injuries inspired activists throughout Alabama to give prosecutors more legal ammunition to pursue abusers. But the path was not straightforward: opposition arose from interests who were concerned that protecting companion animals such as dogs and cats was a slippery slope that would lead to banning hunting. (There was also a hysterical legislator who insisted on the right to shoot a BB gun at his neighbor's dog for urinating on his lawn.) Similar stories in other states follow, and while such horrendous crimes are hard to hear in detail, the silver lining is that in each situation the surviving dog helped to spur the criminalization of abuse. The good news is that all 50 states currently have relevant laws on the books, and the FBI now pursues certain cases as federal crimes. Filmmaker Gorman Bechard's documentary actually goes beyond animal rights to illustrate how new criminal laws are shepherded through the legislative process (it's not easy, but it's democracy at work). Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Dolly Parton's Coat of Many Colors ★★1/2

Warner, 85 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98



This wholesome TV movie is based on an emotionally-charged period in the life of 9-year-old Dolly Parton in mid-1950s Tennessee, as little Dolly (Alyvia Alyn Lind) develops a sense of herself as a future star while also growing more sophisticated in her understanding of her sometimes-flawed parents. With a large brood of kids, Dolly's mother Avie (country star Jennifer Nettles) and father Robert (Ricky Schroder), are heads of what appears to be a happy musical family despite regional poverty (Robert raises tobacco, which can be a hit-or-miss crop). When the incredibly fecund Avie is pregnant again and then loses the child, she is plunged into despair and Robert keeps his distance. Avie's father, community preacher Rev. Jake (Gerald McRaney), tries to help, but Robert's stubborn refusal to attend church creates even more barriers. Meanwhile, Dolly is left to navigate the

challenges of adult mysteries and her own precociousness, as well as the dynamics of a one-room school where half the kids are angry motherless siblings, and a friendless girl hovers around her. Despite a script that seems to cycle back repeatedly to conversations with Dolly about life lessons, filmmaker Stephen Herek's bio-pic has an appealing, nicely-textured *Waltons*-like quality, and Nettles is particularly good as the Partons' matriarch. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

Elvis & Nixon ★★

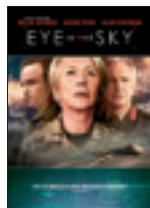
Sony, 86 min., R, DVD: \$25.99, Blu-ray: \$26.99, July 19



Based on an amusing historical anecdote, director Liza Johnson's droll film centers on a meeting between Elvis Presley (Michael Shannon) and President Richard Nixon (Kevin Spacey). In late 1970, while watching the news at Graceland, Presley becomes infuriated by the growing drug problem and moral decline in the United States and he decides to become an undercover federal agent. But he needs a badge from J. Edgar Hoover's Bureau of Narcotics, and the only way to get one is from the president. So Presley's longtime confidante Jerry Schilling (Alex Pettyfer) and Memphis crony Sonny West (Johnny Knoxville) deliver a rambling, handwritten letter to the White House, which convinces Nixon aides Egil "Bud" Krogh (Colin Hanks) and Dwight Chapin (Evan Peters) to arrange an appointment. While Nixon has no interest in meeting the pop singer, his daughter Julie wants an autographed photo. Once they do meet, however, protocol is discarded as the King and POTUS chat informally—with Presley gulping the President's Dr. Pepper and munching his M&Ms. Shannon digs deep beneath the glitz and swagger to reveal Presley as a seriously delusional yet down-to-earth Southerner who believes he can secretly infiltrate disruptive groups, such as the Black Panthers, and bring them to justice. And Spacey embodies hunched-over Nixon's chronic insecurity and social ineptitude with remarkable mimicry, never succumbing to caricature. Incidentally, the most requested photo in the National Archive is of Presley and Nixon shaking hands at the conclusion of their meeting on December 21, 1970. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Eye in the Sky ★★

Universal, 102 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98



Starring Helen Mirren and the late Alan Rickman, this timely, nail-biting British thriller about drone warfare begins in London with Lt. Gen. Frank Benson (Rickman) and several officials having ascertained the exact location in Nairobi,

Kenya, where several people on their most wanted list have convened, including a radicalized British woman with an Al-Shabaab militant. The titular "eye" is an American drone, piloted by Steve Watts (Aaron Paul) from a Nevada bunker, while Colonel Katherine Powell (Mirren) commands a local Kenyan team, ready to capture the woman and her conspirators. But when an on-site operative (Barkhad Abdi) flies a tiny drone into the target's house, pictures are fed back of the terrorists' preparations for an imminent suicide attack. "This changes things," Powell notes, recommending that a Hellfire missile be immediately launched to destroy the building and its occupants. Problem is: the politicians are wary of endorsing a bombing, particularly since there is a child selling fresh-baked bread nearby. One after another, they refer up to Britain's Foreign Minister, the U.S. Secretary of State, etc. Tautly directed by Gavin Hood, this powerfully restrained examination of the ethics and moral quandaries involved in remote-controlled warfare is recommended. (S. Granger)

Fidelio: Alice's Odyssey

★★★

First Run, 97 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



French actress turned filmmaker Lucie Borleteau turns the maritime "girl in every port" adage on its head in this contemporary portrait of an attractive young female sailor, 2nd engineer Alice (Ariane Labed). Accepted as "one of the boys" by landless crewmates aboard the aging merchant-ship *Fidelio*, Alice is still a wild card among the male mini-society. Replacing a first engineer who mysteriously died on duty, Alice anticipates a long separation from a worshipful Norwegian cartoonist-boyfriend, but her sense of commitment fades in the presence of the ship's (married) captain, an old lover (moreover, she has an affair with a young Romanian sailor). Journals left behind by the dead man offer Alice some insight into her own tendency to drift rudderless through relationships. A sexually frank character study, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

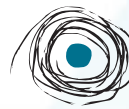
The Fool ★★

Olive, 121 min., in Russian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



It's rather astonishing that the Russian Ministry of Culture has subsidized films that are quite critical of government corruption and social desperation in the Putin era, including Yuri Bykov's gritty drama *The Fool*, centering on Dima (Artzom Bystrov), a simple plumber who tries to enable the evacuation of residents from a dilapidated apartment building that is on the verge of

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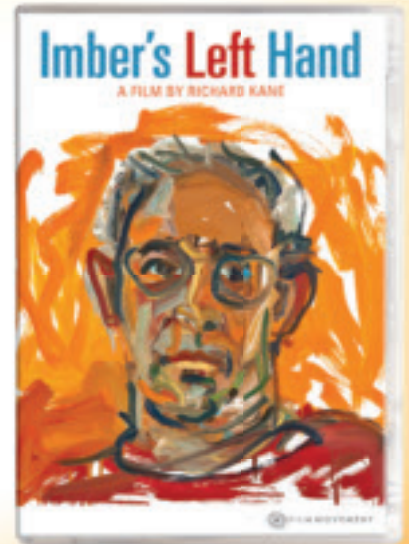
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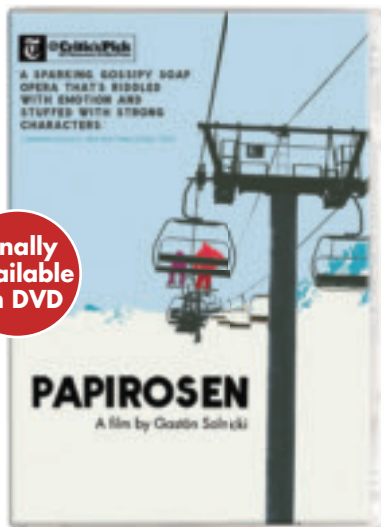


Director Richard Kane follows Jon Imber as he remains determined to continue his work as an artist, despite the debilitating effects of ALS. Thanks to the support of his partner, Jill Hoy, Imber learns to paint with his left hand, and then with both of his hands as his condition worsens. During a prolific four-month span, his heroic resolve leads to the creation of more than 100 portraits, providing a celebration of life and community amidst adversity.

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collapse. City officials—led by the mayor (Natalya Surkova)—debate how to deal with the crisis, while pocketing funds that might have been used to upgrade the structure. There's a modified Frank Capra feel to the set-up, in which the powerful contemptuously (and heavy-handedly) dismiss the ordinary folk they exploit, but the building residents don't escape criticism either, portrayed here for the most part as violent, alcoholic thugs. And even Dima's mother berates him for bucking the corrupt system instead of taking a cut. But things do not go in a Capra-esque direction, and Dima comes across as a modern version of Prince Myshkin, the saintly figure at the center of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*—a good man destroyed by the endemic evil of the society surrounding him. Another solid dark tale of the realities of life in post-Soviet Russia, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Glassland ★★★

Film Movement, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A low-key yet moving drama from Ireland, writer-director Gerard Barrett's *Glassland* serves up an unusual story of selfless if also desperate love. Jack Reynor stars as John, a young taxi driver barely making ends meet while living in public housing. John is also trying to manage a losing battle with his live-in mother, Jean (Toni Collette), over her chronic drinking. Drifting through the odd moment with best friend Shane (Will Poulter), John mostly maintains an ascetic existence of cleaning house and getting through his days. When we finally meet Jean, we understand why John's youth is disintegrating through repressed emotions and boredom: she suffers from a raging addiction and is dying from liver disease. Part of the cycle of their relationship is that John periodically purges their home of booze, but he knows she will find her way to another bottle tomorrow. Despite everything, John has an almost saintly disposition, visiting his younger brother (Harry Nagle)—who has Down syndrome and is the reason Jean's husband abandoned the family, leading to her self-destructiveness—and arranging for Shane to visit the young son he rarely gets to see. Offered a chance to place his mother into expensive rehabilitation (her last shot at survival), John agrees to take on shady tasks for his boss in exchange for cash. Towards the end, *Glassland* goes off the rails a bit, but is a memorable acting showcase for Reynor and Collette, the latter never in better form. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

The Great Alone ★★★1/2

FilmRise, 82 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Although centered on the Iditarod dog-sled race (1,000 grueling miles in Alaska

from Anchorage to Nome), Greg Kohs's documentary is a hybrid of sports-endurance drama and a gothic tale of family dysfunction, divorce, hardship, and addiction in very cold places. Lance Mackey is the son of famed 1970s Iditarod champ/pioneer Dick Mackey, described here as a distant, uninterested father who knew more about what was going on with his dogs than his sons. Lance went through periods of extensive boozing and drugging, worked the famously dangerous (but lucrative) Arctic fishing boat circuit, survived a cancer ordeal, and rather surprisingly (considering all of the emotional baggage) took up the Iditarod challenge himself. Somewhat symbolically, Lance assembled a sled team of true underdogs—unwanted mushers of no pedigree that he claims to have found roaming the streets. Even after a dramatic Iditarod victory, the younger Mackey says he still had to prove himself as more than a fluke, ultimately delivering a stunning streak of consecutive wins. Lance eventually echoes his father, noting that he's more at home with his cherished canines than with human relationships. An intriguing profile, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Green Room ★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 94 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$24.99, July 12

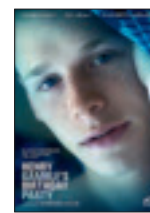
Jeremy Saulnier's follow-up to 2013's *Blue Ruin* centers on a failing punk band comprised of singer Tiger (Callum Turner), guitarist Sam (Alia Shawkat), bassist Pat (Anton Yelchin), and drummer Reece (Joe Cole). In the midst of a road trip that has left them stranded and short on cash for gas, an apparent lifeline is offered in the form of a paying gig at an out-of-the-way roadhouse in the Oregon woods. The place turns out to be a neo-Nazi watering hole, and after stumbling upon the murder of a groupie in the dressing room the band members become the target of the place's coolly malevolent owner, Darcy (Patrick Stewart), who aims to frame them for the crime. That sets in motion an extended cat-and-mouse game in which the terrified quartet, joined by the dead girl's friend, try to escape while Darcy and his thugs aim to eliminate them by any means available (including vicious fight dogs). Saulnier is effective in setting up tense confrontations among the antagonists, and the level of gore is restrained by today's very liberal standards. But as the body count rises inexorably, *Green Room* is revealed to basically be a proficient genre piece—albeit one featuring an intriguing change of pace for Stewart. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Henry Gamble's Birthday Party ★★★

Wolfe, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A swimming pool birthday party for teenage Henry (Cole Doman) turns into a crucible, where religious hypocrisy, homophobia, confessions, and sexual hysteria lead to the beginning of young adult autonomy in this well-acted and insightful drama from writer-director Stephen Cone. Palpable tensions float through Henry's suburban home as he awakens on his birthday. Hints of a stifling, fundamentalist Christian atmosphere set a tone that will be challenged during the ensuing hours when Henry's friends from school and church come over for a swim and celebration. Right away, the exposure of young bodies splashing doesn't sit well with a few of the more judgmental adults, although that is the least of the group's problems. Henry's parents, Bob (Pat Healy) and Kat (Elizabeth Laidlaw), are clearly in the middle of unspoken marital strife; his college-age sister (Nina Ganet) is in a major panic over her first sexual experience some months ago; a fed-up church elder (Francis Guinan) is drinking wine and starting to call things as he sees them; the suicidal son (Patrick Andrews) of Bob's late mentor is being ignored by the men who should be helping him; and a long-suffering gay boy (Daniel Kryi), who shares a mutual attraction with Henry, is unsure where he stands with everyone. Before the night is through, truths will be told. Cone finds fresh energy in a standard trope—a party that reveals all—while creating an array of unique characters on the cusp of major changes. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

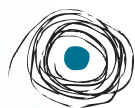


I Know a Woman Like That ★★★

Virgil, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Elaine Madson teams up with her Oscar-nominated actress daughter Virginia Madson for this pleasant celebration of 16 women who remain active, healthy, and vibrant in their senior years. Rather than grow old in inert retirement, the women featured here continue to pursue their careers and creative passions with a vibrancy and spirit that makes the younger generation seem downright enervated in comparison. Not surprisingly, the most animated interview subjects are those who have lived most of their lives in the public eye: feminist icon Gloria Steinem, writer Maxine Hong Kingston, and performers Rita Moreno, Lauren Hutton, and Eartha Kitt (in one of her final interviews) are all sparkling in their observations on the challenges of growing old (without feeling old). Equally entertaining are





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visits with lesser-known subjects including yoga expert Tao Porchon-Lynch, artist Marg Starbuck, and Mexican-American civil rights activist Lupe Anguiano. *I Know a Woman Like That* rarely plumbs the significant concerns that would impact the majority of older American women today—most notably financial issues and healthcare—but it nonetheless offers a positive reminder that age is a number, not a defining boundary. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Identicals ★★

Sony, 100 min., R, DVD: \$25.99



Documentarian Simon Pummell's debut fiction film wants to say something profound about personal identity, but despite a stylish surface, this cerebral sci-fi movie is both confused and confusing. The central character is Slater (Lachlan Nieboer), whose romantic night with his beautiful girlfriend Nadia (Nora-Jane Noone) is interrupted by a gang of masked thugs. They abduct Nadia, but one of the kidnappers is killed in the process, and the corpse proves to be literally a dead ringer for Nadia. Slater is determined to track down his girlfriend, embarking on a search that leads him to a secret organization called Brand New U, which offers people the opportunity to switch places with happier doppelgangers—purportedly explaining the weird home invasion by Nadia's duplicate. Believing that becoming a client himself will give him the best chance of infiltrating the firm and finding Nadia, Slater undergoes elaborate treatment and receives a new identity, but then refuses to give up his former life, earning the wrath of the company, after which Slater is eventually confronted by not only his own double but also another Nadia. *Identicals* does manage to instill a general feeling of unease, but that is partially due to the fact that even an attentive viewer will have a hard time figuring out precisely what is happening and why. Ambitious but fatally flawed, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Ip Man 3 ★★★

Well Go USA, 105 min., in Cantonese w/English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



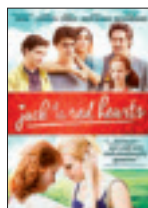
Donnie Yen returns here as the titular real-life martial arts master who kept the art of Wing Chun alive during the Japanese occupation in World War II and then went on to mentor a generation of students, including Bruce Lee. Directed by Wilson Yip, *Ip Man 3* is set in late-1950s Hong Kong, where Master Ip—who runs a celebrated martial arts school—finds himself pitted against a ruthless gangster (boxer Mike Tyson). A handsome production, the busy film sports

plenty of activity built around a simple plot that stitches together familiar martial arts movie clichés involving a corrupt British commander, a rival Wing Chun teacher (Jin Zhang) who is alternately an ally and an enemy, and a fatal illness. Ip's wife died from cancer in real life but the rest of the film is pure dramatic invention designed to set up spectacular fight scenes, which range from impressive collisions of gangs, to Ip taking on a brigade of thugs singlehandedly, to a private showdown with the rival master. Yen remains the main attraction here as the aging Ip, investing his character with modesty and integrity while also bringing grace and precision to the fight scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Jack of the Red Hearts

★★★

Arc, 102 min., PG, DVD: \$19.99



This absorbing, touching, sometimes comic domestic story finds Jack (AnnaSophia Robb), an overgrown street urchin on the lam from her parole officer, undergoing a complete makeover in order to impersonate a qualified caretaker for an autistic girl. Jack lands a job with a frazzled, fractious family whose young daughter, Glory (a wonderfully convincing performance by Taylor Richardson), is a wild child violently rejecting all structure, exhausting her mother, Kay (Famke Janssen), and father, Mark (Scott Cohen). Financial strain is making everything worse, limiting the options for Glory's older brother, Robert (Israel Broussard), to seek higher education. Jack shows up as "Donna" and is hired to watch over Glory at home and school. Knowing nothing about autism, Jack is initially overwhelmed but eventually learns enough to give Glory a fighting chance at communicating and fitting in. Director Janet Grillo is very good at balancing multiple story threads: Jack's desire to reunite with a younger sister in foster care; Robert's frustrations and attraction to Jack; Mark and Kay's eroding marriage; and Glory's deepening affection for her minder. Of course, the viewer knows that sooner or later the boom will be lowered on Jack, but the film doesn't cop out or resort to magical thinking, instead delivering some well-earned hope and a spark of redemption. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Jane Got a Gun ★★

Anchor Bay, 98 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Natalie Portman stars as Jane Hammond, a pistol-packin' frontierswoman in the New Mexico Territory. The story begins in 1871, when Jane's husband, Bill (Noah Emmerich), comes home after having been shot several

times by the Bishop Boys, who are led by villainous John (Ewan McGregor). And Bill says that they are coming to wreak revenge. After depositing their daughter with a neighbor, Jane enlists help from her brooding ex-fiancé: gunslinger Dan Frost (Joel Edgerton), who stayed away too long fighting in the Civil War, but now dwells nearby. Together, they fortify the Hammond homestead, preparing for the Bishops' siege. Muddled flashbacks reveal that seven years earlier Jane left Missouri with her young daughter in tow, and joined a wagon train, only to be kidnapped and forced into prostitution—until Bill saved her. Heavy-handedly directed by Gavin O'Connor at a snail's pace, *Jane Got a Gun* was plagued by production problems, including the departures of original director Lynne Ramsay, stars Michael Fassbender and Jude Law, and cinematographer Darius Khondji. Whether the film would have been better with the original crew is uncertain, but this version is a disappointment. Optional. (S. Granger)

Kung Fu Panda 3 ★★★

Fox, 95 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$36.99



As *Kung Fu Panda 2* ended, Po's long-lost biological father Li realized, "My son is alive." In this third installment of the animated series centering on a rambunctious panda named Po (voiced by Jack Black), our hero reunites with his long-lost biological father Li (Bryan Cranston) and discovers his roots in their ancestral village, while also coping with villainous Kai (J.K. Simmons), a self-righteous, power-hungry spirit who has risen from the dead to lead zombie-like warriors. Po's wise mentor, the red panda Shifu (Dustin Hoffman), tells Po to become a martial arts master by coaching the Furious Five (Angelina Jolie, Jackie Chan, Lucy Liu, Seth Rogen, and David Cross), saying, "If you only do what you can do, you will never be more than you are now." Naturally, there is a rivalry between Li and Po's adoptive father, the goose named Mr. Ping (James Hong), and a love interest for Po, the ribbon-dancing Mei Mei (Kate Hudson). Directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson and Alessandro Carloni, this sweetly scripted sequel—the first American animated feature to be co-produced by a Chinese studio—is recommended. (S. Granger)

The Lobster ★★★

Lionsgate, 89 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99, Aug. 2



This bizarre film, set in the near future in an alternate universe, serves up an existential allegory about the determination within every culture to pair people off. Whether

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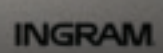
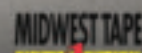
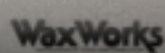
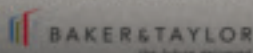
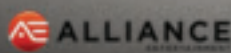
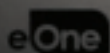


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heterosexual or homosexual, conforming means being part of a duo. So when his wife leaves him for another man, David (Colin Farrell) has only 45 days to find another partner or he will face “transformation” into the animal of his choice. Most people want to be a dog, which is why there are so many. But in the event of failure David has chosen to be re-embodied as a lobster. To facilitate finding a prospective mate, David checks into a spa-like hotel, where the manager (Olivia Colman) sternly explains the regimented schedule to newcomers—including one who lisps (John C. Reilly), another who limps (Ben Whishaw), one prone to nosebleeds (Jessica Barden), and one who is heartless (Angeliki Papoulia). Not surprisingly, the guests grow increasingly desperate under pressure to find a compatible companion. When a match is made, a party ensues with a honeymoon of sorts. And if couples subsequently disagree, children are pressed upon them. With his crustacean reincarnation looming, David flees into the forest, joining a resistance group whose militant leader (Léa Seydoux) enforces her own set of Kafkaesque rules, forbidding any relationships. Then David meets his real soulmate (Rachel Weisz)—but is it too late? Greek writer-director Yorgos Lanthimos’s first English-language film is a strange, surreal, audacious, and absurdist work of satire. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Magical Girl ★★★

First Run, 122 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A mesmerizing cinematic sleight of hand, filmmaker Carlos Vermut’s *Magical Girl* begins with a scene in which a young schoolgirl makes a note—which her teacher is demanding to see—disappear from her palm. The film then follows the efforts of unemployed Luis (Luis Bermejo) to raise cash to buy an expensive costume—the dress that is worn by the heroine of the titular anime series—for his daughter, a devotee of the show who is dying of leukemia. Luis’s mission brings him into contact with the grown-up former schoolgirl, Barbara (Barbara Lennie), who is now a psychologically troubled housewife in thrall to her therapist husband. Luis sleeps with Barbara, records their encounter, and then blackmails her—threatening to turn over the evidence of her infidelity to her spouse. When Barbara’s attempt to raise the cash by prostituting herself to an evil abuser fails, she asks her erstwhile teacher—who has been recently released from prison—to make the crisis go away. Plausibility is in short supply in *Magical Girl*, which is thematically about the conflict between reason and passion in the Spanish soul. But while the film makes little literal sense, its hallucinatory quality grows increasingly compelling, and will hold viewers captive. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Manson’s Lost Girls ★1/2

Lionsgate, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.98

The simple fact that the Lifetime cable channel, best known for its benignly antiseptic TV movies, would take on a heavy subject like the 1969 Tate-LaBianca murders might warrant an “A” for ambition. But this retelling of the grisly crimes committed by Charles Manson and his followers unfortunately never truly plumbs the emotional horror of that infamous crime. The story is told from the perspective of Linda Kasabian (Mackenzie Mauzy), a pregnant runaway teenager who joins Manson’s cult and discovers a new family within the swirl of drugs and free love. But Manson eventually turns to violent rants as his dreams of a Hollywood music career disintegrate, and Kasabian, who functioned as a driver and witness to the gruesome murder spree, would eventually leave the Manson orbit and testify against him and his followers. The main weakness in *Manson’s Lost Girls* lies in its inability to recreate the genuine madness that drove Manson’s devoted female followers to commit unspeakable acts—not to mention the necessarily toned down sex and hideous brutality. Actor Jeff Ward fails to embody the kinetic energy and restless psychosis that fueled Manson’s madness, and outside of Eden Brolin’s eerie Susan Atkins, no one else in the cast truly registers. Not recommended. (P. Hall)



Mediterranea ★★★

MPI, 110 min., in French, Italian, English & Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Jonas Carpignano’s film dramatizes the desperate plight of African refugees who are trying to make their way across the Mediterranean to a new life—and hopefully greater opportunity—in Italy. A work of fiction set against actual events and shot in gritty neorealist style, *Mediterranea* focuses on two friends, Ayiva (Koudous Seihon) and Abas (Alassane Sy), who travel from West Africa through the desert to the Libyan coast, where they embark for Europe in a dangerously overcrowded craft, only to have it capsize in a storm. Rescued at sea, the pair are deposited in Calabria, where they settle in a camp outside the town of Rosarno and become laborers in the region’s citrus groves. Much of their story centers on trying to survive in the face of hostility from the local population while attempting to secure permanent residence status before their temporary work permits expire. Ultimately, the narrative places Ayiva and Abas in the midst of riots by mistreated African immigrants that actually occurred at Rosarno in 2010. Carpignano succeeds in creating a real sense



of time and place, and he resists the temptation to turn the main characters into saintly figures, instead portraying them as flawed men whose desperation—and sense of dignity—can lead them to act in ways that prove detrimental to their ultimate aspirations. A tough, compelling portrait-in-microcosm of the ongoing European immigration crisis, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Misconduct ★

Lionsgate, 106 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99

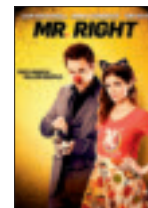
Why would a neo-noir legal thriller starring Anthony Hopkins and Al Pacino go directly to video? Because it’s inexcusably awful! Set in New Orleans, *Misconduct*’s plot revolves around Ben Cahill (Josh Duhamel), an ambitious young lawyer working on a class-action suit involving Arthur Denning (Hopkins), a smugly corrupt Big Pharma kingpin. Ben’s wife Charlotte (Alice Eve) is a registered nurse who has become a workaholic to cloak her depression following a recent miscarriage. Suddenly, Ben’s seductive ex-girlfriend Emily (Malin Akerman) contacts him, saying she has incriminating files that will indict Denning, who also just happens to be her current lover. But when ethically-challenged Ben takes the evidence to his firm’s senior partner, Charles Abrams (Al Pacino), Emily is mysteriously kidnapped. There’s also Denning’s forthright security specialist (Julia Stiles) and a terminally ill South Korean hitman (Byung-hun Lee), careening around on a motorbike. Unfortunately, director Shintaro Shimomura’s film is mostly incoherent, discarding any logical progression or reasonable sense of pacing in favor of curious camera angles. While Duhamel does his best with the story’s misbegotten, melodramatic absurdity, it’s obvious that both Hopkins and Pacino simply cashed their paychecks and moved on. Not recommended. (S. Granger)



Mr. Right ★★

Universal, 96 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98

Writer Max Landis, director Paco Cabezas, and stars Sam Rockwell and Anna Kendrick work much too hard here trying to persuade viewers that *Mr. Right* is a clever and cute movie, but this attempt to meld a romantic comedy with an action thriller ultimately fails. Kendrick plays Martha, who goes into an emotional tailspin when she discovers that her boyfriend is cheating on her. She bumps into Francis (Rockwell), a wild and crazy guy who also happens to be a super-skilled hitman. After a sort of epiphany, Francis has taken to killing the people who hire him rather than the intended victims. Of course, the two fall madly for one another, and just



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as predictably the course of love does not run smooth, because Francis's old partner (Tim Roth), posing as an FBI agent, is out to terminate him (as are scads of other baddies). All of this is intended to be quirkily charming, but the chemistry between Rockwell and Kendrick is nil, and the big joke—she is shocked by Francis's occupation, but quickly proves to be as adept as Francis—falls flat. Regardless, Kendrick must still play the tired role of damsel-in-distress as the plot lurches towards the end in a succession of poorly choreographed confrontations. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Mustang ★★½

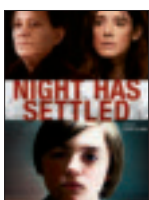
Cohen, 94 min., in Turkish w/ English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99



A compelling feral energy partly defines the close bond between five young, orphaned sisters in this fable-like Oscar-nominated Turkish film that is set in a village by the sea. The girls—who all attend the same school and live with their protective grandmother (Nihal Koldas) and cruel Uncle Erol (Ayberk Pekcan)—exhibit explosive resistance as a group whenever one of them is threatened, and the sheer wildness with which they collectively strike out looks a lot like pack survival. So it's no wonder that their relationship with the world seems equally primeval: plucking apples from a forbidden garden, or innocently sitting on the shoulders of boys while splashing and frolicking at the beach. It's the latter that brings the sisters' naïve paradise to an abrupt end, after a neighbor rats them out, and an enraged Erol lowers the boom. Lale (Günes Nezihe Sensoy), Nur (Doga Zeynep Doguslu), Ece (Elit Iscan), Selma (Tugba Sunguroglu), and Sonay (Ilayda Akdogan)—become prisoners at home, locked behind high walls and barred windows, sans computers or phones, as Erol turns the place into a "wife factory," pushing out the oldest girls first in arranged marriages before they can be further "sullied." With this inexorable fate awaiting them, the younger ones—especially the indomitable Lale—begin to seek a way out. In her feature debut, co-writer and director Deniz Gamze Ergüven presents a visually-charged blend of fairy tale and stark drama about the terrible oppression of girls and women, serving up a powerful story about the fight for freedom and identity. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Night Has Settled ★★★

Film Movement, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Set in New York City, circa 1983, *Night Has Settled* features an unmistakable *Less Than Zero*-vibe of youthful self-destruction set against a seemingly limitless, no-consequen-

es, go-go cultural moment. Except, in this case, the youth are younger—teenagers—and the film's anti-hero is barely even that. Thirteen-year-old Oliver (Spencer List) attends a buttoned-down prep school where he and his mates are brushed off by the principal, despite being holy terrors. At home, things are just as lax: living with his divorced mother, Luna (Pilar López de Ayala), Oliver sees her more as a confidante, one who sets no rules about anything, whether it's tobacco, his sexual activity with a girlfriend, or inappropriate conversations. It's little wonder that Oliver is so powerfully drawn to 65-year-old Aida (Adriana Barraza), a housekeeper who gives him unconditional love, along with some expectations and clear messages about right and wrong behavior. Written and directed by Steve Clark, the film finds Oliver—right on the cusp between childhood and adolescence—desperate for Aida's approval and maternal gravity, which she freely gives with a hint of deep concern about Oliver's need for guidance. But things change when Aida has a stroke and is hospitalized, leaving Oliver with no moral anchor. Being a film about kids engaged in decadent behavior, *Night Has Fallen* certainly has uncomfortable moments, but as a story about a boy trying to gain his bearings before destroying himself, it is often poignant. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

A Place in Heaven

★★★★

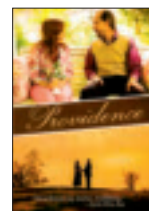
SISU, 113 min., in Hebrew w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



This Israeli film opens with a young man searching for a rabbi who had served in the military with his war-hero father decades prior. The father, nicknamed Bambi and now an old man, is facing death, and the rabbi is in possession of his soul, which will prevent Bambi from entering heaven. The circumstances behind the acquisition—long ago, the cocksure, secular Bambi (Alon Aboutboul) traded his soul to the rabbi, who was then a military cook, for a month's supply of freshly-prepared spicy omelets—and the winding events that shape Bambi's life up to his last days drive director Yosi Madmoni's drama, but they are more than simple plot devices. *A Place in Heaven* uses Bambi's experiences to serve up an allegorical tale about the Jewish/Israeli experience, from biblical days up through the country's wartime conflicts and into the present, while also commenting on the nature of faith and belief, the rigors of parenthood, and the family dynamic—especially when a father and son find themselves at odds on religion. Nominated for 10 Israeli Academy Awards including best screenplay, best actress, and best cinematography (capturing vast countryside vistas that are particularly breathtaking), this is recommended. (P. Morehart)

Providence ★

Mainstreet Productions (avail. from www.christiancinema.com), 79 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99



The idea of a contemporary silent movie set to a music score is not necessarily bad—it worked pretty well a few years ago for the Oscar-winning *The Artist*—but *Providence* is a far cheesier effort, a story of missed love connections that is complemented by a teeth-grinding soundtrack of barely tolerable torch songs, anthems, swaths of jazz and rock, and tinkling piano. In telling the tale of lost opportunities for romance between shy humdrum photographer Rachel (Stacey Bradshaw as the teen version, Juli Tapken as the adult) and overly selfless minister Mitchell (Josh Allen and Rich Swingle), writer-director Sharon Wilharm eschews dialogue and other sounds, relying instead on expressive performances from the actors and music. Unfortunately, no one here seems to know what it means to deliver a wordless performance that actually communicates clear emotions, and the music doesn't so much evoke mood or tone as scream at the audience what they should be feeling. An awkward film about two clueless people who take half their lives to get together, this is not recommended. (T. Keogh)

The Sex Temple ★★★

Dreamscape, 80 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$19.99



Filmmaker Johan Palmgren's seriocomic documentary chronicles an eventful year for the Arbis, a historic but financially troubled old theater/opera house in Norrköping, Sweden. Transgendered proprietor and makeup/wig artist Robin Karlsson (the film does not note his prominence as a Swedish radio personality) partners with a heterosexual entrepreneur behind a "swingers" club called Adam & Eva to repurpose the Arbis. The new venue showcases pansexual burlesque shows and events (one recreates the baroque orgy from Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*) in the mainstage area, while the basement is redone as an S&M dungeon and sex grotto. Local media coverage is unrelentingly negative, even as some in the community find fulfillment with the troupe. English-speaking viewers accustomed to the stereotype of Scandinavia as a free-love haven may be surprised by the prudish social conservatism here; others may wonder how all the nudity and swearing received a PG-13 pass. Although fact-based, *The Sex Temple* has the feel (and plot arc) of a bittersweet indie comedy in the LGBT genre. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Stand Clear of the Closing Doors ★★★

Kino Lorber, 99 min., in English & Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmaker Sam Fleischner's drama concerns a 13-year-old boy named Ricky (Jesus Sanchez-Velez), who has mid-range autism and daily presents complex problems for his mother, Mariana (Andrea Suarez Paz). An illegal Mexican immigrant working as a housekeeper in Queens, Mariana is afraid to ask for too many services for her son, relying instead on Ricky's understaffed school to help him, and Ricky's frustrated sister to watch him at home. With the status quo unraveling, a crisis arrives when Ricky is drawn into a subway station and ends up lost for days, riding one subway train after another. While Mariana searches for him at some of his favorite places, including a beach, she also initially refrains from notifying the police for fear of arrest. Meanwhile, Ricky is lost in a literal and sensory labyrinth, drawn to physical patterns and rhythmic sounds while aimlessly riding the train, alone and hungry (Fleischner blurs the fact/fiction line, so the viewer is never sure which events on the subway are real and which are scripted). The real power of the film lies in Fleischner's



ability to convey the fractured world as Ricky sees and hears it. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Theeb ★★★1/2

Film Movement, 100 min., in Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

Jordanian writer-director Naji Abu Nowar's outstanding debut mixes a coming-of-age story with a boys' adventure tale, an interesting era, and an exotic locale. In this Oscar-nominee set in western Arabia during World War I, the title character (Jacir Eid) is a young Bedouin boy living with two older brothers, learning the family business of being pilgrim guides through the desert, and being taught the skills of manhood by the middle brother, Hussein (Hussein Salameh). One night, a British soldier (Jack Fox) and his Arab guide (Marji Audeh) arrive, asking Hussein to guide them along an old pilgrim route in a dangerous area that is rife with Bedouin bandits, Arab rebels, and Turkish mercenaries. While Theeb follows on his donkey, the Englishman's mission is gradually revealed: blowing up the Ottoman rail line. When an ambush leaves all but Theeb and one of the attackers dead, the two survivors must



make an uneasy alliance in order to reach safety. Filmed in various Jordanian locales, including Wadi Rum (where David Lean shot *Lawrence of Arabia*), *Theeb* is a visually spectacular production that might take place in an unfamiliar setting but touches on universal themes. A fascinating and moving film, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Troublemakers: The Story of Land Art ★★★

First Run, 72 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmaker James Crump repeatedly invokes Stonehenge as evidence that monumental "land art" has been a mode of human expression for thousands of years, but his documentary focuses on much more recent examples—the work of American artists who, beginning in the 1960s, went into virgin areas of the continent and used the landscape itself for their medium. *Troublemakers* explores the work of several members of this semi-organized movement, including Charles Ross, who talks about how he chose—in the early '70s—the location for his earthwork sculpture *Star Axis* (still in progress), and it discusses the motivations for these artists (which range from theoretical questions about what constitutes



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art and a concern for the environment, to more self-serving ploys to grab the attention of the art world). In addition to Ross, the primary focus here is on Robert Smithson, Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, and Nancy Holt—along with important patron Virginia Dwan—and their works, including Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* on the Great Salt Lake, Heizer's *Double Negative* (a huge trench in Nevada that cuts through a canyon), De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (involving hundreds of steel poles arranged on the New Mexico plain) and Holt's *Sun Tunnels* (with tubes aligned to sunrises and sunsets on the horizon). Along the way, Crumb emphasizes the practical difficulties involved in molding the terrain to the artists' visionary ambitions. Of course, one can debate the artistic value of these pieces, but *Troublemakers* certainly makes a strong case for their significance. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Up the Wrong Tree

★★★1/2

SISU, 91 min., in Hebrew w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

The lengths that people will go to in order to win back a past love have been explored *ad nauseum* in cinema (remember John Cusack lofting that Peter Gabriel-blaring boom box above his head to woo his ex in *Say Anything?*). This odd Israeli film opens with a grizzled young man named Nitz (Gal Toren) attempting to enter his ex-girlfriend's apartment, ostensibly to visit an elderly dog that the pair raised while a couple. Nitz is unable to gain entrance, but he discovers that a desolate park nearby offers a perfect view of her place, particularly when someone is perched high up in its lone tree. The problem is that a group of environmental activists have taken control of the park to save it from being destroyed by a developer. Nitz joins the group as an interloping antagonist, spending his days and nights getting drunk and high while unsuccessfully trying to woo back his ex. As the gritty and ultimately tragic details of their failed relationship are revealed, Nitz finds a strange sense of purpose with the activists' cause that almost provides redemption. *Up the Wrong Tree* is the odd romantic drama that doesn't seem to want its protagonist to win the girl, and—unfortunately—Nitz is a sad, lost screw-up who cannot quite hold viewer empathy. That said, director Gur Bentwich's *Up the Wrong Tree* is handsomely filmed and was nominated for five Israeli Academy Awards, making it a strong optional purchase. (P. Morehart)

The Von Trapp Family: A Life of Music

★★

Lionsgate, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98

Imagine *The Sound of Music* without Ju-

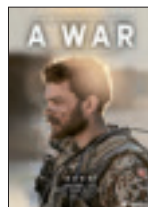
lie Andrews, Christopher Plummer, and the beloved Rodgers & Hammerstein songs, in a film that is more Hallmark Channel than Broadway. Based on Agathe von Trapp's 2010 memoir, *Memories Before and After The Sound of Music*, director Ben Verborg's adaptation focuses not on Maria but on Agathe (Eliza Bennett), the eldest daughter of the von Trapps (named Liesl in the musical version), who struggles with her place in the family following the death of her mother. Agathe is resentful when new nanny Maria (Yvonne Catterfeld) usurps her own role as family caregiver. How do you solve a problem like Maria? In Agathe's case, you act like a real pill. Agathe's story—the least interesting aspect of the von Trapp saga—is told in flashback to her similarly resentful runaway niece by the elderly Agathe (Rosemary Harris), although you would think that her niece must have seen *The Sound of Music* and would presumably know the family story. One can hardly wait to get to the end credits to say so long, farewell, auf wiedersehen, goodbye. Optional, at best. (D. Liebensohn)



A War ★★★1/2

Magnolia, 115 min., in Danish w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

The human impact of the conflict in Afghanistan is powerfully conveyed in Tobias Lindholm's Oscar-nominated *A War*, which is divided into two sections: the first set on the battlefield, and the second in a courtroom. Claus (Pilou Asbæk) commands a squad serving in the international force fighting the Taliban, while his wife Maria (Tuva Novotny) tries to maintain a normal life for their three young children back in Denmark. When Claus and his men come under attack while on patrol, he calls in an airstrike against what he believes is the source of enemy artillery fire, but civilians die as a result and he's summoned home to stand trial for violating the rules of engagement in a moment of panic. Lindholm does an expert job of depicting the fog of combat that prompted Claus's decision, but proves no less skillful in showing the chasm of misunderstanding between the commander (and men who believe he saved their lives) and the stern, self-righteous prosecutor, who effectively represents all civilians willing to judge split-second choices made in the heat of battle. *A War* raises fundamental questions about the differences in perspective between the soldiers who are fighting in wars and those who retrospectively scrutinize their actions from the safety of home—providing no easy answers. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Whiskey Tango Foxtrot

★★★

Paramount, 111 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

This is a fictionalized version of former *Chicago Tribune* reporter Kim Barker's insightful 2011 memoir *The Taliban Shuffle*, which chronicled her stint in Afghanistan and Pakistan from 2004 to 2009. As portrayed by Tina Fey, Barker is a New York broadcast journalist who is dispatched to Kabul because she's single and ready to shake up her humdrum life. Upon her arrival (toting a bright orange backpack), Barker is immediately upbraided by chauvinistic Gen. Hollanek (Billy Bob Thornton), who is none too thrilled about her being embedded with his Marines. Barker is befriended by her shy Afghan translator (Christopher Abbott), whom she quite often endangers by taking thoughtless risks. Directed by Glenn Ficarra and John Requa, *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* takes a jab at the longest military campaign in our nation's history by pointing out that—at least in one case—our “help” is actually detrimental to the well-being of the women in a local village. Margot Robbie plays Barker's hard-partying frenemy, while Martin Freeman is the Scottish photographer who winds up in Barker's bed, much to the chagrin of Alfred Molina as Ali Massoud Sadiq, a high-ranking government official who is determined to seduce her. As this character study evolves, tart-talking comedienne Fey is triumphant from beginning to end, proving that she is equally adept at revealing her vulnerability in a drama. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Classic Films

Antonia's Line ★★★1/2

Film Movement, 103 min., in Dutch w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Marleen Gorris's 1995 Oscar winner for Best Foreign Film serves up a multi-generational tale about a matriarchal extended family formed as an alternative to the aggressive, competitive patriarchy that pushed Europe into two world wars. *Antonia's Line* stars Willeke van Ammelrooy as Antonia, who returns to her little rural village in the Netherlands after World War II to bury her mother and then decides that she will live on her own terms with her daughter. When a local widower (Jan Decleir) asks her to marry, Antonia replies, “You can't have my hand but you can have the rest”—and the pair become friends and lovers, which he accepts and learns to embrace. Antonia's daughter (Els Dottermans) feels she doesn't need a husband to have a child and she auditions for a suitable father. The narrative



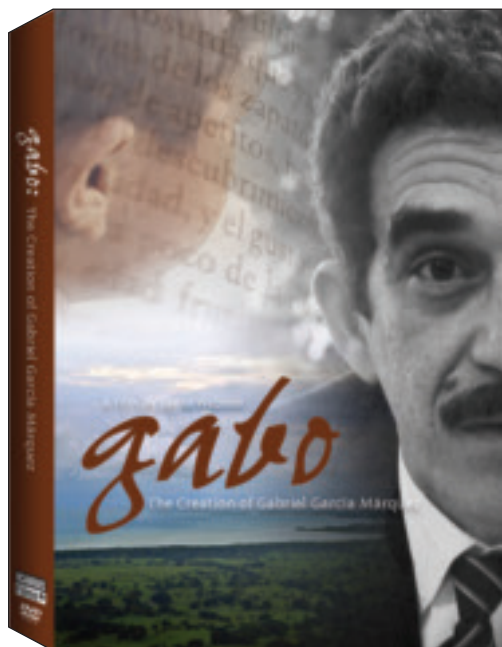
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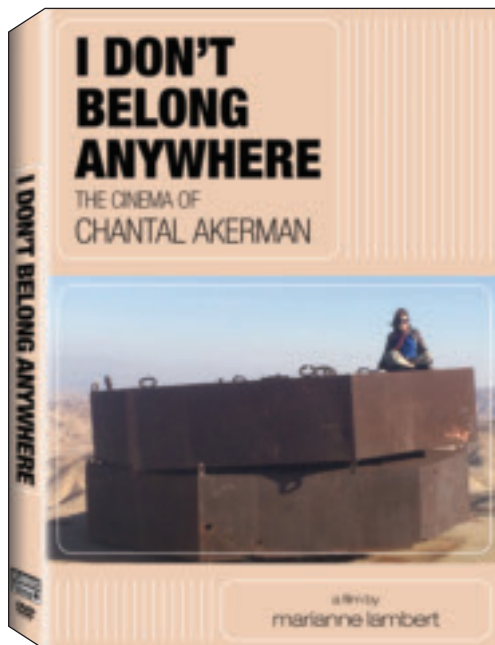
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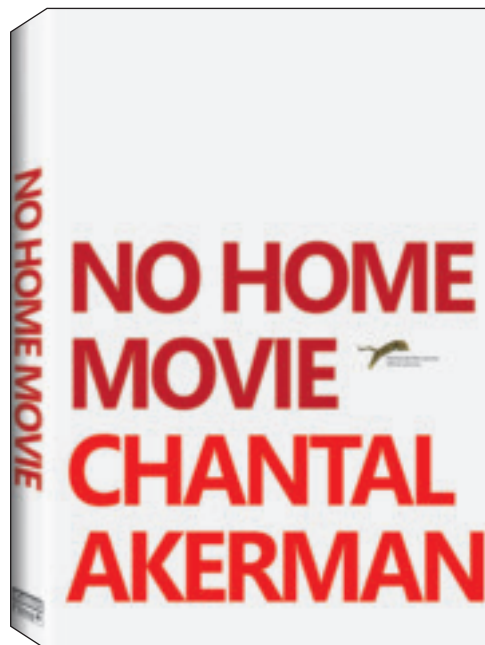
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covers 50 years in the life of Antonia and the community that forms around her like a family—a simple life of farming, church, and communal meals shared with all. Feminist director Gorris, whose previous features explored sexual politics and relations with a critical eye, here trades rhetoric for whimsy, warmth, and fantasy (at the funeral, Antonia's mother sits up to enjoy the celebration, a moment that recalls Latin American magical realism). *Antonia's Line* is not all light and joy, but the bad is taken along with the good in this generous, loving film. Extras include an archival interview with Gorris, and a booklet with an essay by film critic Thelma Adams. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Barcelona ★★★

Criterion, 101 min., PG-13,
DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

American independent filmmaker Whit Stillman's second film expands on the promise of his smart and witty debut, *Metropolitan*. Set in the early 1980s ("the last decade of the Cold War," as the prologue explains), *Barcelona* stars Taylor Nichols as Ted, an American salesman in the Barcelona office of a motor company, and Chris Eigeman as his cousin Fred, an abrasive naval officer sent to Spain to arrange public relations for the visiting U.S. fleet. Ted is an uptight business professional in a sexually liberated society, while Fred is self-absorbed and oblivious to the effects of his unfiltered comments in a culture that is hostile to the presence of the American military. Both are immature (yet also quite engaging) Americans abroad who begin dating local Spanish beauties (played by Tushka Bergen and Mira Sorvino). Inspired by Stillman's own experiences, this locale-driven character piece is as much indebted to literary novels and European cinema as it is to American independent film. Stillman's wry dialogue would likely seem self-conscious in other hands but is an utterly entertaining form of salon conversation here, while the laidback plot favors personal insights and minor breakthroughs over major revelations. Newly restored for both DVD and Blu-ray, extras include a 2002 audio commentary (with Whitman, Nichols, and Eigeman), a video essay on Whitman's work by film critic Faran Smith Nehme, a "making-of" featurette, archival interviews, and deleted scenes (including an alternate ending). Recommended. [Note: this is also available in a new boxed set that also features Stillman's *Metropolitan* and *The Last Days of Disco*.] (S. Axmaker)

A Brighter Summer Day ★★★1/2

Criterion, 236 min., in Mandarin & Taiwanese w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.95

Edward Yang (1947-2007) was one of the great young filmmakers of the Taiwanese

New Wave of the 1980s and 1990s, internationally acclaimed for his *Yi Yi*, which won the Best Director prize at Cannes in 2000. Yet it's his fourth feature, *A Brighter Summer Day*, that is widely considered to be his masterpiece. Set in 1960 Taipei, the film is a sprawling, personal drama about the generation of kids born to the refugees who fled Communist China for Taiwan, centering specifically on Xiao Si'r (Chang Chen), an angry, alienated teenager who is searching for an identity in a culture that isn't strictly Chinese. Like their rebellious American counterparts, these teens turn to gangs and rock 'n' roll. By the end, this nearly-four-hour epic tale has turned into a crime drama based on a real-life murder that shocked Taiwan, but the focus remains on the characters and their culture under an authoritarian government that is little better than the one the parents fled. Unlike his contemporaries Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Tsai Ming-liang, Yang's films were rarely seen in the U.S. outside of film festival showings; in fact, this 1991 film wasn't even released in the U.S. until 2011. Making its American home video debut on DVD and Blu-ray with a 4K digital restoration, extras include audio commentary by critic Tony Rayns, a feature-length documentary on the New Taiwan Cinema, a new interview with actor Chang Chen, and a video recording of a 1992 play by Yang. An overlooked masterpiece of world cinema marked by compelling character drama and rich period detail, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Brotherly Love ★★1/2

Warner, 112 min., R, DVD:
\$21.99

Peter O'Toole fans are quite familiar with the actor's zany turn as an insane English aristocrat in Peter Medak's madcap dark comedy *The Ruling Class* (1972). Fewer have seen this 1970 production, directed by J. Lee Thompson, set in much the same milieu but played straight. O'Toole is again all glib brio and charmingly blithe dissipation as Sir Charles "Pink" Pinkerton Ferguson, a dissolute noble satisfied with his school-age diagnosis of "low moral fiber" as he plays at being a gentleman farmer on a Scottish estate. Meanwhile he drinks, hunts, drives recklessly, and carouses. His slightly more sensible sister Hilary (Susannah York) also had a wild youth. When she flees her domineering husband (Michael Craig), Sir Charles eagerly welcomes her back under the same roof. But his antics prove too much even for Hilary. Suggestions of incest between the pair are kept mildly genteel in this high-decibel thespian showcase of florid speeches and upper-crust neuroses. Based on the 1961 novel *Household Ghosts*



by Scottish author James Kennaway (as well as his own subsequent stage-play adaptation "Country Dance"), this star-powered film is not nearly as notable as *The Ruling Class*, but should be considered a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassady)

Candy ★★

Kino Lorber, 124 min., R, DVD:
\$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Terry Southern's 1958 novel *Candy* (co-written with Mason Hoffenberg) reworked Voltaire's classic satire *Candide* into a pre-counterculture comedy. Scripted by Buck Henry and directed by French actor-turned-director Christian Marquand, this 1968 adaptation is less of a sly satire than a clumsy, intermittently witty romp through a European idea of American decadence. Ewa Aulin, a diminutive, curvy beauty and former Miss Teen Sweden, plays the titular innocent *Candide* figure here, resembling a wide-eyed kewpie doll of a naïve American high school girl (with an unshakable Swedish accent) who is coaxed out of her mini-dress and into the sack by a succession of dirty old men. The all-star cast of seducers includes Ringo Starr as an embarrassing stereotype of a Mexican gardener, John Astin as Candy's lecherous uncle, Richard Burton as a drunken sex-mad Welsh poet, Walter Matthau as a crazy general, and Marlon Brando as a phony horny guru. Also featuring John Huston, James Coburn, Anita Pallenberg, and Sugar Ray Robinson, the acting here is big and broad, played as lampoon rather than satire, and the direction is scattershot, while the comedy is all over the map. Originally rated "X," the film is a bewildering curiosity that hasn't aged well, but it does stand out as the most star-studded sex farce ever made. Extras include new interviews with screenwriter Henry and film critic Kim Morgan. Not a necessary purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street ★★1/2

Olive, 127 min., not rated,
DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

One of the most obscure films by Samuel Fuller—an idiosyncratic American auteur famous for melding pulp stories and flamboyant filmmaking with provocative themes—1972's *Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street* is a spoof of the detective yarns that Hollywood pumped out in the 1940s and '50s. Made for German television, the film started as an episode of the long-running German crime series *Tatort*, but Fuller expanded it to feature length and sidelined the show's main character to focus on Sandy (Glenn Corbett), an American private eye hired by a congressman being blackmailed by an international extortion ring. Posing as





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- *Variety*

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dreaming with your eyes open."**

- *The Hollywood Reporter*

Soldiers with a mysterious sleeping sickness are transferred to a temporary clinic in a former school. The memory-filled space becomes a revelatory world for housewife and volunteer Jenjira. Magic, healing, romance and dreams are all part of her tender path to deeper awareness of herself and the world around her.

Street date: June 28, 2016
DVD SRP: \$27.99 | BD SRP: \$32.99

105 Minutes - Color
Widescreen - Not Rated
In Thai with English subtitles

DVD # 3518-2 | BD # 3518-3
DVD UPC: 7 12267 35182 4
BD UPC: 7 12267 35183 1



a blackmailer himself, Sandy tracks down the ring's top operative (Christa Lang, Fuller's wife) in order to get to the high-tech head honcho villain (Anton Diffring), all the while searching for the mysterious Charlie Umlaut, the man who killed Sandy's partner. It's a B-movie lampoon—big, broad, and at times seemingly improvised. Fuller sets the tone in the opening credits (presenting cast and crew in silly costumes), shooting the film in a loose, shaggy style that is alternately bouncy and plodding. Even Fuller fans are split on this one, which by any measure is a minor work by a major filmmaker. Debuting on home video in a new restoration (the German language sequences are not subtitled or translated, as per the filmmaker's intentions), extras include a feature-length retrospective documentary, and a booklet with essays. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Death Walks Twice

★★★

Arrow, 4 discs, 208 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$69.95



This double feature offers *Death Walks on High Heels* (1971) and *Death Walks at Midnight* (1972), both directed by Luciano Ercoli and starring Spanish actress Nieves Navarro (under the screen name Susan Scott) and leading man Simón Andreu. Both are Italian giallo—i.e., horror films featuring beautiful women, masked killers, bloody and often sadistic murders, and stylish direction. In the first, Navarro plays a celebrity stripper in Paris who is stalked by a knife-wielding killer, and Andreu is her hot-blooded, violent boyfriend, who becomes the prime suspect when she's murdered. The film jumps from Paris to England and features a sardonic police inspector, a twisty plot, some nudity, lots of voyeurism, plenty of killings, and no shortage of suspects. The second film, which is not actually a sequel, takes a more stylistically flamboyant approach. A model (Navarro) on a psychedelic drug trip thinks she sees a violent murder in the apartment across the street, which was the site of a killing six months before. The police don't believe her and an opportunistic reporter (Andreu) thinks it's a flashback induced by the drugs, so she turns detective and discovers an insidious conspiracy. The film moves quickly through creative set pieces, wild plot twists, and a cast of quirky and erratic characters (even for a giallo). Both are considered classics of the genre, and will be of interest to horror fans. The set features separate Blu-ray and DVD copies of each film, along with extras including an audio commentary by film critic Tim Lucas, behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Father of the Bride

★★★★

Warner, 93 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



A wonderful classic comedy centering on a daughter and father struggling with the massive preparations—both actual and psychological—that go into a wedding, director Vincente Minnelli's 1950 *Father of the Bride* stars Spencer Tracy in a dynamite performance as Stanley T. Banks, the irascible daddy with a heart of gold, whose eyes seem to grow in size in direct proportion to the amount of money that daughter Kay (Elizabeth Taylor) seems to require for a proper wedding. Joan Bennett costars as wife and mother in this dead-on satire of American life at the close of the 1940s. Nabbing Oscar nominations for Best Picture, Actor, and Screenplay, *Father of the Bride* bows on Blu-ray with extras including short newsreels on Taylor's marriage to Conrad Hilton, Jr., and the cast meeting President Truman. A beloved film with a powerhouse star pairing of Tracy and Taylor, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (R. Pitman)

The Films of Maurice Pialat, Volume 1

★★★★★

Cohen, 3 discs, 277 min., in French w/English subtitles, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.98



Sometimes called the French Cassavetes, Maurice Pialat (1925–2003) helmed 10 feature films between 1968 and 1995. This three-film first volume from the Cohen Film Collection kicks off with 1974's *The Mouth Agape*, about a philandering husband (Hubert Deschamps) who, along with his son and daughter-in-law, must deal with his wife's (Monique Mélinand) terminal cancer. Next up is 1978's *Graduate First*, an ensemble piece focusing on a group of students in a provincial town who bicker with disapproving parents and one another while facing an uncertain future. Finally, 1980's *Loulou* serves up a portrait of a woman (Isabelle Huppert) who leaves her husband to take up with a devil-may-care guy (Gérard Depardieu) living on the fringes of society. Considering his penchant for long, static compositions, Pialat's style is often termed realist, but it might better be called naturalist: drawing on his own difficult childhood, Pialat emphasizes the simmering unhappiness in the lives of ordinary people, which periodically breaks out in heated exchanges and bursts of violence. These are edgy dramas that exhibit gritty truthfulness while avoiding melodramatic flourishes, and are often painful to watch but carry remarkable power. The copious extras include the superb 2007 documentary profile of Pialat *Love Exists* by Anne-Marie Faux and Jean-Pierre

Devillers, cast and crew interviews, and deleted scenes. An excellent first volume in a series celebrating the work of a major figure in late-20th-century French cinema, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (F. Swietek)

Forbidden Hollywood: Volume 10

★★★1/2
Warner, 5 discs, 358 min., not rated, DVD: \$40.99



Five more Depression-era films that flaunt sex while also celebrating amoral connivers and bad behavior are collected in this 10th volume of the *Forbidden Hollywood* series, which spotlights films made during the brief period between the coming of sound and the imposition of the Production Code in 1934. Lionel Barrymore stars in *Guilty Hands* (1931) as a successful defense attorney for crooks and cads who plots the "perfect murder" when his hedonistic client tries to marry his daughter. It's talky and stage-bound, but Barrymore is very entertaining. Warren William was the era's silver fox, a sly, elegant, mature leading man who played tycoons and ruthless businessmen with an appetite for young women, and he stars here in two snappy films. In *The Mouthpiece* (1932), William is a lawyer who represents underworld crooks but has a crisis of conscience when an innocent man is accused of his client's crime, and he dominates *The Match King* (1932) as a crooked schemer who transforms a Swedish match factory into a worldwide empire built on betrayal, blackmail, and a Ponzi scheme of credit. The last two entries are *Secrets of the French Police* (1932), a crime thriller involving a kidnapped flower girl, a pickpocket, and a Russian aristocrat plotting to steal the Romanov fortune, and *Ever in My Heart* (1933) starring Barbara Stanwyck as the American wife of a German immigrant in the U.S. who is demonized during World War I. These films aren't as strong as those found in earlier volumes, but fans of the racy movies and often ethically-challenged protagonists of the Pre-Code era will likely find them to be interesting and entertaining. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

The Gong Show Movie

★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 89 min., R, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Damned by critics and 1970s cultural tastemakers as a TV broadcasting nadir, prolific producer (and author) Chuck Barris's deliberately tacky talent-search series *The Gong Show* looks somewhat prophetic in our Warholean era of reality-TV and "idol" programs. *The Gong Show Movie*, Barris's own 1980 feature-film spin-off, was a box-office flop for Universal, co-scripted by Barris's

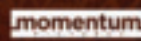
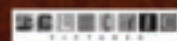


PRE-ORDER DATE: 6/28/2016 **STREET DATE: 8/2/2016**

Septembers of Shiraz tells the harrowing tale of an affluent family whose lives are turned upside down in the wake of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. When Isaac (Adrien Brody) is suddenly arrested and taken to a secret prison, his wife (Salma Hayek) is left to make sense of what has happened and must somehow secure Isaac's release and her family's safety.



SEPTEMBERS OF SHIRAZ - DVD
ITEM #: EOE-DV-8270 | UPC: 7-419528-2709-2
SRP: \$19.98 | Thriller Drama | 110 Minutes

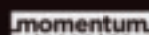


PRE-ORDER DATE: 7/19/2016 **STREET DATE: 8/23/2016**

For seasoned outlaw Henry and his gang of bandits, a high stakes bank heist turns bloody when they kill a U.S. Marshall in the process. With one of the largest bounties in the history of the American West on their heads, they make their way south and invade the home of a seemingly innocent and unsuspecting frontier family for refuge. As an unexpected game of cat and mouse ensues, this twisted tale leads to seduction, role reversal, and ultimately revenge.



OUTLAWS AND ANGELS - DVD
ITEM #: EOE-DV-8242 | UPC: 7-419528-2429-9
SRP: \$24.98 | Western Thriller | 119 Minutes



friend, subversive auteur Robert Downey, Sr. (who was set to direct until Barris himself took the helm). The essentially one-joke premise finds Barris playing himself as the harried host-impresario, nagged by a ratings-obsessed producer, his concerned live-in girlfriend (Robin Altman, the real-life Mrs. Barris for a time) and, mainly, by obnoxious fans and would-be performers, who assail him with impromptu auditions in an escalating variety of inappropriate situations, sending the schlub hero into a meltdown. The seeming intent here was to serve up a too-hot-for-TV *Gong Show*, with more innuendo and profanity than the Unknown Comic and Jaye P. Morgan were able to get past censors. If one accepts that limited scope, then this seldom-seen cult item makes for a guilty-pleasure curio. Noteworthy in bit parts and cameos are such troupers as Tony Randall, Harvey Lembeck, Vincent Schiavelli, Mabel King, and Phil Hartman. Bowing on Blu-ray with an amusing audio commentary by pop culture historian Russell Dyball, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Losing Ground ★★★1/2

Milestone/Oscilloscope, 2 discs, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



The only feature film by playwright and filmmaker Kathleen Collins and one of the first to be directed by an African-American woman, the 1982 drama *Losing Ground* is an independent drama that explores a different side of black life in America. Sara Rogers (Seret Scott) is a professor of philosophy at a New York City college, and her husband Victor (Bill Gunn) is a painter looking for a new direction. When he decides to rent a summer home outside of the city she has no say in the matter, a sign that things are not hunky dory in their marriage. Sara lives a life revolving around ideas and scholarship while Victor is all about aesthetics and expression. As Sara studies the origins of ecstasy in religion and art, she realizes that she has very little of it in her own life and impulsively agrees to act in a student film, where she explores another side of herself. A powerful portrait of committed professionals facing the limits of defining themselves through what they do instead of who they are, *Losing Ground* is a film about relationships and self-knowledge, with a sense of sexual politics that is as sophisticated as its personal odysseys. Collins, who was an intelligent, insightful, and nuanced filmmaker, died in 1988 at the age of 46, and her film never received any real distribution until Milestone Films restored and revived it. Bowing on home video in DVD and Blu-ray editions, extras include audio commentary, new and archival interviews, and Collins's shorter 1980 drama *The Crux Brothers and Miss Malloy*. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

A Married Woman

★★★

Cohen, 95 min., in French w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98



Jean-Luc Godard's 1964 modern portrait of love and sex in the media-saturated '60s serves up a collage of the life of a young wife who is having an affair. Macha Méril stars as Charlotte (a role that was clearly meant for Godard's wife and longtime muse Anna Karina, but they were separated at the time), a married woman who is not so much an individual as she is a product of her culture, defined by the bra ads that literally loom over her as she walks the streets. Married to an older intellectual who has a condescending attitude, this superficial beauty seeks release in an affair with a handsome actor but refuses to choose one man over the other. *A Married Woman* opens on a montage in which Charlotte is reduced to parts—legs, arms, back, lips, midriff (isolated glimpses suggesting those erogenous zones that could not be photographed in a mainstream feature film)—caressed by her unidentified lover. Shot in creamy cool black-and-white by longtime cinematographer Raoul Coutard with a strikingly handsome formality that is both erotic and removed—suggesting a physical intimacy and an emotional disconnection even in the most intimate scenes of love-making and pillow talk—the film was a cause célèbre in France after the censorship board initially banned it, going on to become one of the most financially successful films of Godard's career (although overshadowed by his more overtly political and more stylistically daring films). Today, it stands out as one of his most emotionally sympathetic movies, with Godard's feeling for the lost married woman coming across as quite genuine. Bowing on DVD and Blu-ray in newly restored editions, extras include interviews with Méril, fashion designer and film producer Agnès B., and Godard scholar Antoine de Baecque. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Only Angels Have Wings

★★★1/2

Criterion, 121 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



Howard Hawks was one of the great American directors and 1939's *Only Angels Have Wings* is one of his masterpieces. Cary Grant stars as Geoff Carter, charismatic leader of a fledgling air mail service in South America, and Jean Arthur is Bonnie, a spunky showgirl who is swept into Carter's community of American expatriates as soon as she steps off the ship. Hawks's adventures often featured a bromance angle, so Bonnie's affable rival for Geoff's affections is the latter's best friend, Kid (Thomas Mitchell), an aging flier with bad eyes who Geoff has

to ground. Adding to the tensions is a new pilot (Richard Barthelmess) who is snubbed by everyone for a past cowardice that got a colleague killed, and his glamorous wife (Rita Hayworth in her first major role), who has history with Geoff. Movies are built on such small world coincidences, but the magic of Hawks is his ability to mask contrivance and turn plot twists into tests of character. The screenplay is pure poetry and adventure-story-mythologizing, full of banter and metaphors, and it's shot almost entirely in Hollywood, where a fantasy of an American outpost in the South American jungle is created on the backlot. It's the quintessential Hawks movie of male bonding and tough love, where life is lived minute to minute, and the highest compliment one can receive is being called "professional." Newly restored for DVD and Blu-ray, this handsome Criterion release has extras including audio excerpts from a 1972 conversation between Hawks and filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich, a new interview with film critic David Thomson, a featurette on Hawks, a 1939 *Lux Radio Theatre* adaptation of the film, and an essay by critic Michael Sragow. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Outlaw Gangster VIP: The Complete Collection

★★★

Arrow, 6 discs, 500 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$79.95



This release collects six groundbreaking Yakuza movies directed by Toshio Masuda and filmed in quick succession by the legendary Japanese film studio Nikkatsu between 1968-69. *Gangster VIP*, which introduces anti-hero Goro (a brooding Tetsuya Watari), begins with a stylish black-and-white prologue recounting Goro's happy childhood before he turns into a fearsome gang member who is adept with a deadly dagger and irresistible to the women he is always ready to save from the threats of macho ruffians. The remaining entries in the series—*Gangster VIP 2*, *Heartless*, *Goro the Assassin*, *Black Dagger*, and *Kill!*—all fall into a predictable pattern. Although constantly trying to leave the mob life, Goro is always inexorably pulled back in (friends routinely die, requiring Goro to take vengeance on their killers), and machinations within the gangs frequently leave Goro badly injured, to be nursed by his faithful girlfriend (Chieko Matsubara). All of the films feature exquisitely choreographed fight scenes, along with bloody finales that invariably find the wounded Goro stumbling off into the sunset. Although formulaic, all six of the *Gangster VIP* movies boast exciting moments, and Watari exudes dark charisma as a man fated to continually—if also reluctantly—pull out his dagger one more time. Presented here in a dual-format collection with both DVD and

Blu-ray editions, extras include audio commentary on *Gangster VIP* by Jasper Sharp, a visual essay on the series, photo galleries, and a booklet. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Road Trilogy

★★★★1/2

Criterion, 393 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$99.95; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$99.95



Three defining early features by German filmmaker Wim Wenders—all starring Rüdiger Volger on journeys across Germany—are collected in this boxed set. *Alice in the Cities* (1974), with Volger playing a photojournalist returning to Germany from a trip across America and young Yella Rottlander as a girl left in his care by her single mother (Lisa Kreuzer), is Wenders's international breakthrough and one of his most beloved films. Shooting in lovely black and white, Robby Müller (cinematographer for all three films) visually matches the easy, meandering pace and observational style that defines the entire trilogy. *Wrong Move* (1975), inspired by a Goethe novel and starring Volger as an alienated, self-involved would-be writer, is the most overtly literary of the three and the most downbeat, and also features Hanna

Schygulla and Nastassja Kinski (the latter in her first screen role). *Kings of the Road* (1976) is Wenders's first masterpiece, a road movie epic centering on a movie projector repairman (Volger) working near the East German border and the aimless child psychologist (Hanns Zischler) who becomes his traveling companion. This three-hour film exhibits a gentle serenity and contemplative tone as it chronicles the dramas of people the pair meet along the way. All three films are united by the overriding theme of searching for identity in 1970s Germany (where the culturally suppressed legacy of the Nazi past echoes throughout), as well as the road movie structure, and Volger's casting in the lead, and they established Wenders as a major filmmaker of the New German Cinema. All three films have been newly restored and feature a new English subtitle translation by Wenders, along with extras including audio commentaries, interviews with cast and crew, a featurette on the restoration work, two early short films by Wenders, and a 50-page book with essays and photos. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Sex Murder Art ★★★

Cult Epics, 6 discs, 319 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$99.95

The films of Jörg Buttgerit, it must be

emphasized, are not for everybody. Situated on the extreme fringe of the horror genre, they traffic in subjects and imagery that most viewers will find offensive, even repulsive (of course, Buttgerit argues that his work is intended not to glorify violence but to show its awfulness). This comprehensive set contains four of Buttgerit's films, remastered in HD: *Nekromantik* (1987), about a man who indulges in necrophilia and eventually kills himself; *Der Todesking* (1989), an anthology of seven shorts dealing with suicide and murder (reviewed in VL-9/15); *Nekromantik 2* (1991), a sequel in which the erstwhile girlfriend of the dead necrophilia aficionado exhumes his corpse (for, ahem, obvious reasons) before moving on to a second guy, with bloody results; and *Schramm* (1993), which uses wild camera moves to explore the mind and actions of a serial killer. All were made on shoestring budgets, and the relentless gore and nudity on display are somewhat mitigated by the gritty images, although some would argue that the unsettling effect of the films is actually enhanced by the technical crudeness. Cult Epics has certainly done Buttgerit proud, loading *Sex Murder Art* with extras, including audio commentaries,



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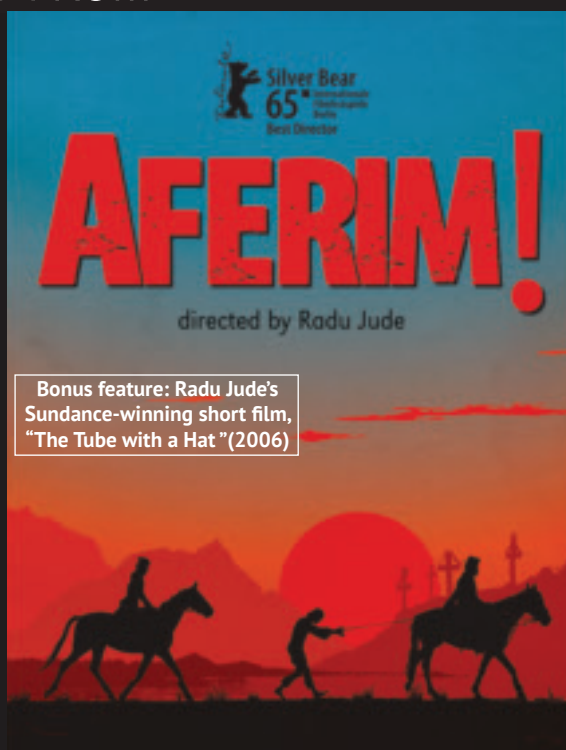
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RAMS

DIRECTED BY GRÍMUR HÁKONARSON

STREET DATE: JUNE 28, 2016 **SRP: \$29.98 / \$34.98**

In a secluded valley in Iceland, Gummi and Kiddi live side by side, tending to their sheep. Their ancestral sheep-stock is considered one of the country's best. Although they share the land and a way of life, Gummi and Kiddi have not spoken to each other in four decades.

VAN GOGH

DIRECTED BY MAURICE PIALAT

STREET DATE: JULY 12, 2016 **SRP: \$39.98 / \$49.98**

After leaving the asylum, Vincent Van Gogh settles in Auvers-sur-Oise, in the home of Doctor Gachet, an art lover and patron. Vincent keeps painting amidst the conflicts with his brother Theo and the torments of his failing mental health. Pialat's examination of the last 60 days of Van Gogh's life earned him a Palme d'Or nomination and stands as his finest masterpiece.



THE LAST DIAMOND

DIRECTED BY ERIC BARBIER

STREET DATE: JULY 26, 2016 **SRP: \$24.98**

Simon Carerra has just been released from prison and is now on parole. His friend Albert persuades him back to his old ways with the idea of a big-time heist of a celebrated diamond in Antwerp; The "Florentine". Features an interview with Director Eric Barbier and stars Bérénice Bejo and Yvan Attal.

FIVE DAY LOVER AND ON GUARD

TWO NEWLY RESTORED FILMS DIRECTED BY PHILIPPE DE BROCA

STREET DATE: AUGUST 9, 2016 **SRP: \$49.98**

Featuring two of Philippe de Broca's most celebrated films, **FIVE DAY LOVER** and **ON GUARD**, and both restored from the original negatives. Bonus features include interviews with the director and cast and behind-the-scenes footage.





**“IMPRESSIVE...
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**- A.O. SCOTT,
THE NEW YORK TIMES**



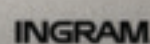
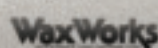
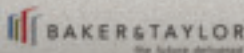
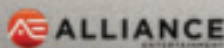
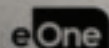
MARGUERITE - DIRECTED BY XAVIER GIANNOLI

**STREET DATE:
AUGUST 2, 2016**

**SRP:
\$29.98 / \$34.98**

Marguerite Dumont is a rich woman whose whole life is devoted to her passion: music. She sings wholeheartedly, but she sings terribly out of tune. When a young, provocative journalist decides to write a rave article on her latest performance, Marguerite starts to believe even further in her talent. This gives her the courage she needs to train for her first recital in front of a crowd of complete strangers.

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brief intros for each film, a Q&A with the filmmaker, "making-of" featurettes, short films by Buttgereit, outtakes, a music video, photo galleries, and—most notably—the hour-shy documentary *Corpse Fucking Art* on Buttgereit's first three films. Also included are two CDs with film soundtracks, and an illustrated booklet. Given the subject matter, this set cannot be recommended for general audiences, but Buttgereit does have a unique voice, and this could appeal to hardcore fans of what might be called alternative horror. Recommended, with the noted reservations. (F. Swietek)

The Sicilian ★★

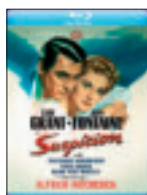
Shout! Factory, 146 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$26.99



Despite an illustrious literary pedigree—*The Sicilian* is based on the 1984 titular *Godfather* tie-in bestseller by Mario Puzo, with a script by novelist Steve Shagan—Michael Cimino's 1987 epic was a box-office bomb, partially due to the distributor's brutal post-production editing that cut 30 minutes of the story. Christopher Lambert stars as Salvatore Giuliano, a remarkable real-life 1940s bandit and Sicilian separatist who styled himself as a modern Robin Hood, working to uplift the peasants from Italian-landowner domination. But—at least here—the well-educated but politically naïve firebrand fails to see how much he is being used as a tool by Palermo Mafiosi, until his fate is sealed. Some subplots—Giuliano's gentleman-highwayman crashing of a posh dinner of aristocrats, and making the cover of *Life* magazine—are historical fact. But even with the missing half-hour of material restored for this Blu-ray release, the saga still features confusing transitions, uneven acting, and schizoid shifts in tone, although one can glimpse a superior, David Lean-like epic lurking beneath this sprawling mess, and Cimino's eye for the Sicilian mountainscape is often breathtaking. Notable also is the international cast, including John Turturro, Aldo Ray, Barbara Sukowa, and an especially impressive boss-of-bosses turn by Joss Ackland. But ultimately this is an interesting misfire, of primary interest to film students studying Cimino's checkered career. Optional. (C. Cassidy)

Suspicion ★★★

Warner, 99 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



Cary Grant plays against type as charming but shady playboy Johnnie, while Joan Fontaine won an Academy Award as prim wallflower heiress Lina, who is swept off her feet in Alfred Hitchcock's 1941 romantic thriller. The sheltered young woman elopes even after she's been warned that ne'er-do-well Johnnie

is only after her money. Later, she discovers that he's lied about almost everything and is content to spend her wealth gambling on horses and long-shot investments. Nigel Bruce (who played Watson in the classic Sherlock Holmes films with Basil Rathbone) is Grant's old chum Beaky, who dies under mysterious circumstances, after which Lina starts to believe that her husband is out to murder her for her fortune. Working from a thin screenplay, Hitchcock creates suspense out of simple sequences through the use of ominous angles and lighting. In one memorable scene, Johnnie carries a glass of milk that may contain poison up a staircase to Lina's room—and the room appears to grow darker while the milk literally glows (thanks to a small bulb placed in the liquid). Hitchcock's early American movie was also his first of four films with Grant, who here displays more menacing shades than the actor had previously exhibited. Hitchcock's original ending was too dark for the studio, which imposed a happy finish that is both abrupt and unconvincing, although audiences embraced the film and made it a hit. But the weak conclusion aside, *Suspicion* is elegant, suspenseful, and very entertaining. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include a retrospective featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Too Late for Tears

★★★

Flicker Alley, 102 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95



In this 1949 thriller, Elizabeth Scott stars as Jane Palmer—one of the most ruthless heroines in film noir—a status-conscious middle-class wife who will do anything to keep her hands on a suitcase of cash that lands in her lap by accident. Arthur Kennedy is her husband, Alan, who wants to take the money to the police, and Dan Duryea is Danny Fuller, a mercenary crook who comes looking for the cash (payment in a blackmail scheme) and ends up becoming Jane's wary partner. Scott, a limited actress who has been called the poor man's Lauren Bacall, played her share of heroines and villains but here her eyes convincingly burn with greed and her avarice drives her to murder. Duryea is also in fine form as a weasel of an opportunist, sneering his dialogue as Scott slowly takes control of the partnership, and Don DeFore costars as the old "army buddy" who hides his own secrets as he goes searching for Alan when the latter suddenly goes "missing." It's one of the most savage noirs in which greed reveals the rotten core of an otherwise law-abiding citizen who is then driven to commit terrible acts of violence. In a genre defined by corrupt, ruthless, and conniving characters, filmmaker Byron Haskin's *Too Late for Tears* features one of the most reprehensible and cold-blooded. This dual-format

edition features the film on both DVD and Blu-ray, with extras including audio commentary by film noir historian Alan K. Rode, featurettes on the film and restoration, and a booklet with an essay by noir expert Brian Light. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? ★★★

Warner, 131 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



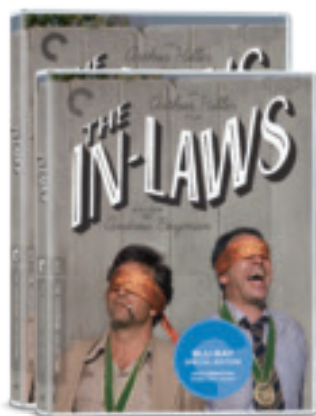
Warner Bros. employed considerable clout to bring Edward Albee's scathing satirical play to the big screen in 1966 with its off-color verbiage virtually intact. Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor play George and Martha, a middle-aged married couple who have just returned home from a party at the late hour of 2 a.m. Martha immediately begins to rake George over the coals—and we quickly learn the nature of their relationship: George is a history professor who will never be head of the department, while Martha is none other than the dean's daughter. The pair have invited another couple over for drinks that night (morning?), Nick (George Segal) and Honey (Sandy Dennis). Over the course of the next few hours, dirty little secrets will be exposed with shameful regularity, as everyone engages in a vicious one-upmanship that ultimately has no real winners. Throughout, the mysterious subject of George and Martha's "son" hangs over the conversation like a loaded gun, and—in true dramatic fashion—explodes in the final act. Director Mike Nichols's debut feature film scored 13 Oscar nominations, and walked away with five statues, including Best Actress (for Taylor, who bravely played the role with a few extra pounds, messy hair, and truly tacky clothes) and Best Supporting Actress for Dennis. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include two audio commentaries (one by Nichols and filmmaker Steven Soderbergh; the other by cinematographer Haskell Wexler), a 1966 interview with Nichols, retrospective featurettes, the 1975 documentary *Elizabeth Taylor: An Intimate Portrait*, and Dennis's screen tests. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. (R. Pitman)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) during July and August for DVD/Blu-ray-specific comments added to the video movies reviewed here, as well as new reviews, including: *Anesthesia*, *Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice*, *Born to Be Blue*, *Boy & the World*, *Bride of Re-Animator*, *Criminal*, *Demolition*, *The Divergent Series: Allegiant*, *I Saw the Light*, *Mother's Day*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2*, and much more!



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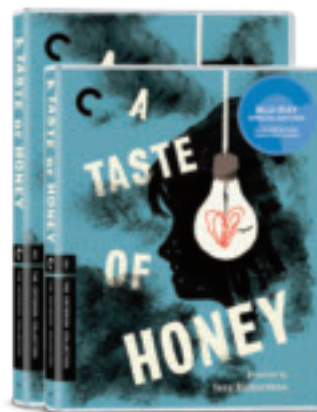
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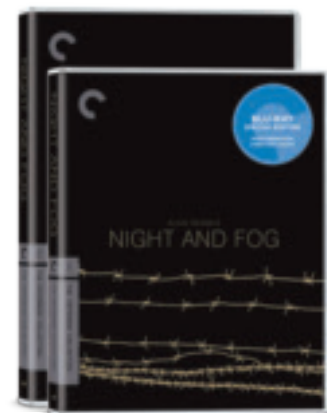
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Angie Tribeca: The Complete First Season

★★★

Warner, 2 discs, 220 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Angie Tribeca, created for TBS by Steve and Nancy Carell, is the 21st-century answer to *Police Squad* and *Sledge Hammer!*, serving up a parody of modern police procedurals. Rashida Jones is Angie Tribeca, a hard-case lone wolf LAPD cop who is assigned a new partner named Jay Geils (Hayes MacArthur). The pair spend the season dancing around their mutual attraction while taking on high-profile cases involving blackmail, art theft, and illegal pet ferrets smuggled into California. They also go undercover on an airliner where Angie's competitive sister is a stewardess, and infiltrate a prison where a gang of British thieves have almost impenetrable accents. The character names are a hodge-podge collection of pop culture references—in addition to "Jay Geils" (think: J. Geils Band), fellow officer DJ Tanner (Dean Cain) is named after a *Full House* character, the coroner is Dr. Scholls (André Vermeulen), and their flinty boss is Chet Atkins (Jere Burns), who barks out every line, no matter the situation. This kind of comedy demands creative lunacy, deadpan delivery, and a rapid-fire barrage of gags to succeed and *Angie Tribeca* delivers, from its crazed sight gags to its nonsensical non sequiturs. The series also features an impressive lineup of guest stars, including Lisa Kudrow, Gary Cole, James Franco, Jeff Dunham, and Bill Murray. The season ends on a cliffhanger that spoofs the whole idea of season-ending cliffhangers, complete with romantic confessions in the midst of defusing a bomb. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2016 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

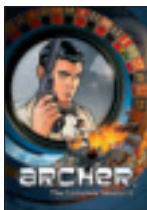


Archer: The Complete Season 6

★★★1/2

Fox, 2 discs, 272 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

This FX-aired animated comedy centering on a private American intelligence agency and its dysfunctional office politics has grown from cult show to hit series. After the team left the business to try their hand at running a drug cartel in season five, they are now back, teaming with the CIA—as long as they can prove themselves capable of handling an assignment without completely bungling it. Complicating matters is the fact that the team's top agents—Sterling Archer (voiced by H. Jon Benjamin), who has mad skills but a serious deficit of brain cells, and Lana (Aisha Tyler), the only clear thinking member of the agency—are the parents of an infant girl who they must leave behind during each mission



(and there are simply no responsible adults back at the office). Christian Slater guest stars in a recurring role as CIA agent Slater ("not Mr. Slater, just Slater"), their long-suffering agency contact, and the two-part season finale shrinks them to microscopic size and sends them into the bloodstream of a dying scientist in a parody of the sci-fi cult film *Fantastic Voyage*. Still marked by extremely raunchy humor—although not as funny as the early seasons—this set compiles all 13 episodes from the 2015 sixth season, with extras including bonus animated shorts. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

The Beverly Hillbillies: The Official First Season

★★★

Paramount, 5 discs, 921 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Come and listen to my story about a man named Jed. Actually, viewers will have to wait until the second episode to hear one of the most beloved TV theme songs. *The Beverly Hillbillies*, which was anything but a critics darling, was the top-rated show during its first two seasons, the first of which earned Emmy nominations for Irene Ryan in her iconic role as Granny and for the show's writing and directing. More than a half century later, these inaugural episodes have aged as well as Granny's possum stew (that's a compliment). If you know the theme song, you know the premise: Jed Clampett (Buddy Ebsen) is a poor mountaineer who finds oil (black gold) on his property and becomes an instant multimillionaire. He loads up the truck with Granny, daughter Elly May (Donna Douglas), and his cousin Pearl's son Jethro (Max Baer, Jr.), and heads West. This is a fish-out-of-water comedy and the gentle, never mean-spirited humor comes from watching the Clampetts struggle to navigate their new world. "We commence plowing tomorrow," Jed proclaims upon the family's arrival to their new palatial home. "But this is Beverly Hills," his banker, Mr. Drysdale (Raymond Bailey) protests. "Dirt is dirt," Jed shrugs. *The Beverly Hillbillies* was more grounded than the goofier *Green Acres*, but it wasn't above its own bizarre grace notes, such as the character Jethro (Max Baer, Jr. in drag). Other collateral pleasures are Emmy nominee Nancy Kulp as Drysdale's indispensable secretary, and a pre-*Petticoat Junction* Bea Benaderet as Pearl. Presenting all 36 episodes from the 1962-63 debut season, extras include an extended pilot episode and sponsor commercials. Recommended. (D. Liebenson)



Bob Hope: Entertaining the Troops

★★★1/2

Music Video Distributors, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

If John Wayne was America's cowboy, Bob Hope was America's comedian. From

vaudeville to Broadway, radio, TV, movies, and even comic books, Hope was the original king of all media. But his tireless service entertaining the troops is one of his most lasting legacies. This compilation collects three Bob Hope Christmas specials. The earliest, a black-and-white kinescope, dates back to 1951 and the Korean War. Filmed live aboard the USS *Boxer*, the program features tap-dancing prodigies the Nicholas Brothers, and singer Connie Moore. "Around the World with the USO," from 1970, follows Hope and company from a dress rehearsal before President Nixon through a 16-day itinerary that includes Italy, Germany, Guam, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam. Guests include Neil Armstrong and Connie Stevens. The third show, "Around the Globe with the USO," broadcast the following year, joins Hope, Lola Falana, Ursula Andress, and Hall of Famer Johnny Bench visiting Alaska, England, Germany, Thailand, and Vietnam. The humor throughout is topical and has not aged well, although Hope's impeccable timing and delivery elevates some groan-worthy double-entendres, as when screen goddess Andress asks Hope which of her films he's seen and he responds, "There isn't a thing of yours I haven't seen." Viewers who grew up watching the then-top-rated specials may get a nostalgic kick from these stirring celebrations of American servicemen. A strong optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)



The Bold Ones—The New Doctors: The Complete Series

★★★

Shout! Factory, 9 discs, 1,980 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99

The New Doctors was the most popular installment of NBC's wheel series *The Bold Ones*, running in alternate sequence with *The Lawyers* and *The Senator* (and, briefly, *The Protectors*) from 1969 to 1973. This medical-action drama takes place at a research hospital/clinic run by the brilliant, boundary-breaking neurosurgeon Dr. David Craig (E. G. Marshall), with assistance from Dr. Ted Stuart (John Saxon), and Dr. Paul Hunter (David Hartman). (Saxon was replaced by Robert Walden as Dr. Martin Cohen in season four.) The elite team at the Craig Institute faces a multitude of vexing diseases and diagnostic issues tied to organ transplants, exotic viruses, tragic accidents, mental illness, and malpractice, along with attendant moral and ethical dilemmas in its bleeding-edge setting. A precursor to shows like *St. Elsewhere*, *ER* and *House*, *The New Doctors* embraces the changing social circumstances and mores of the early '70s as it explores ego clashes and other personal dynamics between doctors and patients. The core cast is solid through-



out, joined by a who's who of guest stars, including Ron Howard, Gloria Grahame, Lou Gossett, Jr., Donna Mills, Richard Dreyfus, Della Reese, Stefanie Powers, William Shatner, and Milton Berle, among others. Compiling all 43 original episodes, plus a crossover episode of *Ironsides*, this is recommended. (T. Fry)

Casual: Season One

★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 2 discs, 262 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

The title of this delicious original comedy from Hulu refers to various attitudes about modern life and mores. Sex is the most obvious—and ripest for observation—but the devotion to a casual way of living for the quirky family unit at the show's heart is spot-on in its combination of honest comedy and sentimental drama. Alex (Tommy Dewey) is a thirtysomething Los Angeles bachelor who takes in his older sister Valerie (Michaela Watkins) and teenage niece Laura (Tara Lynne Barr) in the wake of Valerie's unpleasant divorce. The three roommates embark on a casual series of encounters with lovers, friends, co-workers, and extended family, while underscoring some of the absurdities of contemporary life. One of the show's creators is filmmaker Jason Reitman, who brings an imprimatur of American indie film authenticity and creative insight. *Casual* is not farce, but rather well-observed commentary on what it's like to be part of a culture that treats the politics of partner-hopping, generational differences, and family dynamics as the minefield of misunderstanding that it really is. Alex is a tech entrepreneur who created a dating app to advance his own sexual exploits. He and Valerie both support each other to the nth degree in their respective romantic aspirations, but both also become embroiled in the insanity of a teen girl's life as Laura asserts her own considerable personality. Presenting all 10 episodes from the 2015 first season, extras include a "making-of" featurette. A stellar comedy with a genuine heart, this is highly recommended. (T. Fry)



Doctor Who: The Complete Ninth Series

★★★

BBC, 700 min., not rated, DVD: 5 discs, \$74.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$89.98

Under the guidance of showrunner Steven Moffat, *Doctor Who* has morphed into a more cosmic show, with epic storylines weaving plot threads throughout entire seasons. The ninth opens with a visit to the planet of the Daleks to honor the dying wish of the creator of the Dalek race, a mission of mercy that lands the Doctor (Peter Capaldi) in an elaborate trap, after which his companion Clara (Jenna Col-



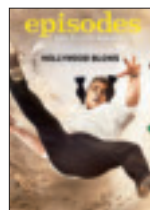
man) joins forces with his nemesis Missy (Michelle Gomez) to save him. The Doctor and Clara travel through time and space for adventures that take place under the sea, in old England, in a battle against alien invaders in the time of the Vikings, and in a hidden "trap street" in London where alien refugees find new life in human form. And the pair stop a plot involving millions of shapeshifting Zygons peacefully living amongst the humans. As fans know, this is the final season for Clara, which ends with the Doctor in a showdown with the Time Lords on their hidden home world, Gallifrey. This set also includes the 2014 Christmas special "Last Christmas," with guest star Nick Frost as Santa Claus, and the 2015 Christmas special "The Husbands of River Song," a colorful interstellar caper with River Song (Alex Kingston) meeting the Peter Capaldi incarnation of the Doctor for the first time (timelines are complicated when you can jump from one era to another). Compiling all 14 episodes from 2015, extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Episodes: The Fourth Season

★★★1/2

Paramount, 2 discs, 256 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

The skewering of showbiz reality is a favorite TV theme, and the Showtime series *Episodes* skillfully mines the rich veins of vanity, venality, and the despicable behaviors of Hollywood creative types in characters who are probably closer to the genuine article than most people would believe. Season four continues exploring the exploits of an actor named Matt LeBlanc (played by Matt LeBlanc) and various hangers-on to his insipid NBC sitcom, *Pucks*. Of course, this isn't the real Matt, nor is it how the TV industry really operates—or is it? The dishonesty, back-stabbery, and antic selfishness that drives the entertainment industry on display here feels like such accurate farce that the show becomes a can't-look-away train wreck. Even more jaded after four years in the Hollywood cesspool, British TV expats Beverly (Tamsin Greig) and Sean (Stephen Mangan)—whose hit Brit series was transformed into the shallow *Pucks*—still grapple with the pull of fame and fortune versus their very souls as the sell-out producers. And Matt discovers that he's been robbed blind by his late manager and falls deeper into the pit of self-loathing self-absorption. Little new ground is broken in the story arc, but the business of showbiz as hateful and mean is still convincingly portrayed. Along with LeBlanc, Greig, and Mangan, the ensemble includes Mircea Monroe, John Pankow, and Kathleen Rose Perkins. Presenting all nine episodes from the 2015 fourth season, this caustic comedy is highly recommended. (T. Fry)



The Expanse: Season One

★★★

Universal, 427 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.98

The most ambitious original sci-fi series created by the Syfy network since their award-winning *Battlestar Galactica* reboot, *The Expanse* delivers a dense mix of space opera, political conspiracy, and galactic mystery based on the bestselling novels by James S. A. Corey (the pen name of authors Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck). The debut season, which essentially adapts *Leviathan Wakes* (the 2011 first novel in the series), reaches from Earth to Mars to the asteroid belt, covering a frontier society of space stations, mining ships, and independent-minded settlers (known as Belters) under the jurisdiction of Earth's government. In the opening episode, an ice mining ship survives an attack by a powerful weapon, and the crew goes into hiding as they become a target. Other stories follow a Belter cop (Thomas Jane) gone rogue in order to find a runaway girl who has joined the resistance, and a U.N. diplomat (Shohreh Aghdashloo) who suspects a Mars conspiracy but discovers a more insidious plot. *The Expanse* serves up a complicated story with an expansive scope. Along the way, the series creates a rich social and political culture, with the frontier society of the Belters resembling that of the original American colonies, a culture of independents and individualists fomenting revolution against long distance rule by a rich mother country that treats them as second class citizens. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2015-16 debut season, extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Grace and Frankie: Season One

★★★

Lionsgate, 3 discs, 377 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin are frenemies in this Netflix original sitcom from the creators of *Friends* and *Home Improvement*. Retired businesswoman Grace (Fonda) is tightly wound and status conscious, while Frankie (Tomlin) is an artist and socially-conscious free spirit. They only socialize because their husbands, Robert (Martin Sheen) and Sol (Sam Waterston), are partners in a legal practice. Then the men drop a bombshell: both are gay and are coming out of the closet to marry one another. Grace and Frankie, opposites who don't even really like each other, end up sharing a beach house and reluctantly becoming a mutual support system while going through their respective divorces (the shake-up also reverberates through the lives of their grown children). Fonda and Tomlin are superb as the oil-and-water duo whose initial antipathy eases to friendly sparring (they even help one



another break out a little, especially as Grace begins dating), while Sheen and Waterston are more low key as they explore their new life together. The writing is witty and sometimes profane (which can be entertaining coming from this cast) but the show is mostly built on the affection shared by the characters, who remain close and caring despite the divorces—embracing healing and new opportunities rather than rancor. Presenting all 13 episodes from the 2015 debut season, extras include episode commentaries, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Grantchester: The Complete Second Season ★★½

PBS, 2 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$49.99

The second season of this British crime drama—based on the novels by James Runcie about a young vicar who helps a veteran police detective solve murders in a rural town in the early 1950s—gets a little more personal. The first episode begins with Reverend Sidney Chambers (James Norton) being accused of seducing a teenage girl who has gone missing and is later found dead. That case reverberates throughout the season as Sidney defends the young man actually guilty of killing the girl (by accident, Sidney believes), which sets Sidney against both his parish and his friend Geordie Keating (Robson Green), an old school cop who isn't above knocking suspects around. As tensions build between them, Geordie is accused of killing a suspect and even Sidney questions whether he's guilty before uncovering the truth. On a lighter note, Geordie and his wife attempt to play matchmaker and Sidney ends up dating a flirtatious and funny receptionist at the station (Seline Hizli), but he's still in love with Amanda (Morven Christie), who remains in a miserable marriage to an abusive, neglectful husband. The series continues to explore mature themes with intelligence while developing a rich cast of characters whose own stories take on greater importance over the course of the season. Presenting all six episodes from 2016, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Heroes Reborn: Event Series ★★½

Universal, 555 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98

The original *Heroes* offered a high-concept take on the comic book superhero genre, putting ordinary people with immense, inexplicable powers in a real-world setting. It was a pop culture sensation that failed to sustain the creative energy and compelling storytelling of its initial season



and eventually lost its following, cancelled after four seasons. *Heroes Reborn* is a mini-series set years later, after the existence of gifted humans throughout society has been revealed. It opens with a terrorist attack by a notorious activist Evo (as the super-powered humans are called)—or so everyone believes. The resulting climate of fear drives Evos into hiding, while human strike forces hunt them for revenge. Only a few of the characters from the original series return, most prominently Noah Bennet (Jack Coleman), who uncovers a conspiracy masterminded by the power-hungry Erica (Rya Kihlstedt), a human framing the Evos for the explosion. An impending solar flare could destroy all life on Earth unless the Evos intervene, but Erica has a plan to create a new civilization in the future and she kidnaps Evos in order to execute it. An epic story of cosmic dimensions with a vast cast of new characters—human and Evo both—the show is reasonably interesting but failed to connect with audiences and did not revive the series. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2015-16, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Likely to still be of interest to fans of the original, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

House of Lies: The Fourth Season ★★

Paramount, 2 discs, 332 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

This Showtime-aided satire of American corporate culture and business consultants stars Don Cheadle as Marty Kaan, the proudly unscrupulous head of a management consultant company (Marty opened his own firm in the third season) and Kristen Bell as Jeannie van der Hooven, Marty's partner, and—as this fourth season begins—former lover. Marty is struggling to rebuild his brand after serving prison time and Jeannie is pregnant with his child, but he can't forgive her betrayal (she inadvertently put the Feds on his trail), so he's forcing her out. Meanwhile, one member of his team (Josh Lawson) battles an unstable, vindictive bride (Jenny Slate) who blackmailed him into marriage, and another (Ben Schwartz) struggles with the return of an absent father (Fred Melamed)—a kvetching, judgmental jerk who plays the cancer card for sympathy. These are not nice people, which is why they are so good at their jobs as highly-paid specialists who fix failing companies, rehabilitate reputations and brand names, and raise investment capital by any means necessary. This season they gamble their future on an egotistical and similarly underhanded young electric car mogul (Demetri Martin). Marty narrates and periodically freezes the action to explain his philosophy and schemes, but while it can be entertaining when it comes to bad (or at least reckless and self-centered) behavior, *House of Lies* has nothing insightful



or original to say about unethical acts in an amoral business culture. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2015 fourth season, this is an optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Lou Grant: The Complete First Season ★★½

Shout! Factory, 5 discs, 1,110 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

The beloved sitcom *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* ended in the spring of 1977 with the newsroom staff being fired by new management. That fall, Ed Asner was back in character as the titular acerbic, irascible veteran in the newspaper drama *Lou Grant*. Lou interviews for a job on the (fictional) *Los Angeles Tribune* with his old friend Charlie Hume (Mason Adams) and is hired as the new city editor. *Lou Grant* is an old-school newspaper series that uses the investigative format to take on dramatic issues (from neo-Nazis to political muckraking) while also exploring journalistic ethics. And it feels surprisingly relevant today, in an age when newspapers are being supplanted by more reckless forms of web journalism. The great cast of supporting characters include Robert Walden as reporter Joe Rossi, a serious, streetwise character who isn't quite as good or as savvy as he thinks he is, and Linda Kelsey as Billie Newman, who joins the show in the fourth episode. The pair provide energy as investigative journalists with a friendly rivalry, while Hume and the paper's blue-blood publisher Mrs. Pynchon (Nancy Marchand) represent a more conservative approach to journalism. Lou is often in the middle, pushing the young reporters to get past their own assumptions and urging the editors to take on more controversial stories. Compiling all 22 episodes from the 1977-78 debut season, extras include a new interview with Asner. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



The Odd Couple: Season One ★★½

Paramount, 2 discs, 257 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99

This latest rehash of Neil Simon's landmark 1965 play is an innocuous and mildly amusing diversion with charms based primarily on casting and the can't-miss sitcom setup. Matthew Perry and Thomas Lennon take over the roles of Oscar Madison and Felix Unger, a pair of middle-aged pals who decide to share an apartment after their respective divorces. The question of whether they can do so "without driving each other crazy," as the intro to the smash 1970's Jack Klugman/Tony Randall series asked, is still the premise—and the answer is still, no. Sports podcaster Oscar is a slob and photographer Felix is a neat freak, and the emotional resonance of their opposites-attract relationship is at the center of

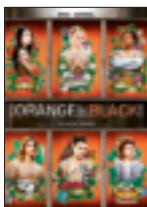


the action. Unfortunately, the writing never rises to the level of earlier iterations, and the Perry/Lennon wrangling can't quite measure up to the classic Klugman/Randall squabbles—let alone the original Walter Matthau/Jack Lemmon Broadway and 1968 movie pairing. Also featuring Wendell Pierce, Yvette Nicole Brown, Geoff Stults, and Dave Foley as friends and coworkers, *The Odd Couple* is far from hall of fame material but it does serve up a decent amount of TV laughs. Presenting all 12 episodes from the 2015 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (T. Fry)

Orange Is the New Black: Season Three ★★★

Lionsgate, 783 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$34.98

Janji Kohan's critically-acclaimed and popular Netflix women-in-prison series—based on the bestselling memoir by Piper Kerman—returns for a third season as convicted drug mule Piper Chapman's (Taylor Schilling) story continues, along with those of the other colorful ladies of Litchfield Penitentiary (as well as assorted guards and administrators). While Chapman (based on Kerman) continues to be the ostensible focal point, *Orange's* narrative (which includes compelling individual character backstories in each episode) takes in the whole dysfunctional ensemble. Here, Piper's on-again, off-again lover Alex (Laura Prepon) returns; promoted-to-warden Caputo (Nick Sandow) tries to soften administrative policies while also butting heads with the prison's new owners—private company MMR; the birth of Daya's (Dascha Polanco) baby approaches; Red (Kate Mulgrew) returns to the kitchen; and Piper launches a new business venture: selling soiled panties to perverts on the outside. With a common enemy to face—bottom-line-oriented owners MMR—tensions ease somewhat between the perennially warring black and Latino inmate populations. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2015, extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a gag reel. Although the laughs are fewer in this season (like Kohan's previous hit *Weeds*, *Orange* is starting to become darker), this is still one of the better shows currently running (with multiple Emmy wins and Golden Globe nominations). Recommended. (R. Pitman)



Roots ★★★★★

Warner, 3 discs, 587 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$44.98

From the moment the young Kunta Kinte (LeVar Burton) is stolen from his ancestral home in 18th-century Africa and brought under inhumane conditions to be auctioned as a slave in



America, a line begins that leads from this most shameful chapter in U.S. history to the 20th-century author Alex Haley, a descendant of Kinte. Haley's acclaimed 1976 book *Roots* was adapted into this six-volume 1977 television miniseries, which was watched by an estimated 140 million viewers (more than half of the U.S. population). The series covers several generations in the antebellum South, winding towards a close with the story of "Chicken" George, a freed slave played by Ben Vereen, whose family experiences the agony of entrenched racism and learns to fight back. Between the lives of Kunta and George, a number of other memorable characters are introduced—black and white—in this series that directly dealt with the physical and emotional torments of slavery, from beatings and rapes, to the forced separation of spouses and families. Mainstream America had never before been confronted with anything like *Roots* before, and the extent to which the country was nudged a degree or two toward enlightenment became instantly obvious. Today, *Roots* still has that ability to open eyes while engaging viewers in a sweeping, memorable drama. Making its Blu-ray debut in a 40th anniversary edition, extras include archival behind-the-scenes featurettes and Burton's screen test, as well as a pair of new featurettes with original cast members and commentators including Whoopi Goldberg, Blair Underwood, and Debbie Allen. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (T. Keogh)

Veep: The Complete Fourth Season ★★★

HBO, 2 discs, 281 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$26.95, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Vice President Selina Meyer (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) is deep in the primary campaign—running for her party's nomination—when the President resigns over a scandal and she is instantly elevated to the Oval Office in the fourth season of this HBO comedy centering on political dysfunction and cynical bureaucratic calculation in the White House. Of course, her staff competes for prime positions, leading to the same kind of mistakes and embarrassments that have plagued her B-team collection of functionaries throughout the series. This time, a few are even sacrificed when gaffs become scandals and Amy (Anna Chlumsky) and Dan (Reid Scott) end up parlaying their political contacts into lobbyist jobs. Hugh Laurie joins the show as Selina's running mate, a veteran politician and born campaigner whose easy manner with both the public and the media makes her almost pathologically jealous. *Veep* is a snarky show that is the polar opposite of Aaron Sorkin's more serious series such as *The West Wing* and *The Newsroom*, serving up a comedy of petty personalities, political waste, ineffectual leadership, and public relations opportunism triumphing over



government action that is presented with an often nasty sense of humor and snappy wit. Diedrich Bader and Patton Oswalt are guest stars for this season, which ends on a cliffhanger. Compiling all 10 episodes from the multi-Emmy-winning 2015 fourth season, extras include deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

War & Peace: The Complete Miniseries

★★★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 2 discs, 357 min., TV-14, DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$49.99



"War is a terrible thing," says high society matron Anna Pavlovna (a rather stiff Gillian Anderson) in this international production offering a mostly faithful adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's epic 1869 novel, in which the struggles on the battlefield of the human heart also loom large. Scripted by Andrew Davies (*Pride and Prejudice*) and directed by Tom Harper, the six-hour *War & Peace*—opening with rumors of war in 1805 and continuing up through the disastrous invasion of Russia by Napoleon's army in 1812—focuses on three major characters: Natasha Rostov (Lily James), a high-spirited girl looking for romance; military hero Prince Andrej Bolkonsky (James Norton), a somewhat rigid fellow who falls in love with Natasha; and bastard-son-turned-rich-aristocratic count Pierre Bezukhov (Paul Dano), a friend of Prince Andrej who muses philosophically about human nature and is unhappily married to the beautiful and unfaithful (Andrews makes explicit what Tolstoy strongly suggests) Helene Kuragin (Tuppence Middleton). Along the way, the series interweaves myriad events in the lives of the Rostovs and Bolkonskys, as well as others, such as battle-avoiding Russian general Kutuzov (Brian Cox). A handsomely mounted production, this version (like others) suffers from the necessary telescoping of Tolstoy's massive tome—most notably here in the abrupt whirlwind romance between Natasha and Helene's villainous brother—but overall this is equal to the 2007 miniseries (VL-11/13), and compares favorably with both the 1972 miniseries starring Anthony Hopkins (VL-1/08), and Sergei Bondarchuk's Oscar-winning 1969 classic (which today suffers from its overuse of distracting late '60s cinematic tropes such as kaleidoscopic images). Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during July and August, including: *And Then There Were None*, *Cop Rock: The Complete Series*, *Dominion Creek*, *Major Crimes: The Complete Fourth Season*, and much more!

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

★★★★ = Excellent

★★★ = Good

★★ = Fair

★ = Poor

PPR = Public Performance Rights

DRA = Digital Rights Available

Aud = Audience

K = Preschool-Kindergarten

E = Elementary (grades 1-3)

I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)

J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)

H = High School (grades 9-12)

C = Colleges & Universities

P = Public Libraries

CHILDREN'S

Albert: Up, Up and Away! ★★

(2015) 81 min. DVD: \$14.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

Based on Danish author Ole Lund Kirkegaard's 1968 children's story, this English-language film features surprisingly realistic looking nature scenes but cartoonish characters and animals. Red-haired and mischievous 'tween Albert has a bit of trouble in his past: as a toddler, Albert caused some damage in the village of Kellytown, which resulted in the destruction of the beloved statue of an air balloon captain. Tasked with replacing the statue when he's older, Albert decides to leave town and come back with an air balloon himself. Along the way, Albert has run-ins with an older-looking greaser bully, kidnaps his best friend Egon to accompany him, meets and goes into cahoots with bumbling pickpockets who are after a precious jewel, and makes a new gypsy friend at a carnival. A scattershot family film, this is not a necessary purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Brother Hugo and the Bear ★★

(2015) 14 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-68141-620-5.

Narrated by Gildart Jackson, this iconographic-animated adaptation of author Katy Beebe and illustrator S.D. Schindler's 2014 picture book is inspired by a 12th-century manuscript compiling real-life letters by Saint Augustine. Here, monk Brother Hugo

cannot return that particular library book because a wild bear ate—and really liked—the tome ("once a bear has a taste of letters, his love of books grows much the more"). Ordered by the abbot to rewrite the book for penance, Brother Hugo gleans the materials necessary to replace the original from helpful Carthusian monks at the Grande Chartreuse, but is dismayed to hear the snufflings and grumblings of the bear, who is pleased by the poems, sermons, and moral tales that Hugo throws out as bait in order to protect the new manuscript. Bonus features include a historical segment on Middle Ages monasteries and gold-illuminated manuscripts. Although it features an engaging premise, this odd (and wordy) tale may be somewhat lost on younger viewers. Optional. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

How to Become the President of the United States ★★½

(2016) 15 min. DVD: \$49. Mazzarella Media. PPR.

The arcane mechanics of a presidential election are confusing for adults let alone kids, but this primer goes a long way towards helping elementary school students get a grasp on the process. The program begins with a capsule history of America's 18th-century war for independence, which was followed by the creation of the Constitution and formation of the various branches of government. The historical haggling in determining just how to elect a president (popular vote versus state vote, etc.) led to the still controversial compromise decision to form the Electoral College (the 2000 election that resulted in Al Gore receiving a greater popular vote than George W. Bush is cited as an example of how the system can sometimes go awry). Viewers learn about the campaign season, during which candidates are winnowed via state caucuses and primaries, followed by party conventions, the selection of a nominee, and the ensuing presidential race that leads up to Election Day, followed by the transition of power or establishment of a second term.

Presenting the complicated electoral process in accessible and age-appropriate terms, this is highly recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (T. Keogh)

I'm a Big Girl ★★½

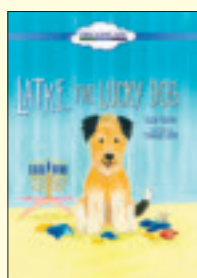
(2015) 12 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-68141-617-5.

Narrated by author Greg Pope, this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2014 picture book featuring illustrations by Lea Wells is subtitled "A Story for Dads and Daughters." *I'm a Big Girl* follows a little girl from babyhood as she grows into a real talker with a love of life. Although customarily whisked off to bed by her father, one night the girl "filled Daddy's heart with fear" by announcing that she was a big girl who could head up to bed by herself. Worried about being left behind, the father instantly begins to imagine her teenage years—and even her wedding—as the child mounts the stairs, but is soon brought back to earth when she reminds him that she still needs help being tucked in. Backed by a sweet piano soundtrack and also featuring two bonus songs by Nashville singer/songwriter Pope (giving this a bit of a vanity project feel), this simple tale is a strong optional purchase. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Kate & Mim-Mim: Flight of the Flowers ★★½

(2013) 65 min. DVD: \$12.99. Public Media Distribution (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-62789-564-4.

This candy-colored Canadian children's animated series follows 5-year-old pig-tailed youngster Kate and her purple stuffed animal rabbit friend Mim-Mim, who comes to tall anthropomorphic life when the duo are (without preamble) spun away to the whimsical land of Mimiloo (Kate usually faces a mild predicament, starts swinging Mim-Mim around, and then—wham—winds up in her fantasy world). "Flight of the Flowers" finds the pair joining up with other pals to become pilots for taking giant flowers to friend Lily's seasonal party. "The Need for Seed" parallels



Latke, the Lucky Dog ★★½

(2015) 7 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-68141-611-3.

This iconographic-animated adaptation of author Ellen Fischer and illustrator Tiphonie Beeke's delightful 2015 picture book is narrated by Kirby Heyborne. Kids Zoe and Zach—along with their parents—pick out a medium-sized puppy from the animal shelter as a Hanukkah present. They name him "Latke," a moniker inspired by his coat, which is "golden brown like a fried latke." The pup often voices the refrain "I am one lucky dog!" as the story—told from his point-of-view—finds Latke jumping on the

table to scarf down the sufganiyot dessert ("I'm the new guy, so they must be for me!"), chewing on Zoe's dreidel, destroying the chocolate gelt used as prizes, and even ruining the candles for the menorah. After Dad notes that "maybe we picked the wrong dog," Latke is frantic to learn the rules, and the accommodating family patiently helps their newest member acclimate. A sweet and amusing tale that also touches on cultural celebration, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

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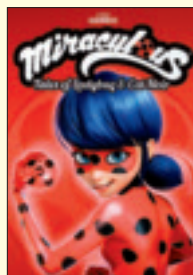


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Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug & Cat Noir ★★½

(2015) 154 min. DVD: \$14.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



Aired stateside on Nickelodeon, this cheeky, action-packed English-language version of a French anime-style series is a fresh, sparkling, and most welcome addition to the superhero genre. Awkward Parisian teen Marinette solves problems as superhero Ladybug, morphing with the help of her powerful talking “Kwami” object Tikki. Marinette’s school crush Adrien (who doesn’t know Ladybug’s true identity) is also often alerted for duty by his Kwami, which turns him into the heroic Cat Noir. Ladybug and Cat Noir go up against Hawk Moth, an evildoer who preys on upset or lonely people, sending out his moths to turn them into villains to do his bidding. Highlight episodes among the seven compiled here include the time-travel doppelganger rollerblade escapade “Timebreaker” (a hilariously over-the-top Hawk Moth chortles “Do I see double-vision in my future? Or should I say, double villain!”) and the technologically savvy “Lady Wifi.” Co-produced by Toei Animation, and full of light banter, acrobatic fight scenes, and high-energy music, this captivating popular series set against a backdrop that includes the Eiffel Tower and boulangeries is highly recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Kate’s real-life gardening with her mom and an imaginary quest for finding the right growing conditions for pal Gobble’s coveted “surprise sapling seed.” Also including “Butterfly Flowers,” “Small Wonders,” “Bunch O’Boomers,” and “Babysitting Squoosh,” this series about encouraging friends and working towards problem-solving is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Super Sentai—Ninja Sentai Kakuranger: The Complete Series ★★½

(1992) 10 discs. 996 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$59.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

Shout! Factory has been busy doing humanity the questionable service of releasing unedited versions of the ultra-bizarre Japanese TV fantasy-action *Sentai* shows, which featured extensive fight scenes that would be recycled by U.S. producers Haim Saban and Shuki Levy into the English-rewritten and re-shot *Power Rangers*. This 1994-95 original series boasts a consciously goofy, campy quality akin to American TV’s *Batman*. Four centuries ago, ninjas quashed the Youkai, a race of goblin monsters, who then had to hide incognito among humans. Now the Youkai have regained their mojo, and five teen descendants of those ninjas (including one Japanese-American who in early episodes sports cowboy togs and speaks occasional English) receive weapons, costumes, and “super ninja beast gods” to fight the Youkai—whose initial leader, a living skeleton, takes the form of a heavy-metal rocker. Later, a rather conceited “Ninjaman”—rescued from a bottle—joins the squad. Guilty-pleasure ingredients abound, from endearing low-tech special effects to onscreen emceeing by an impish bespectacled storyteller who emphasizes Youkai antecedents in Shinto mythology and

scroll art. Some episodes actually hit emotive notes, such as when the Kakurangers must destroy a childlike Youkai who is actually a nice guy...but then it’s back to the bizarre, like the episode about a centipede monster who corrupts Santa’s workshop. Arguably more entertaining than the westernized *Power Rangers* (after one acclimates to the goony vibe), this set featuring all 53 episodes (presented in Japanese with English subtitles) is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Between Allah and Me (and Everyone Else) ★★½

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries & high schools; \$299; colleges & universities. DRA. ConnectedEarth. PPR.

Toronto filmmaker Kyoko Yokoma interviews four women who wear the hijab in this non-judgmental documentary. Farida, who is of Turkish descent, grew up in Russia at a time when the state discouraged religious expression, so she’s been trying to make up for lost time. She studies the Qur’an and prays five times a day, although her mother doesn’t see the point of the hijab. Farida also trades in her short-sleeved tops and above-the-knee skirts for more modest apparel. When she attended Islamic school as a child, Shaila felt like a sinner until her mother bought her a hijab. After wearing it for 20 years, she has now entered politics, and decides that it doesn’t feel right anymore, so she only wears the hijab for special occasions. As she puts it, “I feel that Allah can read my heart, and that’s what Islam is to me.” At the beginning of the film, Naima, a student, believes that wearing the hijab is the right thing to do—although she isn’t sure that it’s mandatory, since re-

ligious scholars disagree on the point—but she comes to the same conclusion as Shaila, and stops wearing it. Since she wore a hijab for four years, those who know her express surprise, but she assures them that her beliefs haven’t changed. Her friend, Sara, has her mother’s support for wearing a hijab, but her secular father criticizes the practice, calling it a relic from an earlier era. By allowing her subjects to speak for themselves, Yokoma offers viewers who are interested in religion and gender studies much food for thought in this documentary that is sure to provoke discussion. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

The Stranger: Immigrants, Scripture and the American Dream ★★½

(2014) 40 min. DVD: \$14.99. National Immigration Forum (dist. by Vision Video).

Commissioned by the Evangelical Immigration Table and produced by Emmy-award winner Linda Midgett, this fine documentary makes the argument that treating U.S. immigrants well is not only moral and practical but also the duty of Christians. Featuring several evangelical pastors and an inclusive Baptist church, *The Stranger* makes its case that the way we treat legal and illegal immigrants reflects on both our character and biblical understanding. Viewers hear from a couple of immigrants with very hard-luck stories related to American deportation policies that separate families and cause enormous hardship. About halfway through, the theme opens up to underscore the logic of hiring immigrants to join the U.S. labor force and contribute to the homegrown economy and taxes (especially in jobs that many Americans don’t want). One telling sequence concerns the plight of a South African family who went through a protracted hell after being deported from the U.S. and becoming stateless (despite the fact that the husband/father did defense contract work here). Ultimately, *The Stranger* delivers a strong, faith-based plea for a logical and compassionate immigration policy. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

What Is Buddhism? ★★½

(2016) 26 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR.

Part of the series *Oh My God*—which explores the belief systems of the world’s major religions—*What Is Buddhism?* is an often lighthearted introduction to Buddhist practices. Host Tevya Heller serves as jovial guide, presenting himself as the newbie outsider in a head-on collision with the unique tenets and rituals of various faiths. Here, accompanied by a young temple leader, Heller is introduced to a female monk who is the master of a U.S.-based congregation. Heller presents a mix of wondrous attitude and self-deprecating jokes to the master as he learns that monks are cut off from their families (for the most part) from a tender age, the better to focus on everyone in a community. Heller also discovers why

Kids and Prayer ★★

(2016) 39 min. DVD: \$49.99. Paraclete Press (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-61261-795-4.

In this upbeat title, author, speaker and pastor Rachel G. Hackenberg hosts a kid's-eye view of Christian prayer. Divided into four segments—addressing the questions “What Is Prayer?”, “Why Do We Pray?”, “How Do We Pray?”, and “Where Do We Pray?”—the program features interviews with kids and experts, backed by effective animation. Starting by bridging modern communication methods (such as texting and e-mail) with the ancient (such as face-to-face teaching and scrolls), the first segment also acts as a mini-course on how simple prayer can be—even just saying “Hey God!” As the lessons continue, prayer is described as a way to deepen a person's relationship with the Almighty (prayer also doesn't have to happen in a particular place, such as in church). Along the way, viewers are offered thoughtful parallels (including how lighthouses are used for communication) as well as illustrative biblical stories. In addition, the program examines various types of worship, ranging from saying grace before meals to the Lord's Prayer. A solid discussion starter, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)



monks shave their heads, but soon delves into matters of greater consequence, such as the proper techniques of meditation and chanting. Heller also talks to a group of teen Buddhists, who encourage him to breathe and be calm, and he gets into the spirit of things during a madcap “money grab” and “food grab” that disperses coins and edibles left for dead souls who have not yet been reincarnated. Viewers are not actually going to learn a lot about Buddhist teachings here, but it is certainly interesting to witness how one community puts their faith into practice. Other titles in the series include *What Is Catholicism?*, *What Is Judaism?*, *What Is Pentecostalism?*, and *What Is Rastafari?* Recommended. [Note: this is also available on home video for \$19.99 from www.amazon.com.] Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

Abundance on a Dry Land ★★1/2

(2015) 52 min. DVD: \$49; public libraries; \$89; high schools; \$225: colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR.

There isn't a lot that Western states in the U.S. can do about ending devastating drought conditions these days, but much can still be done related to conserving and using water more effectively. Filmmaker Jocelyn Demers's documentary explores various permaculture practices that, among other things, eschew chemicals and restore relationships within natural systems to create healthy, water-absorbent topsoil and microbe-rich subsoil for growing plant life. Permaculture also involves the reshaping of barren lands in order to move rainwater where it needs to go for irrigating orchards and crops—as opposed to watching thousands of gallons run off over poorly-maintained, non-absorbent ground. The capturing of water from rooftops, which

is then stored in large tanks to be disseminated through an irrigation system, is also ingenious, as are methods of recycling household water into small underground tanks that is then spread through topsoil via valves. Smarter practices that encourage symbiotic connections between animal life, insects, microbes, and plants may seem like a no-brainer, but this is not the norm in modern farming and big agriculture. In our era of increasing problems due to climate change, Demers makes a persuasive case for permaculture becoming the standard for using water wisely. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Ecocide ★★1/2

(2014) 58 min. DVD: \$49.99 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye. Closed captioned.

In April 2010 an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon—a Transocean-owned, BP-leased oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico—killed 11 workers and subsequently led to the equivalent of an estimated 4.2 million barrels of oil being dumped into the Gulf. It is considered to be the worst manmade environmental disaster in U.S. history. Grand Isle, the last inhabited barrier island off the coast of Louisiana, sits 100 miles from the Deepwater Horizon site, and its inhabitants are entirely dependent on the surrounding water for their livelihood. Once the Deepwater oil made its way to Grand Isle, it decimated everything it touched—and that was just the beginning. Filmmaker Juliet Brown's powerful documentary *Ecocide* chronicles the short- and long-term effects of the Deepwater spill on Grand Isle's people and environment: wildlife dying or suffering from mutations from the oil and the chemical dispersant used during cleanup; commerce disrupted due to trawlers being unable to fish sullied water; tourist dollars lost; and a population slowly succumbing to health conditions related to the spill. The film ironically balances these sad facts with

BP and local, state, and federal government claims that the cleanup was successful and the crisis eliminated. To further drive home the message, images of water, shorelines, and wildlife destroyed by the thick black oil sludge and a community slowly falling apart are juxtaposed with notably sparse scenes of vacationing beachgoers after the island has supposedly received a clean bill of health. *Ecocide* successfully illustrates how willful ignorance continues the damage begun by the oil spill. Extras include a featurette on efforts to make ecocide an international crime. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Morehart)

Feminism Inshallah: A History of Arab Feminism ★★

(2014) 52 min. In Arabic & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89; public libraries, \$350: colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

While women in the West have made significant gains since the 1900s, Arab women have had a much harder time. Ferial Ben Mahmoud's documentary examines the history of feminism in the region, beginning with a look at reformers in the 1930s who believed that Arab countries could only keep up with the wider world by abandoning outdated practices. In Tunisia, author Tahar Haddad spoke out against polygamy and the veil as traditions that kept women from fully participating in society, but religious conservatives interpreted the former theology student's views as anti-Muslim. Chérifa Saadaoui, a member of the Union of Women, recalls that her disciples also fought against French colonialism. In 1956, when Tunisia became independent, women made further strides. Huda Sha'arawi, the first prominent Arab feminist, stopped wearing the veil and formed the Egyptian Feminist Union. Algerian women also advanced in the 1950s, but not as much as in Tunisia. According to Lebanese political historian Ghassan Salamé, “'67 is not the defeat of Arabs [by Israel], but of modernity.” Although oil-rich Saudi Arabia made moves towards modernity in the 1970s, the changes were mostly superficial, since women still can't drive or participate in other activities that would decrease their reliance on men. The situation worsened over the next two decades, due in part to the conservative clerics who appeared regularly on television. But the film ends with signs of hope: inspired by a group in Malaysia, Muslim feminism has found a foothold in Morocco, and the rise of social networking has also made it easier for women, like Lebanon's Yalda Younes, to share information and provide encouragement to other Muslim feminists. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

In the Shadows ★★

(2013) 48 min. DVD: \$20 (\$150 w/PPR). Broadband Films. PPR.

Filmmaker Dan Glynn is willing to acknowledge that laws are being broken by the

presence of illegal immigrants in America, and while the undocumented individuals in question here are presented as decent and honorable individuals, Glynn is also fair in offering the same level of respect to those who are seeking to enforce immigration laws. The central focus of *In the Shadows* is Jairo, a Mexican man who works on a U.S. dairy farm and sends his earnings home to his wife and two children. Jairo shares the details of his dangerous journey into the U.S., and talks about his tenuous existence—a clear and present danger that becomes painfully apparent when his cousin Julio (who is also in the U.S. illegally) is arrested for drunk driving and is deported. Also featured here is Rep. James Sensenbrenner, author of legislation seeking to strengthen enforcement along the U.S.-Mexico border, and members of the self-proclaimed “Minutemen” brigades that offer volunteer support for the Border Patrol’s surveillance of areas where illegal immigrants have been known to enter the country. Although unlikely to sway opinions, the film takes an intelligent, personal look at both sides of a complicated issue that continues to bedevil Americans—all without grinding the customary ax. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Invisible Scars ★★1/2

(2015) 86 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Johnna Janis’s documentary—co-directed by Sergio Myers—chronicles Janis’s personal struggle to come to terms with longstanding emotional trauma stemming from being sexually abused by her father. Drawing on home movies and photos, Janis not only recounts her horrifying childhood experience, but also reflects on the subsequent toll it took on her adult life—until she was challenged by another victim to face her memories and work to free herself from their debilitating effects. Janis also means to use her story as a springboard to bring about broader public recognition of the epidemic of child sexual abuse, and to promote efforts at prevention and intervention. Towards that end, *Invisible Scars* includes interviews with clinical experts who share statistical data and treatment advice. Janis is also actively involved in efforts to encourage other survivors to break their silence—excerpts here from group therapy sessions present moving evidence of the pain that childhood abuse has caused and the determination required to keep it from dominating one’s life. Unfortunately, the documentary is somewhat repetitive, while some elements of Janis’s personal story—such as her devotion to competitive running as a means of dealing with her trauma—feel protracted. Overall, however, the film succeeds in personalizing a major societal problem that is too often treated in merely abstract terms. Extras include extended interviews and text

bios of Janis and Myers. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Land Grabbing ★★★1/2

(2015) 91 min. In English, German & Romanian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$300. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from www.filmplatform.net). PPR.

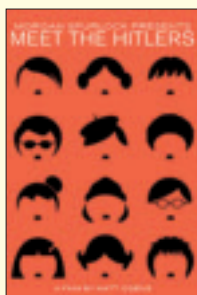
Farmland is a precious commodity, especially as populations rise across the globe, and more and more land is needed to produce crops to feed the masses. Also, as the demand for a particular crop (or crop byproduct) grows, the desire increases to plant as much of that crop as possible in order to reap the financial rewards. Not surprisingly, both of these trends offer opportunities for corruption. *Land Grabbing*, a powerful documentary by Kurt Langbein, examines what happens when governments and organizations decide to take land from private citizens to use for power and profit. A journalist by trade, Langbein traveled the world exposing instances where governments used eminent domain, often accompanied by violence, to procure land. In Cambodia, he shows the efforts of a local Buddhist monk who records the government’s eviction of hundreds of small farmers, taking their land for state agricultural use. Uploading his videos to the web for the world to see, the monk and his temple wind up facing retribution while also trying to feed and care for the displaced farmers. In Eastern Europe and Africa, Langbein exposes conglomerates and wealthy entrepreneurs who use unlimited resources and muscle to outmaneuver small farmers to obtain land rights. He also details how unsustainable farming practices are destroying local ecosystems, in particular the large-scale harvesting of palm oil, which entails the decimation of thousands of acres of rainforest. The brazenness and disregard for humanity and the environment on display here are shocking, but

sadly not surprising. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Morehart)

Love Is a Verb ★★★

(2016) 57 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.98. MPI Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

At a time when Islam is perceived by many in the West as a threat, Terry Spencer Hesser’s documentary offers a different perspective. She paints an effusive portrait of Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish preacher residing in the U.S., who spearheaded the movement called Hizmet, which asks followers—particularly in the fields of education and medicine—to serve those in need. The film begins with a brief but useful sketch of Anatolian history from Ottoman times up through the transformation of the former empire into the secular state of Turkey—a nation plagued by turmoil into modern times. Providing surprisingly little detailed data about Gülen’s earlier life, *Love Is a Verb* concentrates on the humanitarian activities of Hizmet, visiting charter schools in the United States, clinics in Somalia, and various other locales in order to hear testimonials about the good work being done in response to Gülen’s call. Emphasis is placed on the moderate character of Gülen’s teaching, which encourages the education of girls, the compatibility between Islam and modern science, the need for interfaith dialogue, and the support of multi-party democracy—positions that have earned him the respect of many political and religious leaders in the West, as evidenced in footage of his meetings with key figures. Hesser adds excerpts from Gülen’s talks to followers at his Pennsylvania estate—scenes that underscore the man’s modesty and quiet sense of authority—and closes with a section on Hizmet’s often oppressive treatment by the present Turkish regime. Featuring crisp narration by Ashley Judd, *Love Is a Verb*—the title indicates



Meet the Hitlers ★★★1/2

(2016) 84 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Morgan Spurlock serves as executive producer for filmmaker Matt Ogens’s oddball documentary, which centers on individuals who share a name—or identity—with the infamous Adolf Hitler. Gene Hitler is a well-liked retiree who takes his family on a pilgrimage back to their Circleville, OH, ancestral home, where “Hitler” appears on road signs and cemeteries. Heath Campbell is a Milford, NJ, white supremacist who lost his son to social services for renaming the blond toddler “Adolf Hitler”; although articulate

about his views, he doubles down defiantly on the Nazi obsession in the media spotlight, coming across as one scary misfit. Hitler Gutierrez is an Ecuadoran immigrant who was initially unaware of the loaded first name his father gave him. Germany’s Romano Lukas Hitler is a melancholy ship’s helmsman who wears his outcast status as a personal cross; later we get the sense that he is faking being a blood relation to the Führer out of guilt pathology. And *Last of the Hitlers* author David Gardner traces genuine American remnants of the German dictator’s family (not interviewed), and even uncovers a bona fide Hitler diary. A fascinating, funny, and disturbing cinema vérité disquisition on the cultural baggage associated with the dictator, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

the movement's concentration on an active life of service—is obviously a work of advocacy, but one that is instructive and inspiring. Extras include a 2012 interview with Gülen. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Men with Beards ★★★

(2013) 80 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media. Closed captioned.

This documentary in the tonsorial genre is a wryly low-key film that features interviews with a number of, well, men with prominent beards. Unidentified by name, the subjects include a performance artist, a biker/mechanic, an academic, a musician, a fellow who likes to dress up as a garden gnome—and the son of a barber, who just stopped shaving one day. The men (and their supportive women) talk about the importance of beards to their self-image, as well as the mechanics of extreme-whiskers maintenance. From this rather casual premise, filmmaker Dylan Fries's *Men with Beards* actually covers a lot of issues, exploring the equating of beards with villainy, virility, and power (although the last U.S. President with any major facial hair was William Howard Taft). One interviewee speaks of the Jesus Christ/Charles Manson dichotomy, in which a beard marks one as either a peacemaker or a barbarian. Ultimately, the cameras travel to the World Beard and Mustache Championships in Alaska, where viewers will see an unforgettable gallery of faces. An enjoyable documentary that is a bit deeper than it initially seems, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Multiplicity of Us: Immigrant/First Generation Women ★★★

(2015) 15 min. DVD: free (w/\$20 s&h fee; digital download free). DRA. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

In June 2015, 24 women in New York were brought together for a one-day video production workshop. The attendees varied in age, but all were either immigrants to the U.S. or first-generation Americans born to immigrant families who had not quite mastered the art of assimilation. *The Multiplicity of Us* compiles the results of the workshop: three short films—*Coming and Living in America*, *Borders Inside and Out*, and *Luna's Story: The Importance of Accepting Yourself*—that detail the cultural and emotional challenges the women faced in becoming part of contemporary U.S. society. Of course, it is unfair to expect first-time students to suddenly embrace the intricacies of film production and churn out masterworks on their first go-round, so these shorts are far more sincere than sophisticated. Still, the women interviewed on camera are intelligent, frank, often funny, and more than eager to share their experiences. Whether they are dealing with family members who are not pleased with how Americanized they've become or are trying to navigate the intricacies and eccentricities of the American way of life, the women offer real insights into



Normal Is Over: The Movie ★★★1/2

(2015) 120 min. DVD: \$95; public libraries & high schools, \$249: colleges & universities. Telekan (avail. from www.normalisoverthemovie.com). PPR.

Four years in the making and largely self-funded by longtime documentary filmmaker Renée Scheltema, *Normal Is Over: The Movie* initially appears to be a catalog of environmentalist grievances. But very quickly Scheltema establishes a tone of intellectual curiosity, drawing clear and accessible connections between global issues that are more typically approached as unique problems, including income inequality, climate change, species extinction, the depletion of natural resources, corporate control of food production, and more. Scheltema begins with the premise that during her youth in Holland, she was profoundly affected by an international coalition of scientists who wrote a report maintaining that sustained economic growth on the planet was not possible, and further predicted that the entire system would come crashing down in another half-century—about where we are right now. The filmmaker interviews several of the original scientists on the report, as well as a small army of experts in sustainability, environmental devastation, wealth concentration, and alternative currencies. Along the way, she reveals how a for-profit economy based on interest-yielding loans (especially compounded interest) rapidly drives up the need to use resources while also concentrating more and more money into fewer hands, leading to both poverty and ecological destruction. She presents these big ideas with frightening, real-world examples of poaching in Africa, rising oceans, children living in garbage dumps, and dead bodies on the sidewalks of New Delhi. Despite the bleakness, however, *Normal Is Over* maintains an overall sense of hope that communities can ultimately buck the destructive engines of globalization by becoming self-sufficient. A smart, thought-provoking, and timely film, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

the challenges faced by today's immigrant populations. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Nefertiti's Daughters ★★★

(2015) 40 min. DVD: \$325. Icarus Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Co-directors Mark Nickolas and Racha Najdi adapted the title of their documentary from a work of Egyptian street art that depicts Nefertiti wearing a gas mask. Anonymous artist "El Zeft" created this widely-reproduced image in order to recognize the women of the Egyptian Revolution. For 18 days in January 2010, citizens in Cairo protested in an attempt to depose authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak. While they were successful, his replacement—the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces—proved to be no better. Over the next 16 months, the police pummeled protestors with every weapon at their disposal. The filmmakers interview three street artists who expressed their views through graffiti: Mira Shihadeh, Salma Samy, and Bahia Shebab, a mother of two. Shebab does most of the talking, although she admits that she isn't creating art anymore. Shebab originally became involved as a way to offer support to her fellow Egyptians—especially women—during a time of great violence. As she puts it, "The street is the place where you can reach the people directly." She used simple graphic images to present variations on a theme, such as her series of "no" messages (things people shouldn't have to put up with) and her cat series (with the cat representing

rebellious women). Other speakers include Christiane Gruber, a University of Michigan professor who talks about the history of Egyptian street art, and Ammar Abo Bakr, an artist who continues to adorn the streets in hopes that Egypt will change for the better. Shehab maintains faith that it will, but she thinks it's more likely to happen during her children's lifetime. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Femmessy)

On the Bride's Side ★★★

(2014) 89 min. DVD: \$80; public libraries; \$400: colleges & universities. DRA. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

In this audacious documentary, the directors—Syrian-Palestinian writer Khaled Soliman Al Nassiry, Italian journalist Gabriele Del Grande, and Italian filmmaker Antonio Augugliaro—meet in an apartment in Milan with a group of their friends who have agreed to bring five illegal immigrants from Syria and Palestine across Europe to take refuge in Sweden. But none of the immigrants are carrying proper travel documents, so getting them across multiple borders would seem impossible. Unless, maybe, the four-day journey is set up to look like a cross-continent wedding procession (and who would stop that?). Whether this is a brilliant fraud or a harebrained scheme, the power of *On the Bride's Side* lies in watching this elaborate hoax come together and subsequently unfold. Along the way, the filmmakers spend a fair amount of time detailing the immigrants' anxiety and presenting their sympathetic

stories of escaping war-torn regions. A strange film about the hot-button topic of European immigration, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Power to the Pedals: Wenzday Jane and the Culture of Change ★★

(2014) 32 min. DVD: \$295. Documentary Educational Resources.

Wenzday Jones is a “wrench” (a loving slang term often used when referring to bicycle mechanics). According to Jones, “bikes represent self-reliance and autonomy—and a way to take back our own power as a community.” One of her specialties is creating human-powered machines that excel at transporting cargo—and using those machines to change her corner of the world one bike trip at a time. In Cambridge, MA (as well as nearby Boston), Wenzday—with her equally hardworking staff in Metro Pedal Power—has pioneered a service that replaces a former function of fossil-fueled vehicles, using customized bikes (heavy duty—designed to either carry cargo directly or pull cleverly-designed trailers). With many trips being relatively short—bearing cargo that is not that heavy—bikes have become a viable method of cargo transport. Some of the cargo handled by Metro Pedal Power includes delivery of produce to farm-to-table restaurants, as well as recycling runs (appropriately enough) and other forms of waste hauling. Filmmaker Bob Nesson’s inspiring documentary also looks at the challenges of running a unique business in a competitive sector, while also thankfully enjoying the support of a progressive community. Wenzday has proven that costs per pickup are less than trucking—with the added benefit of fewer emissions and lower investment in full-size garbage trucks for this purpose. Offering

an interesting look at a green concept that could be replicated in other communities, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Block)

Thule Tuvalu ★★

(2014) 92 min. In English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39.99 (\$125 w/PPR); public libraries; \$295 w/PPR; colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye. Closed captioned.

Climate change might still be an abstraction for many people, but Matthias von Gunten’s documentary demonstrates that the effects are very real for some, including the residents living around Qaanaaq (formerly Thule) in extreme northwestern Greenland, and the inhabitants of the tiny Polynesian nation of Tuvalu. In Greenland, the camera follows Lars Jeremiassen, a 65-year-old seal hunter, as he and his neighbors struggle to maintain their traditional lifestyle even as the ice on which their livelihood depends continues to contract year after year (and the winter hunting season with it). In Tuvalu—comprised of three small islands and six atolls in the Pacific that together encompass only 10 square miles—the rising sea level has begun to contaminate the ground water with salt, killing off the local vegetation. Some of the natives have already fled to New Zealand with their families, but those left behind who lack the resources to emigrate are worried about their children’s future. For both locales, the sense of sadness and loss is palpable and deeply poignant. A hauntingly personal portrait of two regions that are immediately threatened by global warming, *Thule Tuvalu* delivers a sobering warning about the fate that could soon befall many other places. Presented in its full-length version and an abridged edition, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Way We Talk ★★

(2016) 80 min. DVD: \$49.95 (\$125 w/PPR); public libraries; \$295 w/PPR; colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye. Closed captioned.

Director Michael Hunter decided to make a documentary about stuttering after a friend asked him what it was like. In his voiceover, Hunter explains that he kind of grew up with the disorder since several relatives all stuttered at various times. Hunter starts by asking his brother Ryan about stuttering, but the latter prefers not to dwell on it (their mother wishes the family had talked about it more). Interestingly, home movies show Hunter’s grandfather stuttering, while the young Michael doesn’t appear to have developed the disorder yet. Hunter next meets with Dr. Dennis Drayna, a researcher at the National Institutes of Health, who confirms that stuttering is an inherited condition. “This mutation is about 12,000 years old,” he states. Hunter also observes a support group for adults in Japan and a summer camp for youth in North Carolina. The campers worry about their prospects in terms of job interviews and professions that involve verbal communication, but the camaraderie with other stutterers gives them confidence. Hunter follows up by joining a group in Portland, ME, where he meets Ian, who becomes a friend, and Glenn, a speech therapist, who describes stuttering as “brain-based” rather than psychological. Some of Hunter’s editing choices don’t make complete sense, such as a sequence in which he conducts an interview while getting a haircut, but people who stutter—as well as family and friends—will find much to relate to here. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

TEEN ISSUES

The Sex Trade ★★

(2015) 76 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Canadian filmmaker Eve Lamont takes a harsh look at the sex vice business, mostly in Montreal, in this documentary that is markedly deglamorized from the Hollywood fantasies of *Pretty Woman* and striptease narratives. Montreal is described as the place where more women are “sold” or transacted annually than anywhere else in North America, as johns are often offered catalogues of females grouped by race. Author Victor Malarek states that the Hell’s Angels, the Russian and Albanian mafias, the Chinese Triads, and Japanese Yakuza all have stakes in the Canadian human-trafficking business, which overall is a more lucrative industry than international arms dealing. Ex-prostitutes and former sex slaves here describe the desperation and degrading ordeals that they suffered, and there is footage of a police raid on the high-rise crib of a flamboyant pimp (an aspiring rapper, we’re told). Even the seemingly more hands-off aspects of sexual exploitation, such as topless dancing or porno photo shoots, usually lead to worse, the film warns. If the tone is finger-shaking shame-at-times, there is also ample evidence that it should be. Offering a sobering look at the uglier aspects of the sex trade, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



How to End Unhealthy Relationships

★★

(2016) 16 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher’s guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-075-2.

This short guidance title opens with a definition of healthy relationships, which two onscreen hosts describe as relationships involving common goals and interests, featuring characteristics such as trust, respect, and choice. Unhealthy relationships, by contrast, are often marked by conflict and double standards. Aimed at middle and high school students, the program covers both platonic and romantic relationships, using examples to illustrate the concepts (occasionally with rotoscoping, which gives real images the heightened, abstract look of animation). Miguel recalls that two friends asked him to help them cheat on a test. To keep the peace, Miguel provided them with answers, and everybody got in trouble. Tia and Emma talk about friends who betrayed a confidence or spoke about them disrespectfully. In both

cases, the so-called friends attempted to make them look small. In the romantic scenarios, unnamed students describe bossy or controlling behavior. Along the way, experts put the stories into perspective. Social worker and program advisor Amy Edelstein describes an unhealthy relationship as one that features any kind of bullying, while clinical psychologist Robert Eckstein divides abuse into three categories: emotional, physical, and sexual. Definitions and examples are followed by solutions, which often involve leaving an unhealthy situation. Recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (K. Fennessy)

What's Your Beautiful? ★★★

(2015) 22 min. DVD: \$125. Educational Video Center. PPR. ISBN: 1-56139-162-X.

Co-produced by the New York-based Educational Video Center in conjunction with HBO and the National Endowment for the Arts, this documentary focuses on selfie-loving EVC youth producer teens Samantha and Nang. Mainly featuring Samantha, *What's Your Beautiful?* follows the 19-year-old self-professed Instagram junkie as she applies makeup ("It hides what I don't want other people to see") and admits to self-esteem issues, mainly stemming from put-downs from a past relationship. Secondary subject Nang, a Burmese 18-year-old, frets about her weight, and re-enacts her unhealthy behavior of starvation in an unfortunately lame vignette that detracts from the seriousness of her issues. Professional input comes from Rutgers sociologist Elizabeth Ziff, who looks at the subjects of selfies and self-esteem, and Christina Benavides of Girls Incorporated of NYC, who notes the media, social, and cultural pressures facing women around the globe. A low-budget film with a light but also direct tone and engaging subjects, this is a surefire discussion-starter. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

EDUCATION

School Violence: You Can Help Prevent It! ★★★

(2016) 17 min. DVD: \$149.95. Mazzarella Media. PPR.

The ever-increasing rise in school violence across the United States, both student-on-student and student-on-teacher, is cause for alarm. Regardless, students and teachers often don't take action when warning signs arise, either due to complacency or a dismissal of potential threats as benign or merely sensationalistic acts of teenage aggression. This short instructional program looks at how to recognize warning signs—from less-direct indicators of possible violence such as a student's sudden shift in mood and/or obsession with death, to immediate dangers including



Moving Up to Middle School, Volume 1: Getting a Grip on Middle School ★★★

(2016) 16 min. DVD: \$79.95. Professor Child. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-61867-693-1.

A handful of students here talk about transitioning from primary education to middle school. Chapters include "My Biggest Fear," which range from difficulty remembering the various classes to worrying about fitting in (and jammed lockers); "What's Different?," which touches on getting up earlier, facing tougher courses, and receiving more homework; and "Expectations" good and bad—including more independence, but also increased pressure to get good grades. Also covered are "New Classes" (with discussion of the short time to navigate between rooms, and the offer of more challenging electives), and "Favorite Things," which include better lunches, more responsibilities, and the opportunity to be "more mature." A surefire discussion starter with real-life peers who will appreciate being told that middle school is "not as scary as it seems," bonus features include a PDF workbook. Recommended. [Note: also available in the series are *Surviving the Middle School Social Scene* and *Problems Solved: Advice from Middle Schoolers*. Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)]

direct verbal or written threats—as well as steps that can be taken to insure that threats don't escalate into violence. Four dramatizations here serve up scenarios revolving around emotional, physical, indirect, and direct threats, accompanied by illustrations of actions taken to nullify the situations, most of which entail the involvement of teachers or school administrators. These vignettes are followed by questions to help spur classroom discussion. A timely guidance title on a troubling topic, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (P. Morehart)

LANGUAGE ARTS

Getting Into Grammar ★★★

(2015) 90 min. DVD: \$195. Stenhouse Publishers. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-62531-055-2.

Aimed at K-6 writing teachers dedicated to improving their instructional methods, *Getting Into Grammar* includes two sets of classroom exercises filmed at the Upper Moreland School District in the northern Philadelphia suburbs. In the first section, Dr. Lynne Dorfman, who has written extensively on mentor texts, joins second-grade teacher Maribeth Batcho for sessions with her students on prepositional phrases. In the second, Diane Dougherty, who co-authored *Grammar Matters: Lessons, Tips & Conversations Using Mentor Texts, K-6* with Dorfman, joins fifth-grade teacher Dan Monaghan and his class for discussions about proper paragraphs. In each case, the methodology blends interactive conversations with the class as a whole—using projected texts as a basis—and periods during which the students are given the opportunity to work independently, as the teachers roam the room to answer questions and make suggestions (a technique that keeps students engaged as a group while also allowing the instructors to attend to individual needs). At the close of

each session, mentor and teacher sit down for a brief discussion of what has just transpired in the class, reviewing how various elements are designed to nurture the goal of improving writing skills overall. This modest production obviously has a narrow target audience, but should prove to be a useful tool for relevant educators, especially in conjunction with Dorfman and Dougherty's book. Recommended. Aud: K, E, I, C. (F. Swietek)

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Life's Rocky Start ★★★

(2016) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-627-6.

Although rocks and minerals are perceived as cold, dead objects, they form the building blocks of life as we know it. Filmmaker Doug Hamilton's PBS-aided NOVA documentary describes how Earth's expanding "soup of chemicals" evolved in an "epic history," which began some 4.5 billion years ago when our molten planet was created from rocks and dust dating back to the creation of the solar system. (Nothing on Earth survives from that period, although asteroids provide valuable, if also dangerous, reminders of the solar system's violent history.) Dr. Robert Hazen has divided Earth's history into six stages, ranging from the lifeless "black" period, to today's "green" stage, which is host to diverse animal life forms. The film notes that Charles Darwin speculated that life probably began in a warm, shallow pond, but recent evidence suggests that deep sea volcanic vents known as hydrothermals could be equally important. The camera journeys from Yosemite to Australia and Morocco, showing fossils and minerals while also illustrating how life and rocks have been intertwined throughout history. Oxygen would help supersize animals (the cliffs along the Chesapeake Bay reveal teeth

of massive sharks large enough to devour a whale). A solid overview of how rocks and minerals sculpted our world—with change the only constant—this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

The Megafalls of Iguacu ★★★

(2016) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99. PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-572-9.

Nearly three times the size of Niagara Falls, the megafalls at Iguacu—powered by 300 individual falls draining its nearby forests, and located along the border of Brazil and Argentina—is a World Heritage site and one of nature's biological hot spots. Formed when lava flows hardened into basalt, the environment around the falls is critically endangered due to wildlife poaching and deforestation (only seven percent of the rainforest remains). Directed by Christian Baumeister, this PBS-aided documentary describes the wonders of Iguacu, where mist from the thunderous falls gives abundant moisture to the surrounding forests. One of the region's most elusive creatures is the jaguar, now in steep decline due to the illegal demand for its colorful pelts. Here, researchers place infrared sensors around the forest, hoping to catch a glimpse of the jaguar's secret life. The scaly river reptile known as the caiman is hunted both for food and leather goods, and—like many of Iguacu's residents—is very sensitive to water pollution caused by local farms. Fortunately, much of Iguacu remains remote or inaccessible, pro-

viding a haven for rare animals such as the tree-climbing raccoon-like coatis, and the tapir, the latter an odd-looking descendant of the ancient horse and rhino. It is estimated that Iguacu also contains almost 800 species of butterflies, although less than 300 have been identified. Scientists and researchers are on an urgent hunt to map and document Iguacu's animals (the Great River Otter may have already disappeared; an expedition here yields no sightings), retaining the hope that Iguacu's diversity of life—from tarantulas to the colorful but "pushy" toucan—can yet be saved. Looking at the effects of climate change while offering eye-catching views of the many attractions of this little-known area, this program will appeal to nature lovers and armchair travelers. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Moose: Life of a Twig Eater ★★★

(2016) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-611-5.

In the wilds of Canada's Jasper National Park, the moose is a majestic resident, although its numbers have seriously declined in recent years. Much of the moose's survival depends on the nurturing skills of the mother as she raises her calf, and only about 30 percent of moose calves survive their first year. Hosted by Hugo Kitching, this PBS-aided *Nature* documentary by Susan Fleming follows the fortunes of two pairs of mothers and their calves. Moose are plant eaters who must consume twigs while they can, saving and storing energy for the long barren months when snow covers the vegetation. Expert swimmers, moose can dive deep to consume the sodium-rich plants they crave. Calves must stay close to their mothers, but many still fall victim to hungry wolves and bears. A calf born earlier in the season stands a better chance of survival; unfortunately, one of the calves here was born too late and being too small to defend herself is eventually killed by a wolf pack. The older moose must also contend with the effects of climate change, which reduces the availability of the plants they eat. Many moose are also doomed by a nasty parasite known as the brainworm, which burrows through the moose's brain, destroying motor skills and essentially turning them into zombie-like creatures before they die. If the calf survives the first year or so, it becomes a victim of the mother's "tough love," as she shuns and drives it away to survive on its own, while preparing for another newborn (males seem to play little or no role in a calf's life). Offering many rare views of the intimate relationship between mother and offspring, this nature documentary is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Journey to Space ★★★

(2015) 45 min. Blu-ray: \$19.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

"We are the species that explores," intones Patrick Stewart, part-time narrator of filmmaker Mark Krenzien's IMAX documentary, which combines an overview of NASA's shuttered shuttle program with a look at ongoing preparations for a journey to Mars. Sharing narration duties is Chris Ferguson (commander of the final shuttle mission) and Serena Aunon (a new astronaut who might possibly be part of a future Mars mission). Conceived in the 1970s as "winged delivery trucks" to put equipment into orbit, space shuttles operated from 1981-2011, and were responsible for helping create the International Space Station and MIR. Tragedy struck in 1986 and 2003, with the losses of *Challenger* and *Columbia*, respectively, and the global recession of 2008 contributed to belt-tightening at NASA. The space shuttle history served up here is fairly thumbnail, while the space station footage (astronauts playing with food, exercising, and sailing through narrow corridors in zero gravity) is overly familiar. But the film picks up in the second half as it looks at the technical challenges involved in a trip to Mars and talks about the basics of colonization (readers of Kim Stanley Robinson's landmark Mars trilogy—*Red Mars*, *Green Mars*, *Blue Mars*—will find this material interesting). Mars, which has less than 40% of Earth's gravity, will pose unique problems, beginning with the simple physical toll on the body during a projected two-and-a-half year roundtrip to the Red Planet. Viewers will see current work on a wide range of NASA projects—from redesigning space suits to creating an inflatable habitat that will also feature protection from the potential radiation of solar flares. Like most IMAX films, *Journey to Space* is more about sweeping visuals than narrative, but space buffs should enjoy. Extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a photo gallery. Also available in a 4K UHD and 3D Blu-ray edition (which includes a standard Blu-ray disc), this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (R. Pitman)

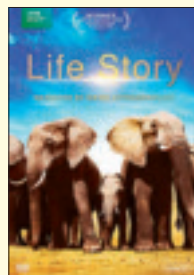
**Mystery Beneath the Ice ★★★**

(2016) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-628-3.

Under the south Antarctic ice pack,

Life Story ★★½

(2015) 2 discs. 312 min. DVD: \$24.98; Blu-ray: \$29.98. BBC Worldwide Ltd. (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



The inimitable David Attenborough hosts this latest BBC Earth series offering another visually eye-popping journey through the animal kingdom—a project that took four years, spanned six continents, and visited 26 countries. Divided into six chapters following various species from birth (“First Steps”) to adulthood (“Parenthood”), the show captures a number of behaviors that have never been filmed before, ranging from an arctic fox snow-diving for lemmings underground, to a Japanese pufferfish creating an incredibly complex crop-circle-like design on the seabed that is used to attract a mate. Each episode covers a handful of animal species—cutting back and forth between locales to tell dramatic stories—starting with an incredible sequence in which Barnacle goslings born on a rocky tower must fall some 300 feet to the ground below in order to begin their lives. Naturally, not all of the chicks will make it, and this brings up a fair criticism of *Life Story*: namely, its continuous (and predictable) scenes of animals in danger, always accompanied by ominous music while Attenborough’s voice drops into a lower register—sequences that are manipulatively edited for maximum emotional impact, featuring writing that is (in a word) cheesy. But the stunning cinematography, with intrepid filmmakers following a bonobo troop deep into the Congolese forest, or the long-eared jerboa in the Gobi Desert, or meerkats fighting a scorpion in South Africa, easily trumps the boilerplate writing and nature-red-in-tooth-and-claw ratings-boosting segments. Extras include a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at how camera crews were able to get their jaw-dropping footage, an interview with Attenborough, and a short sequence of Attenborough’s very close-up encounter with meerkats. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (R. Pitman)

whales, seals, and penguins are nurtured by a tiny, shrimp-like creature known as krill. Antarctic krill sometimes number as many as 500 trillion (a whale can consume one million krill in a single meal), but in recent years it is estimated that the krill population may have declined by as much as 90 percent. Filmmaker David Singleton’s PBS-aided NOVA documentary joins 50 scientists on an ice-breaking ship bound on an urgent quest to determine why krill numbers are declining, and what, if anything, can be done about it. The conditions are forbidding, with wind chill sometimes exceeding 50 degrees below zero. The project will involve cutting a hole in the sea ice, and hopefully locating the krill’s massive red clouds near the surface, where they feed on algae and microscopic life-forms known as phytoplankton. The health of the krill depends on adequate ice coverage, which is needed to breed as well as feed. However, due to climate change, the ice is freezing later and melting earlier. After the divers descend they find that, far from being a desolate world, the sea teems with life. One diver calls it an “out of body” (almost psychedelic) experience, and the cameras capture stunning, multi-colored views of this cathedral of ice. Apparently, the underside of the ice provides a “phytoplankton popsicle” for the hungry krill. Scientists struggle to remain optimistic,

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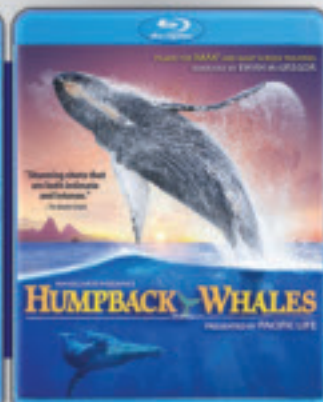
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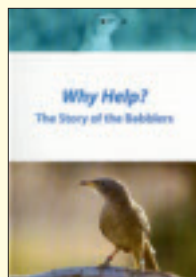
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Why Help? The Story of the Babblers ★★½

(2015) 27 min. In Hebrew w/English subtitles. DVD: \$49; public libraries & high schools; \$99: colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

It's always tempting to ascribe human qualities to members of the animal kingdom. Filmmaker Arnon Dattner's *Why Help? The Story of the Babblers* certainly suggests that Arabian babblers—birds filmed here in an Israeli desert—are models of altruism. After all, they are extremely close and collaborative, literally stumbling over one another in an earnest effort to stay huddled for warmth. Individuals fight hard for food (usually grubs) but then give it to another adult or feed it to some other babbler's offspring. Male babblers volunteer to keep watch from the tallest trees, guarding against predator attacks while other babblers forage. It appears that babblers represent an ideal within nature of selflessness. But is that really the case? *Why Help?* examines the deeper motives within this avian society, drawing on the work of longtime researcher Professor Amotz Zahevi, who explains that altruism among babblers is an effective way to maintain hierarchy in lieu of fighting, since fighting would not be in the collective interest. When we observe one babbler give his grub to another male babbler, what's really going on is that the giver happens to be ranked above the recipient and is underscoring his superiority through sharing rather than defending his place (the lower-ranked bird would never offer food to one above him, as this would be tantamount to rebellion). Similarly, the babbler who sits in a tree and keeps watch for danger is maintaining his position over the rest; if a higher-ranked bird wants the job instead, the original guard will move on. The amazing camerawork here crawls into tight spaces to witness nest activity, captures fights between rival groups, and observes babblers ganging up on a snake. A fascinating and insightful documentary that will make viewers think twice about how to interpret animal behavior, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)



but climate change is a long-term problem and since krill are not likely to change their breeding and feeding habits, the question now is whether humankind can change (notably by lessening our addiction to fossil fuels) in time to save the krill and the web of life it sustains. An informative documentary that carries an urgent environmental message, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Winter: The Dolphin That Can ★★½

(2015) 95 min. DVD: \$9.95. Clearwater Marine Aquarium (dist. by The AV Café).

In 2005, a baby dolphin became entangled in a crab line near Cape Canaveral, Florida, damaging its mouth and tail. The dolphin, later named Winter, was rushed to the Clearwater Marine Aquarium on Florida's west coast, where she was nurtured by "crab walking" her around the pool, and nursing her from a bottle. Unfortunately, she eventually lost most of her tail. Filmmaker David Yates's documentary profile, produced by the aquarium and hosted by teenager Cozi Zuelsdorff (who starred in the inspirational feature *A Dolphin's Tale*, which was based on the true account of Winter's rescue), looks at the facts behind the story, as well as the inspiring effect she had on humans who were also suffering from disabilities. Some suggested that Winter could swim with an artificial prosthetic tail (having no tail, Winter had to swim with a side to side movement, instead of the usual up and down motion common to dolphins),

which she adjusted well to, but still needed to learn socialization skills with other dolphins (returning her to the wild was not an option). Eventually, Winter's fame spread, after which people came to see and sometimes swim with her. At this point in the film, however, the focus becomes rather disjointed, shifting to humans rather than the dolphin, and unnecessarily repeating the stories of visitors, including wounded military veterans who found their lives changed by Winter. A more concise approach would have served the subject better. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Autism in America ★★★

(2015) 87 min. DVD: \$39; public libraries; \$129; high schools; \$250: colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Autism among American children has increased dramatically in recent decades, exponentially widening the number of families impacted. Zac Adams's documentary primarily focuses on how more and more parents find themselves trying to meet the challenges posed by this new reality. While not lacking in data—viewers will learn that the term "autism" was first coined in 1943 by a child psychologist, and is still defined in very different ways due to the diverse range of behaviors the condition encompass-

es—*Autism in America* concentrates on those who are autistic and their caregivers (mostly mothers and fathers), with the latter given the opportunity here to talk about their own experiences and offer advice to others who might find themselves in similar situations. Moving but never maudlin, the film emphasizes that while dealing with autism is definitely not an easy task, it is still one that can be undertaken with enthusiasm and hope. Although many matters are discussed—diet, for instance—particular stress is put on the special demands that autistic children place on the public educational system (the Brown Center for Autism in Nashville—the city where the documentary's production company is located—is repeatedly mentioned as a site where innovative teaching techniques have been developed). While *Autism in America* is occasionally repetitive, it ultimately provides a profoundly personal and practical introduction to the subject, while also refusing to wade into the confusing and divisive question of what has caused the contemporary explosion in cases of autism. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

FOOD & SPIRITS

The Farmer and the Chef ★★½

(2015) 65 min. DVD: \$199. DRA. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR.

Cynthia Sandberg, a lawyer in Northern California, opted to give up her career to become a stay-at-home mother. She tended a vegetable garden at home as a hobby, but her talent in growing succulent heirloom tomatoes reached Michelin-starred chef David Kinch of the ritzy Manresa restaurant in Los Gatos, CA. Initially, she was hesitant to allow Kinch to sample her tomatoes—would someone with such a discriminating palate be impressed with the tomatoes from an amateur garden? The answer, to both Sandberg and Kinch's surprise, was affirmative. Under Kinch's encouragement, Sandberg expanded her agricultural output by launching Love Apple Farms, an 80-acre operation that would eventually produce over 300 products—with Kinch's restaurant becoming one of her chief customers. Mike Whalen's documentary works on many different levels: as an intelligent study of contemporary agriculture, with a focus on the value of local-grown produce; as a life-changing celebration of Sandberg's unlikely career odyssey and her ability to adapt to highly unusual challenges; as a celebration of Kinch's pursuit of culinary excellence via his insistence on obtaining the very best local goods for his gourmet creations; and as an intelligent study of two very different people working together in a marvelous agricultural and business partnership. An invigorating and entertaining film, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Boom Bust Boom ★★★1/2

(2015) 74 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$200; public libraries & high schools; \$350: colleges & universities. DRA. Tugg. PPR.

The worldwide financial meltdown of 2007-08 might seem an unlikely subject for a Monty Python treatment, but Terry Jones—a founding member of the famed British troupe—here delivers a wittily instructive primer that situates the disaster snugly within the framework of the boom-and-bust cycles characteristic of a capitalist economy. The basic argument is that capitalism encourages episodes of irrational euphoria about profiting from a particular type of investment—leading to “bubbles” that prevent people from recognizing the risks...until the market collapses, which causes a crisis. The bursting of the housing bubble in 2008 was, Jones points out, just the latest example—mirroring such earlier events as the tulip mania in 1630s Amsterdam and the South Sea scam during the early 18th century in which Sir Isaac Newton lost a bundle. Jones includes numerous excerpts from interviews with economists such as *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman—as well as the archival words of John Kenneth Galbraith—to help make the overall point (singling out the “forgotten” Hyman Minsky for his dictum that apparent stability breeds instability), but he also indicts the discipline of economics itself for failing to predict such catastrophes due to a preference for ideologically-based models over real-world analyses (ruefully identifying Alan Greenspan as a prime culprit). What sets *Boom Bust Boom* apart from similar documentaries, however,

is its style: while Jones provides plenty of thought-provoking material, he serves it up with the same mixture of puppetry, goofy animation, and satirical songs that he brought to Monty Python. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Strange & Familiar: Architecture on Fogo Island ★★★

(2014) 54 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

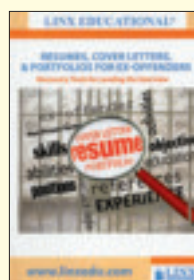
A tiny island off the coast of Newfoundland might sound like an unusual locale for modern architectural marvels, but that unlikely scenario is the subject of Marcia Connolly and Katherine Knight's engaging documentary. The economy of Fogo Island, with a population of fewer than 3,000, was threatened by the collapse of the fishing industry. Enter Zita Cobb, a native who had retired after she earned millions in fiber optics. Cobb had the idea of building an inn and turning the place into an exotic tourist destination. She enlisted Todd Saunders, a Newfoundlander with a successful architectural firm in Norway, to design the inn in a way that would blend the traditional style of the island's structures with a modern minimalist twist. Perched on stilts on the rugged coast, the new four-story building has—along with a group of artists' studios designed along similarly striking lines—transformed Fogo Island into a travelers' mecca, with the five-star inn featuring a library, movie theatre, and gourmet restaurant. The film offers beautiful footage of the inn, studios, and entire island, combined with interviews of Cobb, Saunders, and some of the locals who have contributed their skills to furnishing the buildings (and thereby reviving the economy in the process). The project on Fogo Island has attracted the attention of

Resumes, Cover Letters & Portfolios for Ex-Offenders

★★★1/2

(2016) 31 min. DVD: \$108 (downloadable instructor's guide included). LINX Educational Publishing. PPR.

How does an ex-offender find work in the job market? This brief guidance program offers a crash course covering the most essential steps for released prisoners to take in trying to land a job. No one here suggests that this will be a walk in the park for the formerly incarcerated, but the advice is clear and direct, including the importance of having a stellar resume, an attention-grabbing cover letter, a fine-tuned social media presence, and an updated portfolio. The range of experts interviewed is broad—from career counselors who have helped place ex-offenders, to former prisoners who have successfully made the transition into a new career. Interestingly, the program encourages ex-offenders to omit mention of jail time on their resume (“your resume is yours to shine with”). If invited to participate in latter steps in the hiring process, that information will then be required as part of the application process (ex-offenders are encouraged to list experience gained as part of any jobs performed during incarceration—but not framed from the perspective of a prisoner). Although squarely aimed at a particular audience, the advice given here could easily benefit anyone with problems entering the job market. Highly recommended. [Note: also newly available is the more general title *Resumes, Cover Letters & Portfolios*.] Aud: P. (C. Block)



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many architectural publications, as well as popular media outlets such as *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*. A charming look at how an infusion of imaginative entrepreneurialism helped foster an economic revival, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

THE ARTS

Art House ★★★

(2016) 87 min. DVD: \$12.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

The intersection between creative work and living space is explored by filmmaker Don Freeman in this ruminative tour of 11 homes of American artists—designed by the artists themselves and used as working studios that reflected their stylistic approaches in a deeply personal way. The sites range in location from rustic New England to wide-open Arizona, from architect Paolo Soleri's unorthodox desert structures and tile-maker Henry Chapman Mercer's old-fashioned Pennsylvania castle to the Hudson River estate of Frederic Church, which is laid out to resemble his characteristic landscapes, and industrial designer Russel Wright's elaborate gardens. An idiosyncratic but equally revealing chapter centers on Byrdcliffe, the arts-and-crafts colony founded in 1902 near Woodstock, NY. Each segment includes an introductory thumbnail biographical sketch before presenting footage of the locale's exterior and interior in slow tracking shots that are occasionally supplemented by observations from the artists' relatives and friends, as well as comments by scholars. The idea that a person's living space will reflect his individual tastes is hardly one that applies only to painters, sculptors, and architects, of course, but Freeman persuasively suggests that in these cases, the houses that artists made for themselves are as much an expression of their unique vision as their other works, and for that reason are worthy of appreciation (and preservation). Extras include a photo gallery and text bios of the artists and Freeman. Offering a satisfying glimpse of one way in which art and life are inextricably intertwined, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Building England ★★★

(2015) 120 min. DVD: \$24.95. Globe Trekker (www.globetrekkerstore.com). PPR. ISBN: 1-937103-38-5.

Part of the long-running *Globe Trekker* series' 16th season, this lovingly photographed two-parter offers a survey of English architecture, starting from the early Middle Ages. Hosted by the energetic Judith Jones, the first episode, "Before There Were Architects," generally moves from North to South, beginning with the remains of the Irish monastery founded on the island of Lindisfarne in the



Chantal Akerman: Four Films ★★★

(2016) 5 discs. 419 min. DVD: \$49.98 (\$498 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (available from most distributors).

This set serves as a fitting tribute to the memory of idiosyncratic but influential Belgian-born filmmaker Chantal Akerman (1950-2015). Akerman is best known for *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, her minutely observed 1975 study of the daily routine of a single mother and sex worker, but in addition to her fiction films she also made numerous documentaries, four of which are collected here. *From the East* (1993) records a journey that Akerman took into post-Communist Eastern Europe and Russia, while *South* (1999) focuses on Jasper, TX, where a black man named James Byrd was killed in a particularly gruesome fashion, and *From the Other Side* (2002) contrasts the attitudes of Mexicans trying to cross the Arizona border with those of locals who are determined to stop them. All share features that are typical of Akerman's style: a lack of narration, a penchant for long tracking shots from the windows of cars (traveling along Moscow streets, or the route over which Byrd was dragged to his death, or near the Mexican-American border), and interviews in which speakers are isolated in static single shots. The fourth film, *Down There* (2006), is markedly different, mostly consisting of footage taken from the windows of an apartment that Akerman rented during a stay in Tel Aviv (although there are occasional scenes on a nearby beach), to which are added her own musings on her life and beliefs. All of Akerman's films demand patience and attention; these four are no exception, but while often painstakingly slow, they also can exert an almost hypnotic pull. Extras include *Chantal Akerman, From Here*, a 2010 interview with the director by Gustavo Beck and Leonardo Luiz Ferreira, and a booklet. A fine introduction to the documentary work of an important alternative filmmaker, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

7th century and then proceeding on to the great ecclesiastical edifices of the High Middle Ages—cathedrals at Durham, Ely, York, and Canterbury—as well as the ruins of the Cistercian abbey at Fountains. Interviewed experts provide detailed historical information, while graphs and building plans are employed to help clarify their remarks. The latter part of the episode turns to the castles of the later Middle Ages and the style of building that was representative of the Tudor-Stuart period, with special attention given to post-Reformation sites such as the King's Chapel at Cambridge and the Burghley House in Lincolnshire, wrapping up with a look at the work of famed architects including Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren. Each stop offers only a thumbnail sketch, and even the more extended profiles—for instance, York and Burghley House—are quite short. But together they testify to the wealth of extraordinary sites for travelers in England to visit. The second episode, "The Age of Architects," covers the subsequent 200 years of British architectural history. Sure to appeal to Anglophiles and armchair travelers, this is recommended. Aud: P. (F. Swietek)

The Heritage of Chinese Culture and Dance ★★★

(2016) 67 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR.

Offering a fascinating tour of distinctive dance styles tied to groups and cultures living in (or occupied by) China, *The Heritage of Chinese Culture and Dance* is a colorful produc-

tion. Among the several dance styles captured here is a tribute to Buddhist deity Guanyin, a bodhisattva of compassion who sports many arms. A troupe of deaf dancers here invoke Guanyin through movement, with a dozen or so women waving their arms in perfect synchronicity behind the main dancer to create a magical and dazzling effect. The long-sleeve dance—with its lyrical, floating movements of sleeves—is an integral aspect of Chinese opera. The Dai people practice many rituals involving water and rivers, the fluidity of which has a mesmerizing influence on local dance (the Dai's "Peacock Dance" is an elegant solo piece that conjures the mysteries of the titular bird). Along with Aini, inner Mongolian, and Han, Tibetan dance is also represented, the latter coming across as both earthy and spiritual, recalling the hardships of a culture that has been oppressed by many for centuries. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

The Merchant of Venice ★★★1/2

(1973) 128 min. DVD: \$19.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

Jonathan Miller's 1970 National Theatre staging of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*—considered a highly controversial work in the aftermath of the Holocaust due to its arguable anti-Semitism—was filmed for television in 1973, and while the visual quality here is hardly outstanding, the performance still shines. With staging that updates the action to the late 19th century, this production stars Sir Laurence Olivier as the Jewish mon-

eylender Shylock, a class-conscious financier acutely aware of the indignities he suffers as a result of his religion. When approached by Bassanio (Jeremy Brett) for a loan to enable the latter to court the lovely Portia (Joan Plowright), Shylock accepts the famous bond of a pound of flesh proffered by the young man's friend Antonio (Anthony Nicholls)—and will ultimately demand payment of it, only to have the tables turned against him in court by Portia, who appears in the guise of a legal expert. Olivier is simply brilliant, producing an unforgettable howl of anguish after his final departure from the stage, and while Plowright seems a trifle matronly, her delivery is impeccable. Miller cuts some text and also makes some unusual choices—mostly successful (portraying Antonio as a world-weary older man) but occasionally not (turning Stephen Greif's Moroccan prince into a caricature). Still, Miller's sure balancing of fidelity and imagination is impressive, while the contribution of Olivier—perhaps the greatest British actor of the last century—makes this an indispensable addition to any serious drama collection. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

About Executing Eichmann ★★½
(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR.
Closed captioned.

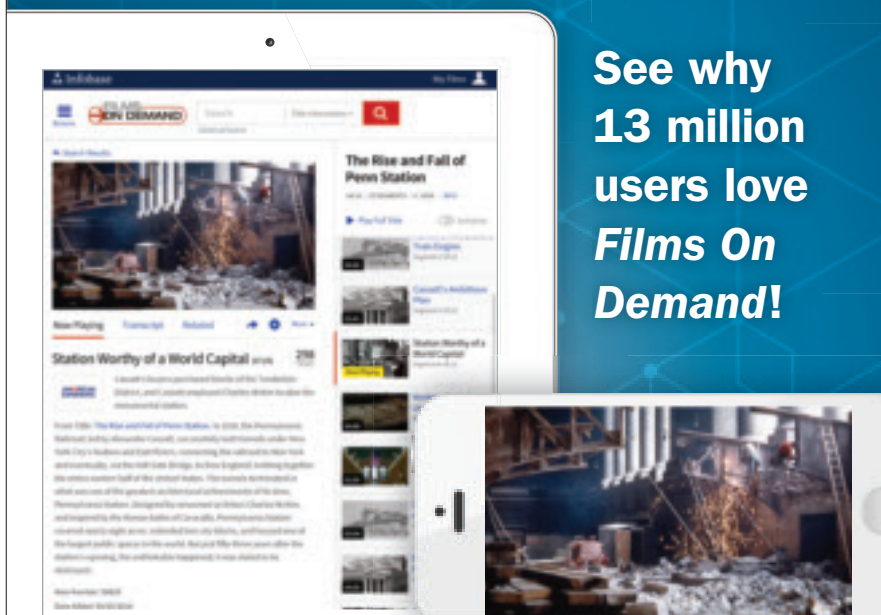
In 1961, former Nazi SS officer Adolf Eichmann was sentenced to death by an Israeli court for his role in the mass killing of Jews during the early 1940s. Eichmann was eventually hanged, but his execution raised moral questions among the Jewish intelligentsia of the time, and that debate has continued into the present. There was no serious doubt that Eichmann, as one of the chief Nazi figures responsible for the implementation of the Final Solution, deserved to die. But some raised questions about both the trial process and the effect that his execution would have on Israel's identity and perceived role in the world (wondering whether his death would seem a matter of justice or revenge). Florence Jamnot's remarkable documentary assembles a wide array of archival material that helps to place the overall discussion within the context of the day—taking cognizance of Israel's economic problems and the political realities that faced the nation's leaders, including David Ben-Gurion, but ultimately concentrating on the positions adopted by intellectuals such as Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Yehuda Bacon, and Hannah Arendt. Many of them pleaded unsuccessfully for a commutation of Eichmann's sentence, some arguing that Israel's representation of an ethical ideal was even more important than statehood. Along the way, present-day philosophers and historians revisit the debate, noting—and

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Heroes: Saving Jewish Lives from the Nazis ★★★1/2

(2016) 70 min. DVD: \$19.99. Visual Productions (dist. by Vision Video).

From Anne Frank's famous diary to the chilling opening segment of Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*, the subject of Jews being hidden from the Nazis during World War II has been a recurrent theme over the past half-century-plus. This documentary tells the story of how one village in France—the former community of remote Plateau du Vivarais—hid and protected Jews in defiance of both the Nazi occupation and their own French police collaborators. Combining interviews, archival footage, and dramatic re-enactments, *Heroes* notes that the memory of the village's actions remains very much alive today; even kids interviewed at the local skateboard park have some sense of what happened in the past. In one segment, a teacher directs a cast of teenagers in a play depicting historic events, encouraging the students to dig deeply into what people were feeling when they were apprehended and sent off—first to holding facilities, and ultimately to concentration camps. In another section, the background behind a letter written by unidentified schoolchildren to French police is explored—a letter in which the children clearly stated their disdain for Nazi policy towards Jews and vowed to do everything they could to protect them. Poignantly, survivors who were hidden in the area are also interviewed here, revisiting the land and homes where they were kept safe during the most notorious act of genocide of the last century. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)



sometimes regretting—the centrality of the event to Israel's sense of mission, while also emphasizing its importance in keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust. The film has a few technical flaws—at one point an English interview with Arendt is overlaid with a French voiceover—but as a whole this is an important contribution to a fuller understanding of a key historical incident. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Je Suis Charlie (L'humor a mort)

★★★1/2

(2015) 90 min. In French w/English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$200: public libraries & high schools; \$350: colleges & universities. DRA. Tugg. PPR.

The January 7, 2015 assault by Islamic extremists on the editorial offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, which left 11 staff members and a policeman dead, along with several other staff members wounded, led to an outpouring of support for free expression throughout the West and massive demonstrations in Paris. Daniel and Emmanuel Leconte's documentary is a follow-up of sorts to Daniel's previous film *Tough Being Loved by Jerks* (VL-7/15), an examination of the 2007 trial in which the magazine had been accused of violating laws against hate speech by printing cartoons of Muhammad. *Je Suis Charlie*—titled after the signature phrase used by those who filled the streets in a show of solidarity following the massacre—recounts the 2015 tragedy through news footage, coupled with wrenching interviews of survivors, including Corrine "Coco" Rey, who was forced at gunpoint to open the door to the office. They express thanks for the outpouring of support that the public, intellectuals, and politicians

showed in the immediate aftermath, even as staff worked tirelessly to produce the next issue for its regular publication day (it immediately sold out). But they also note ruefully that within days of the shooting an article appeared in a rival publication that accused them—and especially two of the dead, editor-in-chief Stéphane "Charb" Charbonnier and cartoonist Jean "Cabu" Cabut (shown here in a haunting earlier interview)—of having incited the assault. The film—which gives no publicity to the assailants—also emphasizes that the policeman killed in the shooting was Muslim, and it closes with a moving tribute to the victims that includes samples of their work, home movies, and recollections from colleagues. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Letters to Max ★★★1/2

(2013) 103 min. DVD: \$69: public libraries & high schools; \$150: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1518-1.

The eponymous Max is Maxim Gvinjia, former Minister of Foreign Affairs for Abkhazia. Those unfamiliar with Abkhazia are hardly alone: this tiny Black Sea entity seceded from the Republic of Georgia following a 1992-93 civil war, but is only recognized as an independent state by Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Nauru. The letters that Max received are from French filmmaker Eric Baudelaire, who uses the old-fashioned notion of postal correspondence as the foundation for his highly original film essay. The texts of Baudelaire's letters—which ask questions about subjects including Gvinjia's unlikely career as the chief diplomat for a country with almost no diplomatic relations, the Abkhazian war of secession, and the nation's shaky inde-

pendence—are presented against images of Abkhazia. But Gvinjia offers his replies on the soundtrack due to restrictions on Abkhazia's access to the international postal system—mail can be delivered to this location via Georgia, but no country aside from the few that recognize Abkhazia will accept incoming mail from its postal service. The presentation technique is initially awkward, but the questions and answers are often invigorating and surprising, raising intriguing notions regarding sovereignty, identity, and the challenge of being an unlikely pariah among the community of nations. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Netanyahu at War ★★★

(2016) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-610-8.

The relationship between the American government and Israel has been tense during the Obama administration. Obama has been committed to expanding dialogue with the Muslim world, while Netanyahu has adopted a wary, fortress-like view of Israel's neighbors, reluctant to negotiate or compromise when he feels that his country's survival is being threatened. This PBS-aided *Frontline* documentary, directed by Michael Kirk, examines the career of Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, who spent much of his early life in suburban Philadelphia, where he was raised by his college professor father, a man who felt exiled from Israel due to his conservative views. Netanyahu, who has always believed that Israel faces a hostile world, left high school just before graduation to participate in the 1967 Six-Day War, and he was part of a team that hit back after a 1972 "Black September" plane hijacking. Netanyahu's brother Yoni suffered a martyr's death in the 1976 Entebbe hostage rescue. For a while, Netanyahu was Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, but he became increasingly politicized following the 1990s Oslo Accords, which spurred right wing anger over dialogue with the PLO. Numerous demonstrations turned violent, culminating in the assassination of Israeli prime minister Rabin. Netanyahu feels he understands the "DNA of the Israeli public," resolutely refusing to return the country to its pre-1967 borders, give up Jerusalem, or limit settlements in Palestinian territory. Netanyahu views Obama as hopelessly naïve, and as prime minister he never hesitates to speak out, addressing in 2015 the U.S. Congress in his perfect English, where he slammed the Iranian nuclear deal, while also warning of the dangers of the "Arab Spring" movement. An evenhanded and informative profile that does not view Netanyahu through the prism of right or wrong, but rather sees him at the center of conflicting worldviews, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Murder of a President ★★½

(2016) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-560-6.

Although James Garfield's tenure in office was tragically brief (about 200 days), many historians feel that his untimely assassination deprived the nation of a potentially great president. Directed by Rob Rapley and narrated by Michael Murphy, this PBS-aided *American Experience* documentary explores the forgotten presidency of Garfield. Young Garfield grew up desperately poor, and his experience as an officer in the Civil War gave him a lasting hatred of injustice and slavery, as well as a foundation for a promising political career. Garfield had no intention of seeking the presidency in 1880, but his formidable speaking skills led Republicans to draft him after many ballots in their contested convention. His shy wife, Lucretia, reluctantly agreed to support his run, but after his victory Garfield's life was made miserable by constant battles with Senator Roscoe Conkling, who ran New York's spoils system in the city's custom house. The new president was also besieged by an army of office seekers, who demanded payback for their help in the election. Among them was the delusional Charles Guiteau. Abused as a child, probably a paranoid schizophrenic, Guiteau—after being turned down for a patronage position—became obsessed and convinced of the need to “remove” Garfield from office. Buying a fine pistol he hoped would eventually be displayed in a museum, Guiteau shot Garfield on July 2, 1881 in Washington's train station, as the latter was headed to a summer vacation with his wife. Garfield could possibly have survived his wounds, but his friend Dr. William Bliss assumed control of his care, spurned all offers of help from other doctors, and introduced germs and infections during his repeated probes into Garfield's body as he searched for the assassin's bullet (Bliss did accept help from Alexander Graham Bell, who used a metal detector in a fruitless attempt to locate the bullet). The documentary offers a poignant description of Garfield's long “wearisome struggle,” which ended when he died that September, after being transported to the New Jersey shore. Based on Candice Millard's 2011 book *Destiny of the Republic*, and featuring actors Shuler Hensley and Kathryn Erbe as Garfield and his First Lady, this is a fascinating biographical portrait that also includes insights on civil rights, income inequality, lax presidential security, and the 19th century's sometimes primitive medical system. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)



Sweet Land of Liberty: Memorable Moments in American History—The 18th Century ★★★

(2016) 40 min. DVD: \$19.95 (\$24.95 w/PPR). Marshall Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-936134-18-2.

This title serves up six capsule histories of various episodes in America's past, with the first three playing like tales from an historical *X-Files*, while the remaining trio deal directly with the formation of the nation. First up is “Cahokia,” focusing on the mysterious titular city that existed in what is now the center of the U.S. from the years 700 to 1400. Cahokia was comprised of six square miles of urban center surrounded by farmlands, and was architecturally noted for a number of mounds that were used for various purposes. Viewers will learn that Cahokia featured a social class structure, was overseen by a ruler, and that it developed a calendar system using wooden posts in a Stonehenge-like circular fashion. For unknown reasons, the inhabitants of Cahokia disappeared, leading to speculation about diseases and other disruptions. The

18th-century connection here is decidedly tenuous, as it is for the next two entries. “The Lost Colony of Roanoke” tells the familiar story of the 16th-century Virginia settlers left behind by their governor, who traveled to England for supplies and came back to find his people had vanished. “The Salem Witch Trials” covers the grim 1692 history of hysteria when Puritans in Salem, MA—taking their lead from a 1689 publication on witchcraft by Boston minister Cotton Mather—commenced trials of women and men charged with witchcraft, resulting in 19 people being hanged and five others dying while in custody. “The Boston Tea Party” is the first of the no-mystery segments, delivering an historical account of the 1773 protest in Boston Harbor that was organized by the Sons of Liberty, which led to England's King George III punishing the colonists, followed by the Revolutionary War. Also featuring chapters on the Bill of Rights and the nation's early capitals, this somewhat scattershot program is also full of copious detail that will interest history buffs. Recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (T. Keogh)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Discoveries...America National Parks: Colorado's Spectacular ★★★

(2016) 53 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. DRA. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-206-8 (dvd), 978-1-60490-229-7 (blu-ray).

Another winning entry from *Discoveries...America National Parks*—the extensive high-def-filmed armchair-travel series from filmmakers Jim and Kelly Watt—*Colorado's Spectacular* offers an overview of parks that showcase the state's incredible array of geological wonders and ancient history. Located just west of the nation's center, Colorado boasts an abundance of mountains, rivers, canyons, and sand dunes, as well as fossils and dinosaur bones. Among the spectacular sites covered here is Rocky Mountain National Park—two hours from Denver—which straddles America's Continental Divide, resulting in distinct climate differences found within the 358-square-mile area that includes a variety of wildlife and plentiful campgrounds. The Great Sand Dunes National Park & Reserve is an eerie wonder: comprised of 100,000 acres in Eastern Colorado, the park offers the tallest sand dunes in North America (how these dunes got here is a prehistoric mystery, but their ever-shifting shapes and photogenic appeal draw many visitors). Dinosaur National Monument (part of which is in Utah) features the bones of at least 500 creatures from the Jurassic period. An enormous slice of petrified mud from a riverbed is on display at a visitor's center, dotted with loose bones like candied fruit in a fruitcake. The Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument in southeastern Colorado offers evidence of an entirely different, temperate climate that existed there 55 million years ago, including a fossilized imprint of a Tsetse fly (now only found in Africa) and stumps of redwood trees buried in mud from volcanic eruptions. Serving up a lovely overview of Colorado's national parks, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Sites for Your Eyes: Stockholm ★★½

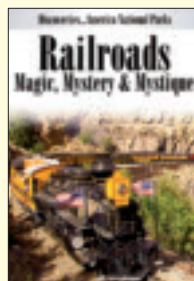
(2016) 30 min. DVD: \$39.95. DRA. Film Ideas. PPR.

Part of the *Sites for Your Eyes* series aimed at travelers (actual and armchair), this entry takes viewers into the network of 30,000 fragmented islands in Sweden known as the Stockholm archipelago. While many islands are formed by volcanic activity, this archipelago came about after polar ice caps melted and Earth's mantle released enough pressure to allow the land to rise above the water, creating a unique and jagged combination of mini-coasts and ecosystems. Charmingly, this travelogue focuses on the people who call these jigsaw-puzzle-styled islands home, including schoolchildren who ride a small

Discoveries... America National Parks: Railroads— Magic, Mystery & Mystique ★★½

(2016) 61 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. DRA. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-205-1 (dvd), 978-1-60490-228-0 (blu-ray).

This special entry in Jim and Kelly Watt's acclaimed *Discoveries...America National Parks* series focuses on magnificent parks that also feature a train line. Here, viewers board vintage trains to witness natural beauty, starting with the Grand Canyon Railway, which hosts a 265-mile trip to the southern rim of Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona (every day except Christmas). An old diesel engine does the job, but from April through September a steam engine—one of only 200 left from the original 100,000 built in the U.S.—will get passengers there. The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad in Colorado travels an old route once used to transport metal ores mined in Silverton and brought to Durango. Gorgeous long shots of the train, with its steam engine and bumblebee-yellow cars moving through a spectacular valley, are accompanied by footage of an annual event in which people dress up in historic Western outfits amidst lots of hoopla and music. The Golden Spike National Historic Site in Utah is where the Transcontinental Railroad—joining eastward and westward tracks—was completed in 1869, an occasion that was marked with an honorary golden spike (now on display at Stanford University). Re-enactments of the project's completion can be seen most days of the year, and the park features a natural memorial to the many Chinese laborers who did so much of the construction. Also covered here is the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, which originally carried coal and passengers across the Tuscarawas River Valley to Akron and Cleveland (one can travel that route now as a tourist and stop along the way to shop or ride bikes). Farther northwest, the Denali National Park—with its six million acres and tallest mountain in North America (Mount Denali)—is crossed daily by the Alaska Railroad, which has been traveling from Fairbanks to Anchorage since 1923, offering plenty to see in the way of mountains, glaciers, and wildlife. Sure to appeal to train buffs and armchair travelers, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)



ferry to classes each day (with an enviable student-teacher ratio) and a farmer who shuttles herself and livestock from island to island, rotating the fields where her herds eat—as well as delivering produce by boat and four-wheeler to local markets. Swedish law allows visitors to enjoy the islands—kind of like camping on public lands in the U.S.—and here viewers will see a small group of tourists lounging in bathing suits on portable chairs, enjoying the sun and breezes of summer. Other titles in the series pay visits to hidden parts of France, Baja California, Italy, Spain, Canada, Senegal, and Western Scotland. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

BIOGRAPHY

I Don't Belong Anywhere ★★★

(2015) 67 min. DVD: \$24.98 (\$348 w/PPR from www.icarusfilms.com). Icarus Films Home Video (available from most distributors). PPR. Closed captioned.

A valedictory tone is pervasive throughout Marianne Lambert's documentary on feminist experimental filmmaker Chantal Akerman, who committed suicide at the age of 65 in 2015. Although Akerman was prolific, her films—both fiction and non-fiction—are still relatively obscure. Lambert includes clips from Akerman's oeuvre in this profile,

which consists primarily of recollections by Akerman (sometimes joined by her longtime collaborator, editor Claire Atherton). Added to the mix are excerpts of interviews with admirers such as director Gus Van Sant, who expresses particular enthusiasm for her straightforward scene composition, and actress Aurore Clément, who talks about the sense of female solidarity she felt with Akerman. A number of themes emerge, beginning with the fact that Akerman led a nomadic existence—she was Belgian-born, but came to New York in the 1970s and delighted in working in unfamiliar locales, whether it was the American South, post-communist Eastern Europe, or Tel Aviv. Another is her strong connection with her mother, a Holocaust survivor from whose letters she quotes and who was the subject of her final film, *No Home Movie*. A third is her attitude toward cinematic tempo: she wanted viewers to deeply feel the passage of time. This last observation is one reason why her films are challenging, sometimes forbiddingly so (Akerman's best-known film, 1975's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, is a three-hour-plus study of a single mother and sex worker who repetitively goes about her daily chores). But Akerman was unquestionably a singular artist, making this posthumous tribute a most welcome one. Extras include an interview with Lynne Cooke of the National Gallery of Art on Akerman's museum installation

work, and the featurette *My Name Is Chantal Akerman*, with behind-the-scenes footage of Akerman preparing her documentary *South*. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Janis: Little Girl Blue ★★★

(2015) 105 min. DVD: \$19.95. MVD Entertainment Group (avail. from most distributors).

Janis Joplin (1943-1970) narrates her life story through the voice of Chan Marshall (aka singer Cat Power) in this affectionate but clear-eyed documentary from director Amy Berg, which aired on PBS's *American Masters* series. Marshall reads from letters that Joplin wrote to her parents, chronicling her rise from outcast to rock star. Joplin's siblings, Laura and Michael, remember Janis as being self-conscious about her looks, but eager to make a mark. Her friend, Karleen Bennett, recalls that she couldn't wait to escape Port Arthur, TX, where high school classmates bullied her for supporting integration (Austin college students also voted her "ugliest man"). After singing bluegrass in Texas, Joplin moved to San Francisco where she joined Big Brother and the Holding Company, part of the Haight Ashbury music scene that also included the Grateful Dead, which led to a relationship with founder Pigpen. Clive Davis of Columbia Records cites the Monterey Pop Festival as a turning point for the band, since their well-received act led to a record deal—and their 1968 debut, *Cheap Thrills*, went gold. Documentarian D.A. Pennebaker and talk show host Dick Cavett here recall Joplin with fondness. But as her star rose, she and the Holding Company grew further apart, so she eventually left and formed the Kozmic Blues Band. On her own, however, Joplin's drug use increased, although she was heading towards sobriety when she formed the Full Tilt Boogie Band and recorded Kris Kristofferson's "Me and Bobby McGee." This would become her biggest hit—months after the accidental drug overdose that claimed her life. Berg effectively captures Joplin's highs and lows, as well as some of the impassioned performances that made her reputation. Extras include deleted and extended scenes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Knox ★★★

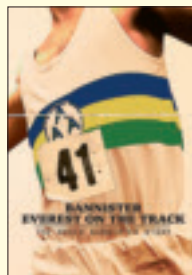
(2016) 77 min. DVD: \$19.99. Trinity Digital (dist. by Vision Video).

The bloody and complicated history of John Knox (1513-1572), a leader in the Protestant Reformation and founder of the Presbyterian denomination in Scotland, is examined in this fast-paced documentary featuring numerous experts. Knox received a 16th-century education at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and was influenced by Catholic Church reformers, notably George Wishart, who was martyred for his efforts, setting off an angry revolt. Knox's

Bannister: Everest on the Track ★★★1/2

(2016) 70 min. DVD: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmakers Tom Ratcliffe and Jeremy Mosher's thrilling documentary recounts the long drama that played out during the 20th century to find an athlete who could achieve or break the four-minute mile. In the end, it was English runner Roger Bannister who shattered what many perceived as a psychological and/or physical barrier to how fast a human could run. Fortunately, Bannister, now 87, is a participant here, with clear memories of the experience. The first half of *Bannister* looks at the conditions of life in Britain from the Blitz years (featuring nightly bombings of the country by Nazi Germany) through the lengthy, dreary post-war period of nationwide privation and rationing. In the war, Bannister—like many other children—was sent from his city-dwelling family to live in rural locations less likely to be attacked by the enemy. It was during this time that Bannister began challenging himself physically, running for miles and riding his bike astonishing lengths to visit faraway friends. While at Oxford, the 17-year-old Bannister discovered that excelling at track was a way to distinguish himself from older returning veterans who were grabbing up educational and career opportunities. Meanwhile, as time passed, the quest to achieve the four-minute-mile became an international obsession. Bannister and others also note that by 1954—the year of Bannister's historic race—England was entering a new golden period with the recent crowning of a new queen and Edmund Hillary's conquest of Mt. Everest. Suddenly, possibility was in the air, and Bannister became a part of the upbeat new narrative. Telling the story of the run-up and the race itself in an edge-of-your-seat manner, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



subsequent involvement in political events would lead to his arrest and exile to England, where he would participate in the Church of England and rise to the rank of chaplain to King Edward VI. But the ascension of Mary Tudor to the throne and her re-establishment of Catholicism resulted in Knox fleeing to Geneva and Frankfurt, where his thinking was further refined by the ideas of Protestant theologian John Calvin. Knox would eventually spearhead the Protestant Reformation in Scotland that was at odds with the doomed Tudor queen. Offering an absorbing mix of Reformation history and royal intrigue, this biographical portrait of a seminal religious figure is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Packed in a Trunk: The Lost Art of Edith Lake Wilkinson ★★★1/2

(2016) 78 min. DVD: \$24.95. Wolfe Video (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-942584-16-2.


Filmmaker Michelle Boyaner's stirring documentary *Packed in a Trunk* tells a compelling story about the vindication of a significant artist who was victimized and cheated out of her rightful place in history. Co-writer and executive producer Jane Anderson spent decades trying to uncover the mystery of what happened to her great-aunt Edith Lake Wilkinson, a prolific painter who was part of a sizable art colony that gathered in Provincetown, MA, every year during the early 20th century. A middle-aged Wilkinson was forced into a mental asylum in 1924 (an attorney had her committed and then stole her money), separated from her lesbian partner, and kept captive in a squalid hospital until her death

in 1957. After failed attempts in the 1970s and 1990s to stir interest in Wilkinson, Anderson makes one more push, enlisting family members, her spouse Tess, and an army of art historians and Provincetown collectors and gallery owners to help uncover the truth about a great talent. Various revelations—Wilkinson's art was shown around the U.S. prior to her institutionalization; her plans to paint in Paris were cut short by her attorney; and she apparently invented a printing technique that was later credited to a male artist—are all part of a stunning discovery process. The slightly impish Anderson and the stalwart Tess are warm explorers and guides, while several allies prove to be colorful and entertaining eccentrics. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Pearl S. Buck: A Life, a Legacy ★★★

(2015) 45 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Dreamscape Media.

Director Robert Child presents a comprehensive profile of bestselling and award-winning author Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973), who grew up in China with her missionary parents. During the Boxer Rebellion, the family returned to America, where Pearl attended college, but according to Hilary Spurling (*Pearl Buck in China: Journey to the Good Earth*), Pearl never felt at home, so she returned to China. In 1917, she married John Buck, a Presbyterian missionary like her father, and the couple had one child, Carol, whose developmental disabilities placed her in special schools and institutes. Although the Bucks survived the siege of Nanking, they lost everything, including Pearl's first novel. But



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— Video Librarian, 2015

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— Midwest Book Review, March 2015

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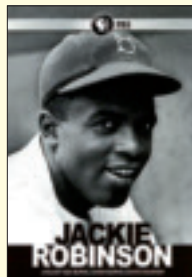
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Jackie Robinson ★★1/2

(2016) 2 discs. 240 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-618-4 (dvd), 978-1-62789-619-1 (blu-ray).

Ken Burns applied his documentary skill to the subject of baseball in his highly regarded 1994 miniseries *Baseball* (VL-7/94). Here, he focuses on one of the most significant events in the history of the game: the signing of Jackie Robinson by General Manager Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, which broke the racial barrier in the major leagues. Although the story was dramatized in the 2013 movie *42*, this four-hour treatment offers considerably more detail, while also covering Robinson's post-baseball career as an activist. As usual, Burns's approach is both conventional and signature, combining a mass of archival film footage and stills, sober narration (read by Keith David, with Robinson's own words spoken by Jamie Foxx), and interviews offering context and interpretation. But it's a technique that perceptively situates Robinson's accomplishments within the realities of his time, explaining his connections with important figures of the 1960s—including politicians like Richard Nixon and John Kennedy, and civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Among the talking heads appearing here, the most important is certainly Robinson's widow Rachel, who shares candid, loving recollections of her husband. Extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, outtakes, and a short showcasing a teen team, the Anderson Monarchs, inspired by Robinson. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



her second, *The Good Earth*, would win the 1932 Pulitzer Prize. President Nixon would later credit her for opening a door between America and China. Pearl's marriage to John, unfortunately, was unhappy and did not last. Following a divorce, she married her editor, Richard Walsh, with whom she lived in Bucks County, PA, not far from Carol. According to Dr. Peter Conn (*Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography*), her humanist tendencies led Buck to become a civil rights activist. Concerned about the low adoption rate for mixed-race children, she also founded an adoption agency, and took on seven children herself. Despite her good works, the FBI branded her a Communist sympathizer, although she denied the claim. All the while, Buck never stopped writing, producing 80 books before her death in 1973. A solid biography, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Rebel Citizen ★★★

(2015) 76 min. DVD: \$29.95; individuals: \$395 w/PPR; institutions. DRA. Skylight Pictures.

The late Haskell Wexler (1922-2015) was one of America's great cinematographers, an Oscar winner for 1966's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* who went on to lens films such as *In the Heat of the Night*, *American Graffiti*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and *Days of Heaven*. Filmmaker Pamela Yates's profile mentions Wexler's mainstream movies, but the focus is on the politically-charged documentaries that Wexler made over the years, including: *The Bus* (1965), shot while Wexler accompanied civil rights activists to the March on Washington where Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech; *Underground* (1976), featuring secretly-filmed interviews with fugitive members of the radical Weather Underground; and

Four Days in Chicago (2013), centering on the Occupy movement's protests against the 2012 NATO summit. Serious attention is also paid to the making of the landmark *Medium Cool* (1969), an ultra-realistic "hybrid" film about a detached cameraman that Wexler shot (and directed) against the backdrop of the actual violence occurring at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Discussion of these and Wexler's other activist works are part of a lengthy interview that Yates conducts with nonagenarian Wexler, who argues vigorously that his criticisms of the U.S. government represent a truly patriotic stance. Wexler also voices anger over the fact that ISIS's 2014 beheading of journalist James Foley, whom Wexler had met while filming *Four Days in Chicago*, was being used as justification for increased military action in the Middle East—a disservice, he says, to the dead man's memory. Serving up a worthy tribute to a talented artist who had strong political beliefs that drove a significant amount of his work, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

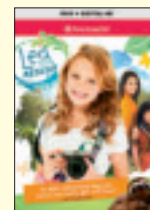
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Series Update

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

The latest addition to the *American Girl* franchise, Universal Pictures Home Entertainment's *Lea to the Rescue* (98 min., DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98)



follows young protagonist Lea Clark in an animal-poaching-themed story to save her brother in the South American rainforest. See review of *Felicity: An American Girl Adventure* in VL Online-2/11.

Animal-loving fashionista Blythe and her pet pals are back in Shout! Kids and Hasbro Studios' recent addition to the computer-animated series, *Littlest Pet Shop: Making Friends* (110 min., DVD: \$14.95). See review of *Littlest Pet Shop: Petacular Escapades* in VL-11/13.

Also newly available from Shout! Factory is *Power Rangers Ninja Storm: The Complete Series* (750 min., DVD: 5 discs, \$22.98), the 2003 11th season of the Fox Kids-aided live-action martial arts series, which follows a trio of teens who double as students at a clandestine ninja school. See review of *Power Rangers Zeo, Volume One* in VL-1/14.

Bubble Guppies: Fun on the Farm (120 min., DVD: \$15.99) is the most recent title in Paramount Home Media and Nickelodeon's animated preschool series following the underwater-dwelling Bubble Guppies as they enjoy farm-friendly escapades. See review of *Bubble Guppies* in VL-7/12.

Hosted by Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., PBS Distribution's *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: Season 3* (600 min., DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99)



explores the family trees of Gloria Steinem, Bill O'Reilly, Shonda Rhimes, Norman Lear, Neil Patrick Harris, Sandra Cisneros, and Senator John McCain, among others. See review of *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* in VL Online-11/12.

Akame Ga Kill!: Collection 2 ★★½

(2014) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Aired on TVs Toonami/Adult Swim, this is the final entry for this superior "sentai" action series centered on a team of super-powered heroes and heroines. In a corrupted Empire that is simultaneously feudal and futuristic, the Night Raid freedom-fighters are dissident ex-military members and royal assassins who are now determined to end the depraved leadership. Often GMO'ed or cyborg-enhanced with near-mystical weaponry, the team are practically a mirror image of their opponents, the "Jaegers" (the Empire's most elite defenders). In a seriocomic running plotline, boyish Night Raider Tatsumi is romantically pursued by the Empire's dreaded enforcer, the bosomy Gen. Esdeath (your anime word-of-the-day is "tsundere," a fearsome alpha-female who nonetheless succumbs to a crush like a schoolgirl). While *Akame Ga Kill! Collection 1* (VL-5/16) introduced the colorful ensemble of violent and sexy warriors, this one focuses on duels in which they kill each other off. Even though it is literally cartoon violence, the gore and dismemberment on display are graphic. Extras include a handful of comedy shorts with simplified *South Park*-esque caricatures of slain characters who complain that the script didn't strictly follow the source comic books. Presenting the last 12 episodes from 2014 in separate dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-MA, this action-packed and beautifully drawn series is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

The Fruit of Grisaia: Complete Collection ★★

(2014) 325 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



A narrative-oriented video game inspired this rambling melodrama. Yuji Kazami, a muscular teen with the bearing and fighting moves of an elite assassin, transfers to Mihama Academy to be just an "ordinary student," but the place seems bereft of teachers or classes (actually not all that unusual in anime). The only other students are a group of enticing girls, each of whom seems to have foreknowledge of Kazami. Secretive Yumiko slashes at those who displease her with a box-cutter; she's the unwilling heiress of a railway magnate. Voluptuous, mercurial, mortality-obsessed Michiru may suffer from a split personality, or possibly spirit possession. Sachi is servile to the point of endangering her own life, while childlike Makina—adopting Kazami as a surrogate father—is traumatized over her own parents'

brutalization by gangsters. Kazami's trouble-shooting interaction with his classmates (as a kind of action-hero therapist) gradually uncovers everyone's back stories. Throughout, the tone shifts from harem-comedy to thriller-drama to fan-service cheesecake with casual nudity and panty flashes. But none of this ever amounts to a very coherent whole, despite some subplots that are lyrical and deeply moving. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2014 in separate DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-MA, and presented in Japanese with English subtitles, this is an optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Gugure! Kokkuri-san: Complete Collection ★★½

(2014) 300 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



An absurdist comedy-fantasy based on a manga series by female artist-writer Midori Endo, *Gugure! Kokkuri-san* centers on noodle-obsessed loner schoolgirl Kohina, who is so alienated that she pretends to be an emotionless doll (and the character is drawn in super-cute "moe" style to match). Kohina performs a folk-legend ceremony to summon a traditional Shinto fox spirit, and winds up with Kokkuri, a mischievous entity who decides that odd misfit Kohina needs him as a heroic protector. Other supernatural beings materialize to compete for spooky Kohina's attention, including a jaded dog spirit, a "tanuki" or household ghost in the form of an old vagrant, and even a classmate who seems to be a stereotypical UFO alien. Spirits can arbitrarily change shape or gender (enabling mild fan service). Along the way, the material quotes from John Carpenter's *Halloween* and Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* for yuks, while also serving up obscure Japanese references and inside jokes. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2014 in separate DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, and presented in Japanese with English subtitles, this odd but thoroughly amiable anime series is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Monthly Girls' Nozaki-kun, Complete Collection ★★½

(2014) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



In a flustered attempt to declare her crush to fellow high school student Nozaki Umetaro, Sakura Chiyo instead blurts that she is his fan. In return, Nozaki signs an autograph and then asks to follow Sakura home. Before long, Sakura is sitting in Nozaki's apartment, inking the unfinished manga sheets of Nozaki's alter

ego, girls' manga creator Yumeno Sakiko. Sakura has joined a small club of Nozaki's assistants, the team responsible for the popular monthly *Let's Fall in Love*. That group includes fellow assistant Mikoshiba, a boy who blusters confidently to his admirers only to blush privately in embarrassment moments later (and this boy is who Nozaki bases his manga's heroine on), and Seo, a girl with a golden voice, who fills the typical brash and clueless loudmouth role commonly carried by a rakish boy (of course, Nozaki bases a male character on her). As Sakura continues to fall even harder for Nozaki, she learns that the tall, dreamy, and deep-voiced object of her affection is actually rather clueless, although supremely serious about his chosen profession and genre. Each character is great fun separately, but it's their interactions that create the real narrative magic here, and fans of shōjo manga will find no shortage of knowing winks and outright laughs sprinkled throughout the episodes, which are full of lovingly rendered everyday circumstances. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2014 in separate dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, extras include bonus shorts. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (L. Martincik)

Parasyte—The Maxim: Collection 1 ★★½

(2014) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Given that teen hero Shinichi looks a bit like Marvel's Peter Parker, it's fitting that a popular manga comics series inspired this gruesome anime entry sporting a mutation-oriented vibe that is less akin to Stan Lee than to David Cronenberg during his horror-happiest phase. Schoolboy Shinichi is one of an indeterminate number of Earthlings infiltrated by brain-eating parasitic worms. But thanks to a tourniquet, Shinichi is able to confine the bodily invader to his right arm. Calling itself "Migi" and claiming ignorance of its origins (alien? GMO bio-weapon?), the creature grudgingly coexists with the schoolboy, granting Shinichi shape-shifting superpowers in savage death-battles against monstrous, fully-possessed victims of the parasites, who are carefully camouflaged in society. Although driven by instincts of self-preservation, the parasites also claim moral superiority over people, on whom they occasionally experiment with terrifying detachment. Meanwhile, the changes that gradually come over Shinichi begin to call into question his own humanity and alliances. Sporting several *Walking Dead*-style twists, *Parasyte* is an excellent and often fascinating series. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2014 in separate dual-language DVD

and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-MA, this is highly recommended. [Note: *Parasyte—The Maxim: Collection 2* is slated for release on July 5.] (C. Cassidy)

Rail Wars! Complete Collection ★★

(2014) 300 min. In Japanese w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Many anime series feature abundant T&A, but in this occasionally steamy set (based on a book series) the “T” also stands for “trains.” Teen protagonist Naoto Takayama aspires to become an engineer with Japan’s giant (fictitious) government-run railroad system, but instead his entire class of train-ees are conscripted into being apprentice workers in the railway security forces. Naoto’s schoolmates in the Japan National Railways student academy program unsurprisingly happen to be a squad of outrageously curvy girls—most of whom are eventually attracted to Naoto, even though locomotive technology/trivia/timetables are his primary passion. The adventures have the characters dealing with bomb-extortion threats, a royal kidnapping, and typical Japanese “harem comedy” misunderstandings in which Naoto is accidentally caught in compromising positions with nude nubile (at least the abundant train imagery resists the suggestive cliché of streamlined engines entering tunnels). Compiling all 12 episodes from 2014 in separate DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-MA, and presented in Japanese with English subtitles, this oddball series is an optional purchase, at best. (C. Cassidy)

Shirobako: Collection 1

★★1/2

(2014) 300 min. In Japanese w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



A rare example of an anime TV series conceived as an original and later spun off into manga comics (instead of the other way around), *Shirobako* is a realistic comedy-drama set within the Japanese TV-animation industry. Musashino Animation is a once-mighty production house—now reduced to minor status—where the eccentric staff struggle to complete episodes of their heroine-oriented chase series *Exodus*. Crises include the friction between a CGI specialist and a director who favors hand drawing, a procrastinating artist who must be literally locked in a cell to complete storyboards, final edits lost in hard drives, and lessons in voice-acting and sound/fx. The chief characters are five former high-school girlfriends paying their dues in entry-level duties in the animation biz (making it a sho-

jo anime about doing shojo anime), whilst dreaming of their pet project: a blockbuster theatrical cartoon fantasy entitled *Seven Lucky Battle Gods*. The behind-the-scenes ambiance, insider minutiae, and references work both for and against the material, as only hardcore anime fans will truly appreciate. Compiling the first 12 episodes from 2014 in separate DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-PG, and presented in Japanese with English subtitles, this is a strong optional purchase. [Note: *Shirobako: Collection 2* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

Tonari No Seki-Kun—The Master of Killing Time: Complete Collection ★★1/2

(2014) 168 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: \$49.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Comprised of 21 episodes running a mere eight minutes each, this sublimely simple 2014 classroom comedy (adapted from comics, using rather simple animation) centers on Seki, a slacker student—(aka, an “at-his-own-pace-boy”) who amuses himself at his desk during dull school lectures by concocting elaborate tabletop diversions using toys and games that he has smuggled in or fabricated out of commonplace objects. Seki (who never speaks) outrages and fascinates Rumi, the prim girl who sits next to him. But despite her disapproval as Seki’s little schemes unfold, Rumi is the one who usually gets in trouble with the teacher for inattention. The situation is almost as ritualized as Wile E. Coyote’s failures with the Road Runner, although over the course of the series a strange bond develops between the two schoolmates. Gag references to other anime series along with other esoteric bits of Nippon culture don’t detract from this inoffensive farce that will strike a chord with anyone who has ever been painfully bored in the classroom. Presented in separate dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Utawarerumono OVA: Complete Collection

★1/2

(2009) 85 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



This set of three 2009 OVAs (original video animations) acts more like a set of footnotes to the anime series adaptations of *Utawarerumono*, which is a cross-media franchise based on a PlayStation role-playing game (spun off into comics, cartoons, and radio dramas). A feudal fantasy set in humanity’s post-apocalyptic far future—with evolved branches of human-

ity that seem like Tolkienesque magical creatures—the story centers on amnesiac hero Hakuoro (affixed with a permanent cosplay-type animal mask), who has become a benevolent chieftain, protecting his realm with the aid of an array of warriors (mostly pretty females) drawn from numerous races. This trio of shorts essentially adds backstories to the canonical battle-narrative. Urutori, a winged female “priestess” (who resembles a blonde angel), adopts a war-orphan baby (the women warriors engage in nude bathing-nursing scenes). A weird aristocrat tries to marry one of the nubile heroines, but only with the condition that she drink a youth potion that will make her even younger (ugh). And some peaceful R&R is interrupted by a monster-hunt ruckus. Presented in separate dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-MA, extras include a series of related “picture dramas” (mostly using still shots). Likely to be of little import to anyone other than the most rabid followers of the original series, this is not a necessary purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Yamishibai—Japanese Ghost Stories: Complete Collection, Seasons One & Two ★★★

(2014) 117 min. In Japanese w/ English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$24.98; Blu-ray: \$34.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



Rather than featuring super-powered Tokyo schoolgirls kicking demon butt, *Yamishibai* is closer in theme to the old-time Nippon horror anthologies, such as the live-action Lafcadio Hearn-inspired *Kwaidan*. The CGI-assisted animation here simulates traditional paper-doll puppet-show cutouts in a series of 26 macabre shorts that are related by a masked storyteller after school in a gloomy mid-20th-century Japan. Most are rudimentary vignettes rather than fully plotted tales. A tired salary-man on a stalled train is the only commuter to perceive a gruesome creature. A school copier malfunction reveals a traditional, long-haired ghost. A carefree village boy sees the bad omen of an umbrella-carrying spirit and fails to observe safety precautions. A Shinto priestess heals a little girl of a curse...almost. A cop’s ventriloquist dummy inconveniently comes to life during a safety presentation. And so on. Exploiting viewer phobias and urban-legend dread, the material is longer on style than substance, but there is no fan service and the violence is mild, even with the intense creep-out ambiance. Compiling all 26 episodes from the 2013-14 first and second seasons in separate DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, and presented in Japanese with English subtitles, this artful and atmospheric series is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Antibalas: Live from the House of Soul ★★1/2

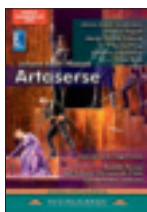
(2016) 36 min. DVD: \$16.95. MVD Entertainment Group (avail. from most distributors).



The 12-piece Afrobeat collective Antibalas plays a live set in Daptone Records' Brooklyn backyard in this entry from the label's concert series, interweaving black-and-white interview segments between the full-color song performances. Director Philip Di Fiori employs fancy camerawork, including sharply-angled shots, deeply saturated color, and blurred-out backgrounds on the four-song brass-and-organ-heavy set list, featuring "Dirty Money," "The Ratcatcher," "Him Belly No Go Sweet," and "Sâré Kon Kon." Trumpet player Jordan McLean credits a party he attended in London for introducing him to Nigerian musician Fela Kuti, who was a primary influence on Antibalas's jazz-funk sound, in which call-and-response vocals play a secondary role to instrumental interplay. Other speakers include singer and percussionist Duke Amayo, saxophone player Martín Pena, and 21-year-old drummer Miles Arntzen, who joined the band when he was only 18 (although he could play in clubs while underage, he had to leave immediately afterwards). Because Di Fiori keeps his focus on the band, it's hard to tell whether an audience actually witnessed the set while it took place, especially since the musicians mostly look at their instruments or at each other. Unfortunately, weighing in at a mere half-hour plus, this feels more like an introduction to the group instead of a full-fledged documentary, despite the band's spirited playing. Presented in stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Artaserse ★★★

(2012) 2 discs. 189 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39.99. Dynamic (dist. by Naxos of America).



This is the premiere recording of Johann Adolf Hasse's *Artaserse* (Hasse is credited with writing some 60 operas from 1721-71), one of the earliest works to be based on Pietro Metastasio's 1730 libretto (employed by more than a hundred composers over the years). A seminal *opera seria*, it is set at the Persian court, and focuses on the efforts of General Artabano to gain the throne, first by assassinating the king and then by trying to poison the king's son, Prince Artaserse. Suspicion, however, falls on Artabano's own son, Arbace, who is not only loyal to Artaserse but in love with the new king's sister (in complementary fashion, Artaserse pines for Artabano's daughter). All ends well, with the couples united and Artabano exiled rather than executed by Artaserse. The long piece resembles Handel's operas, with reams of

recitative interrupted by demanding arias (either sprightly or morose as the moment requires), and very few ensembles. Although the acting is rudimentary, the vocalism is excellent, with Sonia Prina (Artabano), Anicio Zorzi Giustiniani (Artaserse), and Franco Fagioli (Arbace) all exhibiting great coloratura dexterity, and Maria Grazia Schiavo and Rosa Bove equally impressive as the female love interests, while the modern-instrument orchestra plays nimbly for Corrado Rovaris. The production is from the 2012 Valle d'Itria Festival in the Apulian town of Martina Franca, performed on a fairly bare outdoor stage at the ducal palace. The images are rather dark and the costumes—featuring modern military uniforms—are not especially attractive. But an alternative recording is unlikely, so this will appeal to anyone interested in the historical development of opera. Presented in PCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Enrique Bunbury: El Camino Más Largo ★★★

(2010) 122 min. DVD: \$14.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Alexis Morante's music tour documentary—*El Camino Más Largo* translates as *The Longest Road*—centers on Spanish rocker Enrique Bunbury, who has been making music for 30 years. After playing in notable bands, including Héroes del Silencio, Bunbury established himself as a solo artist, but one thing eluded him: American success. At first, Bunbury started slowly by playing five U.S. dates a year, but for the 2010 tour covered here, he goes all out to play 26 dates in 15 cities over the course of two months. Bunbury's backing band Los Santos Inocentes includes a bassist, drummer, keyboard player, and two guitarists (Bunbury also plays guitar). Instead of a private jet, Bunbury travels in a tour bus with his photographer girlfriend and their cat. Although he could attract a wider audience by performing cover songs or singing in English, he sings exclusively in Spanish, which brings in Spanish-speaking fans wherever he goes, whether the venue holds a few hundred or a couple thousand. Nonetheless, there are setbacks along the way, as Bunbury's cat falls ill, Bunbury himself suffers throat problems, and a Salt Lake City gig turns away ticket holders due to improper ID (they are undocumented immigrants). While he doesn't miss any shows, it's hard to say whether Bunbury will ever find a wide audience in America, especially if he isn't open to some degree of compromise, such as collaboration with an English-speaking artist. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Gesualdo: Death for Five Voices ★★★

(1995) 60 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



In both his fiction and nonfiction films, director Werner Herzog has often portrayed obsessively driven protagonists who have dangerously destructive tendencies, so it is not surprising that he was drawn to the simultaneously lurid and creative life of Don Carlo Gesualdo, the Italian Renaissance composer whose madrigals—featuring a chromatic language far ahead of its time—were written, at least in part, as penance for his 1590 murder of his wife, her lover, and the son he feared was not his. Gesualdo's music, largely dismissed after his death, was rediscovered in the 20th century and embraced as the work of a genius by modern giants including Stravinsky. Herzog approaches Gesualdo's story for this 1995 film in his usual idiosyncratic way. On one hand, he offers performances of the music, courtesy of Il Complesso Barocco and the Gesualdo Consort of London, along with learned commentary from their respective leaders, Alan Curtis and Gerald Place. On the other, he stages sequences with both Renaissance re-creators and actors (featuring a woman who haunts Gesualdo's dilapidated castle claiming to be the reincarnation of the composer's dead wife, and a chef and his wife who quarrel as he discusses the menu for Gesualdo's wedding feast). Also included is an interview with the aristocrat who now holds Gesualdo's title as Prince of Venosa. Throughout, Herzog narrates in his typically deadpan style, translating for viewers as needed. While this may not be one of the prolific director's best films, it's an intriguingly weird entry that fits nicely into his overall oeuvre. Presented in PCM stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

King Priam ★★★1/2

(1985) 138 min. Blu-ray: \$32.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Homer's *The Iliad* provides the source material for Michael Tippett's 1962 second opera, but unlike the famed Greek epic, *King Priam* is a comparatively compact work, yet one that also carries considerable power, as is evident in this 1985 film featuring the Kent Opera. The composer's libretto centers on the tension between predetermined fate and free choice. The king of Troy is warned by a soothsayer that his infant son Paris will be the cause of his death along with the city's destruction, so he orders a soldier to kill the child. But instead the man leaves the boy with a shepherd, and years later Priam brings him back to the palace. Scenes follow depicting Paris's kidnapping of Helen and the major episodes in the subsequent

siege of Troy—the killing of Patroclus by Hector, the death of Hector at Achilles's hand, Priam's plea for the return of his son's body, and the deaths of both Achilles and Priam. Tippett's music is mostly martial and propulsive, with the orchestral sound dominated by brass and percussion, but there are also some soothing interludes, including an aria for Achilles with only guitar accompaniment. This is not a filmed stage performance but rather a recreation for TV, shot close-up from various angles, with occasional flashbacks and other visual inserts (as well as some theatrical gore). It all works nicely, with the vocalism by Rodney Macann (Priam), Howard Haskin (Paris), Omar Ebrahim (Hector), and Neil Jenkins (Achilles) especially strong, while the company chorus and orchestra respond vigorously to Roger Norrington's leadership. Although the picture format is standard 4:3, the digitally enhanced PCM soundtrack is excellent. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Matthäus-Passion

★★★1/2

(2005) 211 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).

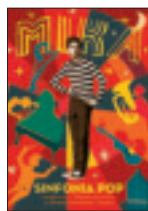


While many ballets are written to existing pieces of music, Johann Sebastian Bach's long, contemplative *Passion According to St. Matthew* seems a curious choice, and—judging from this performance recorded at the 2005 Baden-Baden Festival—not a particularly wise one for John Neumeier, artistic director of the Hamburg Ballet. The troupe, dancing to a rather lugubrious 1980 recording of Bach's score, certainly exhibits stamina and skill. Neumeier, then in his mid-60s, takes the role of Jesus in what amounts to an interpretative Passion Play surrounded by the company's intricately choreographed responses to a succession of ruminative arias and traditional chorales. While there are impressive moments, as a whole the ballet is an oddity: much of the movement consists of groups dressed in simple tunics walking about the stage in regimented units, or individuals stepping out to shake, twitch, or keel over in contortions—in short, very little traditional dance is on display here, and the solos lack distinction. Still, some viewers might find this combination of Bach's majestic score and Neumeier's obviously heartfelt response to it deeply moving. Others, however, will remain unconvinced that the *Passion According to St. Matthew* benefits at all from the addition of dance. This release includes two complete versions of the performance: the final version, edited to include close-ups and various perspectives, and one from a single-camera view of the entire stage. Presented in PCM stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Mika: Sinfonia Pop

★★★

(2015) 109 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Vision (avail. from most distributors).



Lebanese-born, British-raised, falsetto-voiced pop singer-songwriter Mika—who sounds like a cross between Freddie Mercury and Frankie Valli—channels his inner opera star in this 20-song 2015 performance in the elegant Teatro Sociale in Como, Italy, where he is accompanied by a full orchestra conducted by Simon Leclerc. Eyebrows might understandably be raised at the idea of taking a symphonic hammer to such lightweight pop confections as “Last Party” (“If it's the end of the world, let's party”) and “Love You When I'm Drunk” (“I only love you when I'm drunk”), but let's give props where props are due: Mika in fact has a strong enough voice to hold his own amongst the soaring strings and English horns, while the orchestral arrangements often take a suitably playful approach to the songs (on “Good Guys,” an orchestra member rhythmically beats a pair of split logs together). Drawing from his four albums to date, Mika serves up plenty of hits here, including “Grace Kelly,” “Happy Ending” (earning him a standing ovation), “Relax (Take It Easy),” and “Love Today.” While this is not a theatrical extravaganza with costume changes, a light show, or special effects—like *Mika: Life in Cartoon Motion* (VL-3/08)—this should still appeal to most Mika fans, and might even please lovers of light opera. 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 interviews with Leclerc and Mika (who was in a West End production of *Oliver!* as a kid). Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Les Pêcheurs de Perles

★★★

(2012) 118 min. In French w/ English subtitles, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major/Unitel Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).



The Pearl Fishers is known as “the other opera” by Georges Bizet, being the only stage work by the composer apart from his mega-popular *Carmen* that has retained even a tenuous spot in the repertory. Set in exotic Ceylon, the libretto essentially revolves around a romantic triangle, in which Zurga, just chosen as king of the fishermen, reconciles with his long-absent friend Nadir, with whom he had quarreled years earlier over Léïla, a woman who now returns as a priestess sworn to chastity. But seeing Nadir again, Léïla's love for him is rekindled, and when the pair are discovered, they are both threatened with execution—until Zurga orchestrates their escape. *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* lacks the melodramatic punch of the much

more famous *Carmen*, but it compensates with considerable lyrical beauty, especially evident in the lovers' arias and duets. Originally performed in 1863, the work has a complicated textual history; this 2012 production hailing from the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples follows the standard edition that was cobbled together by Bizet's publisher following Bizet's death—which many scholars consider to be corrupt. For those willing to accept this, however, the performance is a good one, with vibrantly opulent sets and costumes, sensitive orchestral playing under Gabriele Ferro, and several athletic dances added by director Fabio Sparvoli. And the vocalism—by Dmitry Korchak (Nadir), Patrizia Ciofi (Léïla), and Dario Solari (Zurga)—is excellent. Presented in DTS 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this colorful production is certainly engaging. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

La Reine Morte

(2015) 110 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Those who regret that Tchaikovsky only composed three ballets (much-loved perennials *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*) should enjoy this “new” work, featuring a score cobbled together by choreographer Kader Belarbi, artistic director of the Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse, from the composer's various orchestral works—mostly the rarely performed *Suites* but also tone poems (*Franческа da Rimini*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and the *Capriccio Italien*) and even some piano pieces (*The Seasons*). The libretto, adapted from a play by Henry de Montherlant, centers on Pedro, a 14th-century Portuguese prince whose romance with Inés—one of his wife's ladies-in-waiting—leads his father, King Ferrante, to kill Inés, which causes the prince to rebel and, after seizing the throne, viciously punish his lover's murderers. The story allows for a good deal of dancing by the ensemble in what amount to throne room sequences where jesters take conspicuous parts. The principals—Davit Galstyan (Pedro), Maria Gutierrez (Inés), and Artjom Maksakov (Ferrante) are all excellent, as are the Capitole corps and orchestra, who play Tchaikovsky's music with verve under the baton of Koen Kessels. The sets are fairly plain, with some curious touches such as ladder-like thrones, but the costumes (especially for the women) are flamboyantly distinctive and colorful. *La Reine Morte* is not likely to become a repertory item internationally, but this 2015 performance from Toulouse—exhibiting an interesting combination of traditional ballet and modern dance—is bound to appeal to balletomanes. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo,

extras include a cast gallery. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Still Life at the Penguin Cafe ★★★

(1989) 39 min. Blu-ray: \$32.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Amusingly whimsical but also featuring a strong environmental message, David Bintley's ballet—set to music by Simon Jeffes—is presented in a colorful, exuberant performance by the Royal Ballet in this 1989 film made for Thames Television. In the mid-'70s, guitarist Jeffes founded the Penguin Cafe Orchestra, a small group of instrumentalists who became successful in England playing music that combined classical and pop elements in a generally cheery minimalist style. In 1988 he adapted eight of the band's popular numbers for a ballet by Bintley that offered a gentle but incisive commentary on man's harmful impact on the environment and the animal kingdom. Introduced here by Jeremy Irons in a recorded message about the recent extinction of the great auk, the piece launches into an evening at the eponymous cafe, where penguin waiters serve a crowd of well-attired humans who engage in dance with the auk and—in succeeding scenes—a variety of other endangered species, including a ram, rat, flea, zebra, and monkey, as well as an indigenous family from the South American rainforest, before Noah's Ark makes an appearance. Each sequence benefits from Jeffes's catchy upbeat music, Bintley's imaginative choreography, and highly amusing costumes, which include elaborate masks and animal outfits. All the roles are nicely danced, while the company orchestra—under Isaiah Jackson—handles the pop idiom without missing a beat. Presented in the standard 4:3 picture format, backed by a PCM soundtrack, extras include a documentary on the Penguin Cafe Orchestra. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Theory of Obscurity: A Film About the Residents ★★★

(2015) 87 min. DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95. Film Movement (avail. from most distributors).

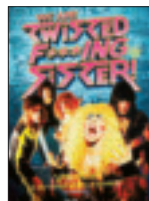


Don Hardy's intentionally opaque documentary presents the history of the mysterious band The Residents, but never unmasks the players. Consequently, there's no way to know if the same individuals comprise the Bay Area avant-pop outfit or whether replacements have stepped in over the years. As *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening puts it, "There is no true story of The Residents," so Hardy keeps biographical information to a minimum, instead speak-

ing with fans, associates, and members of the Cryptic Corporation, the organization that oversees the band's affairs. Hardy also uncovers performance footage and excerpts from their unfinished film *Vileness Fats* (mostly filmed between 1972-76). For those who know them best for their music, *Theory of Obscurity* makes it clear that the group is equally invested in film and performance art (the Museum of Modern Art has copies of all of their releases). Collaborators Penn Jillette, who narrated shows, and Gary Panter, who illustrated record jackets, talk about their own participation, while recording artists such as Mickey Melchiondo and Les Claypool discuss how the band influenced their careers (Melchiondo, for instance, prefers the pseudonym Gene Ween). The Residents, however, never speak for themselves, not even behind their famous eyeball-shaped head masks, although former Cryptic Corporation president John Kennedy jokes that he could have been a member. Presented in 5.1 surround sound and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and Dolby Digital 5.1 on Blu-ray, extras include the Residents' first live performance, Residents short films, and an excerpt from *Vileness Fats* (exclusive to the Blu-ray release are extended interviews). Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

We Are Twisted F***ing Sister! ★★★

(2016) 134 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. Music Box Films (avail. from most distributors).



Andrew Horn's documentary isn't the usual rags-to-riches portrait of a rock band, but rather a rigorous examination of a regional phenomenon. If New York glam-metal quintet Twisted Sister had emerged 10 years earlier or later, they might have had an easier road to success, but the group developed their sound just as glam was starting to fade away and before hair-metal came into fashion. Twisted Sister originally started as a cover band with a preference for the works of David Bowie and the New York Dolls. In his accompanying audio commentary, filmmaker Horn recalls attending the same shows as band founder Jay Jay French, although they wouldn't meet until decades later. After Dee Snider joined the group, Twisted Sister became a more theatrical act, but tension ensued when Snider criticized French's songs. Guitarist French responded by challenging the singer to write his own, and Snider surprised him, becoming a self-described "maniacal, malicious" songwriter, after which the band developed a wider following and they consistently sold out venues throughout the tri-state area. Through merchandising and ticket sales, they made a living, but record companies weren't interested, so they pressed their own singles and produced their own radio spots—a tactic

that garnered press attention in the U.K., and led to a record deal for their debut. Still, for every step forward, there were two steps back. The film ends with their signing to Atlantic—a less than ideal marriage, although it did lead to 1984's multiplatinum release *Stay Hungry*. Although their signature hit "We're Not Gonna Take It" (used by Donald Trump during his presidential campaign) is absent here, the abundance of rare footage and colorful fan recollections make this an entertaining portrait. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 on Blu-ray, extras include bonus footage, interviews, and performances. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Zydeco Crossroads: A Tale of Two Cities ★★★

(2015) 87 min. Blu-ray: \$19.95. MVD Entertainment Group (avail. from most distributors).



Robert Mugge's follow-up to 1994's *The Kingdom of Zydeco* (also newly available) takes its name from a yearlong Creole music/interviews series (which also covered dance and cuisine) that was sponsored by Philadelphia radio station WXPB. The first performer, C.J. Chenier, talks to host David Dye about his days playing saxophone and keyboards in funk bands before following in the footsteps of his father, Clifton Chenier. Mugge and Dye also travel to Lafayette, LA, to catch up with Chubby Carrier, Major Handy, Lil' Nathan Williams, Rockin' Dopsie, Jr., and Buckwheat Zydeco. Vasti Jackson, a Mississippi artist, joins in to add his talent on guitar. All told, there's a mix of races, genders, generations, and even genres, since some of the younger performers customize their repertoire with pop, reggae, and hip-hop elements. As accordion player Sean Ardoin of Creole United puts it, he aims to "do new stuff in an old way." The 19-song set list here encompasses originals and covers, like Soul Creole's swinging version of Bob Marley's "Buffalo Soldier," while the lyrics toggle between English and French (in the case of the latter, Mugge provides onscreen summaries rather than lyric translations). Comments from author Michael Tisserand (*Kingdom of Zydeco*) and KRVS disc jockey Herman Fuselier add context to the music. Also included is the documentary *Rosie's in the House Tonight*, an hour-shy profile of musician and band leader Rosie Ledet, who notes that female accordion players are still a rarity, even though Queen Ida is every bit as famous as male accordionists from the Chenier and Ardoin families. Presented in LPCM stereo, this is recommended. [Note: also newly available on Blu-ray is filmmaker Robert Mugge's music documentary *Pride and Joy: The Story of Alligator Records* (1992), featuring performances by Koko Taylor & Her Blues Machine, Lonnie Brooks Blues Band, Elvin Bishop, Katie Webster, and Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials, among others.] (K. Fennessy)

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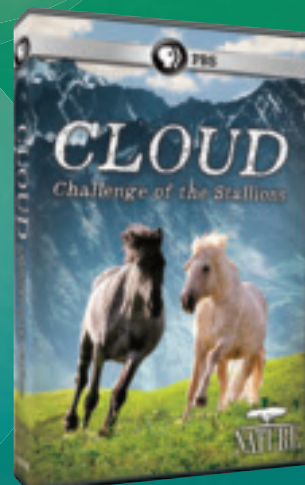
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"For Ms. Taymor, the sky is not the limit. It's a supple canvas to be stretched and bent to the whims of the imagination." – The New York Times

From the mind of award-winning director Julie Taymor (*The Lion King on Broadway*, *Frida*, *Titus*) comes a Shakespeare adaptation like none other; *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*. Rich with Taymor's trademark creativity, this immersive and darkly poetic cinematic experience brings the play's iconic fairies, spells and hallucinatory lovers to life. Filmed at her sold-out stage production with cinematography by Rodrigo Prieto (*Argo*, *Frida*) and music by Academy Award-winning composer Elliot Goldenthal, the feats of visual imagination are ingenious and plentiful, but beating at the center of the film is an emotionally moving take on the deeper human aspects of Shakespeare's beloved tale.

Directed by Julie Taymor. Art, Theatre

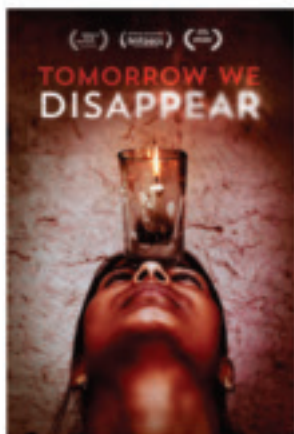


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"Every once in awhile, in our ongoing pursuit of strange and amazing places, people and stories, we come across something that truly inspires us. One such find is a film entitled Tomorrow We Disappear." – Indiewire

The film chronicles the last days of Kathputli, the mysterious hand-built artist colony first discovered in Salman Rushdie's iconic *Midnight's Children*. Hidden in the alleyways of New Delhi, a community of magicians, acrobats and puppeteers approach their looming eviction to make way for a modern skyscraper. Bound together by tradition and impending gentrification, this captivating film allows us to experience a culture's magic and wonder before it's gone.

Directed by Adam Weber and Jimmy Goldblum. Documentary, Art, Human Rights, South Asia



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"Young people need to see the film as well as old, for we all see ourselves and our future in these audacious women who dare to be seen. Highly Recommended." – EMRO

Based on his popular blog and book, street photographer Ari Seth Cohen and director Lina Plioplyte dive into the personal lives of New York City's most fashionable seniors. In an industry obsessed with youth, these older women dispel conventional ideas about beauty and aging and prove that with age comes grace and confidence.

Directed by Lina Plioplyte. Documentary, Fashion, Women's Studies

"Deep Web provides myriad topics for classroom discussion. Highly Recommended." – EMRO

The inside story of one of the most important and riveting digital crime sagas of the century – the arrest of Ross William Ulbricht, the 30-year-old entrepreneur convicted of being 'Dread Pirate Roberts,' creator and operator of online black market Silk Road. As the only film with exclusive access to the Ulbricht family, *Deep Web* explores how the brightest minds and thought leaders behind the Deep Web and Bitcoin are now caught in the crosshairs of the battle for control of a future inextricably linked to technology, with our digital rights hanging in the balance.

Directed by Alex Winter. Documentary, Criminology, Cybersecurity, Human Rights



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When Jack Tramiel invented Commodore in the 1970's, he envisioned computing for the masses and not just the upper classes. Spearheading the personal technology revolution and combatting giants like Apple and IBM, Commodore became a household name by changing the way in which we interact, create and play with computers. From the advent of the groundbreaking Atari and Tetris games to the evolution of contemporary technological design, 8 Bit Generation dives into the home computer explosion and explores Commodore's key role in shaping the future in which we now live.

Directed By Tomaso Walliser. Documentary, Tech



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"Both entertaining and illuminating" – Slate

Meet the artists who are redefining the tradition of knit and crochet, bringing yarn out of the house and into the world. Reinventing our relationship with this colorful tradition, YARN weaves together wool graffiti artists, circus performers, and structural designers into a visually-striking look at the women who are making a creative stance while building one of modern art's hottest trends.

Directed by Una Lorenzen. Documentary, Art, Women's Studies



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NATURE / SPORTS / BIOLOGY



ON A LONG BREATH

SIX OCEANS, SIX MINUTES,
FREE DIVING AT ALL COSTS
OXYGEN IS OVERRATED

Imagine six minutes without breath, slipping below the ocean's surface with world champion free-diver Pierre Frola as he interacts with sperm whales, swims with a giant moray eel and meets a tiger shark face to face. Over 51 days, Frola explores the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea, offering a firsthand glimpse into Earth's underwater mysteries.

STARRING: **Pierre Frola** (World Champion Free-diver)
DIRECTED BY: **Philippe Gerard**

VF-1041 UPC# 881394123229
SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$149.00, 52 Min
STREET DATE: 6/7/16

HISTORICAL / CINEMA / POP CULTURE

THE MAN WHO SAVED BEN HUR

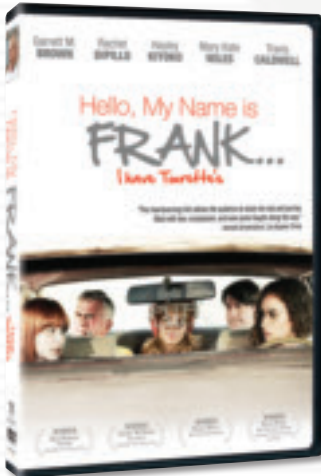
Follow one man's quest to learn more about his 89-year-old cousin, Johnny Alarimo, only to discover that Johnny spent a dazzling career behind the scenes in Hollywood's Golden Age of Film as an assistant director on *Ben Hur* (1959). Alarimo shows us his private collection of set photographs, recounts the time he went to the Isle of Capri with Rock Hudson, and shares fascinating stories and anecdotes about his close friends and confidantes Elizabeth Taylor and Sandra Dee.

STARRING: **John Alarimo, Joe Forte, Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor, Sandra Dee.**
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY: **Joe Forte**

VF-1043 UPC# 881394123724
SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$149.00, 60 Min
STREET DATE: 7/26/2016



MEDICAL STUDY / TOURETTE'S



HELLO, MY NAME IS FRANK

A cross-generational coming-of-age narrative of three teenage girls and a socially awkward man with Tourette's disorder who bond over a cross-country road trip. Along the way, they each learn to stop using his illness as an excuse to hide from life, and that love and family can be found in unexpected places.

STARRING: **Garrett M. Brown** (*Kick-Ass, Uncle Buck*), **Rachel DiPillo** (*Chicago Med, Jane the Virgin*), **Hayley Kiyoko** (*CSI: Cyber, Insidious 3, Jem and the Holograms*), **Mary Kate Wiles** (*Lizzie Bennet Diaries*), **Travis Caldwell** (*Criminal Minds*)

VF-1045 UPC# 881394124028
SRP: \$14.95, PPR: \$249.00, 109 Min
STREET DATE: 8/16/16

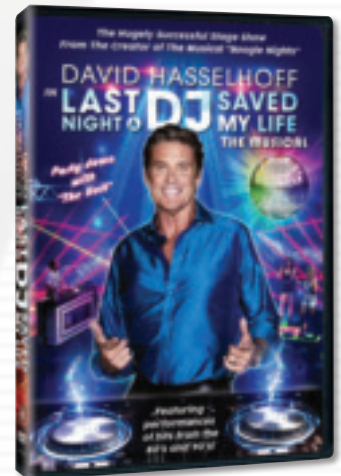
MUSICAL / COMING OF AGE

LAST NIGHT A DJ SAVED MY LIFE

David Hasselhoff is Ibiza's top 80's DJ, clueless to the fact that a new decade has dawned. His life is thrown into a comical tale-spin when his estranged daughter Penny moves in. Now the dad must become the dad...but how will a badly behaved parent still stuck in the 80's keep his modern, free-spirited daughter in line? This hit musical contains many 80s and 90s hits such as "Papa Don't Preach", "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" and "Never Going to Give You Up".

STARRING: **David Hasselhoff** (*Baywatch, Knight Rider*), **Shane Richie Jr.** (*Loose Women*), **Kim Tiddy** (*The Bill, Hollyoaks*), **Stephanie Webber** (*The Voice*)

VF-1044 UPC# 881394123823
SRP: \$14.95, PPR: \$149.00, 94 Min
STREET DATE: 8/2/16



SCIENCE / CONSPIRACY



THE UFO CONCLUSION

What is the alien agenda? And why has the government gone to such great lengths to stifle the overwhelming evidence that otherworldly creatures exist? Some of our greatest minds unveil the truth behind this massive cover-up...and why we can't afford to ignore the extraterrestrial signs any longer.

INTERVIEWS WITH: **Stanton Friedman** (world-renowned nuclear physicist), **Kathleen Marden** (leading UFO researcher), **Jim Marrs** (NYT Bestselling Author), **Patty Greer** (Crop Circle Expert)

VF-1046 UPC# 881394123922
SRP: \$14.95, PPR: \$149.00, 47 Min
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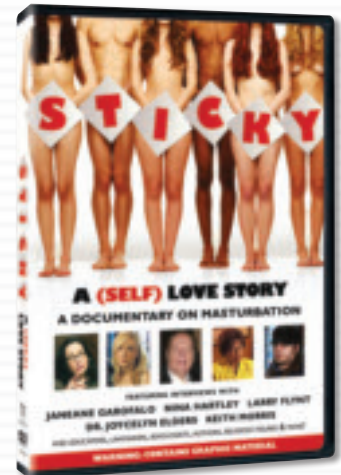
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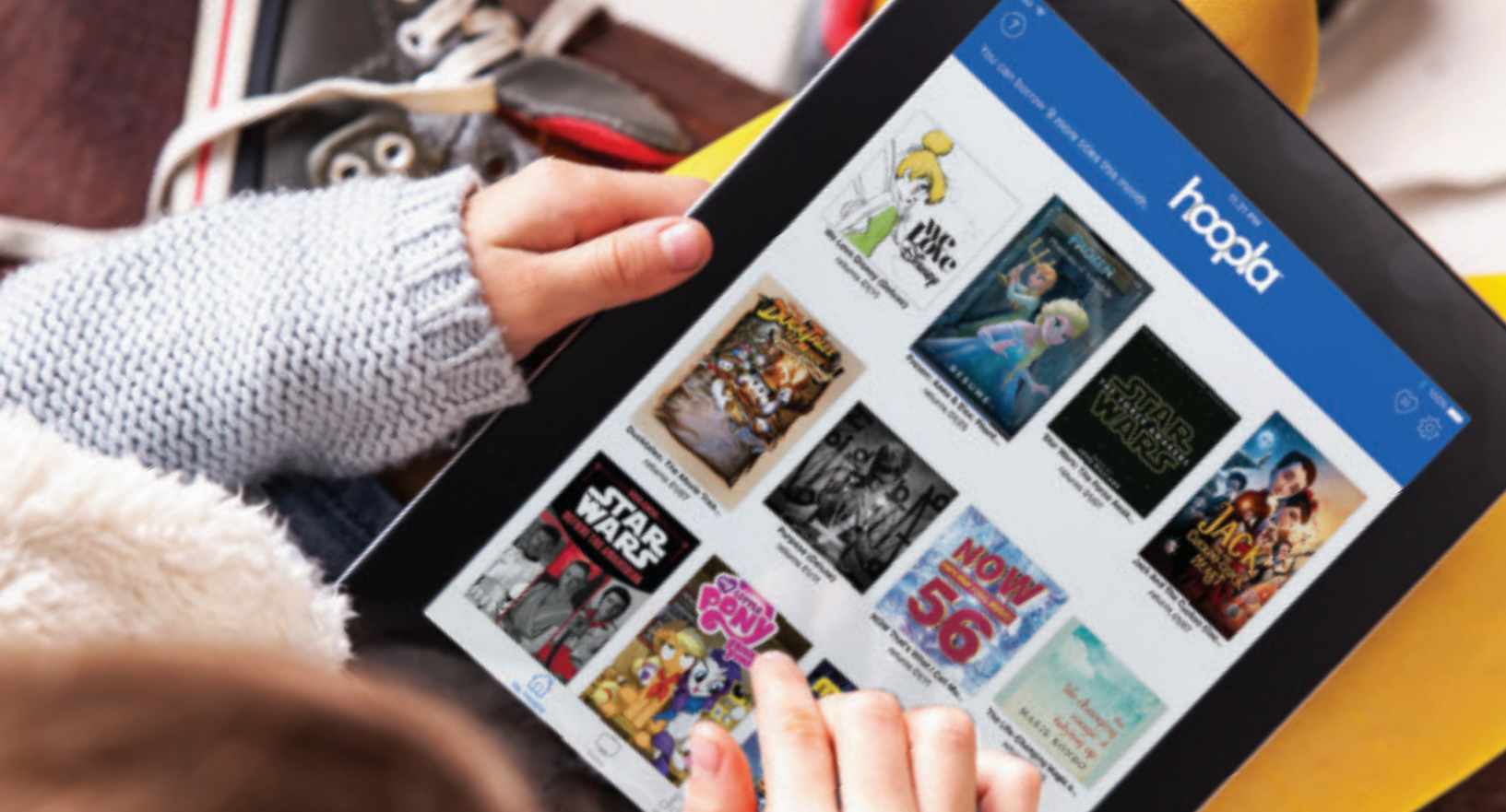
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