

May-June 2015

Video Librarian

VOL. 30 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 3



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Publisher/Editor: Randy Pitman
Associate Editor: Jazza Williams-Wood
Copy Editor: Kathleen L. Florio
Editorial Assistant: Chris Pitman
Graphic Designer: Carol Kaufman
Marketing Director: Anne Williams

Contributing Writers

Kathleen C. Fennesy, *Reviewer*,
Amazon.com
Susan Granger, *SSG Syndicate*
Donald Liebenson, *Reviewer*,
Entertainment Weekly, Amazon.com
Maureen Puffer-Rothenberg, *Librarian*,
Valdosta State University, GA
Stephen Rees, *Librarian, formerly with*
Bucks Co. Free Library, Levittown, PA
Frank Swietek, *Associate Professor*
of History, University of Dallas, TX

Additional Contributors:

Sean Axmaker
 Carson Block
 Charles Cassady
 Ted Fry
 Fran Gardner
 Phil Hall
 Tom Keogh
 Michael Sandlin

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

The Winter's Tale

★★★1/2
 (2015) 119 min. DVD:
 \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99.
Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos
of America).



Shakespeare's late-career rumination on the devastating results of jealousy is the source for this new ballet fashioned for the Royal Ballet of Covent Garden by choreographer Christopher Wheeldon, with strong assistance from composer Joby Talbot, and designer Bob Crowley. The action follows the Bard's play closely: Act I depicts Sicilian King Leontes's rage over the misapprehension that his wife, Hermione, has been unfaithful—resulting in her death. Act II shifts to Bohemia, where the couple's surviving daughter, Perdita, has grown up unaware of her lineage, and is in love with a shepherd who is really Prince Florizel in disguise (when Florizel's father discovers their relationship, he forces the pair to flee the realm). Act III returns to Sicily, where Perdita's identity is revealed, Leontes atones for his mistakes, a royal wedding is held, and Hermione returns to life. Talbot and Wheeldon's approach is largely traditional: the music (which is well played under David Briskin) effectively catches the mood of each scene, while the dance moves are expressive in an old-fashioned, elegant style

that is exquisitely performed by Edward Watson (Leontes), Lauren Cuthbertson (Hermione), Sarah Lamb (Perdita), Steven McRae (Florizel), and the other principals. Crowley contributes sumptuous sets and colorful costumes, while Daniel Brodie delivers some spectacular rear-stage projections. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and LPCM stereo, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a cast gallery. A modern work that balletomanes should find deeply satisfying, this is highly recommended. (*F. Swietek*)

Although hardly one of Shakespeare's most performed plays, *The Winter's Tale* is available on DVD (Kultur, \$24.95) in a full-length 1998-99 production from London's Barbican Theatre, performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and starring Antony Sher, Alexandra Gilbreath, Estelle Kohler, and Emily Bruni.



VL at ALA

Video Librarian will be exhibiting at the American Library Association Annual Conference in San Francisco from June 26-29. Please drop by our booth (#527) to say hello!

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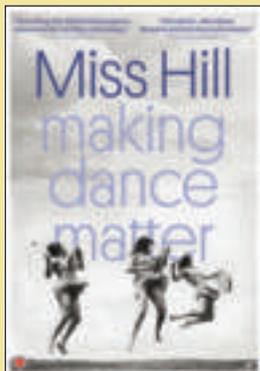


ROMAN DE GARE

105 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916578D
STREET DATE: JUNE 23

Judith Ralitzer, novelist and femme fatale, is seeking characters for her next bestseller. Meanwhile a serial killer has just escaped from a high security prison. Their paths are about to cross in Claude Lelouch's tricky thriller, which features a number of characters and a timeline that skips back and forth, keeping the audience guessing.

"A lavishly appointed and sensuous thriller with a delightfully tricky plot." -New York Times

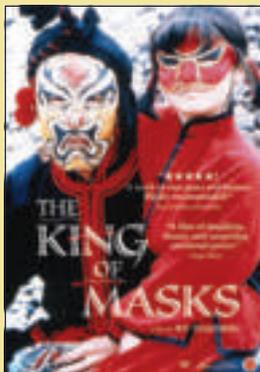


MISS HILL: MAKING DANCE MATTER

80 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916561D
STREET DATE: JUNE 23

An illuminating look at Martha Hill, who fought to make modern dance a legitimate art form in America. Weaving together over 90 years of footage, the film is both a celebration of dance and an examination of the passion required to keep it alive.

"A marvelous primer on the rise of modern dance. Wonderful footage...Bound to enthrall dance aficionados." -Hollywood Reporter



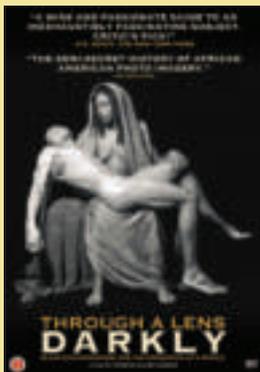
THE KING OF MASKS

102 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916486D
NOW AVAILABLE

The King of Masks is an elderly master of the ancient Sichuan opera art of changing masks so quickly that it seems like magic.

Bereft from the loss of his family many years ago, the old man searches for an heir to impart his talents and skills upon.

"Stunningly gorgeous! Assured performances make for a powerfully redemptive tale." -Austin Chronicle



THROUGH A LENS DARKLY

92 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916387D
NOW AVAILABLE

Exploring the American family photo album through the eyes of black photographers, this acclaimed film probes the recesses of American history to discover images that have been suppressed, forgotten and lost.

"Extraordinary...a deep, rich dive into the history of African American photography." -Time Magazine

"One of the most important and necessary documentaries of the year." -Indiewire



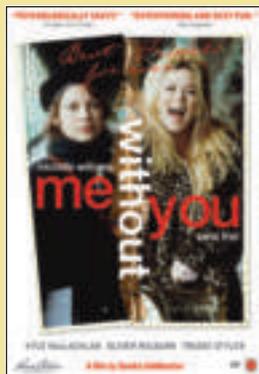
JFK: THE PRIVATE PRESIDENT

53 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916264D
NOW AVAILABLE

In 1961, a new generation moved into the White House. All of a sudden politics were youthful, dynamic and sexy.

With personal reminiscences and rare footage from private archives, the film is an intimate view of life inside 'Camelot' with the legendary First Family.

"Captivating...wonderful. An excellent contribution to an over exposed subject." -Educational Media Reviews



ME WITHOUT YOU

100 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916585D
STREET DATE: JUNE 23

Michelle Williams and Anna Friel star as best friends growing up in the London suburbs in the 1970s. Over the ensuing decades they battle through drugs, random sex, manipulation, betrayal, and lots of other saucy stuff, including Kyle MacLachlan as a very influential professor.

"★★★★! A bracing truth that's refreshing. Michelle Williams is the surprise." -Roger Ebert

"Psychologically savvy." -New York Times



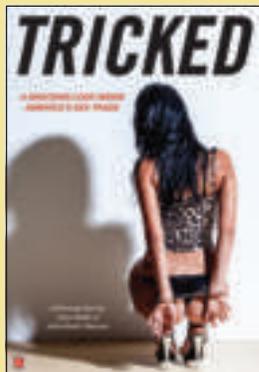
HE LOVES ME, HE LOVES ME NOT

96 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916479D
NOW AVAILABLE

French star Audrey Tautou is a talented art student who is madly in love with a doctor whose wife is expecting their first child. But things take a dangerous turn as the young student grows less discreet in her affections.

"A devious romantic thriller." -New York Times

"Darkly witty, with a twist ending!" -Time Magazine



TRICKED

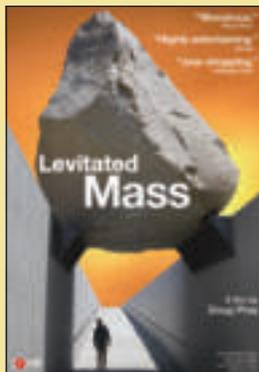
75 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916363D
NOW AVAILABLE

Modern-day slavery is alive and well in the U.S., as thousands of victims are trafficked across the country to satisfy America's \$3-billion-a-year sex trafficking industry.

Meet the pimps, the johns, the police, the parents and the victims of the thriving sex trade in this daring documentary that uncovers one of America's darkest secrets.

"Heartbreaking." -New York Times

"Truly hair-raising." -Village Voice



LEVITATED MASS

89 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916318D
NOW AVAILABLE

Levitated Mass chronicles the amazing story of a 340-ton rock and its 105 mile journey from a desert quarry through the streets of Los Angeles.

Doug Pray's documentary also explores Michael Heizer, the controversial artist who conceived the monolithic artwork.

"Illuminating, engaging and unexpected."

-Los Angeles Times



DESIGN IS ONE: LELLA & MASSIMO VIGNELLI

79 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916073D
NOW AVAILABLE

They are two of the world's most influential designers. In this intimate documentary, luminaries including Richard Meier and Milton Glaser bring us into the Vignellis' world, capturing their creativity as well as their humanity, warmth and humor.

"This smart, information-rich film includes perceptive visual details...and is enlivened by the charm of the intelligent, eccentric couple at its heart." -The New York Times



SAGRADA: THE MYSTERY OF CREATION

94 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916493D
STREET DATE: MAY 12

One of the most iconic structures ever conceived, Barcelona's La Sagrada Familia is an astonishing architectural project first imagined by Antoni Gaudí in the late 19th century. This unhurried, meticulous documentary allows the viewer time to observe and reflect upon the historical and spiritual significance of this glorious landmark while gaining deep insight into the ongoing process of artistic creation.

"The most extraordinary personal interpretation of Gothic architecture since the Middle Ages." -Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Goldberger

"A peaceful and gently stirring documentary that considers faith and architecture and human achievement." -The Village Voice

"Vividly informative...loving, comprehensive." -Film Journal International



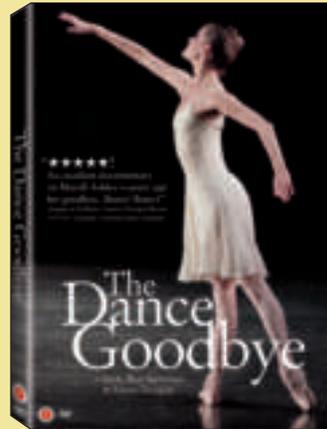
A YEAR IN CHAMPAGNE

82 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916554D
STREET DATE: MAY 12

The exploding cork. Endless tiny bubbles. An indulgence...a celebration...a seduction. This is the essence of Champagne.

A Year in Champagne offers a rare glimpse behind the scenes into six 'houses' that have been instrumental in shaping the image of Champagne.

"Entertainingly guides viewers through the winemaking process and behind the scenes to hear from the vintners who put the magic in the bottle."
 -The Hollywood Reporter



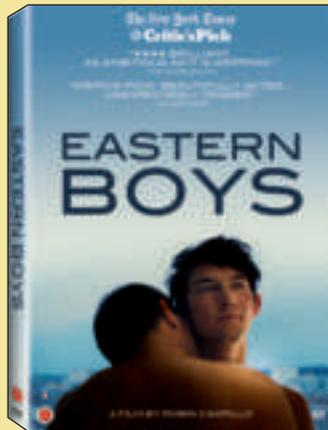
THE DANCE GOODBYE

56 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916509D
STREET DATE: MAY 12

Inspired by Merrill Ashley's departure from the New York City Ballet as an acclaimed principal dancer, *The Dance Goodbye* captures the poignancy of this life turning point for Ashley and indeed for all dancers.

"★★★★★! An excellent documentary on Merrill Ashley's career and her goodbye. Bravo! Bravo!"

-Jacques d'Amboise, Former Principal Dancer at the New York City Ballet & Founder, National Dance Institute



EASTERN BOYS

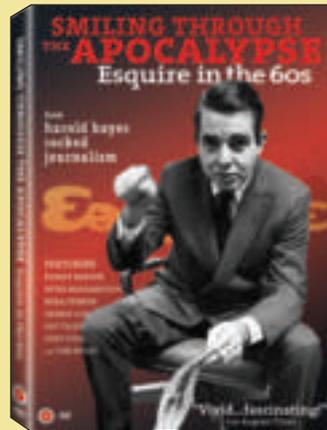
128 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916547D
STREET DATE: JUNE 2

Arriving from all over Eastern Europe, the men who loiter around the Gare du Nord train station in Paris are scraping by however they can.

When the middle-aged, bourgeois Daniel hires a boyishly handsome Ukrainian for a date, he learns the young man is willing to do anything for money. But an unexpectedly profound relationship develops between them, despite their differences.

"Critic's Pick!" -The New York Times

"Both surprisingly resonant and something of a thrill ride." -National Public Radio



SMILING THROUGH THE APOCALYPSE: ESQUIRE IN THE 60s

97 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916530D
STREET DATE: JUNE 2

Exploring the revolution in journalism sparked by the turbulence of the 1960s, *Smiling Through the Apocalypse* is the story of maverick editor Harold T.P. Hayes, who made *Esquire* magazine a galvanizing force in American culture.

Featuring Nora Ephron, Gore Vidal, Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Peter Bogdanovich, Robert Benton, George Lois and more.

"Vivid...fascinating!" -Los Angeles Times



KNOW HOW

106 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916516D
STREET DATE: JUNE 2

A musical drama written and acted by foster care youth ripped from the stories of their lives. Five youth's worlds interweave as they confront loss, heartbreak, and come of age in this surprising tale about transience and perseverance. All of them must decide to survive or else fall victim to a broken system.

"A groundbreaking achievement: a heart-breaking musical, written and performed by a cast of foster youth who give an electrifying performance."

-The Chronicle of Social Change



SHE MUST BE SEEING THINGS

94 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916523D
STREET DATE: JUNE 2

This landmark indie film about the politics of lesbian desire is now digitally restored. Agatha, a lawyer, and Jo, a filmmaker, are lovers. While Jo is on the road showing her films, Agatha discovers her diaries, leading to jealousy and spiraling sexual obsession.

"A landmark film...brilliant. It pursues, in unprecedented ways emotionally and intellectually, the nature of lesbian desire, fantasy and sexuality."

-St. Louis Riverfront Times

"An engaging comedy of sexual jealousy."
 -Philadelphia Inquirer

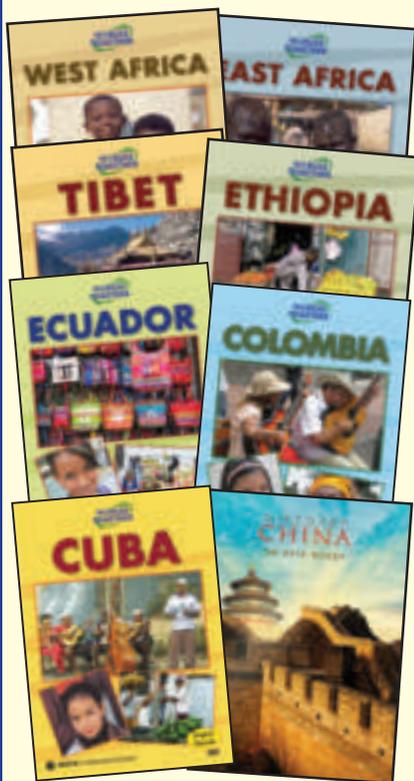
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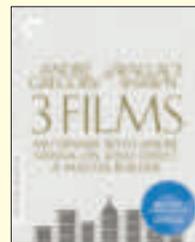
500 Essential Documentaries (and Mockumentaries) to Watch Before You Graduate

Media Librarian Christopher Lewis, American University Library, Washington, D.C., has compiled an excellent annotated list (available online at <http://subjectguides.library.american.edu/c.php?g=175213&p=1154206>) of great documentaries (and mockumentaries) for students to see before they graduate. As of mid-2012, all were available on DVD and/or available for streaming. Presented in alphabetical order, the list includes landmark early classics such as D.A. Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back* (1967), Albert and David Maysles' *Grey Gardens* (1976), Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County USA* (1976), Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), and Les Blank's *Burden of Dreams* (1982); legendary TV series including Ken Burns's *The Civil War* (1990), Henry Hampton's *Eyes on the Prize* (1987-1990), and Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* (1980); and exemplary contemporary films such as Steve James's *Hoop Dreams* (1994), Michael Moore's *Roger & Me* (1989), and Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004); as well as a handful of mockumentaries like Rob Reiner's *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984) and Albert Brooks's *Real Life* (1979). Kudos to Lewis for creating this outstanding list featuring the cream of the documentary crop.

Criterion's June Slate Includes André Gregory / Wallace Shawn Boxed Set, "Five Easy Pieces," and "The Fisher King."

Theater directors, writers, actors, and longtime friends are showcased in *André Gregory & Wallace Shawn: 3 Films* (DVD: 5 discs, \$99.95; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$99.95), Criterion's lead June title, arriving June 16. The set features the duo's stimulating conversational meal recorded in 1981's *My Dinner with André*; 1994's *Vanya on 42nd Street*, a passionate read-through of Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*; and 2014's striking Henrik Ibsen interpretation *A Master Builder*, directed by Jonathan Demme. Coming June 23 is Bernard Wicki's 1959 Oscar-nominee *The Bridge* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), the first major anti-war film to come out of Germany after World War II, following a group of small-town teenage boys who enlist as soldiers. Also arriving June 23 is Terry Gilliam's 1991 Manhattan-set modern myth *The Fisher*

King (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), featuring Jeff Bridges as a former radio shock jock reconstructing his life after a scandal, and Robin Williams as a homeless man on a quest for



the Holy Grail—which he believes to be hidden somewhere on the Upper West Side. Slated for June 30 is Bob Rafelson's 1970 classic *Five Easy Pieces* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), starring Jack Nicholson as a shiftless thirtysomething oil rigger and former piano prodigy—immune to any sense of responsibility—who is returning to his estranged father and childhood home along with his blue-collar girlfriend (Karen Black, in an Oscar-nominated role). Also coming June 30 is Czech director Jaromil Jireš's 1970 phantasmagoria *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), centering on a teenage girl who is thrust into an eerie, vampire-inhabited wonderland in a quasi-medieval landscape.

"Wolf Hall" Miniseries Available Now from PBS Home Video

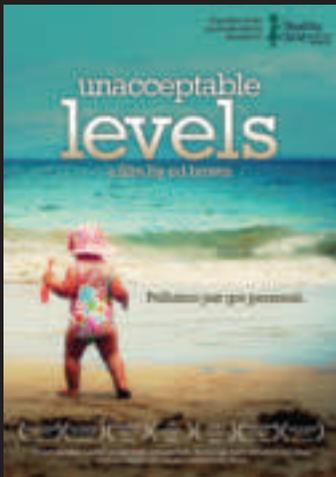
PBS Distribution has just released *Wolf Hall* (DVD: 3 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99). Based on the Booker Prize-winning novels *Wolf Hall* and sequel *Bring Up the Bodies* by author Hilary Mantel, this flagship *Masterpiece* production serves up a provocative portrait of Thomas Cromwell, the brilliant and enigmatic consigliere to King Henry VIII, as he maneuvers the corridors of power at the Tudor court. Filmed entirely on location in England at National Trust properties, *Wolf Hall* is told from Cromwell's (Mark Rylance) perspective—the son of a brutal blacksmith—who rises from the ashes of personal disaster to deftly pick his way through a court where "man is wolf to man." Featuring Damian Lewis as King Henry VIII—haunted by his brother's premature death, and obsessed with protecting the Tudor dynasty by securing his succession with a male heir to the throne—this historical drama follows the complex machinations and back room dealings of pragmatic and accomplished power broker Cromwell, as well as the surrounding deadly political intrigue, Henry VIII's tempestuous relationship with Anne Boleyn (Claire Foy), and the religious upheavals of the Protestant Reformation.

TDC ENTERTAINMENT ESSENTIALS

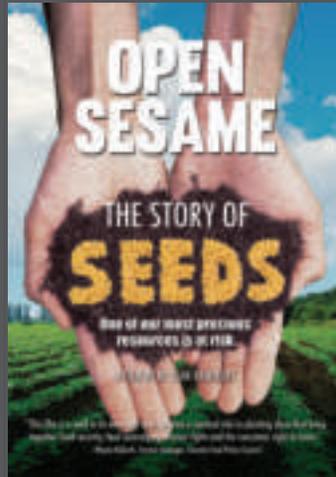
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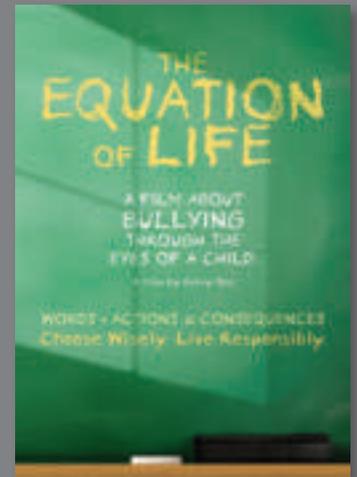
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shelterisland.net



Unacceptable Levels \$19.98 / 826262011598
"...addresses the alarming number of unregulated industrial chemicals we ingest regularly" - *LA Times*



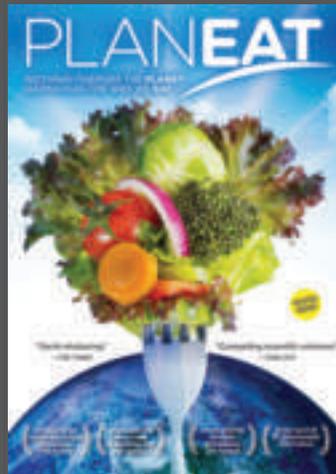
Open Sesame \$24.98 / 826262012496
"examines the crisis surrounding the corporate patenting of seeds—our most crucial source of food, fuel, and fabric. 3.5 Stars/Highly Recommended" - *Video Librarian*



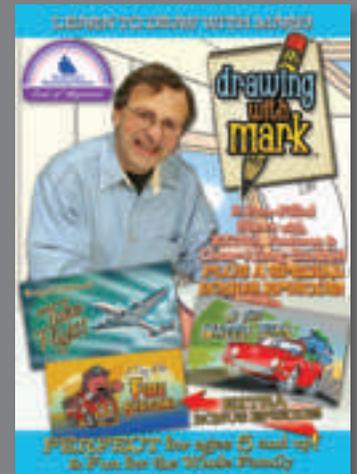
Equation of Life \$16.98 / 826262011994
"3.5 Stars. Sure to spark discussion among young viewers, this is recommended" - *Video Librarian*



Pay2Play \$19.98 / 826262012397
"3.5 stars/Highly Recommended...probes the quid pro quo relationship between government and major political donors." - *Video Librarian*



Planetat \$19.98 / 826262007393
"We leave the film rapacious to explore the bright-colored world of vegan cooking" - *Sierra Club*



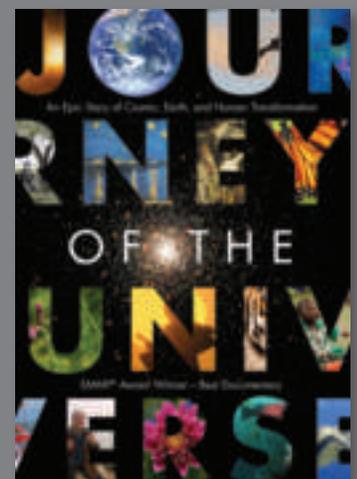
Drawing with Mark: Take Flight \$14.98 / 826262012298
Winner: Parents' Choice®, Creative Toy. Approved by Kids First!



Mobilize \$19.98 / 826262011697
"An alarming documentary. 3.5 Stars/Highly Recommended" - *Video Librarian*



Bee People \$19.98 / 826262011895
"A must for all teachers as well as a must for every person on this planet!" - *The Examiner*



Journey of the Universe \$24.98 / 826262008796
Emmy® Award Winner for Best Documentary



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-Basil Tsiohis, DOC NYC*

OFF THE FLOOR

What does it take to overcome gender bias and share an artistic vision with the world?



*"An engaging documentary... Recommended."
-Video Librarian*

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darkhollowfilms.com

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

Late April TV

While not a feature film, HBO's April 29-30 premiere of *The Casual Vacancy* is a very high-profile adaptation of J.K. Rowling's 2012 class and social drama, her first book since completing the *Harry Potter* series. Directed by Jonny Campbell, the three-part miniseries stars Rory Kinnear, Michael Gambon, Julia McKenzie, Keeley Hawes, and Emilia Fox.



Directed by Sophie Barthes, the romantic drama stars Henry Lloyd-Hughes, Paul Giamatti, Rhys Ifans, Logan Marshall-Green, and Mia Wasikowska as Emma Bovary.



Me and Earl and the Dying Girl (June 12) is based on Jesse Andrews's 2012 debut novel, winner of the Cybils Award for Young Adult Fiction. Directed by Alfonso Gomez-Rejon, the film—which premiered at Sundance and won Audience Award and Grand Jury Prize honors—stars Thomas Mann, Olivia Cooke, RJ Cyler, Connie Britton, and Nick Offerman.

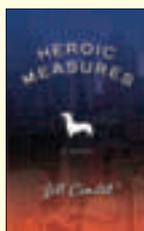


Coming in May

Far from the Madding Crowd (May 1) is an adaptation of Thomas Hardy's 1874 Victorian romance set in the English countryside. Directed by Thomas Vinterberg, the film stars Carey Mulligan, Michael Sheen, Tom Sturridge, Matthias Schoenaerts, and Juno Temple.



5 Flights Up (May 8) is based on Jill Ciment's 2009 novel *Heroic Measures*, which was chosen for Oprah's Book Club. Directed by Richard Loncraine, the comedy stars Morgan Freeman, Diane Keaton, Miriam Shor, and Cynthia Nixon.



Looking Ahead

Slated for July is *Mr. Holmes*, based on Mitch Cullin's 2005 novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind*. Directed by Bill Condon, this tale revolving around the memories of an elderly Sherlock Holmes (Ian McKellen) also stars Laura Linney, Colin Starkey, Hattie Morahan, and Hiroyuki Sanada.



Also coming in July is *Paper Towns*, based on John Green's *New York Times* bestselling 2008 YA novel, winner of an Edgar Award. Directed by Jake Schreier, the romantic mystery stars Nat Wolff, Cara Delevingne, Justice Smith, and Austin Abrams.



Coming in June

Testament of Youth (June 5) is based on the 1933 memoir by English writer and pacifist Vera Brittain. Directed by James Kent, this World War I-era film stars Alicia Vikander as Brittain, with a supporting cast that includes Colin Morgan, Kit Harington, Dominic West, Emily Watson, and Miranda Richardson.



Madame Bovary (June 12) is based on French writer Gustave Flaubert's 1856 classic novel about the torrid affairs of a social-climbing doctor's wife.

Arriving in August is *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*, based on Inkpot Award and Guggenheim fellowship author Phoebe Gloeckner's 2002 graphic novel, subtitled "An Account in Words and Pictures."



Directed by Marielle Heller, the film stars Bel Powley, Kristen Wiig, Alexander Skarsgård, and Christopher Meloni.

Exclusive New Releases from BOND/360



Bite Size

childhood obesity · health

BITE SIZE takes a look at the obesity epidemic through the eyes of the children most at risk, following several families, and educators, to show us that losing weight is not just about changing the number on the scale but also about asking ourselves who we are and what we want to become.

RUN TIME: 87 MINUTES
UPC: 616892 28694 3

\$24.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL



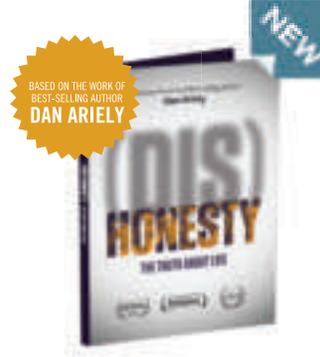
In Country

reenactments · Vietnam War · ptsd

To many, the idea of Civil War reenactment is a familiar concept. But the men of Delta 2/5(R) recreate the battles of a far more charged conflict: the Vietnam War. IN COUNTRY blurs fantasy with trauma, deftly asking: what compels these men to meticulously bring this controversial war back to life?

RUN TIME: 80 MINUTES
UPC: 616892 29734 5

\$24.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL



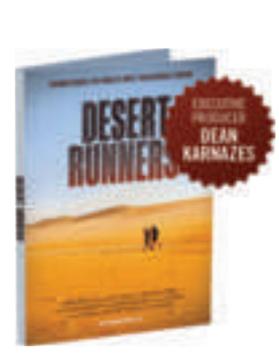
(Dis)Honesty: The Truth About Lies

psychology

Inspired by the work of behavioral economist Dan Ariely, DISHONESTY: THE TRUTH ABOUT LIES interweaves personal stories, expert opinions, and archival footage to reveal how, and why, people lie.

RUN TIME: 90 MINUTES
Available June, 2015
Contact hello@bondinfluence.com to pre-order

\$24.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL



Desert Runners

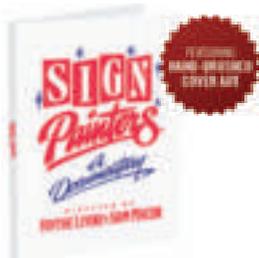
endurance · travel · inspiration

DESERT RUNNERS delves into the mindset of ultra-athletes as they push their bodies, hearts, and spirits to the limit while attempting to complete a series of ultra-marathons in the world's toughest climates.

RUN TIME: 95 MINUTES
UPC: 724101 24919 8

\$19.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL

Now Available from BOND/360

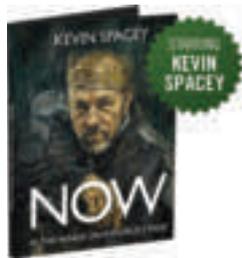


Sign Painters

Hand-painted signs are a product of a fascinating 150-year-old American history. What was once a common job has now become a highly specialized trade, a unique craft struggling with technological advances. Sign Painters stylistically explores this unacknowledged art form.

RUN TIME: 80 MINUTES
UPC: 616892 28064 4

\$19.95 SRP | PPR AVAIL



NOW: In The Wings on a World Stage

With over 200 performances across 3 continents, Kevin Spacey, Sam Mendes and The Bridge Project company reveal some of the most intimate moments behind their staging of Shakespeare's classic tragedy, *Richard III*.

RUN TIME: 93 MINUTES
UPC: 0 91037 50737 2

\$24.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL

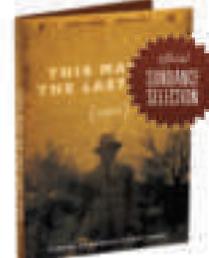


Documented

In 2011, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas outed himself as an undocumented immigrant in the New York Times Magazine. DOCUMENTED chronicles his journey to America, his struggle for immigration reform, and his journey to reconnect with his mother.

RUN TIME: 90 MINUTES
UPC: 0 91037 50710 5

\$24.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL

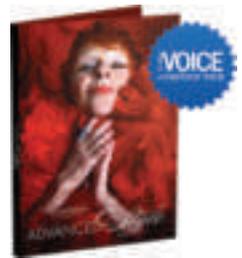


This May Be The Last Time

This May Be the Last Time traces the journey of award-winning filmmaker Sterlin Harjo as he interweaves the tale of a mysterious death with the rich history of the powerful hymns that have united Native American communities in times of worship, joy, and hope.

RUN TIME: 93 MINUTES
UPC: 0 91037 50727 3

\$24.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL



Advanced Style

Directed by Lina Pliplyte, and based on Ari Seth Cohen's blog of the same name, ADVANCED STYLE paints intimate and colorful portraits of independent, stylish women aged 62 to 95 who are challenging conventional ideas about beauty and aging.

RUN TIME: 72 MINUTES
UPC: 0 91037 50727 3

\$24.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL

BOND/360

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BOND/360 is an innovative film distribution company that collaborates with the industry's most cutting-edge and forward-thinking filmmakers to release films that address the most popular topics in today's zeitgeist. For more information, contact hello@bondinfluence.com

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

Video Games

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

Available Now

The Golf Club: Collector's Edition (Maximum Games, PS4/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: E). This golf simulation game features tons of design options, variable weather conditions, stunningly beautiful scenery, and authentic controls that are on par with real-world moves and behaviors.

Omega Quintet (Idea Factory, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action-fighting game, music plays an integral role in the battle system—providing stat boosts and more—while as manager of the titular singing idols, players can build relationships with group members.



State of Decay: Year One Survival Edition (Microsoft, XOne: \$29.99, Rated: M). This updated version of the third-person zombie survival game—in which players must form a team in order to find shelter and food before time runs out—features new missions, weapons, and other bonus content.

May 17—May 23

Farming Simulator 15 (Maximum Games, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$39.99-\$49.99, Rated: E). In this educational agricultural simulation game, players develop and manage their own farms across hundreds of acres using authentic machines and farming tools.

The Witcher III: Wild Hunt (Warner, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this open world third-person action-RPG, players return as witcher Geralt of Rivia, one of the last monster slayers for



hire, who explores war-torn kingdoms and towns rife with corruption while tracking down a child of prophecy who is a living weapon capable of untold destruction.

May 24—May 30

Splatoon (Nintendo, WiiU: \$59.99, Rated: E10+). In this family-friendly third-person shooter, players splatter enemies and claim their turf as ink-spraying, squid-like creatures, in a game that resembles paintball gone wild in cool neon colors.



June 7—June 13

The Elder Scrolls Online: Tamriel Unlimited (Bethesda, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-MMORPG (non-subscription-based), players explore the far reaches of Skyrim, mysterious lands of Morrowind, sprawling metropolis of Daggerfall, and beyond, where the choices they make—ranging from joining alliances to picking fights—will shape the destiny of the world of Tamriel.

June 21—June 27

Batman: Arkham Knight (Warner, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In the explosive third-person action finale to the *Arkham* series, Batman faces the Scarecrow, who has returned to unite an impressive roster of super villains—including Penguin, Two-Face, and Harley Quinn—in a bid to destroy the Dark Knight.



Ride (Bandai Namco, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). Designed for bike lovers who live and breathe the world of motorcycling, this racing simulation game seats players on the most prestigious models from eminent motorcycle manufacturers as they travel around the globe to race on a wide variety of challenging tracks.

June 28—July 4

BlazBlue: Chrono Phantasma Extend (Aksys, PS3/PS4/XOne: \$39.99-\$49.99, Rated: RP). The latest entry in the popular *BlazBlue* 2D fighting game series introduces two new characters, along with redesigned moves, new stages and scenarios, and a Remix Heart comedic

addition to the story mode.

Onechanbara Z2: Chaos (XSEED, PS4: \$49.99, Rated: RP). This third-person zombie action-fighting game puts players into the skimpy outfits of vampire sisters who engage in high-octane swordplay against hordes of zombies infesting the land.

Payday 2: Crimewave Edition (505 Games, PS4/XOne: \$49.99, Rated: M). In this remastered-for-next-gen-consoles edition of the morally questionable first-person shooter, players embark on a spectacular crime spree, with activities ranging from small-time convenience store hits to major league cyber-crime to emptying out bank vaults.

TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

The Almighty Johnsons: The Complete Series (PBS, DVD: 11 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 9 discs, \$39.99). This 2011-13 New Zealand fantasy dramedy series follows the four Johnson brothers, who have been reincarnated as Norse gods.

The Book of Negroes (Entertainment One, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Based on the novel by Lawrence Hill, this six-part Canadian miniseries—aired in the U.S. on BET—centering on the life of a woman sold into slavery during the American Revolution stars Aunjanue Ellis, Cuba Gooding Jr., and Louis Gossett Jr.



May 5

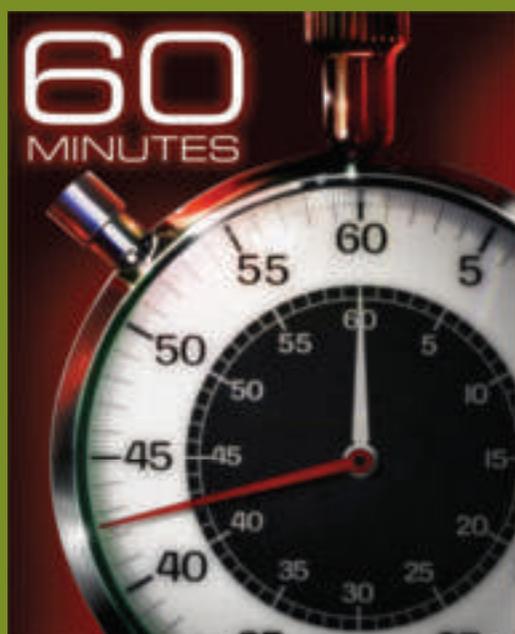
The Bridge: Series 2 (MHz, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.95). The 2013 sophomore season of the Scandinavian crime drama follows a detective (Sofia Helin) who looks into an incident revolving around five youths found unconscious in a crashed tanker ship.

Broadchurch: The Complete Second Season (Entertainment One, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). David Tennant, Olivia Colman, James D'Arcy, and Charlotte Rampling star in this 2015 second season of the grisly mystery series revolving around a coastal town murder.



Dalziel & Pascoe: Season 11 (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98). The titular crime-solving

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- "Killing Bin Laden"
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- "Brazil"
- "130 Million Tons of Waste"
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- "Watching the Border"
- "Screening the TSA"
- "401K Recession"
- "War Against Women"
- "Deepwater"
- "Justice at Guantanamo"
- "Identities For Sale"

alexanderstreet.com/VL60Min

duo (Warren Clarke, Colin Buchanan) are back in this 2006-07 11th and final season of the popular crime series based on the novels by Reginald Hill.

Dancing on the Edge (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Nominated for three Golden Globes, this 2013 BBC and PBS-aired miniseries chronicling the rise of a black London jazz band stars Chiwetel Ejiofor, Matthew Goode, Angel Coulby, Jacqueline Bisset, and John Goodman.



DCI Banks: Season Three (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Starring Stephen Tompkinson as Detective Chief Inspector Alan Banks, this 2014 third season of two-part episodes based on the novels by Peter Robinson includes "Wednesday's Child," "Piece of My Heart," and "Bad Boy."

Death in Paradise: Season Three (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). This 2014 third season of the Caribbean-set crime dramedy series introduces a new detective from London (Kris Marshall).

Father Brown: Season Two (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Based on author G.K. Chesterton's classic character, this 2014 second season of the 1950s-set series stars Mark Williams as the titular Roman Catholic detective.

Halt and Catch Fire: The Complete First Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.98). An erstwhile IBM exec (Lee Pace) builds a team to work on perfecting a personal computer in this 2014 first season of the 1980s-set period drama.

Jamaica Inn (Acorn, DVD: \$34.99). Aired on BBC One, this 2014 three-part miniseries based on the romantic novel by Daphne du Maurier stars Jessica Brown Findlay, Joanne Whalley, Sean Harris, Matthew McNulty, and Shirley Henderson.



Law & Order: The Eighteenth Year 2008 Season (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). The 18th season of Dick Wolf's long-running drama series includes guest appearances by Michael McKean, Tristan Wilds, and Tom Everett Scott. Also newly available are the final seasons **Law & Order: The Nineteenth Year 2008-2009**

Season and Law and Order: The Twentieth Year 2009-2010 Season.

Masters of Sex: Season Two (Sony, DVD: 4 discs, \$55.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$65.99). The second season of the Showtime-aired drama based on the book by Thomas Maier about American sex researchers William Masters and Virginia Johnson stars Michael Sheen and Lizzy Caplan.



Mr. Selfridge: Season 3 (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$44.99). Based on Lindy Woodhead's biographical *Shopping, Seduction and Mr. Selfridge*, this 2015 third season follows the life of London department store magnate Harry Gordon Selfridge (Jeremy Piven).

Parenthood: Season 6—The Final Season (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98). Chronicling the ups and downs of three generations of the Braverman family, this 2014-15 sixth and final season of the family dramedy series stars Erika Christensen, Dax Shepard, Lauren Graham, and Peter Krause.

Scott and Bailey: Season Three (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Stars Suranne Jones and Lesley Sharp are back as the titular crime-solvers in this 2013 third season from the ITV-aired detective drama.

White Collar: The Complete Sixth Season (Fox, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). A former con artist (Matt Bomer) continues to work with the FBI in this 2014 sixth and final season of the USA Network original series.

May 12

The Colbys: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 12 discs, \$119.99). A spin-off from the popular nighttime soap *Dynasty*, this 1985-87 Aaron Spelling-produced series stars Charlton Heston, Barbara Stanwyck, John James, Emma Samms, and Maxwell Caulfield.

The Hotwives of Orlando (Paramount, DVD: \$29.98). Starring Casey Wilson, Andrea Savage, and Kristen Schaal, this 2014 first season of the comedy spoof of various rich reality housewives series premiered on Hulu.



Mister Ed: The Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$16.98). This 1965-66 sixth and last season featuring the escapades of the titular talking horse includes a crossover episode with *The Beverly Hillbillies* (and stars Irene Ryan and Raymond Bailey).

Murder in the First: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). A pair of detectives (Taye Diggs and Kathleen Robertson) find a connection between a drug murder and a young Silicon Valley CEO (Tom Felton) in this 2014 debut season of the TNT-aired crime drama.

Power: The Complete First Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.99). Aired on Starz, this 2014 first season of the NYC nightclub drama from executive producer 50 Cent stars Omari Hardwick and Naturi Naughton.



Science Fiction Theatre: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 8 discs, \$49.98). Produced from 1955-57, this sci-fi anthology series hosted by Truman Bradley features guest appearances by DeForest Kelley, Basil Rathbone, and Adolphe Menjou.

Unforgettable: The Third Season (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Detective Carrie Wells (Poppy Montgomery) uses her photographic memory to get to the bottom of crimes in this 2014 third season of the police procedural series.

May 19

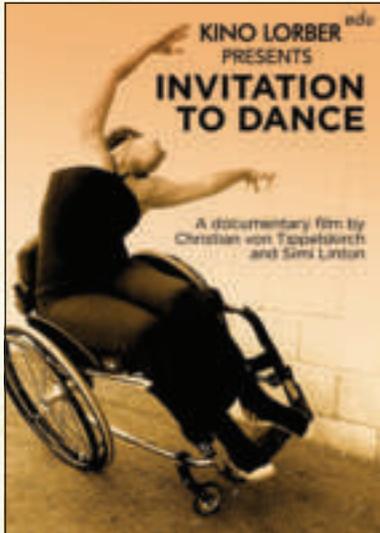
Beauty & the Beast: The Second Season (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$49.99). The beastly Vincent (Jay Ryan) and detective Cat (Kristin Kreuk) search for the truth about his condition in this 2013-14 sophomore season of the CW drama series.

Call the Midwife: Season Four (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98). Based on the memoirs of British nurse Jennifer Worth, this 2015 fourth season of the medical drama features voiceovers by Vanessa Redgrave.



CPO Sharkey: The Complete Season 1 (Time Life, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Starring Don Rickles as the titular Chief Petty Officer, this 1976-77 debut season of

Best Sellers & New Releases from KINOLORBEREDU.COM



INVITATION TO DANCE

In 1971, Simi Linton was seriously injured in a horrific car crash that caused a permanent disability. Upon returning to college, she encountered discrimination she couldn't have imagined before she began using a wheelchair. Determined to fight the status quo, she gradually became a powerful and effective international advocate for the rights of disabled people to lead lives filled with opportunity, love, sexuality...and dance.

"Anyone interested in understanding the breadth of human experience should watch this film." -Julia Pinover Kupiec, Disability Rights Advocates

Without PPR \$149 • With PPR \$349 • DSL Streaming \$499 • Single-semester streaming \$100

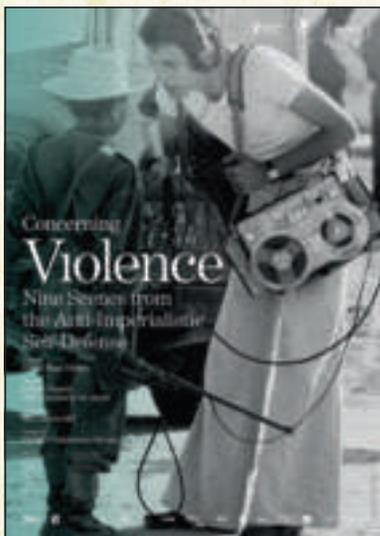


GOODBYE GAULEY MOUNTAIN: AN ECO-SEXUAL LOVE STORY

A rollicking documentary that follows campaigning 'ecosexuals' Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle. Returning home to the Appalachian mountains of West Virginia to protest against the environmentally devastating practice of mountain top removal, they preach their doctrine of "Earth as lover," with its literal embrace of the natural world. As they put their bodies on the line, Goodbye Gauley Mountain demonstrates how the fight for environmental justice can be inclusive, sexy and fun, even in the face of environmental tragedy.

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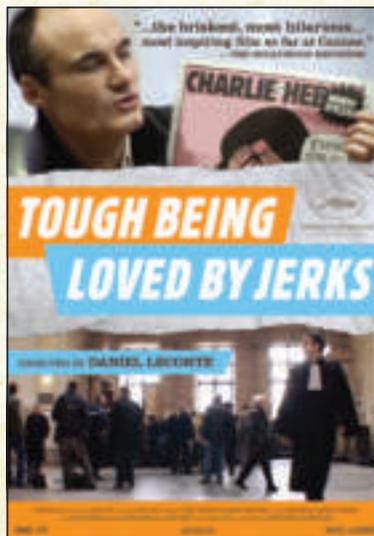
CONCERNING VIOLENCE

This potent, arresting, and surprisingly emotional film artfully elucidates Frantz Fanon's psychiatric and psychological analysis of the dehumanizing effects of colonization on the individual and the nation. Directed by Göran Hugo Olsson (*Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975*). Includes a video introduction by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

"Armed with a legitimacy as startling as its content, it is a superbly executed document of a pivotal, inevitable era in 20th-century history."

-Ed Gibbs, sbs.com.au

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TOUGH BEING LOVED BY JERKS

Because he had published the twelve Danish cartoons that had triggered the wrath of Muslims worldwide, Philippe Val, the editor of *Charlie Hebdo*, a French satirical newspaper, was cited to court by the Great Mosque of Paris, the World Muslim League and the Union of Islamic Organizations of France. Daniel Leconte covered this extraordinary trial in real time, aiming at deciphering the international political, ideological and media-related stakes with the key participants. A reflection on Islam, on the press, on the state of the public opinion in French society, but also an endeavor to answer the challenges that fundamentalism poses to all democracies.

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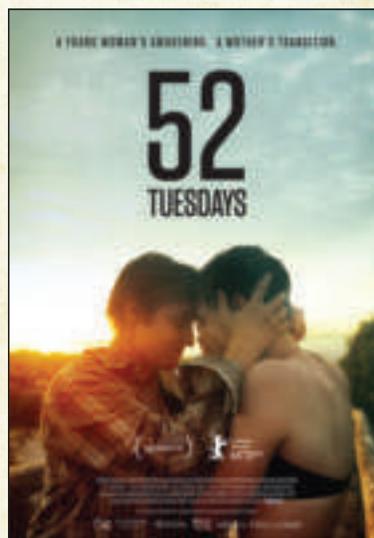


SEEDS OF TIME

10,000 years ago the biggest revolution in human history occurred: we began to farm, breeding and domesticating plants that have resulted in the crops we eat today. But the genetic diversity of these domesticated crops, which were developed over millennia, is vanishing and the consequences could be dire. Crop diversity pioneer Cary Fowler aims to safeguard the last place that much of our diversity is left intact: in the world's vulnerable gene banks.

WINNER - BEST FILM PORTLAND ECOFILM FESTIVAL

Without PPR \$149 • With PPR \$349 • DSL Streaming \$499 • Single-semester streaming \$100



52 TUESDAYS

16-year-old Billie's reluctant path to independence is accelerated when her mother reveals plans for gender transition and their time together becomes limited to Tuesday afternoons. Filmed over the course of a year, once a week, every week (only on Tuesdays) these unique filmmaking rules bring a rare authenticity to this emotionally charged story of desire, responsibility and transformation.

"Critics' Pick. An impressive debut. [A] near-masterpiece." -Village Voice

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the sitcom features Harrison Page, Peter Sarsgaard, and Elizabeth Allen.

Glee: The Final Season (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). Past and present members of the New Directions glee club say goodbye in this 2015 sixth and final season that features guest appearances by Ken Jeong, Jennifer Coolidge, and Gina Gershon.

Midsomer Murders, Series 14 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.99). The residents of Midsomer County continue to have fatal troubles in this 14th compilation of episodes, which include "Death in the Slow Lane," "The Oblong Murders," "The Sleeper Under the Hill," and "A Rare Bird." Also newly available at the same price is **Midsomer Murders, Series 15**.

Orange Is the New Black: Season Two (Lionsgate, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.99). Based on the memoir by Piper Kerman, this second season of the Emmy-winning Netflix prison dramedy series stars Taylor Schilling as Piper Chapman, along with Kate Mulgrew and Jason Biggs.



Rogue: The Complete Second Season (Entertainment One, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). Produced by DirecTV, this 2014 second season follows San Francisco FBI task force handler Grace Travis (Thandie Newton).

Welcome to Sweden (Entertainment One, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98). This Swedish sitcom about a NYC accountant (Greg Kinnear) who moves to his girlfriend's home country costars Illeana Douglas, Patrick Duffy, and Lena Olin.

May 26

Hello Ladies: The Complete Series (HBO, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.98). Stephen Merchant stars as an English nerd transplanted to L.A. in this 2013 first season of the HBO comedy series, which also features Nate Torrence and Christine Woods.



Hill Street Blues: Season Five (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$34.95). This 1984-85 fifth season of creator Steven Bochco's iconic police drama features guest appearances by Tim Robbins and Forest Whitaker.

Major Crimes: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98). Starring Mary McDonnell as an L.A. police captain, this 2014-15 third season of the TNT legal drama spin-off from *The Closer* features guest appearances by Jon Tenney, Tom Berenger, and Malcolm-Jamal Warner.



The Nanny: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 19 discs, \$149.99). Fran Drescher stars as a wacky nanny for a wealthy family in this 1993-99 sitcom that also features Charles Shaughnessy, Daniel Davis, and Nicholle Tom.

Ray Donovan: Season Two (Showtime, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). Liev Schreiber stars as a Hollywood law firm fixer in this 2014 sophomore season of the Showtime drama costarring Elliott Gould, Hank Azaria, and Sheryl Lee Ralph.

Welcome Back, Kotter: The Complete Third Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.95). Creator/star Gabe Kaplan's life is the basis for this 1977-78 penultimate third season of the Emmy-nominated sitcom, also starring John Travolta, Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs, and Ron Palillo.

June 2

Bonanza: The Official Eighth Season (Paramount, DVD: 9 discs, \$69.98). This 1966-67 eighth season of the long-running Western adventure series set on the Ponderosa ranch stars Lorne Greene, Dan Blocker, and Michael Landon.

Falling Skies: The Complete Fourth Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). The Second Massachusetts resistance group may return to old stomping grounds in this 2014 penultimate fourth season of the TNT-aired sci-fi drama series starring Noah Wyle and Moon Bloodgood.

Justified: The Complete Final Season (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$55.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$65.99). This 2015 sixth and last season ends the Kentucky-set Peabody Award-winning neo-Western series starring Timothy Olyphant in an Emmy-winning role as a U.S. marshal.



Last of the Summer Wine: Vintage 2004 (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.98). A group of elderly friends (Keith Clifford, Peter Sallis, and Frank Thornton) continue their antics in the Yorkshire Dales in this 2004 25th season of the long-running British sitcom.

Miss Marple, Volume 3 (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98). Starring Joan Hickson as Agatha Christie's iconic sleuth, this compilation of remastered high-definition mysteries includes "At Bertram's Hotel," "Sleeping Murder," "A Caribbean Mystery," and "Nemesis."

New Worlds (Acorn, DVD or Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99 each). The North American colonies in the 1680s provide the setting for this four-part 2014 miniseries starring Jamie Dornan, Freya Mavor, Joe Dempsie, Eve Best, and Jeremy Northam.

Parks and Recreation: Season Seven—The Farewell Season (Universal, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98). This 2015 seventh and final season of the comedy series, which closes by jumping into the future to explore the lives of government employee characters, stars Amy Poehler, Chris Pratt, Rashida Jones, and Rob Lowe.



Pretty Little Liars: The Complete Fifth Season (Warner, DVD: 6 discs, \$59.98). Picking up right after the previous season finale shooting, this 2014-15 fifth season stars Troian Bellisario, Lucy Hale, and Tyler Blackburn.

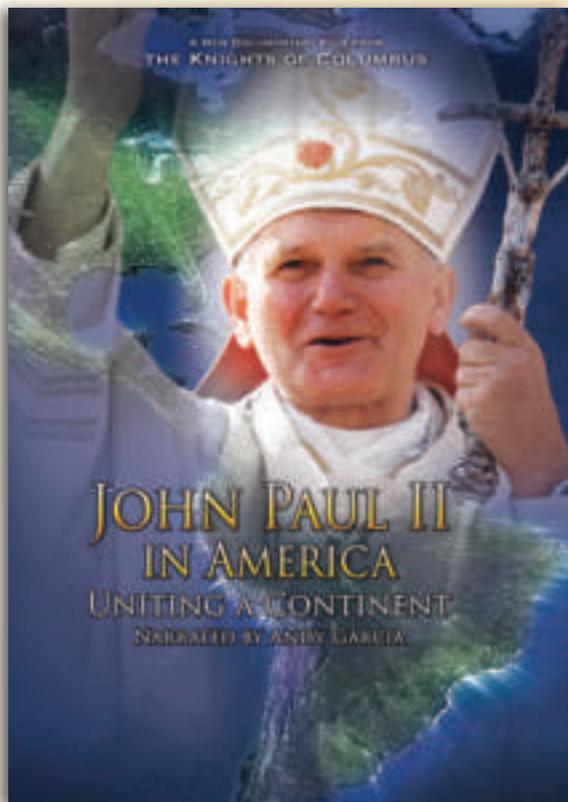
Rectify: The Complete Second Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Marking the first original series from SundanceTV, this 2014 second season following a former death row inmate (Aden Young) who returns to his hometown also features Abigail Spencer and Hal Holbrook.



Rizzoli & Isles: The Complete Fifth Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). The titular odd couple Boston detectives (Angie Harmon, Sasha Alexander) are back in this 2014-15 fifth season of the TNT drama series.

Top Gear: The Complete Season 22 (BBC, DVD: 4 discs, \$19.98). This 2015 22nd season of the popular British auto apprecia-

New Releases from JANSON MEDIA



The papacy of St. John Paul II left an indelible mark on the American continent. Driven by his singular conviction of a “United American Continent” under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe, his papal travels from Argentina to Alaska generated massive crowds, shaped an entire generation, and ultimately changed the course of history.

Long celebrated for his role in the fall of communism in eastern Europe, John Paul’s crusade for human rights and religious freedom also transformed the West. This film explores the Pope’s pivotal role in the fall of dictatorships in Chile, Haiti, Paraguay and Brazil. From celebrations of World Youth Days with millions to pastoral visits to the favelas of Brazil; from his historic 1998 visit to Cuba to his tireless defense of workers rights and indigenous peoples — *John Paul II in America* captures the raw emotions and spontaneous thrills of this remarkable pontificate. The DVD includes both the English version and the Spanish version, *Juan Pablo II en América: Uniendo a un Continente*.



**NARRATED BY ANDY GARCIA
IN BOTH ENGLISH & SPANISH**

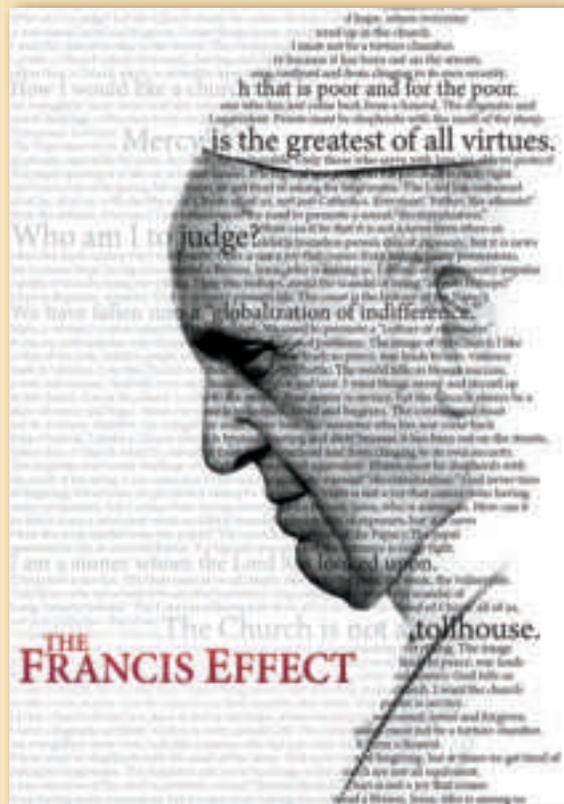
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“Revealing.”

– Peter Mansbridge, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

“Insightful.”

– Catherine Pepinster, The Tablet



“A masterfully forward-looking panorama of where Francis wants to take the church.”

– Philip Pulella, Reuters



The Francis Effect takes a critical and in-depth look at how one man has quickly changed the face of Catholicism at a moment when no one really expected it. Pope Benedict XVI’s announcement that he would be the first pope to resign in more than seven hundred years sent shock waves through the Catholic Church and raised serious questions about its future direction. One month later, after only five ballots, the Cardinals elected the serene and unassuming Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires as the 266th pope. The newest “Bishop of Rome” would take the name Francis, and from the moment he appeared on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, he won the hearts of the people. With characteristic humility, simplicity and closeness to the poor, he has initiated a fundamental reform of the Vatican’s government, challenged a “globalization of indifference,” and became the most talked about person in the world.

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tion series features guest appearances by Nicholas Hoult, Henry Cavill, Will Smith, and Gillian Anderson.

June 9

The Facts of Life: Season Six (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). Mrs. Garrett (Charlotte Rae) and her girls' school charges continue their teen escapades in this 1984-85 sixth season of the sitcom starring Nancy McKeon and Kim Fields.

Hart to Hart: The Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.98). Sophisticated crime-solving couple Jonathan and Jennifer Hart (Robert Wagner, Stefanie Powers) bring their adventures to a close in this 1983-84 fifth and final season, featuring guest appearances by Dorothy Lamour and Martina Navratilova.

The Last Ship: The Complete First Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). A naval destroyer crew works to find a cure for an apocalyptic virus in the 2014 debut season of this TNT drama series—based on the novel by William Brinkley—that stars Eric Dane, Rhona Mitra, and Adam Baldwin.



Teen Wolf: Season 4 (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). This 2014 fourth season of the MTV-aired drama series features friends (Tyler Posey, Dylan O'Brien, Holland Roden) who must balance high school problems with shadowy supernatural situations.

Transporter—The Series: The Complete Second Season (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.98). Spun-off from Luc Besson's action feature film series, this 2014-15 sophomore season of the high-octane drama stars Chris Vance as an enigmatic courier-for-hire who partners up with an ex-agent (Violante Placido).

June 16

The Bold Ones—The Senator: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). Starring Hal Holbrook in an Emmy-winning role, this 1970-71 dramatic series following an intelligent senator (part of the rotating *Bold Ones* series) features appearances by Ed Binns and Burgess Meredith.



The Driver (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Produced by BBC One, this three-part 2014 serial drama centering on a ne'er-do-well taxi driver (David Morrissey) who takes up with criminals also stars Ian Hart, Colm Meaney, and Darren Morfitt.

The Newsroom: The Complete Third Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Created by Aaron Sorkin, this 2014 third and final season of the HBO series spotlighting the staff at a political network stars Jeff Daniels, Emily Mortimer, Dev Patel, and Sam Waterston.

Two and a Half Men: The Complete Twelfth and Final Season (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). This 2014-15 12th and final season of the popular sitcom features a series finale with guest appearances by Arnold Schwarzenegger, John Stamos, and Christian Slater.

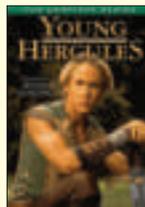


June 23

The Campbells: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 12 discs, \$59.98). A Scottish doctor (Malcolm Stoddard) and his kids emigrate to Canada in this 1986-90 1830s-set family series.

Ripper Street: Season Three (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.98). Matthew Macfadyen, Jerome Flynn, and Adam Rothenberg star in the 2014 third season of this BBC One period drama set after the Jack the Ripper killings.

Young Hercules: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$29.95). Aired on the Fox Kids Network, this 1998-99 spin-off from *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* stars Ryan Gosling as the titular warrior in training.



June 30

A Place to Call Home: Season 2 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Set in New South Wales after the Second World War, this 2014 sophomore season of the rural melodrama series follows a woman (Marta Dusseldorp) who returns home after two decades and butts heads with a rich family.

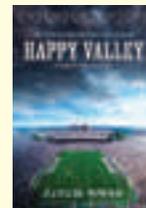
Looking Ahead

Slated for July is the second season of

Witches of the East End, the third season of **WKRP in Cincinnati**, the eighth and final season of **Barney Miller**, a two-part adaptation of **The Dovekeepers**, and the HBO docudrama **The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst**. Slated for August is the fifth season of **The Walking Dead**.

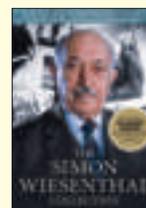
Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Happy Valley (Music Box, DVD: \$29.95). Filmmaker Amir Bar-Lev's documentary details the sexual-abuse scandal that rocked the campus of Pennsylvania State University in November 2011, leading to the firing of Joe Paterno—one of the most successful college football coaches in history—and life imprisonment for convicted perpetrator Jerry Sandusky. DVD extras include an interview with the director.



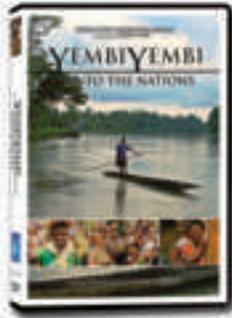
Raising Renee (Passion River [avail. from www.midwesttape.com], DVD: \$59.98). Oscar-nominated filmmakers Jeanne Jordan and Steven Ascher's powerful documentary (*VL-11/12* ★★★1/2) follows artist Beverly McIver and her family for six years while McIver struggles to fulfill her promise to take care of her mentally disabled sister Renee following their mother's death.

The Simon Wiesenthal Collection (Cinedigm, DVD: 11 discs, \$49.98). Produced by the center that is named for Austrian writer and Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, this collection includes two Oscar-winning documentaries—1982's *Genocide* and 1997's *The Long Way Home* (*VL-1/98* ★★★1/2)—as well as nine other films on the legacy of the Holocaust, including *Unlikely Heroes* (*VL-7/05* ★★★1/2) and *The Prime Ministers*.



The Way Things Go (Icarus Films, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98). Newly restored, this 1987 documentary from Swiss artists and filmmakers Peter Fischli and David Weiss looks at the duo's Rube Goldberg-like assemblage of common household items, which viewers see interacting in a chaotic chain reaction of self-destruction. Also newly available on DVD for \$24.98 is **Disorder**, from filmmaker Huang Weikai.

Compelling True Stories from Vision Video



YembiYembi: Unto the Nations

This moving documentary tells the story of an American family's journey from a comfortable life in San Diego into groundbreaking missionary work with an isolated tribal group in Papua New Guinea. Follow them as they prepare for this epic adventure and witness how they adjusted to a culture so different from their own. Their work in literacy education, Bible translation, and more brought transformation to the culture. Experience the joyous celebration as the YembiYembis receive the complete Bible in their own language. Documentary, 30 minutes.

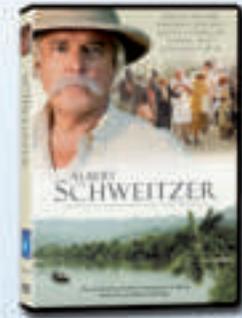
DVD - #501605D, \$12.99, UPC 7 27985 01605 4



Reunion

Reunion is an engaging personal story of loss and redemption told by the people who lived it. When Kim was a high school senior, she became pregnant by her boyfriend, Duane. While the couple would one day marry, they were not ready for that commitment at the time, nor were they ready to take up the responsibility of raising a child. So, they made the heartwrenching decision to place their daughter for adoption. Twenty-five years later, Kim and Duane reunited with their daughter, SaraAnn. Learn about their emotional journey and see how these two families were brought together through adoption. Documentary, 55 minutes.

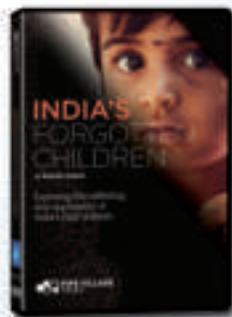
DVD - #501607D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01607 8



Albert Schweitzer

It is 1949, the early years of the Cold War. Physician, theologian, and humanitarian, Albert Schweitzer, has become one of the most admired men in the world, thanks to his philosophy of Reverence for Life, which he lives out in his hospital in Lambarene, West Africa. When he is urged by Albert Einstein to speak out against the hydrogen bomb tests, U.S. national security agencies consider this a denunciation of Western politics. A smear campaign is launched to discredit the physician's reputation and silence him. Starring Jeroen Krabbe and Golden Globe winner, Barbara Hershey as Helene Schweitzer. Drama, 114 minutes.

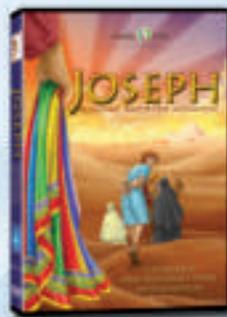
DVD - #501633D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01633 7



India's Forgotten Children

India's Forgotten Children exposes widespread trafficking, persecution, and oppression among the children and young people of India's 300 million strong Dalit community. Meticulously researched, this documentary portrays the everyday lives of these forgotten children of India, whose painful predicament rarely reaches the headlines. Through interviews of Dalit children and expert analysis from Indian commentators and human rights advocates, the charting of these disturbing stories is vividly portrayed. Documentary, 58 minutes.

DVD - #501624D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01624 5



Joseph: Beloved Son, Rejected Slave, Exalted Ruler

The thrilling Biblical story of Joseph is told in this high quality 3-D animated feature film for children ages 5 and up. Young Joseph is a dreamer, indulged by his father and resented by his older brothers, who soon sell him into slavery without their father's knowledge. Now captive in Egypt, Joseph experiences humiliation, hardship, and imprisonment. But his faith and his gift for interpreting dreams soon lead him to an exalted position in the kingdom. When his brothers come calling for help, Joseph responds in a surprising way. Animated, 90 minutes.

DVD - #501579D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01579 8



Going on Vocation: Exploring Work as It Was Meant to Be

Do you spend most of your time at a job that seems to have no purpose or meaning? Do you work just so you can pay the bills? Do you work for a difficult boss or with toxic people? Work is essential to life, so why is it so hard? This two-part series combines personal stories of ordinary people at work with expert insight and advice to help you discover that vocation is about much more than your paid job. This series will challenge you to look at work in a whole new way. Documentary, two 52-minute programs.

DVD - #501630D, \$24.99, UPC 7 27985 01630 6



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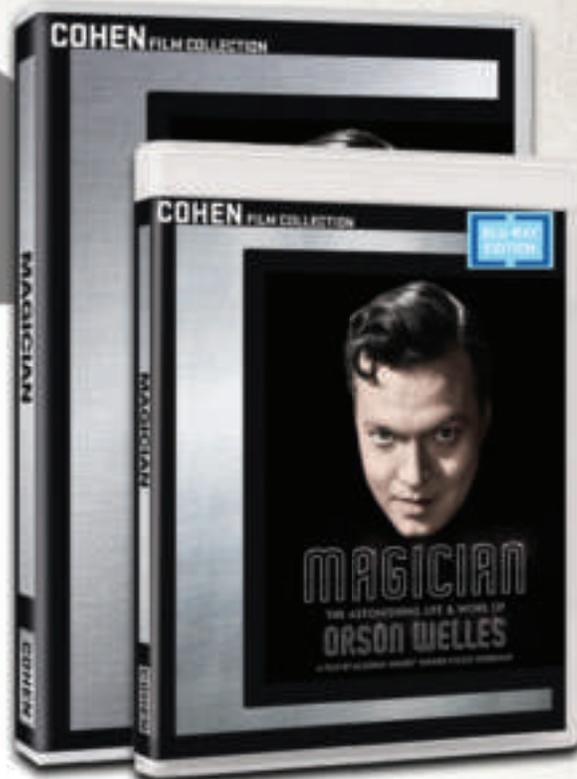
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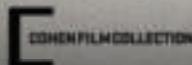


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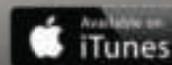
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- A rediscovered classic by the master of suspense, fully restored in 4K in collaboration with the British Film Institute from an archival picture negative.
- In this dark period drama, a young woman discovers her uncle heads a gang of ship-wreckers and murderers under the secret patronage of the local squire, wickedly played by Charles Laughton. Her efforts to stop their wicked ways leads her down a path filled with murder and betrayal.

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"MCIVER IS A PURE, EFFERVESCENT DELIGHT!"

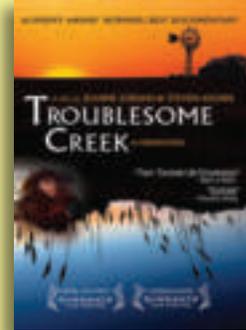
- *Slant Magazine*

HBO Documentary *Raising Renee* is about artist Beverly McIver and the promise she made to her mother that she would take care of her older sister Renee, who is mentally disabled. The promise comes due just as Beverly's career is blasting off. Directed by Oscar nominees Jeanne Jordan and Steven Ascher and filmed over 6 years, the film is filled with drama, humor and unexpected twists as it explores race, disability, the transformative power of art, and the tenacity of family bonds.



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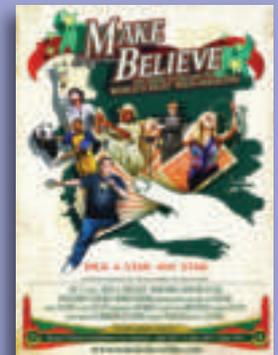
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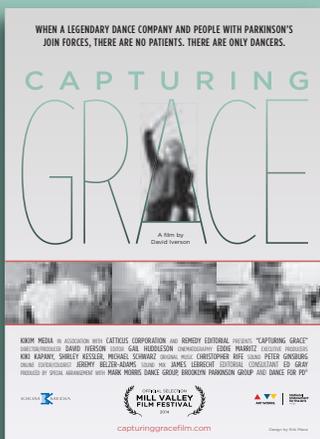
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CAPTURING GRACE

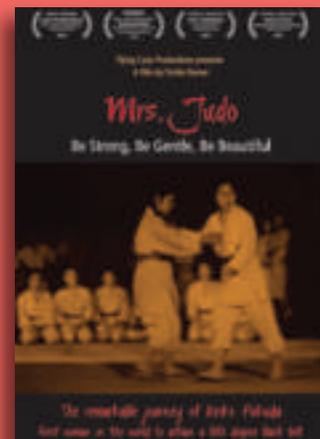
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"A GROUNDBREAKING AND INSPIRATIONAL STORY" - *San Francisco State University*

Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful documents the life-long journey of Keiko Fukuda's decision to defy thousands of years of tradition, choose her own path, and become the only woman in history to attain judo's pinnacle of 10th degree black belt.

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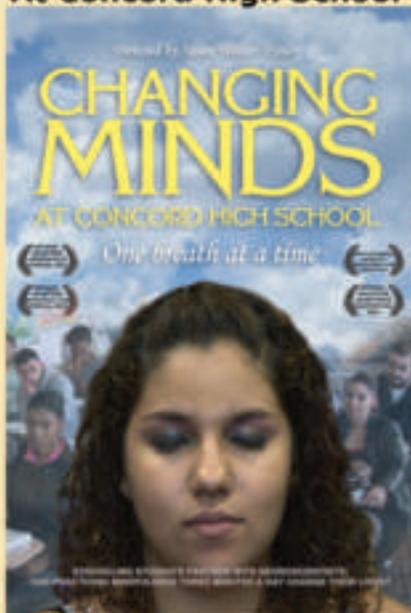


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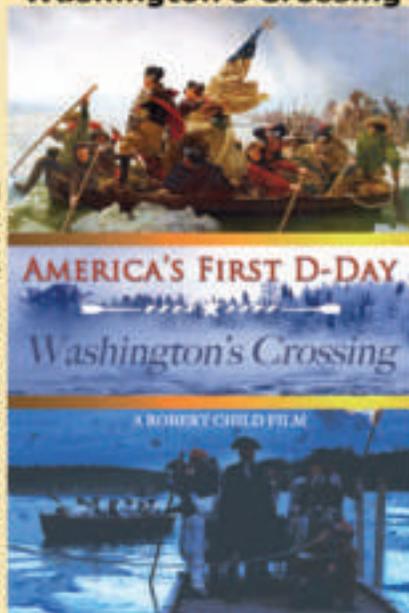
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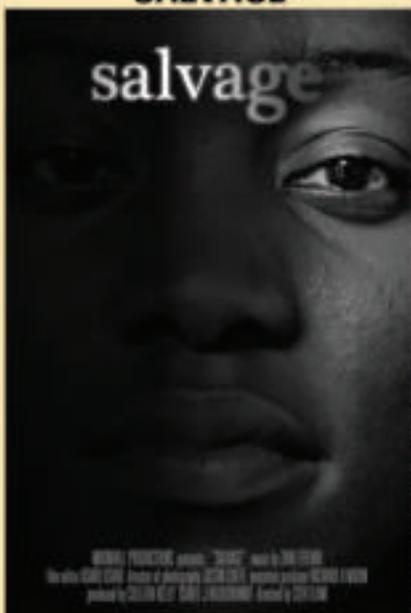
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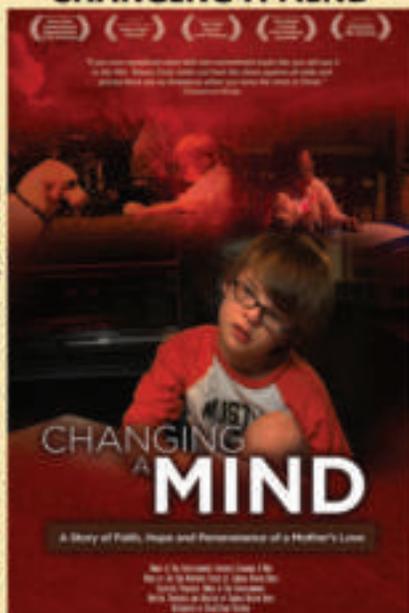
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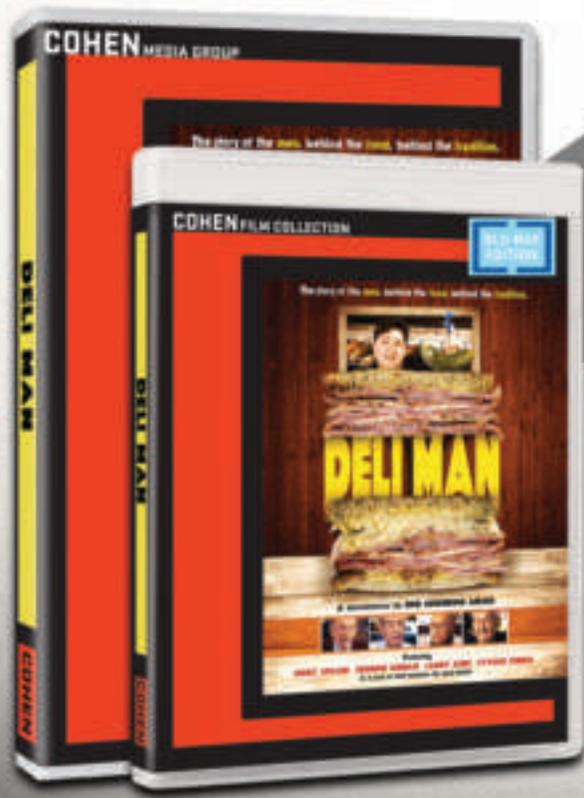
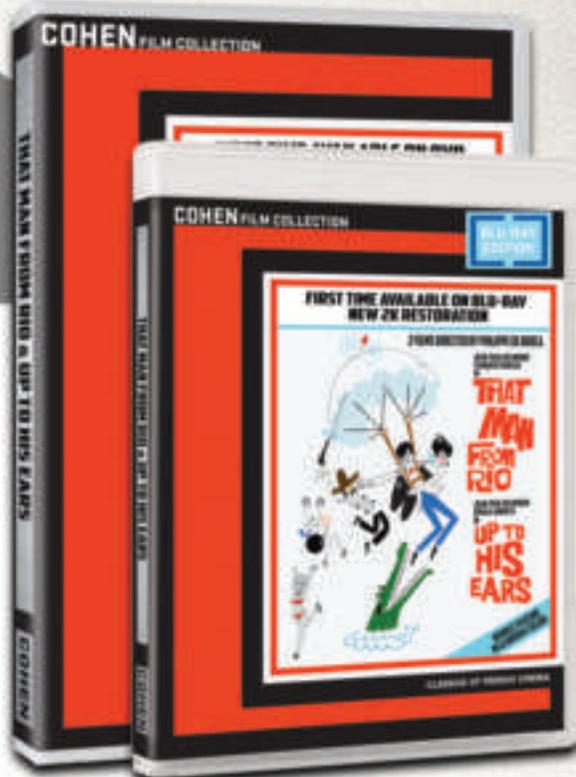


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**STREET DATE:
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- First time available on DVD and Blu-Ray / New 2K Restoration
- Director Philippe de Broca (King Of Hearts, On Guard) and actor Jean-Paul Belmondo's (Breathless) most successful collaborations. THAT MAN FROM RIO was a riotous cut above the James Bond spoofs of the day and UP TO HIS EARS, it's follow-up, notched up the action even higher.

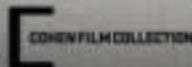


**STREET DATE:
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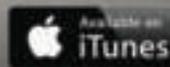
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- Jewish culture reflects the heart of a vital ethnic history. As that culture continue to shift and adapt alongside mainstream America, delicatessen food – as its name suggests – remains a beloved communal delicacy.
- Features appearances by Jerry Stiller, Larry King and Ziggy Gruber
- In Houston, Texas, third-generation deli man Ziggy Gruber has built arguably the finest delicatessen restaurant in the U.S. His story – augmented by the stories of iconic delis such as Katz's, 2nd Avenue Deli, Nate 'n Al, Carnegie, and the Stage – embodies a tradition indelibly linked to its savory, nostalgic foods.

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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

American Sniper ★★1/2

Warner, 132 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$44.95, May 19



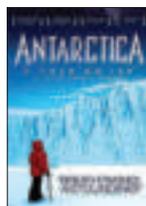
Oscar-winning filmmaker Clint Eastwood's Best Picture-nominated film serves up a sad, somber tribute to the late Chris Kyle, a Navy SEAL acclaimed for being the most deadly sharpshooter in U.S. military history. Set in Iraq, the opening scene is riveting, with Kyle (Oscar-nominee Bradley Cooper) having to decide whether to shoot a woman and a young boy (the same scene is revisited midway through the story). Much of the film is conventional biography: where Kyle came from (Texas), how he met his wife (played by Sienna Miller), and why he nobly embarked on four tours of duty. This last decision stemmed from Kyle's father's dictum that the world is divided into three types: sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs. Devoted to God, country, and family (in that order), Kyle envisioned himself as a sheepdog, protecting others, while his expertise earned him the nickname "The Legend." But when he eventually returned home, after eliminating the Syrian-born marksman who was terrorizing U.S. troops, Kyle suffered post-traumatic stress, like many other soldiers. Based on Kyle's autobiography, this is a respectful examination of what compelled Kyle to fight, the toll that brutality and violence took on his soul, and what it cost him to recover his humanity after nearly a decade at war. But despite being fact-based, the film is not only predictable but also recalls themes better explored in Kathryn Bigelow's Oscar-winning *The Hurt Locker*. Given the film's box office popularity and Oscar attention, however, this is recommended, overall. (S. Granger)

Antarctica: A Year On Ice ★★1/2

Music Box, 92 min., PG, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

The extraordinary beauty and resident

mysteries of Antarctica are both a lure and a trap (of sorts), as viewers learn in this exquisite, eye-opening documentary. Largely filmed at an American research station at the bottom of the world (with visits to a few other bases occupied by Russia, South Africa, New Zealand, etc.), *Antarctica: A Year On Ice* focuses on the relationship between the people who are working in this extreme environment and the strange land in which they function. Filmmaker and renowned nature photographer Anthony Powell captures incredible scenes of mountainous ice, snow, wind, and a sky that will feature constant sunlight for one part of the year and unremitting darkness during another. Animals, green lights undulating overhead, whiteouts, and seas of stars are all common sights in Antarctica, where the people can experience loneliness, homesickness, boredom, and the occasional feeling of humility at being in such a wondrous place. Powell films his subjects at work and play, sometimes blowing off steam in unique, college-prank ways, as he explores the pluses and minuses of life on this still-pristine continent. A gorgeous and meditative documentary, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain ★★

Revolver, 96 min., in English & Hindi w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.98



Indian filmmaker Ravi Kumar pulls off a difficult task here, recreating the 1984 leak of methyl isocyanate at the American-owned Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, which killed at least 10,000 people and injured many more. Kumar starts this complex, culturally sensitive tale at a point prior to the catastrophe, when the plant was constantly on the brink of lethal accidents, yet no one dared mention it. *Bhopal* features several characters whose priorities offer differing perspectives on the real-life events, including a hard-pressed working man (Rajpal Yadav) who lands a job at the chemical factory in time to keep his family from starving (and serve as host for his sister's wedding). Also on hand are a pair of journalists (Kal Penn, Mischa Barton) who are digging into lax oversight by Union Carbide, and a visiting American executive (Martin Sheen) who is trying to keep everybody happy despite problems. *Bhopal* is a technical marvel given the simple effects that Kumar uses to illustrate the disaster, which made many people very sick very rapidly. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Big Eyes ★★★

Anchor Bay, 109 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.99



Do you remember those kitschy "big-eyed waif" paintings that were popular in the early 1960s? They were created by an artist named Keane—and the stranger-than-fiction backstory is fascinating. Imperious Walter Keane (Christoph Waltz) was a master of merchandising, commercializing his wide-eyed, innocent kid portraits—but he didn't actually paint them; his wife Margaret (Amy Adams) did, setting up a colossal lie that fooled the entire art world. Leaving her first abusive husband, Margaret fled with her young daughter Jane to San Francisco, where she sold charcoal portraits for a dollar or two at outdoor art fairs. Then she met insistently charming Walter, who told her he studied in Paris, and chided her: "You undervalue yourself." After they married, fast-talking Walter manipulated his naïve, gullible wife into allowing him to sell her work under his name, claiming that they could never achieve fame and fortune unless she hid the truth that she was the artist. Insecure and isolated, Margaret eventually left Walter, moving to Honolulu, where Jehovah's Witnesses encouraged her to expose the fraud and take Walter to court. In this dramedy, director Tim Burton uses Walter's megalomaniacal dominance and Margaret's submissiveness to represent gender barriers that were still mostly prevalent in that era. Adams sensitively captures Margaret's timidity, reticence, and complicity in her own victimization, while Waltz exudes frenzied exuberance and smug persuasiveness. Danny Huston narrates as *San Francisco Examiner* columnist Dick Nolan, while Terence Stamp plays *New York Times* art critic John Canaday. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Bird People ★★★

MPI, 128 min., in French & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98



The title for Pascale Ferran's drama refers to those who spend much of their time in business flights from one location to the next. One member of this flock is Gary Newman (Josh Charles), a Silicon Valley engineer who arrives at an airport hotel near Paris's Charles de Gaulle Airport for a business meeting before heading off the next day on a flight to Dubai. Except when the next day rolls around, Gary changes his routine drastically: staying in his hotel room, sending word to his employer that he is quitting, and ending his marriage via a video conference. Elsewhere in the hotel, Audrey (Anaïs Demoustier), a somewhat mousy young woman who works as a chambermaid, has her own domestic problems, namely a

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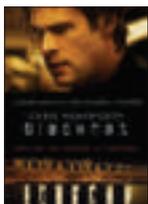
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nagging father whose phone calls become increasingly unpleasant. Gary and Audrey's lives intersect during a series of oddball twists and turns that often seem to be a little too convenient. But this is easily offset by the solid performances by the two leads: Charles wisely avoids making Gary too sympathetic, while Demoustier brings out the eccentricity of Audrey's behavior without becoming too fey. Recommended. (P. Hall)

Blackhat ★1/2

Universal, 134 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, May 12



Michael Mann's cyber-crime thriller is a shallow exercise in Hollywood action tropes, designed to pander to the growing Asian market and visually ugly to boot. *Blackhat* begins with a devastating explosion at a nuclear plant in China, which Captain Chen (Leehom Wang) is assigned to investigate, along with his sister Lien (Tang Wei). The siblings quickly learn that a similar attack on a U.S. reactor was aborted, which leads them to seek American cooperation in identifying the source. Soon the two are collaborating with not only a defense department honcho (Viola Davis) but also Chen's old MIT roommate, roguish Nick Hathaway (Chris Hemsworth), whom they spring from prison in return for his help. Before long the team is busy globetrotting in pursuit of the elusive villain, from Los Angeles to Hong Kong to Jakarta, and finally to Malaysia. *Blackhat* features a labyrinthine plot marked by plenty of chases and shoot-outs, but it grows sillier with each twist. A cybercrime tale can certainly be made compelling, but Mann's mixture of glitzy computer screen imagery and badly staged spy-movie action sequences doesn't do the job. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Brotherhood of Blades

★★★★

Well Go USA, 112 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles or English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



There are faint echoes of *The Three Musketeers* (but with far more gravitas) in Chinese action director Lu Yang's tragic epic. Three young members of the Emperor's feared secret police ("Imperial Assassins")—Shen Lian (Chen Chang), Jianxing (Wang Qianyuan), and Yichuan (Ethan Li)—are sent in pursuit of once-powerful court eunuch and intriguer Wei (Chin Shi Chieh), now out of favor but still retaining many powerful connections (think J. Edgar Hoover in the Ming Dynasty). One of the assassins, who is being blackmailed over his lawless past, succumbs to a bribe to allow Wei to fake his death and flee, a gambit that puts the close-knit trio in

danger, not only from suspicious lords who suspect the truth, but also from the eunuch's fanatical followers, who want to leave no witnesses alive. Ferocious exhibitions of swordplay (marred only by a too-obvious use of CGI for blood spatters) are matched by intricate (and sometimes confusing) plotting and conspiracies in this kinetic film that is sure to appeal to martial-arts action fans. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Cake ★★

Fox, 102 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99



Suffering chronic pain, cranky Claire Bennett (Jennifer Aniston) is first seen as part of a support group, led by Annette (Felicity Huffman), who encourages everyone to express their feelings about the suicide of a fellow member named Nina (Anna Kendrick). "Way to go, Nina," Claire caustically declares—after describing Nina's plunge off a Los Angeles freeway onto the top of a flatbed truck headed for Mexico. Acerbic, pill-popping Claire has anesthetized herself from the world since a tragic automobile accident that scarred her, alienated her husband (Chris Messina), and killed their young son. Wallowing in misery, perpetually scowling Claire is asked if she really wants to recover by her perceptive physical therapist (Mamie Gummer). When Claire starts hallucinating about Nina, she invents a phony pretext to seek out Nina's grieving widower, Roy (Sam Worthington), who's been left with a young son, and a bizarre friendship slowly develops. Deliberately un-glamorous, Aniston epitomizes drab, dowdy, and depressed here, yet Claire is also privileged, living in a stunning hilltop home with a swimming pool where she is devotedly cared for by her long-suffering Mexican housekeeper (Adriana Barraza). Directed by Daniel Barnz, this flaky, underwhelming dramatic confection is an optional purchase, at best. (S. Granger)

Captive ★★

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



The May 2001 kidnapping of guests at the Dos Palmas resort on Palawas Island in the Philippines by the Islamic rebel group Abu Sayyaf is the inspiration for Brillante Mendoza's documentary-style film, which follows the voyage of captors and captives to the island of Basilan, subsequent march to the interior after being attacked by government forces at a hospital, and the final military assault that ended the ordeal in June 2002. Isabelle Huppert stars as French relief worker Therese Bourgoine, the most vocal and confrontational of the hostages. *Captive* clearly aims to make politi-

cal points about the willingness of the army to endanger the hostages while launching ambushes against the rebels, which leads to increasing anger on the part of the captives (particularly after they hear about the 9/11 attack, which they are sure will make people forget about them). But it also effectively portrays the simpleminded brutality of the captors, who are capable of committing horrific acts on a moment's notice. A harrowing film, presented with impressive and disturbing verisimilitude, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Captive ★★

Lionsgate, 112 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99



In *The Sweet Hereafter*, Canadian director Atom Egoyan brilliantly dealt with the subject of parental grief over the loss of a child, a theme he revisits in this exquisitely crafted but slow and dramatically inert melodrama that is as chilly as its snowy locations. Ryan Reynolds stars as Matthew, whose 9-year-old daughter is kidnapped from his car while Matthew briefly goes into a diner. The crime poisons his marriage and leads the detectives assigned to the case to suspect him of selling the child, but the culprit is actually Mika (Kevin Durand, way over-the-top), an ultra-creepy key member of a pedophile ring, who keeps the girl alive for eight years and then uses his technological know-how to torment her parents. Mika also engineers the abduction of one of the cops (Rosario Dawson)—the head of a police task force targeting crimes against children—in an apparent bid to discredit her team. *The Captive* aims for suspense, but lethargic pacing and an overly clinical style drain it of all tension. A disappointing effort from a gifted director, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

The Circle ★★

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

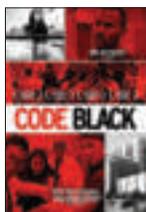


The story of Ernst Oster-tag and Robi Rapp—the first same-sex couple to marry in Switzerland—is a remarkable one. The pair met in 1958 at a ball sponsored by The Circle, a gay organization founded in 1942 by actor Karl Meier that provided supportive camaraderie and also published a magazine for its members. Oster-tag, a closeted instructor at a girls' school working toward his professional certification, was instantly entranced by Rapp, a free-spirited young man performing as a drag entertainer at the ball. They quickly fell in love, and although their relationship was threatened by a series of murders in the Zurich gay community (which would lead the police to put pressure on Meier to share his membership

list and eventually contributed to The Circle's closure), they have remained together up to the present. Filmmaker Stefan Haupt's *The Circle* is a hybrid documentary/drama that combines extended dramatic re-enactments (featuring Matthias Hungerbuhler as Ostertag and Sven Schelker as Rapp), archival footage and stills, and interviews (with the real octogenarian Ostertag and Rapp, among others). An illuminating, often moving film centering on a little-known chapter in gay history, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Code Black ★★★1/2

Music Box, 81 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95



No fictionalized portrayal of hospital emergency rooms can match the raw, visceral power of the real thing as captured here in Ryan McGarry's documentary. McGarry served as a resident-in-training in the ER of the Los Angeles County Hospital, where he worked in the C-Booth (the department where critical cases were treated). *Code Black* paints a remarkable portrait of the dedication of ER professionals, while also capturing the intensity of the problems they confront—such as the titular term used when the ER is at or beyond capacity, a situation

that happens frequently since the county facility is obligated to provide treatment to everyone, regardless of ability to pay. With a waiting room often filled to overflowing, hard choices have to be made about who to treat first. Much of the film is made up of footage of the ER operation, including some wrenchingly graphic episodes of patients being treated by the C-Booth team, but there are also numerous shots of people waiting patiently to be seen, some obviously in great pain. Some patients are directly interviewed, but most of the comments come from residents, nurses, and administrators, who remain devoted to serving the community despite the difficulties. What comes across loud and clear is the incredible idealism of doctors who are struggling to be effective in a healthcare system hobbled by political and economic constraints. *Code Black* offers an insightful and genuinely moving glimpse into the operation of one of America's premier medical facilities. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

A Cry from Within ★1/2

Breaking Glass, 96 min., not rated, DVD: \$21.99

Eric Roberts is peculiarly miscast as Jonathan, a cuddly psychotherapist and family man whose pregnant wife, Cecile (Deborah Twiss, the film's co-director), and two young

kids rent a big house harboring a dark presence. The landlady, Alice (Cathy Moriarty), is a flinty introvert taking care of her bedridden mother; the pair have been living in the house for decades, and Alice decides to rent it out, knowing that she's probably putting Jonathan and his family in danger from a raging specter. What follows is the usual succession of hauntings and possession and nocturnal roaming through the house by whatever "It" is. Director Zachary Miller's *A Cry from Within* sports a crude, amateurish look that at times resorts to such shopworn clichés as point-of-view shots (from the demon's perspective) of racing up stairs and down hallways. All of this is far from scary or meaningful, while Jonathan's occupation invites characters to unburden themselves of pain and grief, making this about as self-conscious as a horror tale can get. Not a necessary purchase. (T. Keogh)



Dinosaur 13 ★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 100 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$19.98

Based on archaeologist Peter Larson's 2002 autobiographical book *Rex Appeal*, filmmaker Todd Douglas Miller's pulse-quickening

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documentary chronicles the legal scandal that followed the electrifying 1990 discovery in South Dakota of the most complete T. rex skeleton yet, by Larson and other maverick excavators of the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research. Affectionately named "Sue" (after Larson's onetime girlfriend), the flesh-eating giant proved only to be an amateur carnivore compared to the lawyers, prosecutors, and other human predators that followed. When the shady landowner (not interviewed) on whose property Sue was found realized that a potential fortune could be made, he invoked Washington D.C. treaties with Lakota Sioux to claim that the bones were stolen U.S. government property. Stormtrooper-like feds and guards rolled into the small, panicked community in paramilitary fashion, seized the fossil, and indicted Larson on a slew of felonies. Would Sue be sold to a super-rich private collector and not a museum or learning institution? Relationships evolve (or go extinct) during this whole affair, and while the ending is ultimately upbeat, the ivory-tower snobs of mainstream academia are faulted for not aiding the Black Hills Institute, whom they regarded as scientific inferiors. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



The Divine Move ★★★

CJ Entertainment, 118 min., in Korean w/English subtitles and English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

The popular Asian board game of Go is central to Jo Bum-Gu's Korean action movie, a revenge tale in which Tae-seok (Jung Woo-sung)—an erstwhile player on the professional circuit—tries to assist his debt-ridden brother in a high-stakes match against a gambling kingpin called Sal-soo, or Killer (Lee Bum-soo). Tae-seok's brother winds up dead and Tae-seok is sent to prison for murder, where he makes friends with a crime lord who trains him in martial arts in return for instruction in Go. Bent on avenging his brother, once he's released Tae-seok assembles (in *Ocean's Eleven* fashion) a crew of expert players—including a blind master called Drinking Jesus—to help him destroy Killer's gang from within before he takes on the boss himself. But Killer has the advantage of two females who excel at the game: a beautiful woman known as Navel and a street urchin with uncanny native talent. While there are plenty of scenes of people clicking the signature black-and-white stones onto the Go board in *The Divine Move*, even more sequences involve torture and prolonged fights, accompanied by great splashes of blood. Stylishly mounted and directed with flair, this will likely appeal to genre fans. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Exposed ★★★

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

New York director Beth B, who has been exploring alternative subcultures since the 1970s, turns her lens on New Burlesque in this documentary featuring explicit nudity. Interviewees' comments about their lives are interwoven with scenes of preparation for going onstage and excerpts from performances. Bunny Love says that her parents don't know what she does, but she thinks that's for the best, since they tried to steer her towards a more conventional career. World Famous BOB thinks of herself as a gay man in drag, since drag performers helped raise her. Although she dresses like a woman, she once preferred a more androgynous look, which reflects her fluid approach to sexual orientation. Rose Wood also feels more comfortable in the space between genders. When he isn't performing as a rabbi, he adopts the role of a woman who reveals herself as a man (after he receives breast implants, the rabbi routine will surely seem even more subversive). Mat Fraser, who has underdeveloped arms, combines humor and politics into his routine (his mother took thalidomide for morning sickness). When he was younger, Mat tried to hide his disability, but now aims to demystify his condition, since he believes that everyone feels different to some degree or another. Other profiled subjects include James "Tigger!" Ferguson, Bambi the Mermaid, Dirty Martini, and Julie Atlas Muz. For all, burlesque has helped them to accept their shape, gender, and sexual orientation, and they hope to inspire a similar sense self-acceptance in their audiences. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Fifty Shades of Grey ★★

Universal, 126 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, May 8

This film adaptation of the provocative bestselling novel by E.L. James revolves around a man's fetishistic desire for kinky sex and a woman's determination to achieve emotional satisfaction. "I don't do romance. My tastes are very singular," dapper Seattle billionaire Christian Grey (Jamie Dornan) explains to naïve, virginal Anastasia Steele (Dakota Johnson), who is looking for love and commitment. The pair meet when Anastasia's journalist roommate (Eloise Mumford) gets sick and Anastasia is dispatched to interview Christian for the college paper. She's clumsy and flustered; he's icily formal and arrogant. But they connect, even though he asks her to sign a nondisclosure agreement over their first glass of wine. Curious about what being a sex slave means, Anastasia willingly enters Christian's



locked "playroom," where she learns about dominance and submission, bondage and discipline, sadism and masochism—in sanitized fashion (this is less shocking than 1972's *Last Tango in Paris*). Even when Anastasia is spanked, blindfolded, and smacked with a riding crop, the soft-core sex scenes are choreographed with stylized sterility. Directed by Sam Taylor-Johnson, *Fifty Shades of Grey* fails for the most basic of reasons: leads Johnson and Dornan have no erotic chemistry, and the supporting cast, which includes Marcia Gay Harden and Jennifer Ehle, is wasted. Optional. (S. Granger)

Focus ★★

Warner, 105 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$44.95, June 2

At an upscale Manhattan hotel, debonair con-man Nicky Spurgeon (Will Smith) challenges conniving Jess Barrett (Margot Robbie), who begs to become his protégé. Later, she eagerly joins Nicky in New Orleans, where his highly-trained team cleverly rob unsuspecting tourists in the French Quarter. Predictably, a romantic relationship develops, but once the job is done it's over. Or is it? Meeting again in Buenos Aires, Nicky hatches a Formula 1 auto car racing scheme that forces him to match wits with a rich Chinese gambler. Saying more would be a spoiler. While it's often fascinating watching Nicky instruct Jess in the art of deception and psychological grift (courtesy of technical advisor Apollo Robbins, a sleight-of-hand artist-turned-security-consultant, whose initial claim to fame came from pickpocketing Jimmy Carter's Secret Service agents), filmmakers Glenn Ficarra and John Requa's episodic, globe-trotting film is uneven and Robbie and Smith share little chemistry. Even with strong support from a cast that includes Gerald McRaney, B.D. Wong, Rodrigo Santoro, and Adrian Martinez, this is no more than a mildly entertaining diversion. Optional. (S. Granger)



Futuro Beach ★★

Strand, 107 min., in German & Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, May 5

Although no one would accuse director Karim Aïnouz of prudishness, *Futuro Beach* is certainly guilty of being mostly plotless. In this rambling, moody, transcontinental gay romance, Brazilian lifeguard Donato (Wagner Moura) finds himself thrust into a hot and heavy relationship with German tourist Konrad (Clemens Schick) after Donato saves the latter from drowning in the waters of the titular Brazilian beach. Very little is offered here in terms of the relationship's foundation, other than mutual animal attraction,



although following this unlikely hookup, Donato decides to leave job and family behind to move to Berlin with Konrad. Graphic, steamy sex scenes between Donato and Konrad are interspersed with the buzzing techno-club nightlife and beautifully atmospheric gray austerity of Berlin's cityscapes. Aïnouz clearly revels in sensual, imagistic poetry, but striking visuals can only take the movie so far. As Donato and Konrad's relationship monotonously progresses, viewers learn more about Donato's past, but it's not enough to add much more dimension to his character, or lift the film out of its plodding, navel-gazing routine. An optional purchase for more adventurous collections. (M. Sandlin)

The Gambler ★★

Paramount, 110 min., R, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Rupert Wyatt's discordant, second-rate remake of the acclaimed 1974 movie starring James Caan sports a fatal flaw: viewers are forced to spend nearly two hours with a spoiled, self-destructive protagonist. By day, Jim Bennett (Mark Wahlberg) works as an English professor at a Southern California



college, spouting Shakespeare and Camus, while berating his students in classes that resemble bizarre group-therapy sessions. At night, Bennett gambles. When the story begins, he's nearly a quarter-million in debt to a Korean mobster (Alvin Ing) with only a week to repay. Every time his rich mother (Jessica Lange) bails him out, Bennett goes back to the blackjack or roulette table, where his compulsive high-stakes "double or nothing" wagering brings him into contact with one crooked loan shark (Michael Kenneth Williams) after another (John Goodman), along with a state tennis champ (Emory Cohen) and a basketball star (Anthony Kelley). Revising director Karel Reisz and screenwriter James Toback's original concept, the story is moved from New York to Los Angeles, where the tone devolves into snarky, superficial slickness. A miscast Wahlberg seems ill-at-ease as an intellectual (he is far more convincing in blue-collar roles), although Brie Larson is solid as Bennett's most gifted student and, eventually, girlfriend. Since she works as a waitress at the casino, she knows about Bennett's addiction, and she astutely observes, "You're one of those guys who started out with no problems at all, and now you have all of them." A weak update, this is an optional purchase. (S. Granger)

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night ★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 99 min., in Farsi w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Iranian-American filmmaker Ana Lily Amirpour's unconventional vampire film is set in a mythical, desolate, Farsi-speaking oil boomtown known as Bad City (or "Badbad"). Hardworking youth Arash (Arash Marandi), whose life is in chaos due to his father's drug habit, crosses paths with the nameless title character—a mystery woman (Sheila Vand) in a flowing dark chador, who is eventually revealed to be a bloodsucking creature that seemingly preys on irresponsible, destructive males. The minimalist plot revolves on a simple question: will Arash be her next meal or the beginning of a serious relationship? Lyle Vincent's striking B&W cinematography recalls early David Lynch, and while horror fans may find it too arty, others will be drawn to this offbeat entry. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Girlhood ★★★1/2

Strand, 112 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Blu-ray: \$32.99, May 19

Director Céline Sciamma's *Girlhood* centers

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on Marieme (Karidja Touré), a black teenager living in the projects in northwest Paris, who works part-time and helps to look after her two younger sisters when her mother and brother are away. Marieme wants to attend high school, but her grades are too low, so a counselor suggests vocational courses (Marieme has already repeated a grade). Feeling down, Marieme hangs out with a girl gang led by Lady (Assa Sylla), as they visit the mall, shoplift, and trade insults with other girls. Under their influence, Marieme learns to stand up for herself, but while it's heartening to see her having fun, it's also distressing to see her making choices that are likely to negatively impact her already-precarious future. To make matter worse, she can't date the boy she likes, because he is friends with her brother. Sciamma portrays Marieme's journey in a style that alternates between realistic and cinematic (including black screens that mark scene transitions). A blue-lit sequence in which the girls sing along to Rihanna's "Diamonds" is a high point, but the good times don't last long. After a series of setbacks, Marieme realizes that she has to make a change if she doesn't want to end up being a cleaning woman like her mother. Sciamma's powerful film illustrates how Marieme's society (which discards the poor) and community (which values men over women) leave her with few options. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Give Me Shelter ★★1/2

Virgil, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

While Katie Cleary and Kristin Rizzo's animal welfare documentary appears to have the best of intentions, the decision to fill *Give Me Shelter* with celebrity activists makes it feel a bit like an infomercial. The film opens with brief statements from speakers that are juxtaposed with quotes from Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, and other famous figures. The rest follows a similar pattern with close-ups of the participants intercut with shot-on-the-fly footage of cruelty and neglect. Some of the material is quite disturbing, especially the images of seal clubbing, dogs who haven't received proper medical care, and abandoned horses en route to slaughter. An inter-title notes that only 26 states regulate puppy mills, and just 15 have restrictions against the sale and ownership of exotic pets, such as tigers and chimpanzees. In their interviews, actors and actresses—including Michael Vartan, Charlotte Ross, and Tippi Hedren (who founded Shambala Big Cat Preserve)—cite other injustices, such as animal testing, the mistreatment of circus elephants, and the displacement of orangutans in Indonesia



due to palm oil production, while additional speakers including rescuers, trainers, and equestrians weigh in. But Cleary and Rizzo cast too wide a net, and some viewers will feel more overwhelmed than motivated to take action, despite the sound advice offered at film's end. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

If You Don't, I Will

★★★

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

In Sophie Fillières' drama, a bottle of champagne that shatters when put in the freezer to quickly chill serves as a metaphor for a marriage coming unglued after years of stress. Mathieu Amalric and Emmanuelle Devos play Pierre and Pomme, a middle-aged pair who have successfully negotiated her ordeal with a benign brain tumor but have become casually dismissive of one another's feelings, leading to a simmering tension that is only exacerbated by Pomme's suspicion that Pierre is having an affair with a younger woman. After they quarrel during a hike through a nearby forest, Pomme refuses to return home, instead deciding to temporarily live in the woods. Scenes of her sleeping outside on a log, interacting with rabbits and deer, and trying to fit in with a group of musicians during a night at a motel—while Pierre pretends to act nonchalant, even though friends (and their son) prod him to go out and search for her—provide dry Gallic humor. A sly, subtle portrait of a relationship that has lost its early passion but not degenerated into outright hostility, this engaging foreign film benefits from nuanced performances by Amalric and Devos who convey as much through gestures as they do in dialogue. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Inherent Vice ★★

Warner, 148 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99

You don't have to be stoned to watch Paul Thomas Anderson's laconic adaptation of Thomas Pynchon's pulpy crime mystery novel, but it would surely help to ease the tedium. Set in (fictional) Gordita Beach in the 1970s, the story revolves around Larry "Doc" Sportello (Joaquin Phoenix), a private eye working out of what looks like a medical office. Whisperingly narrated by a flower child observer (singer/songwriter Joanna Newsom), *Inherent Vice* tells a tale about Doc's ex-girlfriend (Katherine Waterston), who's involved with a rich real-estate developer (Eric Roberts), both of whom mysteriously disappear. Along with the consumption of lots of weed, the film also features the strange Golden Fang (an Indo-



Chinese drug cartel), a coke-snorting dentist (Martin Short), and a presumed dead tenor sax player (Owen Wilson) who is very much alive (but not who you think he is). Dazed Doc's nemesis is a square-jawed, buzz-cut LAPD cop (Josh Brolin) who moonlights as a TV actor and celebrity pitchman. In addition, there are oddball hustlers, dopers, rockers, cultists, and white supremacists, played by Benicio Del Toro, Reese Witherspoon, Jena Malone, and Maya Rudolph, among others. Unfortunately, Anderson never ties together the many bizarre, inconsequential fragments that make up this film (Oscar-nominated for its screenplay!), which might have been more accurately titled *Incoherent Vice*. Optional. (S. Granger)

Irreplaceable ★★1/2

Virgil, 104 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

Presented by faith-based organization Focus on the Family, this documentary was made by Tim Sisarich, a father of five, who is the former head of Focus on the Family's New Zealand branch. Here, Sisarich travels around the world exploring why family no longer holds primacy in many cultures, even though the interviewees share his belief that family should come before everything and is part of God's plan. The participants include authors, historians, philosophers, and representatives of Christian organizations, many of whom feel that the government is now the enemy of the family. Sisarich identifies other contributing factors to the erosion of family life, including abortion, divorce, the sexual revolution, and extramarital sex. Among high school and college students, he refers specifically to hookups. "When you devalue sex," Sisarich states, "you devalue marriage." Broadcaster Michael Medved dismisses the oft-quoted mis-statistic that half of all marriages end in divorce, claiming that the number is closer to 30%, citing U.S. Census Bureau data. With the overriding emphasis on heterosexuality here, gay couples and single parents are absent, although conversations with male and female prisoners, who all lacked strong role models, seem less agenda-driven. Hailed by Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, *Irreplaceable* doesn't seem all that inclusive in a broad Christian sense, but it does raise serious questions while attempting to offer answers from a Christian fundamentalist perspective. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)



Island of Lemurs: Madagascar ★★

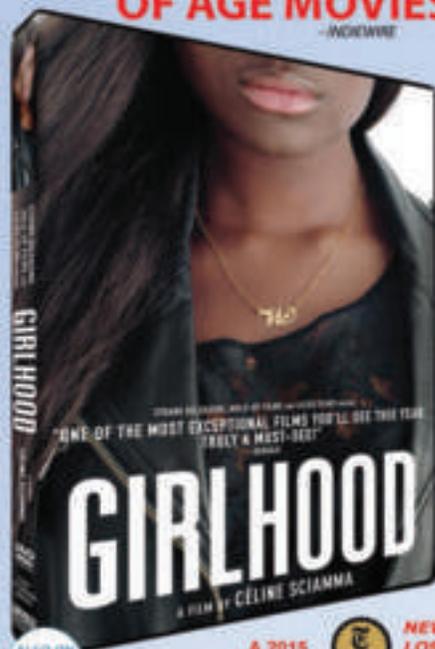
Warner, 41 min., G, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99

Narrated by Morgan Freeman, this nature documentary journeys to the island of Madagascar, home to Earth's oldest primates: lemurs. More than 60 million years ago, the ancestors of these lemurs floated on rafts of

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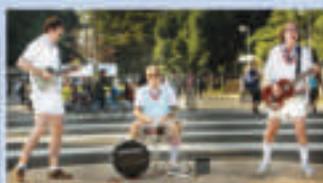
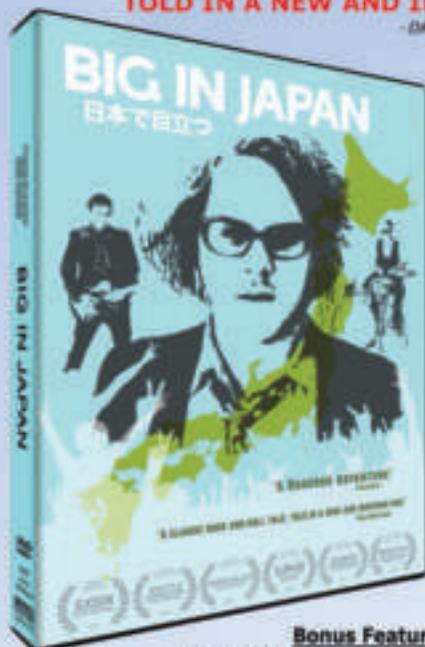
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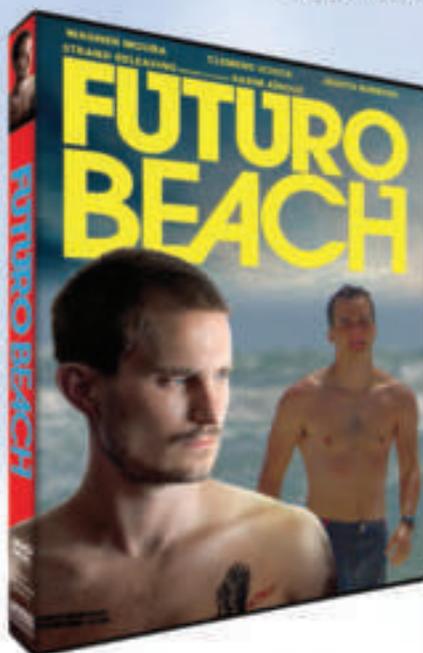
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vegetation from East Africa to Madagascar. With no predators, these primitive primates flourished, developing into a variety of species, some as large as a gorilla. Now, thanks to encroaching civilization, over 90% of their forests have been destroyed. Giant lemurs are extinct, and the types that are left are in danger. Filmmakers David Douglas and Drew Fellman explore the elusive lemurs' exotic habitats, working with primatologist Patricia C. Wright, Professor of Anthropology at Stony Brook University, who describes the animals' female-centric power structure. Dubbed the "Eighth Continent," Madagascar is about the size of Texas, and it sports a varied topography. Established in 1991, Ranomafana National Park features over 100,000 acres of protected rainforest and has become the only indigenous home for many species—including the greater bamboo lemurs, ring-tailed lemurs, and mouse lemurs, the smallest primates in the world (which have the same genetic foundation as humans). While the large Indri lemurs are shrill choral masters, it's the dancing Sifakas that will steal viewers' hearts—playful, arboreal acrobats that leap great distances between trees that are covered in needle-sharp spines. An enchanting and educational film that delivers an ecological message about conservation in a most delightful way, this is recommended. (S. Granger)



Jupiter Ascending ★1/2
Warner, 127 min., PG-13,
DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD
Combo: \$44.95, June 2

Jupiter Jones (Mila Kunis) is a Chicago maid living with her extended Russian family and spending most of her days scrubbing toilets. Suddenly, she discovers that she's heir to an intergalactic empire. Although initially skeptical, Jupiter is literally swept off her feet by hunky, chivalrous Caine (Channing Tatum)—a wolverine space warrior wearing hover boots—who is soaring above the Loop to escape evil forces in hot pursuit. Caine and his cohort Stinger (Sean Bean) convince Jupiter to fight evil aristocrat Balem (Eddie Redmayne) for control of Earth (it seems that Earthlings are, basically, bred as DNA livestock to be "harvested" to prolong the lives of a decadent Royal Family). Jupiter is a "recurrence"—the genetic reincarnation of the previous Queen, the deceased mother of three squabbling siblings (Redmayne, Douglas Booth, and Tuppence Middleton). Flamboyantly directed by Andrew and Lana Wachowski, *Jupiter Ascending* is a ludicrously pulpy lust in space saga, tricked out with elaborately vivid, eye-popping visual effects (there's even a cameo with *Brazil* director Terry Gilliam). Why did Warner Bros. give



the Wachowskis \$175 million to squander on this preposterous cosmic soap opera? For one reason: the pair made the blockbuster *Matrix* trilogy. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

Kabbalah Me ★★★
First Run, 80 min., not rated,
DVD: \$27.95

Feeling a need for spiritual renewal following 9/11, Steven E. Bram—a secular New York Jew about to turn 50—became interested in the tradition of mystical thought known as kabbalah. Here, Bram and co-director Judah Lazarus follow Bram's introduction to the titular esoteric discipline. Bram visits the Hasidic branch of his family (whom he hasn't seen in years), drops in at Manhattan's Kabbalah Center, and participates in large-scale communal gatherings, one at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey and another in Brooklyn. Bram also confers with rabbis in person and through Skype, eventually traveling to Israel, where he visits holy sites and listens to descriptions of kabbalah from scholars and religious teachers. The documentary touches on various elements of kabbalah—including its acceptance of reincarnation and its emphasis on unity with "the one"—but the overall portrait that emerges is of a system of thought allowing for divergent interpretations and viewpoints. Along the way, viewers witness Bram's spiritual journey, which brings him a sense of peace and fulfillment—even as his down-to-earth wife and children (as well as friends and professional colleagues) express concern. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Land of Eb ★★★
Kona Film Group (avail. from
www.thelandofeb.com), 88
min., not rated, DVD: \$9.99

This skillful, touching film stars Jonithen Jackson as Jacob, a middle-aged laborer in one of the more remote communities on a Hawaiian island. Hailing from the Marshall Islands, Jacob and his family were displaced from their original home by the U.S. government for nuclear test purposes. Jacob carries his sense of loss and dislocation with the same silent dignity he uses to keep his stomach cancer a secret from his beloved family. Juggling many balls at once, Jacob is the primary provider for his children and grandchildren, always hustling to find a coffee farm to harvest or junk that he can salvage to sell at a flea market. Co-written and directed by Andrew Williamson, *The Land of Eb* is largely an observational character study of a man going through his daily routines and ordinary adventures, from washing himself to picking coffee beans to sitting through his grandkids' music lessons. Jackson brings an admirable nobility to his performance as Jacob, who maintains control



despite his hardscrabble existence and the ease with which temporary employers can (and will) cheat him of earnings. A powerful story told quietly and with compassion, this engrossing film is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Late Phases: Night of the Lone Wolf ★★★
Dark Sky, 96 min., not rated,
DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

A surprisingly good horror film, *Late Phases* pits a blind ex-serviceman against a ravenous beast stalking the residents of a retirement community when the moon is full. Nick Damici is outstanding as gruff Vietnam vet Ambrose McKinley, a widower who settles into his new house only to be attacked the very first night. Although he is able to fight off the beast, his beloved dog is killed, along with an elderly next-door neighbor. Sensing that the creature is a werewolf, Ambrose begins to prepare for the next encounter in 30 days, ordering some silver bullets for his guns. He also tries to sniff out the identity of the wolfman, eventually honing in on the local priest (Tom Noonan) as the likeliest suspect. The script has a few problems, featuring some old biddies straight out of a sitcom and a couple of beat cops who are as dumb as rocks, and the makeup effects are almost humorously low-tech by today's standards (folks running around in rubber werewolf suits). But while admittedly cheesy, director Adrian Garcia Bogliano's film is also an enjoyable addition to the werewolf genre that is likely to be appreciated by horror fans. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

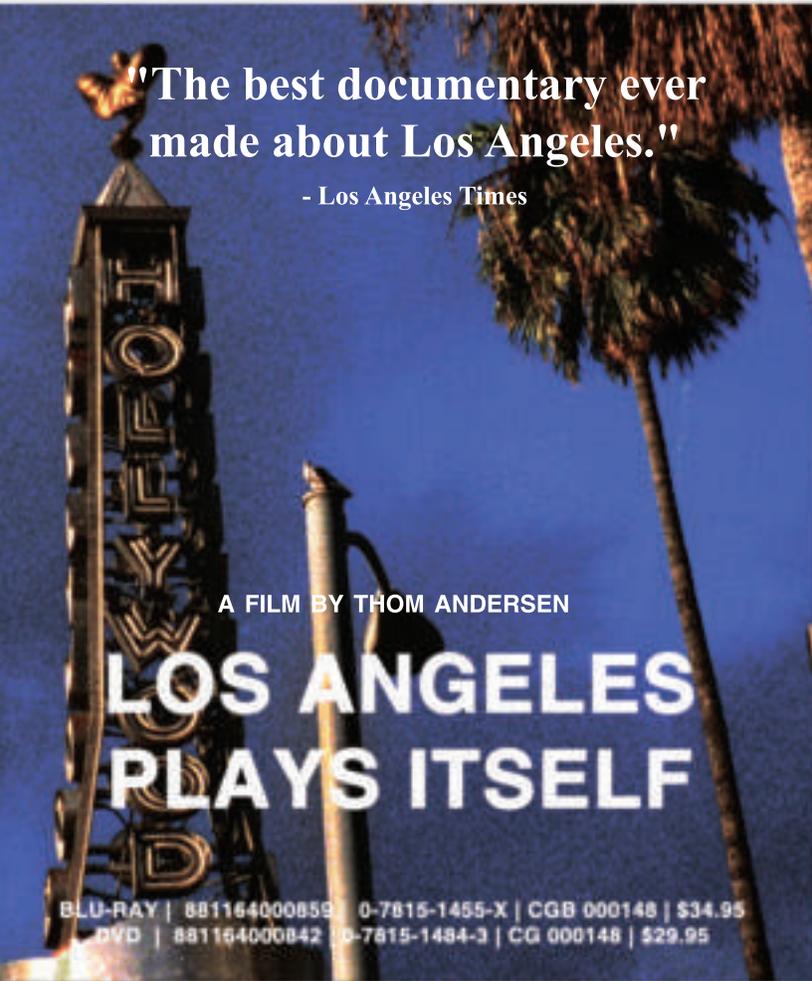


The Liberator ★★★
Cohen, 119 min., R, DVD:
\$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98

Simón Bolívar (1783-1830) is widely revered as the Latin American George Washington, a military leader whose campaigns drove the Spanish from South America and proved instrumental in establishing independence in the northern part of the continent. Adopted by Hugo Chávez (the leftist president of Venezuela) as the patron saint of his anti-U.S. ideology, Bolívar is regarded negatively by some Americans. Alberto Arvelo's biographical film serves up a quasi-hagiographical treatment full of stirring speeches and impressive battle sequences, one that fails to do complete justice to the complexity of Bolívar's career, but nevertheless serves as a welcome introduction to the man. *The Liberator* begins in 1828 with an attempt on Bolívar's life before flashing back to his early education in Europe and return to Venezuela, where the oppressive rule of Spanish authorities leads him to join the resistance movement. The bulk of the narrative covers the years of struggle—including Bolívar's domestic troubles—in detail



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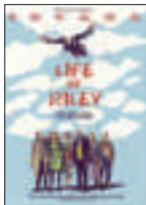
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up through the decisive battle of Boyacá in 1819, although Bolívar's final decade is treated in summary fashion, and some of the political issues—such as Bolívar's sometimes dictatorial inclinations—are glossed over (the introduction of a fictional British money man—played by Danny Huston—into the proceedings also feels rather heavy-handed). Still, Ramírez cuts a striking figure as Bolívar in this sweeping cinematic biopic. Recommended, overall. (F. Swietek)

Life of Riley ★★★

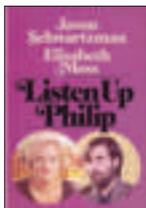
Kino Lorber, 108 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Alain Resnais (1922-2014), the most narratively daring of the directors in the early days of the French New Wave, spent his last two decades melding cinema and theater. *Life of Riley*, Resnais's third adaptation of a work by British playwright Alan Ayckbourn, is a French production set in rural Britain, revolving around rehearsals for a community theater play. The titular Riley, who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer, never appears onscreen, but he still stirs the drama between three couples in this mix of bedroom farce (without the bedrooms), romantic comedy, and self-aware theater that opens on the first day of rehearsals and ends after closing night with a coda that returns to the themes of mortality and emotional connections. Resnais stages the tale on stylized, abstracted sets with hanging strips of heavy cloth used as backdrops, and he draws exaggerated, stage-like performances from his actors—a superb cast that includes French stars Sabine Azéma, Hippolyte Girardot, Sandrine Kiberlain, and André Dussollier—calling attention to the contrivances and conventions. Not always successful, but certainly inventive and playful, Resnais's final film is a minor but also pleasant capstone to a rich career. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Listen Up Philip ★★★

Cinedigm, 109 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98

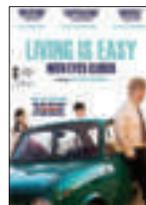


American independent filmmaker Alex Ross Perry's *Listen Up Philip* stars Jason Schwartzman as Philip Lewis Friedman, an abrasive, narcissistic thirtysomething New York novelist who ducks out of promoting his second novel after receiving poor reviews. Friedman finds a mentor in an aging, resentful literary lion named Ike Zimmerman—clearly modeled on Philip Roth (right down to the cover art of the novels seen onscreen)—played by Jonathan Pryce with a smarmy smugness that Friedman appropriates to justify his self-absorbed behavior. Elisabeth Moss costars as Friedman's long-suffering neglected

professional photographer girlfriend, and Krysten Ritter is Ike's daughter, who takes the brunt of her father's withering judgments. Taking place in a modern day New York that—technology aside—feels like it could be from 20, 30, or even 40 years ago, the story draws on the literary tradition of Roth and other celebrated (and decidedly male) American novelists to emphasize the gulf between the self-reflection found in their work and the distinct lack of same in their lives. A novelistic narrator (voiced with perfect feigned objectivity by Eric Bogosian) slips sly commentary into the poetic observations. While these aren't likable characters, there is a savage and brutal humor in the film's exploration of male vanity and artistic entitlement leading to emotional isolation. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed ★★★

Strand, 108 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99



Beatlemania is the driving force behind David Trueba's leisurely seriocomic road movie. Set in 1966, when John Lennon visited Spain to film *How I Won the War*—a trip that inspired "Strawberry Fields Forever," from which the title here is taken—the story focuses on Antonio (Javier Cámara), a good-hearted English teacher who uses the lyrics from Beatles songs as instructional tools. After learning that Lennon is in the country, Antonio decides to drive to the film location site and ask Lennon to have the lyrics printed on the LP albums to help his students. Along the way he picks up two hitchhikers—Belen (Natalia de Molina), a pregnant girl claiming to be visiting her mother, and Juanjo (Francesc Colomer), a 15-year-old who left home when his dad ordered him to get a haircut. The three bond, especially after reaching the seaside town where Lennon's movie is filming. Antonio gets Belen a place to stay and Juanjo a job in the local café, and the pair accompany him in his quest to meet with his idol. Along the way, they naturally confront setbacks and even a local ruffian (which allows for some rather heavy-handed allusions to the repressive Franco regime). A low-key charmer that is buoyed by engaging performances, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Loft ★

Universal, 103 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, May 26



Erik Van Looy's English-language remake of his 2008 Belgian thriller follows five married buddies (played by Karl Urban, James Marsden, Wentworth Miller, Eric Stonestreet, and Matthias Schoe-

naerts) who decide to buy an apartment for extramarital trysts in a new building designed by Urban's character, Vincent. This set-up is presented in an elaborate series of flashbacks while the guys are being interrogated by cops, following the discovery of the butchered body of a woman in the penthouse loft. The men bicker about what should be done and accuse one another of responsibility for the murder. Meanwhile, more flashbacks reveal a whole slew of complications, including an affair by one man with an icy blonde who is the mistress of a crooked city councilman allied to the rich father-in-law of another one of the men. Unfortunately, it's hard to be the least bit interested in any of these cardboard characters, who spout ludicrously flat dialogue in an increasingly artificial plot. One could argue that that the loopy style here is meant to be a parody of the over-plotted puzzle movie, but that would be giving *The Loft* entirely too much credit—it's really just absurdly, almost hilariously terrible, a whodunit featuring characters so repulsive that it ends up being a whocareswhodunit. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Love Me ★★★1/2

Film Movement, 90 min., in Ukrainian, Turkish & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Filmmakers Maryna Er Gorbach and Mehmet Bahadi Er's bluntly realistic and surprisingly unsentimental "lost in translation" love story centers on two randomly intersecting malcontents from clashing ethnic backgrounds—desperate characters both, who are languishing in similar existential purgatories. Cemal (Ushan Çakir) is a ruggedly handsome Turkish twentysomething slated for a traditional marriage arranged by his family, but for now his devious uncle has convinced him to cross into neighboring Ukraine for one last bachelor sex-capade. We're also introduced to icy Ukrainian beauty Sasha (Victoria Spesivtseva), a successful model and one of the few "haves" in a post-Communist wasteland of mostly have nots. In a brief series of deftly shot scenes, viewers learn that Sasha's penthouse life is no bowl of cherries: she's in a relationship with a married man, and is determined to get pregnant (but not by her current paramour). Sasha's so driven, in fact, that she ventures into Kiev's meat-market club scene dead set on having a contraception-free one-night stand. And she randomly chooses Cemal to be her inseminating dupe. Despite the language barrier, Sasha and Cemal eventually find themselves falling into a strange, intuitive kind of love, but their sordid urban adventures collide with some hard-knock underlying truths about ethnic prejudice and social inequality in Eastern Europe, which threaten to snuff out their

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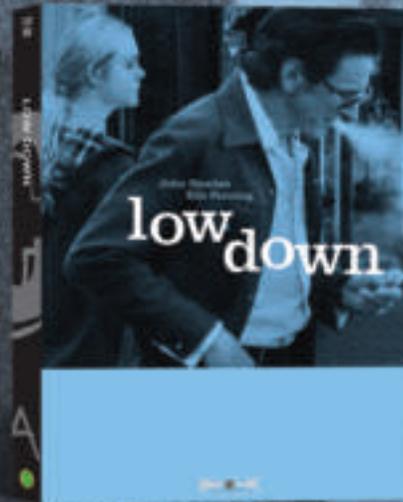
John Hawkes Elle Fanning

low down

“low down is one from the heart.

It's a melancholy, evocative,
beautifully made memory piece...
a story that is as universal as it is personal.”

- Los Angeles Times

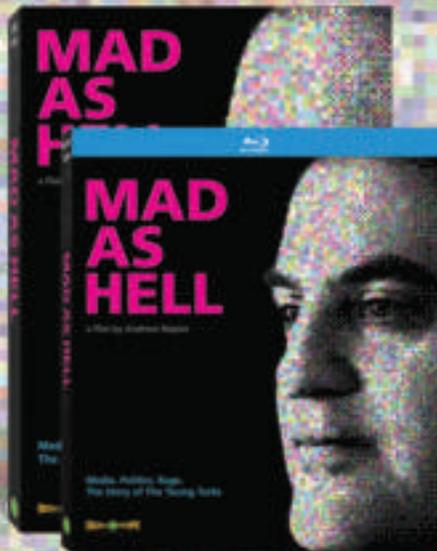


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Based on the memoir by Amy-Jo Albany, **LOW DOWN** is a compassionate, tender look at the complex relationship between Amy-Jo (Fanning) and her father; legendary jazz musician Joe Albany (Hawkes), a man torn between his musical ambition.



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relationship before it can really begin. Highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

Low Down ★★★1/2

Oscilloscope, 114 min., R, DVD: \$34.99

An impressionistic adaptation of Amy-Jo Albany's titular memoir, Jeff Preiss's directorial debut *Low Down* centers on a father and daughter relationship in a jazz milieu. Set in 1974, the action unfolds in a seedy Hollywood motel, where 13-year-old Amy-Jo (Elle Fanning) lives with her divorced father, Joe (John Hawkes), a jazz pianist struggling to stay clean from heroin. More often than not, he fails, but his love for his daughter continues to shine through. Still, when that love isn't enough—when Joe goes off on a bender or winds up in jail—Amy-Jo stays with her no-nonsense grandmother (Glenn Close). On occasion, she receives visits from her mother, Sheila (Lena Headey), but the latter's alcoholism makes her difficult to be around (for all his faults, Joe never stops being a caring father). Amy-Jo has better luck making friends at the motel with a boy with a similar parental situation, and an experimental actor who lives in the furnace room (Peter Dinklage). Joe also hangs out with a combination of drug buddies and jazz musicians, including horn player Hobbes (Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers). From the drugs to the unintentional neglect, this is hardly an ideal life for a kid, but Preiss never judges. *Low Down* doesn't just capture a specific place and time, Sundance award-winning cinematographer Christopher Blauvelt, who shot in 16mm, also makes it look like an actual artifact from the 1970s. More importantly, Hawkes and Fanning create a believable, touching relationship. Highly recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Maps to the Stars ★★★

Universal, 112 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98

David Cronenberg's savage satire of Hollywood mores serves up a coolly analytical dissection of mad desperation among the Beverly Hills set, focusing on two celebrities, one a precocious child actor and the other an actress who fears encroaching middle age. Benjie (Evan Bird) is a 13-year-old kid who is making a sequel to a smash comedy following a stint in rehab, and Havana (Julianne Moore) is an actress anxious to land a role in a remake of a film that originally starred her mother—a legendary beauty who tragically died in a fire. Linking the pair is Benjie's sister, Agatha (Mia Wasikowska), who returns after spending years in an institution—physically scarred from a fire—and is hired as Havana's assistant. Others drawn into the central characters' web include Benjie's parents,



and a limo driver (Robert Pattinson) who wants to act. All are broken people, whose interconnections grow increasingly destructive. Cronenberg oversees everything with a typically detached and clinical eye, and ultimately each viewer will have to decide whether his cold, scientific approach to this cynical portrait of moviedom works. But love it or hate it, *Maps to the Stars* is clearly the work of a filmmaker with a unique vision and a distinctive style. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Monk with a Camera ★★★

Alive Mind, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

The surprising life of Nicholas Vreeland, grandson of renowned fashion tastemaker Diana Vreeland is the subject of this pleasant documentary by filmmakers Guido Santi and Tina Mascara. Combining archival material together with interviews with acquaintances, *Monk with a Camera* sketches Vreeland's early life as a dapper playboy who initially was interested in photography and was able—through the influence of his grandmother—to study with such renowned artists as Irving Penn and Richard Avedon. In the 1970s, however, Vreeland turned to exploring Tibetan Buddhism, and in 1985 joined a monastery in India, which he helped expand by raising funds through sales of his pictures. In 2012, the Dalai Lama named Vreeland abbot of the now-thriving Rato Dratsang monastery—the first Westerner in the history of Tibetan Buddhism to achieve such an honor. While hardly profound, this is still an agreeable, affectionate portrait of an amiable man, which also includes amusingly homespun views of both the Dalai Lama and Vreeland's mentor Khyongla Rinpoche, as well as (almost inevitable) appearances by Richard Gere, whose assessment of Vreeland is predictably rapturous. A genial tribute to a man whose unusual life path might well serve as an inspiration to others, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Overnighters ★★★

Cinedigm, 102 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.95

A North Dakota oil boom enticed unemployed men from across the country to head for the Peace Garden state, leading to population explosion in towns like Williston, which went from under 15,000 to nearly 21,000 people in a mere three years. Accommodations became scarce (many newcomers couldn't afford them anyway), which led Williston's Pastor Jay Reinke of the Concordia Lutheran Church to open his building to some homeless men, and allow others to sleep in cars and RVs in the parking lot. Reinke is the focus



of Jesse Moss's extraordinarily moving and powerful documentary—the story of a man who considers it his moral duty to help the needy men at his church's doorstep. But as *The Overnighters*—shot in 2012-13—shows, Reinke's sentiments were not shared by many locals, causing tension with parishioners and neighbors, which in turn led the town government and local newspaper to investigate the matter with a critical eye. Complicating matters is the fact that many of the over-nighters had serious problems in their past and when confronted could quickly turn on their host, who had his own shortcomings to contend with, along with a secret that eventually threatened both his family and career. Moss's film powerfully captures the desperation felt by both the victims of the country's economic woes and by those who try—not always effectually—to offer them assistance. More importantly, the documentary humanizes issues often presented as abstract statistics. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (F. Swietek)

Remote Area Medical ★★★

Cinedigm, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Remote Area Medical (RAM) was originally devised as a relief effort that enabled volunteer health professionals to administer to isolated communities, such as in jungle rainforests. Lately, however, RAM has become deployed in the U.S. in periodic efforts to speed-treat thousands of working poor, laid-off, and unemployed Americans who are without health insurance. Here, "remote" takes on a bitter, metaphorical meaning, pertaining to distance from opportunities and income as much as geography. Filmmakers Jeff Reichert and Fariyah Zaman follow a three-day RAM operation set up in Bristol, TN (a rural environment, but hardly the rainforest), at the huge Bristol Motor Speedway, where the caregivers process victims of the coal-mining industry, deal with bad teeth (a lot of bad teeth), and treat the rare bobcat bite. Although set in the Volunteer State, the emphasis of this timely documentary is really on the broader state of modern medicine (or lack of access to it). Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



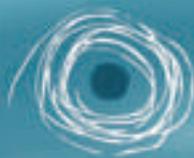
The Rewrite ★★1/2

Image, 107 min., not rated, DVD or Blu-ray: \$29.98

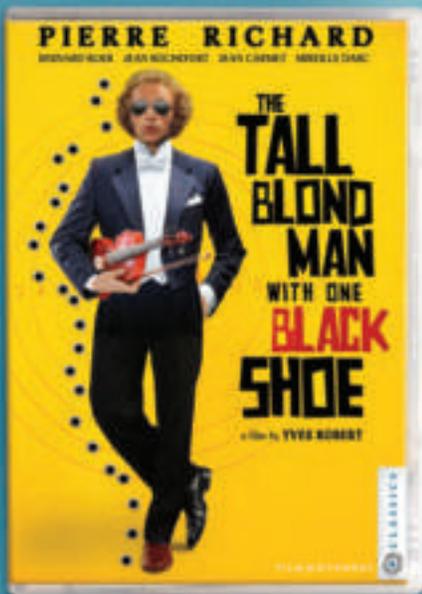
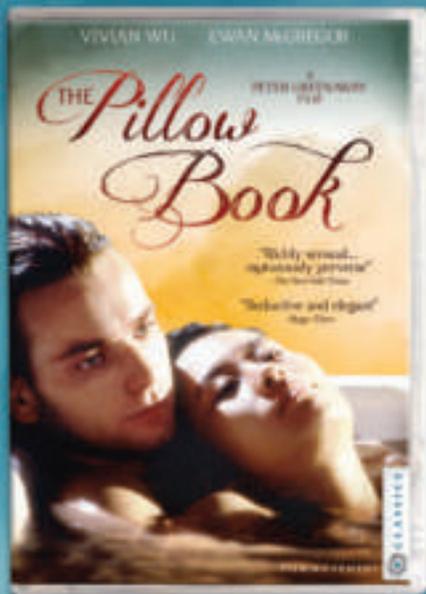
Filmmaker Marc Lawrence's romantic comedy stars Hugh Grant as down-on-his-luck screenwriter Keith Michaels, who pitches ideas to Hollywood execs that are repeatedly shot down. When his agent points out an opening to teach a screenwriting class in upstate New York, the financially strapped



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Michaels agrees to take the gig, even though it means moving cross country and doing something he deprecates. What follows is a predictable elongated sitcom as Michaels finds himself in front of a class of quirky students in a soggy comic riff on films like *Dead Poets Society*. Michaels predictably has an affair with a much younger coed, which riles the rigid ethics committee chair (Allison Janney), although the dean (J.K. Simmons) overlooks his misbehavior with a tolerant smile, suggesting that there is no academic impropriety that he hasn't seen before. And even though he tries to shirk off his job responsibilities, Michaels does actually assist one student in selling a script, and also develops a relationship with Holly (Marisa Tomei), an older student returning to school. An obvious final twist will not only put the stamp on the writer's redemption as a person, but also jumpstart his career. All of this is mildly amusing, thanks primarily to Grant's trademark dithering dialogue delivery, but ultimately this *Rewrite* feels underwritten. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Selma ★★☆☆1/2

Paramount, 128 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, May 5

Ava DuVernay's Best Picture-nominated historical drama about the voting-rights

struggle during 1965 begins with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (David Oyelowo) receiving the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, after which he meets with President Lyndon B. Johnson (Tom Wilkinson), urging him to support passage of a national Voting Rights Act. To underscore the need for change, Dr. King and his Southern Christian Leadership advisors travel to Selma, AL, in March 1965, for a peaceful, non-violent protest, and then boldly march 50 miles from Selma to the state's capital of Montgomery. Stressing that raising white America's consciousness is as crucial as organizing black communities, King outlines his three principles of protest: "Negotiate, demonstrate, resist." Hideous brutality erupts, with opposition coming not only from Sheriff Jim Clark (Tim Houston) and his posse on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, but also Alabama's Gov. George Wallace (Tim Roth). Determined to discourage King by monitoring his movements and disrupting his marriage, J. Edgar Hoover (Dylan Baker) leaks secret FBI recordings of King's adulterous liaisons. Co-producer Oprah Winfrey cameos here as an elderly churchwoman unable to register to vote. Oyelowo's powerful, provocative portrayal is electrifying,



aply reflecting King's oratorical cadence and canny political strategy. Although plagued by controversy over the depiction of President Johnson, this is an inspiring and impassioned film that delivers King's reverberating and sadly still necessary message of perseverance against racism. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

Serena ★★

Magnolia, 109 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, June 9

Danish director Susanne Bier's adaptation of Ron Rash's pulpy novel seems to have been aiming for a star-laden 1940s-style romantic tragedy, but the result is a major misfire (which sat on the shelf for nearly three years before being released). Set during the early years of the Great Depression, the story centers on George Pemberton (Bradley Cooper), who runs a lumber business in North Carolina's Great Smoky Mountains. Although his partner frets over financial setbacks, as well as an effort spearheaded by the local sheriff to have the region declared a national park, George fritters much of his time away hunting panthers with a mystical mountain-man as his guide. George also impulsively weds Serena (Jennifer Lawrence),



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the ravishing blonde survivor of a Colorado logging disaster, but their marriage proves a troubled match as Serena becomes unhinged over George's relationship with his former mistress, who gives birth to George's son while Serena's pregnancy results in a miscarriage. After moseying along at a funereal pace for an hour, the film suddenly lurches into violent melodrama, as Serena plans to take vengeance against the other woman and her child. Lawrence and Cooper fail to recapture the spark they exhibited in *Silver Linings Playbook* in this inert, stodgy, and unconvincing effort. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Seventh Son ★★1/2

Universal, 102 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, May 26



Loosely derived from the first two books in Joseph Delaney's YA fantasy series *The Last Spook's Apprentice*—set in the north of England during medieval times—*Seventh Son* stars Ben Barnes as Tom, a young man who yearns to leave the family farm in search of excitement. Apprenticed to Gregory (Jeff Bridges), a so-called Spook whose job is to hunt down and destroy evil creatures, the pair take on Malkin (Julianne Moore), Queen of Witches, who recently escaped from her underground prison through the influence of the Blood Moon, a centennial phenomenon that lends her special powers—including the ability to change into a dragon. Malkin has a passel of helpers who are also shape-shifters—turning into a leopard, a bear, and another dragon. The feeble plot consists of some perfunctory training sequences before Tom and drunken old coot Gregory set off in pursuit of Malkin on a quest that is complicated by the intervention of the beauteous daughter of the witch's devoted assistant, who turns Tom's head as he and Gregory wend their way through a series of tiresome adventures. Another series in which story plays second fiddle to CGI effects, this is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Song of the Sea

★★★★1/2

Universal, 94 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98



Filmmaker Tomm Moore's Oscar-nominated *Song of the Sea* casts an enchanting spell, serving up a lovely hand-drawn rejoinder to the recent overwhelming trend toward CGI-animated movies. Drawing on Celtic myth, the story centers on 10-year-old Ben (voiced by David Rawle)—son of a lighthouse keeper (Brendan Gleeson)—who blames his still-speechless 6-year-old sister,

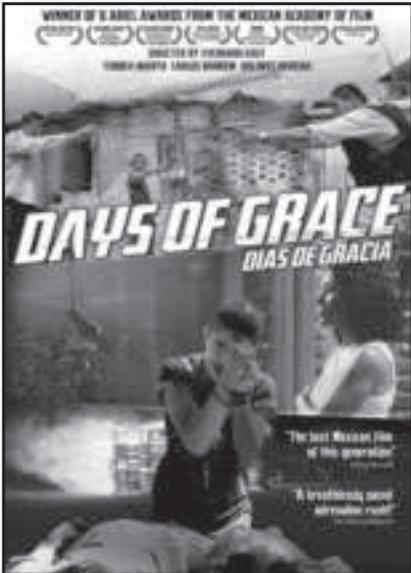
Saoirse, for the death of their mother, after the latter disappeared into the ocean just as she was giving birth. Taken by their grandmother to live in the city, the children attempt to return home, an odyssey that results in encounters with magical beings, including fairies who recognize Saoirse as a selkie, i.e., a creature who lives as a seal in the sea but is transformed into a human on land. Saoirse may turn out to be instrumental in liberating fairies who have been turned to stone by an evil witch—a destiny that Ben must help his sister fulfill. Boasting beautiful imagery, accompanied by a lovely Celtic-inspired music score, this wondrous family film is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Song One ★★1/2

Cinedigm, 86 min., PG-13, DVD: \$14.95, Blu-ray: \$19.98

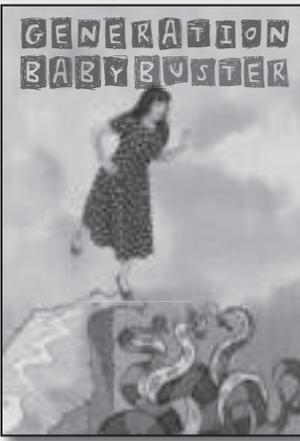


Kate Barker-Froyland's directorial debut is a contemplative, heart-on-its-sleeve affair that marks a change of pace for Anne Hathaway following blockbusters such as *Les Misérables* and *Interstellar*. Although Barker-Froyland fills the film with music, Hathaway's Franny is more of a listener than a musician. After her younger brother, Henry, a subway busker, ends up in a coma following a traffic accident, Franny returns to Brooklyn from Morocco, where she's been working on her doctorate



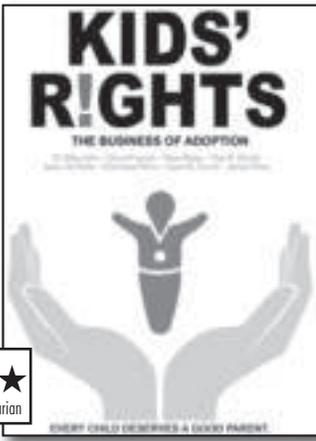
Corruption, kidnapping, and vigilante justice fuel the explosive debut by filmmaker Everardo Gout. The lives of an idealistic cop, a tough street kid, and a suburban housewife converge against the backdrop of consecutive World Cup tournaments, when all eyes turn to watch and the streets are left unguarded.

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★★★★
Video Librarian

Generation Baby Buster is a documentary feature that explores why so many women are just saying no to procreation. Armed with insight from those who write and think about the current state of affairs for mothers, the director confronts her own ambivalence towards children and motherhood and offers up some baby food-for-thought to a new generation of women: the baby busters.

DVD \$19.95 / PPR \$150 / UPC 881394120426

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in anthropology. Going through Henry's belongings, she notices the name of British troubadour James Forester (Johnny Flynn). Forester happens to be performing in town that week, so she introduces herself after a show, and Forester later turns up at Henry's hospital room, although it's hard to tell if he's more interested in his unconscious young fan or said fan's attractive sister. When Franny isn't by Henry's bedside talking to him about his favorite things and places, she hangs out with her mother (Mary Steenburgen) and Forester, who plans to leave for England in a few days. Before film's end, one of these storylines will reach resolution, while the other will not. Produced by Jonathan Demme, *Song One* is a small film that while often laudable also still feels fairly inconsequential. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water

★★★1/2

Paramount, 92 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, June 2



Following on the success of 2004's *The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie*, the colorful characters in Stephen Hillenburg's popular TV 'toon series embark on a new animated/live-action adventure. Under the sea in Bikini Bottom, squeezable SpongeBob (voiced by Tom Kenny) and his purple starfish pal Patrick (Bill Fagerbakke) once again foil an attempt by their scheming, one-eyed nemesis, Plankton (Doug Lawrence), to steal stingy Mr. Krabs's (Clancy Brown) secret formula for succulent Krabby Patties to save his own Chum Bucket eatery from bankruptcy. Suddenly, the precious recipe for the delicious delicacy disappears from the Krusty Krab's vault! Pandemonium reigns until the rival restaurateurs join forces on a perilous mission. SpongeBob, Patrick, Mr. Krabs, and Plankton, along with the curmudgeonly cashier Squidward Tentacles (Rodger Bumpass) and savvy squirrel Sandy Cheeks (Carolyn Lawrence), travel to the surface to track down the villainous pirate Burger Beard (a live-action Antonio Banderas), who has transformed his ship into a food truck. Visual gags abound: Bubbles the hyper-intelligent dolphin (Matt Berry) shoots lasers out of his blowhole, while SpongeBob and Patrick take a spin in a cotton-candy machine, emerging on a crazed sugar high. And there are plenty of puns: Mr. Krabs commands, "Release the condiments!" and SpongeBob replies, "With relish!" Directors Paul Tibbitt and Mike Mitchell's sequel is an uneven mix of silly and surreal, but will likely be appreciated by fans. Optional. (S. Granger)

Still Alice ★★★

Sony, 101 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99, May 12

Oscar-winner Julianne Moore elevates

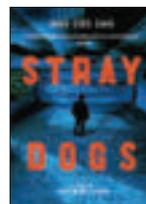
this eloquent chronicle of a woman's descent into the oblivion of Alzheimer's, serving up a restrained, delicately nuanced yet intense performance. Brilliant, beautiful, 50-year-old Alice Howland (Moore) is a renowned linguistics professor at Columbia University who suddenly starts to forget words during a lecture. A dedicated jogger, Alice next becomes confused about where she is, even though she's in the familiar environs of Central Park. When her neurologist diagnoses early-onset Alzheimer's, Alice's supportive husband, John (Alec Baldwin), a research physician, is at her side. In further testing, Alice learns that her particular strain is genetic, a discovery that profoundly affects her grown children: Lydia (Kristen Stewart), Anna (Kate Bosworth), and Tom (Hunter Parrish). Determined to end her life when her deterioration becomes unbearable, Alice systematically hoards sleeping pills, hiding them in a bureau drawer and posting a reminder on her computer. Alice's daily struggle to stay connected propels the film's tragic, character-driven plot. Working from neuroscientist Lisa Genova's 2007 novel, directors Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland's compassionate, enlightening film was made for less than \$5 million and shot over 23 days in Manhattan. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Stray Dogs ★★★1/2

Cinema Guild, 140 min., in Cantonese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

The films of Taiwan director Tsai Ming-Liang have become successively more abstract. *Stray Dogs*, centering on a homeless family trying to survive on the fringes of Taipei, is his most austere and minimalist to date—a film with almost no traditional narrative, presented in a style that has been alternately described as hypnotic and pretentious. The director's longtime star and muse, Lee Kang-sheng, is a single father who toils as a human signpost, implacably holding an ad at a busy intersection, while his two children wander the streets by day. Also on hand is a woman (played by three different actresses) who crosses paths with the children but whose tenuous connection is never explained. Clearly about isolation and disconnection, *Stray Dogs* is also a grueling watch (over two hours of soul-crushing scenes) with almost no dialogue, comprised of long takes (up to 10 minutes) in busy urban locations and empty abandoned spaces using a static camera that studies the characters with such unblinking focus that the slightest movement takes on heightened dramatic dimensions. Winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival, *Stray Dogs* has earned both rave



reviews and frustrated dismissals. Tsai is a major international director but this is a difficult film that will challenge all but the most dedicated fans of art movies and slow cinema. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

This Ain't No Mouse Music! ★★★

Kino Lorber, 92 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Filmmakers Chris Simon and Maureen Gosling profile Arhoolie Records founder Chris Strachwitz in this music-saturated documentary, accompanying Strachwitz to Texas, Louisiana, and Appalachia to visit his favorite artists. For 60 years, the German immigrant has been releasing records from roots musicians of all kinds, from blues to zydeco. Richard Thompson believes that many of these artists would still be unknown if not for Strachwitz, who says he's just putting out music that he enjoys. Since Strachwitz prefers to record musicians where they perform, he has never owned a studio. "It ain't no mouse music," he explains, citing his catch-all term for inauthentic sounds. In 1960, Strachwitz released his first album, Mance Lipscomb's *Texas Sharecropper and Songster* (according to Ry Cooder, he would sell records out of the back of his car). Other notable speakers include Bonnie Raitt, Taj Mahal, and Flaco Jiménez. With Strachwitz's help, Lipscomb, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Big Mama Thornton, and others were able to make a living on the folk festival circuit and European tours, opportunities previously unavailable. With the publishing royalties from Country Joe and the Fish's "Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag," Strachwitz also opened Down Home Records in El Cerrito, CA, which houses Arhoolie's offices. For of all his good work, however, Strachwitz can be petulant, and Simon and Gosling capture him here pulling faces when he hears "mouse music" and chastising vendors who don't make beverages to his exacting specifications. Still, a well-rounded portrait is always preferable to the sanitized version. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Timbuktu ★★★1/2

Cohen, 97 min., in Arabic & French w/English subtitles, PG-13, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98, June 23

Filmmaker Abderrahmane Sissako's piercingly relevant Oscar-nominated film offers a study of life under the rule of Islamic jihadists. Set in 2012 in the fabled titular city—once a major hub along the African trade route, as well as a byword for a remote, exotic locale—here Timbuktu is an impoverished backwater town taken over by the militant group Ansar Dine as part of its conquest of northern Mali. The



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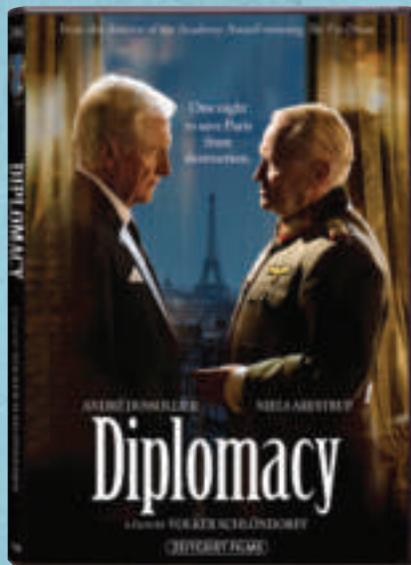
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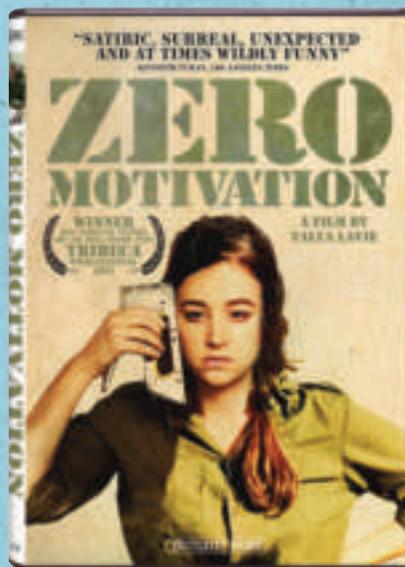
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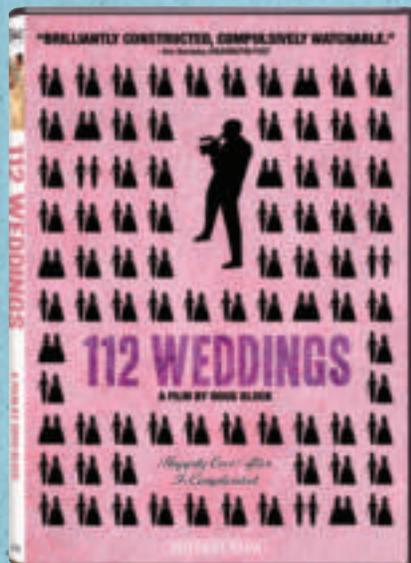
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brusqueness of the gun-toting conquerors is emphasized as they bark out directives at the locals designed to impose conformity with their idea of Sharia law (women must wear veils and gloves; smoking and soccer are forbidden), while they also systematically destroy cultural artifacts such as masks and wooden statues. The jihadists are led by a man who has no answer when the saintly local imam demands to know where God is in the jihadists' absurd and often brutal treatment of the locals. At the center of the story is one family that is the target of jihadist "justice" when herdsman father Kidane (Ibrahim Ahmed) becomes embroiled in a feud with a local fisherman that results in the latter's death. The cruelty of the ensuing verdict against Kidane is also reflected in the whipping of a woman arrested for singing, and the execution of an adulterous couple. Both courageous and striking, *Timbuktu* delivers a wrenching neorealist portrait of peaceful people suffering under the rule of self-righteous, unthinking fundamentalism. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Tinker Bell and the Legend of the Neverbeast ★★★

Walt Disney, 77 min., G, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$36.99

Disney's popular and critically-acclaimed spin-off franchise starring the beloved fairy from *Peter Pan* returns in this uncharacteristic (in more ways than one) sixth entry in the candy-colored CGI-animated series. To begin with, Tinker Bell (voiced by Mae Whitman) is clearly a secondary character here, with the spotlight shining instead on Fawn (Ginnifer Goodwin), whose animal-loving tendencies sometimes conflict with the aims of Nyx (Rosario Dawson), head of a band of protective scouts who guard Pixie Hollow from dangerous intruders (such as hawks). Knowing that Nyx would nix her plans, Fawn secretly aids a huge strange creature she discovered—somewhat resembling a scarier version of the flying dog-like beast in *The Neverending Story*—which she nicknames "Gruff." Sporting alternately charming and ominous green eyes, Gruff is busy building rock towers to nowhere, which makes no sense—until Nyx gets wind of what's going on and informs Fawn that Gruff is actually the Neverbeast, a creature that returns every millennium to lay Pixie Hollow to waste. Will Fawn, Tink, and their fairy friends follow their hearts or their heads as the time for the Neverbeast's purported destructive rampage draws near? Featuring returning voice cast members including Anjelica Huston, Lucy Liu, Pamela Adlon, and Raven-Symoné, director Steve Loter's film is much darker than any previous Tinker Bell feature, with a *Harry and the Hendersons* vibe that will put a lump in young (and old) viewers' throats. Also includ-

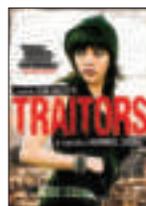


ing catchy tunes performed by KT Tunstall, this is recommended. (R. Pitman)

Traitors ★★★

Film Movement, 83 min., in Arabic, French & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

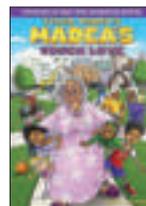
Actor Sean Gullette makes his directorial debut with this riveting tale of a struggling punk rocker in Morocco. Malika (Chaimae Ben Acha) lives at home in Tangier with her parents and younger sister. By day, she works as a telemarketer; by night, she fronts *Traitors*, an all-female punk band. Malika loses her job, but gains a producer, although she still has to find the money to pay for studio time in order to record a demo. Nothing she tries works until she meets Samir (Mourade Zeguendi), a wheelchair-bound kingpin who needs a courier. When Malika finds out that her family faces eviction due to her father's gambling, she accepts Samir's offer to drive into the mountains with two associates, Amal (Soufia Issami) and Omar (Salah Ben Salah), with hashish concealed in the car doors. In private, Amal warns her that the men will never let her leave (Amal has no idea what happened to the previous driver). But when Malika helps out her new colleague with a personal matter, she puts them both at risk. Although it might seem out of character for Malika to lay her life on the line for someone she barely knows, the filmmaker seems to be suggesting that she would prefer exile or death to a life of servitude, which is consistent with the punk worldview. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Tyler Perry's Madea's Tough Love ★★

Lionsgate, 64 min., PG, DVD: \$19.98

Tyler Perry's loud and obnoxious Madea character (featuring playwright and filmmaker Perry in drag as a heavyset elderly woman) gets animated in this film that opens with a live-action bridge in which Madea presses a "Do Not Push" remote button and enters a cartoon world. Immediately, Madea harangues a young brother and sister who zoom past a senior trying to cross the street, which leads the youngsters to respond with a simple request: "Just shut it, old lady." Of course, Madea's special brand of *Tough Love* doesn't allow remarks like this to go unpunished, so she takes off after the kids in a skateboard/shopping cart/property-damaging rampage through the neighborhood, attracting full pursuit by the "po-po." After her arrest, Madea is sentenced—by a "stupid judge" that she calls a "sneaky lil' frog-lookin' toad"—to community service at the local Moms Mabley Youth Center, where she runs across the same brats, who turn



out to be homeless and appeal to Madea's softer side. Also featuring an evil mayoral candidate who wants to destroy the youth center, a gaming competition that Madea coaches the Moms Mabley kids on winning (using the acronym for Passion, Endurance, Empowerment, or P.E.E.), and cameos from Perry characters Aunt Bam and Uncle Joe, this is a coarse, shrug-worthy attempt to cash in on the popular live-action film series. Optional, at best. (J. Williams-Wood)

Vandal ★★1/2

First Run, 84 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Director Héliar Cisterne's *Vandal* illuminates French working-class *banlieue* culture in an age in which these suburban no-go zones are either ignored or maligned by mainstream media. Here, the focus is on lost soul teen youths in Strasbourg whose outlet for self-expression is graffiti art: the film's adolescent protagonist, Chérif (Zinedine Benchenine), a sometimes disillusioned construction apprentice, finds himself caught up in a gang of young "taggers" whose secretive nocturnal activities involve marking up the nearest blank concrete canvas with spray paint. Soon the gang find themselves competing with an unnaturally prolific lone tagger known as "Vandal." Envious of Vandal's feats of artistic derring-do, Chérif's paint-bomber posse obsessively follows Vandal's trail of awe-inspiring graffiti, defacing it with their own crude markings. But trouble erupts when Chérif is caught with his girlfriend in the gang's hideout, severely damaging his reputation within the group. Chérif's attempt to win back the trust of his tagger pals will lead to his participation in a potentially life-ruining misadventure to thwart Vandal. Although it takes a bold look at the young French underclass, it's hard to empathize with Chérif: unlike many underprivileged ghettoized youngsters, he has caring parents and legit job opportunities, but seems too weak to accept work and responsibility and instead engineers his own nihilistic self-destruction. A strong optional purchase. (M. Sandlin)



Watchers of the Sky ★★★1/2

Music Box, 121 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Although "genocide" is a commonplace term, it is also of relatively recent vintage—coined in the 1940s by Raphael Lemkin, a refugee from Nazi-occupied Poland, who lost nearly 50 family members to the Holocaust and spent most of his life trying to persuade the world community to develop mechanisms to prosecute those responsible for such enormities. A substantial portion of Edet Belzberg's fine



Breaking Glass Pictures

COMING SOON TO



WHITE RABBIT



AVAILABLE
MAY 12TH
\$24.99
-SRP

STARRING
SAM TRAMMELL
("True Blood")
BRITT ROBERTSON
(*The Longest Ride*)
NICK KRAUSE
(*Boyhood*)

Harlon Mackey (Nick Krause) has been tormented by visions since his alcoholic father (Sam Trammell) forced him to kill an innocent rabbit while hunting as a boy. Now that Harlon is a bullied high school teen, his undiagnosed mental illness is getting worse. He begins to hear voices, and his imagination encourages him to carry out violent acts as the line between reality and Harlon's imagination begins to blur in this intense dramatic thriller.

MARFA GIRL



AVAILABLE
JUNE 26TH
\$24.99
-SRP

FROM LEGENDARY
DIRECTOR LARRY CLARK
(*Kids, Bully*
Wassup Rockers)

Marfa Girl follows Adam (Adam Mediano), a directionless 16-year-old boy, in the days surrounding his sixteenth birthday. The film details his relationships and interactions with the other inhabitants of the small Texas town, including his 16-year-old girlfriend Inez (Mercedes Maxwell), his 23-year-old neighbor Donna who attempts to seduce him as a sixteenth birthday present, his teacher, and a newly arrived local artist who also seeks to have sex with Adam.

FOLSOM FOREVER

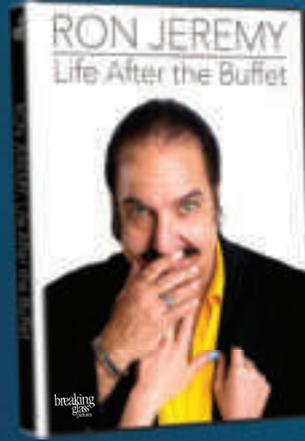


AVAILABLE
JUNE 9TH
\$19.99
-SRP

"Folsom Forever chronicles the ongoing evolution of the biggest outdoor kink fetish event in the world."
-EDGE

In 1984, a scrappy little neighborhood in San Francisco - home to many low-income tenants and the heart of the gay male leather scene - faced destruction from the bulldozers of redevelopment and the AIDS crisis. FOLSOM FOREVER tells the story of how this small street fair grew into the biggest outdoor kink and fetish event in the world, and managed to do a lot of good along the way.

RON JEREMY: LIFE AFTER THE BUFFET



AVAILABLE
MAY 5TH
\$19.99
-SRP

LEGEND.
ICON.
SUPERSTAR.
SURVIVOR.

Ron Jeremy is a cultural icon, known as the King of Porn. Even with his eccentric features, he is a sex guru to millions of fans. Ron Jeremy: Life After the Buffet is an explosive film that exposes Ron, at age 60, in a surprising and very real way. In 2013, Ron made a different kind of headline. Death came knocking at his door like a bolt of lightning when he started experiencing pains in his chest.

ALL YOURS

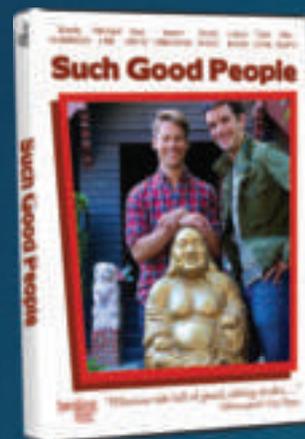


AVAILABLE
MAY 26TH
\$24.99
-SRP

FROM THE ACCLAIMED
DIRECTOR OF
Beyond the Walls

Lucas is a young and penniless Argentine escort who arrives in a small Belgian town to visit Henny, a gay bakery owner who fell in love with him online. Henry buys Lucas a plane ticket to Europe hoping he will sleep with him and help out at his bakery. While Henny and Lucas's ideas about living together clash, Lucas grows closer to his female employee Audrey. He soon finds himself caught in a complicated love triangle with Henry and Audrey.

SUCH GOOD PEOPLE



AVAILABLE
NOW
\$24.99
-SRP

STARRING
RANDY HARRISON ("Queer as Folk")
MICHAEL URIE ("Ugly Betty")

Contemporary screwball comedy about a young gay couple, Michael Urie (Ugly Betty) & Randy Harrison (Queer As Folk), who discover a secret room filled with cash while house-sitting for their wealthy friends, who have unfortunately just died in a car accident while doing charity in Bhutan! After the boys discover wads of cash that the couple will now, obviously, no longer need, mayhem ensues as they deal with jealousy, sibling rivalry, greyhounds, labradoodles, and porpoises!

For more information please contact Richard Ross at ross@bgpics.com

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documentary is devoted to a biography of Lemkin, told through dramatic re-creations, elegant animation, and excerpts from his writings. This material is complemented by testimony concerning recent acts of genocide from four activists who struggle to put Lemkin's principles into practice: Samantha Power, the current U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., who speaks of the massacre at Srebrenica during the Bosnian War; Luis Moreno Ocampo, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, who issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for his military's actions in Darfur; Emmanuel Uwurukundo, a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda now working in refugee camps in Chad; and Benjamin Ferencz, a prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials and lobbyist for action against perpetrators of crimes against humanity. Belzberg's attempt to cover so much results in some details being skimmed over, but overall this is a crisply edited, obviously heartfelt treatment of an important subject, bringing attention to a little-known indefatigable champion of international justice. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Wedding Ringer ★

Sony, 101 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



With his wedding to Gretchen (Kaley Cuoco-Sweeting) drawing near, financially successful tax attorney Doug Harris (Josh Gad) realizes that he has no close friends to be groomsmen. In desperation, Doug turns to Jimmy Callahan (Kevin Hart)—a professional best man—for help. Predictably, the buddy-for-hire plot turns into a bromance, as Jimmy's companionship changes Doug's nerdy life. Director Jeremy Garelick's *The Wedding Ringer* has a simple premise that begs a basic question: namely, how did socially awkward Doug ever win Gretchen's heart? Unable to elicit laughs from contrived jokes about rape and child molestation, Garelick encourages motormouthed comedian Hart to employ profuse profanity and he stages raunchy, degenerate bachelor-party hijinks with a pseudo-Russian stripper who smears peanut butter on Doug's private parts and brings in a beagle as a perverse "service dog." In addition to humiliating Cloris Leachman, the film also wastes the talents of Ken Howard, Mimi Rogers, and Olivia Thirlby. Not recommended. (S. Granger)

Winter Sleep ★★ ★ 1/2

Adapt, 196 min., in Turkish & English w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95, May 5

Weighing in at over three hours, this quietly devastating film by Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan demands patience and attentiveness, but pays off with revelations

about the human condition that are made through probing characterizations and pungent dialogue. A character study that is also the story of a marriage in trouble, *Winter Sleep* centers on Aydin (Haluk Bilginer), owner of a hotel in the remote mountains of Cappadocia. A former actor who is treated as the lord of the region, Aydin lives with his much younger wife, Nihal (Melisa Sözen), and divorced sister, Necla (Demet Akbag), collecting material for a prospective book on Turkish theatre while posing as a self-styled arbiter of taste and propriety as he pens a regular newspaper column commenting scornfully on what he considers lapses of decorum among the locals. The minuscule plot shifts between Aydin's relationship with a local family who have fallen behind on rent payments, his interference in his wife's charitable activities, and the acidulous criticisms of his sister, whose marriage he had a hand in breaking up. Aydin's hotel is named Othello, but the story doesn't follow Shakespeare's play; rather, the reference seems to be about the poison that words can spread—not only Necla and Nihal's biting observations concerning Aydin, but also Aydin's editorial judgments about everyone surrounding him. A remarkable portrait of people trapped by their cultural and emotional baggage in a majestic landscape that emphasizes just how small they actually are, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Woman in Black 2: Angel of Death ★★

Fox, 98 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99



In 2012, when *Harry Potter* actor Daniel Radcliffe chose to play widowed Edwardian solicitor Arthur Kipps, it sparked heightened interest in the psychological horror thriller. Unfortunately, this feeble sequel not only lacks Radcliffe's charismatic presence but also the essential terror factor. During the Nazi bombing of London in 1941, caretakers are charged with escorting a group of children out of the war-torn city and into the supposed safety of the countryside. The group takes refuge inside the eerie, isolated Eel Marsh House, which happens to be haunted by the vengeful, darkly veiled, titular female. Much to the consternation of prim schoolteacher Eve Parkins (Phoebe Fox), the sinister apparition soon becomes obsessed with stalking shy young Edward (Oaklee Pendergast), whose parents were killed in the Blitz. As a result of that trauma, Edward is now mute, unable to scream when the menacing, malevolent spirit appears. Riffing off a 1983 novella by British horror author Susan Hill, director Tom Harper tosses in far too many convoluted

plot points and characters involving the ghostly woman's complicated backstory, a stern headmistress (Helen McCrory), a local doctor (Adrian Rawlins), and fearful RAF pilot Harry Burnstow (Jeremy Irvine), who is struggling with shameful feelings of cowardice. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)

The Wrecking Crew

★★★

Magnolia, 101 min., PG, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, June 16



The backstory to this engaging, informative music documentary is almost as fascinating as the film itself, which began as a tribute by Danny Tedesco to his father Tommy, guitarist in the titular group of Los Angeles session players who anonymously performed on many of the pop music classics of the 1960s and '70s (not to mention iconic TV and movie themes). Tedesco began filming in 1996, interviewing the musicians themselves (including his father, bassist Carol Kaye, and drummer Hal Blaine), the artists they worked with (Glen Campbell, Herb Alpert, Cher, Nancy Sinatra, Brian Wilson, and others), record producers, engineers, and TV hosts (Dick Clark). By 2008, Tedesco had edited together the interviews, archival material, and loads of song snippets, but he couldn't afford to cover the licensing fees for the music, so—aside from some film festival screenings—the documentary remained in limbo for five years, until a Kickstarter campaign raised the needed cash. At the forefront here are reminiscences by the musicians—backed up with song clips—who often appear seated together at a table, which allows them to fill in, or even correct, the stories. What emerges is an entertaining portrait of a group who are pleased that their contribution to American culture is being belatedly recognized. Sure to appeal to fans of the similarly-themed music documentaries *Standing in the Shadows of Motown* and *Muscle Shoals*, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

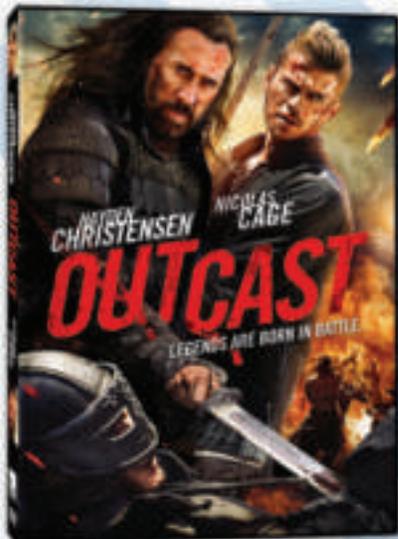
Zombeavers ★★

Freestyle, 76 min., R, DVD: \$14.99, May 19



One doesn't expect great filmmaking from a movie with a title like *Zombeavers*, which features a fun premise: namely, a bunch of beavers who have been zombified by toxic waste launch an attack on three sorority sisters and their boyfriends at an isolated lakeside cabin. Unfortunately, Jordan Rubin's ham-fisted direction undermines any potential for ghoulish fun, with leaden pacing and sloppy execution. While the animatronic beaver puppets are amusingly tacky at first, they quickly wear out their welcome, and the performances by the young cast—saddled

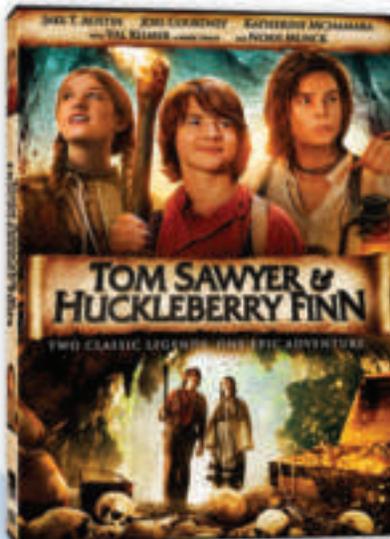
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When the heir of the Imperial throne becomes the target of an assassination by his despised older brother, the young prince must flee the kingdom and seek protection. His only hope for survival is a reluctant war-weary crusader named Jacob, who must overcome his own personal demons and rally the assistance of a mythical outlaw known as The White Ghost. Together they must fight side by side in an epic battle to return the prince to his rightful place on the throne.

OUTCAST - DVD
625828639883 / \$29.99 / ACTION

AVAILABLE ON DVD
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Based on the classic novel "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" comes the newest adaptation of this timeless tale. The story unfolds as Mark Twain (Val Kilmer) narrates his masterpiece and brings his beloved characters to life. Tom Sawyer (Joel Courtney) has nothing but pranks and mischief on his mind, but luckily his fearless friend Huck Finn (Jake T. Austin) loves adventure as much as he does. When the daring duo witness trouble in a graveyard, Tom and Huck are thrown head-first into adventure, putting their courage to the test!

TOM SAWYER & HUCKLEBERRY FINN - DVD
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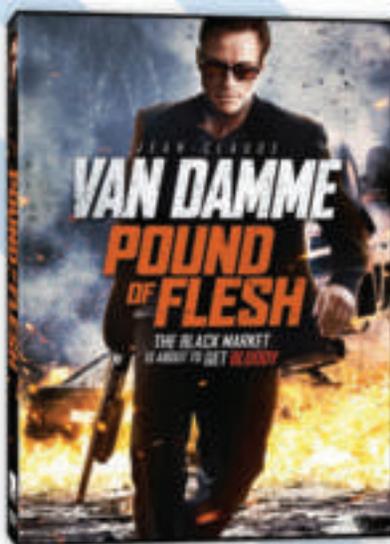
AVAILABLE ON DVD
APRIL 7TH



An 18th century explorer sets out on an epic journey to map the forbidden uncharted lands of Transylvania only to discover its dark secrets and dangerous creatures hidden in a cursed, fantastical forest.

FORBIDDEN EMPIRE - DVD
625828641817 / \$19.99 / FANTASY

AVAILABLE ON DVD
JUNE 30TH



In Asia to donate his kidney to his dying niece, former black-ops agent Deacon awakes the day before the operation to find he is the latest victim of organ theft. Stitched up and pissed-off, Deacon descends from his opulent hotel in search of his stolen kidney and carves a blood-soaked path through the darkest corners of the city. The clock is ticking for his niece and with each step he loses blood.

POUND OF FLESH - DVD
625828641848 / \$29.99 / ACTION

AVAILABLE ON DVD
JUNE 23RD

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with a witless script—range from mediocre to terrible. Only Rex Linn, as a grizzled, cantankerous hunter who assists the college kids, wrings any smiles from this limp material. Compared to other cabin-in-the-woods and animals-gone-wild horror movies, *Zombeavers* is repetitive and tedious (even at 76 minutes), and while it obviously aims for camp cult status, the filmmakers simply don't have the chops (unlike the beavers) to pull it off. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

Classic Films

Aguirre, The Wrath of God ★★★★★

Shout! Factory, 94 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$24.98

Werner Herzog's 1972 breakthrough film is an astounding vision of imperialism run amok in the primitive, savage Eden of 16th-century Peru. Klaus Kinski stars as Don Lope de Aguirre, a mad Spanish conquistador searching for the mythical golden city of El Dorado. Shot entirely on location in the jungles of South America, the imagery is astonishing: dense vegetation layered in mist and fog, broken by a glittering train of armored soldiers and their slaves, the latter bearing thrones carrying improbably dressed and coiffed noble women along trails carved into steep mountains. Herzog's vision truly comes alive in Kinski's feral, furious evocation of a lunatic soldier overcome with delusions of godhood. In fact, the scene of a raving Aguirre reigning over a kingdom of spider monkeys floating downstream on a raft remains one of the greatest images of madness ever captured in cinema. Herzog and Kinski had a volatile relationship but collaborated on some fascinating productions, beginning with this landmark classic (also available on Blu-ray in Shout! Factory's massive *Herzog* boxed set). Extras include audio commentaries, and a stills gallery. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Axmaker)

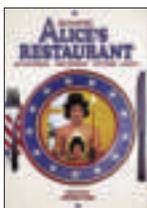


Alice's Restaurant

★★★★★

Olive, 111 min., R, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Arlo Guthrie's epic 1967 musical monologue "Alice's Restaurant Massacre" was a satirical anti-war folk anthem performed at coffee houses and clubs that became a bestselling LP and counterculture phenomenon. Directed and co-written by Arthur Penn (fresh from helming *Bonnie and Clyde*), this 1969 film expands Guthrie's performance piece into a loose, loving, bittersweet portrait of the time, with Guthrie playing himself. The movie follows the basic structure of Guthrie's story-song—his Thanksgiving dinner with friends and com-



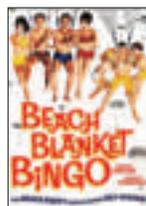
mune leaders Alice and Ray (Pat Quinn and James Broderick), his arrest for littering by Officer William "Obie" Obanhein and court appearance in front of Judge James Hannon (both playing themselves), and his reporting to the induction center after receiving his draft notice—but Penn presents the incidents as stops in a meandering road movie through the culture of the late 1960s. In essence, Penn explores the unraveling of an ideal, a fragile sense of social freedom that becomes confused with irresponsibility and rocked by possessiveness and jealousy. Guthrie is a marvelous performer but a limited actor, and his awkward sweetness and modesty is hardly electric, but his presence suits the easy, intimate nature of the film. One of the most interesting and non-clichéd cinematic portraits of the era, this long-out-of-print classic has been remastered for DVD and its Blu-ray debut. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Beach Blanket Bingo

★★★

Olive, 98 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

This 1965 fourth Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello beach romp adds jumping out of airplanes to the mix, along with a couple of silly subplots that could have been lifted from the sitcoms that director William Asher made between big-screen features. Deborah Walley (star of the second *Gidget* movie) and John Ashley play skydiving instructors Bonnie and Steve, who complicate the love life of wholesome sweethearts Frankie (Avalon) and Dee Dee (Funicello). Linda Evans is Sugar Kane, a fledgling pop singer put through a series of headline-grabbing stunts by a conniving publicist named Bullets (Paul Lynde), and Marta Kristen is Lorelei, a mermaid who falls in love with lovable beach bum Bonehead (Jody McCrea). Harvey Lembeck provides slapstick comic relief as dimwitted cyclist Eric Von Zipper, silent movie legend Buster Keaton is stuck with unfunny gags chasing a buxom girl in a bikini, and Don Rickles performs his insult schtick in a nightclub act aimed at the teenagers. Unfortunately, *Beach Blanket Bingo* serves up routine sight gags and a forgettable collection of songs, making it pale in comparison to the original *Beach Party* and sequel *Muscle Beach Party*, which are more entertaining examples of the short-lived summer-movie phenomenon of the 1960s. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



Black Sunday: The U.S. Release Version

★★★

Kino Lorber, 83 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$19.95

The first great Italian horror film—and directorial debut of Mario Bava—1960's *Black Sunday* became the inspiration for what would evolve into the stylish but violent *giallo* genre of the 1970s. Bava, who trained

as a special effects artist, art director, and cinematographer, creates a rich atmosphere and gorgeous visual canvas for this adaptation of Nikolai Gogol's short story "Viy." Barbara Steele plays a double role as the vengeful witch Asa Vajda, who's burned at the stake, and her guileless descendant, Katia Vajda, who 200 years later unwittingly resurrects her earlier self with a drop of blood. Bava employs gliding camerawork, dramatic lighting, striking compositions, and dark, moody sets cobbled together from limited resources, and his magnificent photography of the weirdly beautiful Steele turned her into an icon. Like many motion pictures of the era, *Black Sunday* appeared in alternate versions created for different countries. The uncut original is available in a fine edition on Blu-ray and DVD from Kino, complete with critical commentary by Bava historian Tim Lucas, and that version is highly recommended. This edition features the U.S. release, re-edited by distributor AIP to cut a few minutes of violence and horror, and set to a score by American composer Lex Baxter. Collectors and completists may be interested in this one, but libraries would be better served with the original Italian cut. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



The Connection

★★★1/2

Oscilloscope, 110 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

In her 1962 debut feature, pioneering American independent filmmaker Shirley Clarke turned an off-Broadway play-within-a-play by Jack Gelber into an innovative cinematic work in which a young director named Jim Dunn (William Redfield) and his cameraman, J. J. Burden (a largely off-screen Roscoe Lee Brown), film a group of heroin junkies and musicians in a New York loft. As they await the arrival of flamboyant drug dealer Cowboy (Carl Lee), the scenes shift between: men delivering alternating soliloquies, a jazz quartet periodically launching into impromptu jams, Dunn—who has never so much as taken a puff of marijuana—spouting off about film theory and authenticity, and the addicts occasionally slipping off to the bathroom to discreetly shoot up. The result is experimental theater meets cinema vérité, enveloped in a self-aware sensibility. The setting never leaves the derelict apartment, but is constantly in motion, and Clarke's editing evokes a rhythm that rises and falls like a sustained piece of music. While not the first American movie to take a serious look at drug use, this is a raw film that initially faced censorship battles due to language that would be considered tame by today's standards. Restored to near pristine condition by Mile-



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"Wonderful, funny and touching film"

David Thomas, The Examiner

"A story filled with rich and complicated characters that jovially mirror those in our own lives."

San Diego Asian Film Festival

David Au's *eat with me* offers a fresh take on the love and food through a deliciously emotional and interpretive story. When Emma moves in with her gay son Elliot, the two are forced to confront their shared lives and learn to communicate — which they do through the vehicle of food. Stars **Shane Dowd, Teddy Chen Culver, Nicole Sullivan (MADtv)** and a surprise moment with **George Takei**.



95 Min / Color / WOL5290D

SRP \$24.95 • UPC 754703764171

Prebook: 4/14/2015 • Street Date: 6/2/2015



SPECIAL JURY MENTION
DIRECTOR MONIKA TREET,
ACTORS CECILSCHEMITZ-CHRIH
AND ALESSA WILMS
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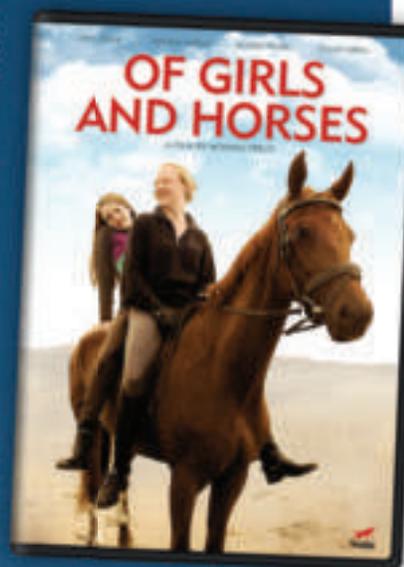
"Subtle and startling"

Alter Class

"A simply stunning coming-of-age story."

Planet London

This beautiful drama from **Monika Treet** deftly unfolds the coming-of-age of rebellious teen Alex, sent away to a horse farm in the country. Alex keeps up her bad girl ways but is gradually enamored with the horses — and with the resident lesbian riding instructor, Nina. As Nina tries to help Alex find purpose and maturity, the arrival of privileged young equestrian Kathy presents new challenges as Alex grapples with her longing for love and connection, *Garner with substance.*



82 Min / Color / WOL5288D

SRP \$24.95 • UPC 754703764157

Prebook: 5/12/2015 • Street Date: 6/30/2015



A poignant depiction of family dynamics and small town life, *Chat and Todd* are estranged gay brothers who grow up in a small town in Central California. While bad boy *Todd* ran off to Los Angeles and is now out and proud, *Chat* stayed at home (and mostly closeted) to run the family store and to care for their dying father. When *Todd* returns home broke and homeless, long-simmering resentments boil to the surface as the brothers confront their differences and similarities.

76 Min / Color / WOL5320D

SRP \$24.95 • UPC 754703764225

Prebook: 5/19/2015 • Street Date: 7/7/2015

"A universal love story that is both refreshingly unsentimental and deeply touching."

The LipTV



A poignant romantic comedy about three twenty-year-olds living in Kentucky, *Robby* (**Michael Welch, *Sailight***) and his life-long best friend *Ricky*, a gorgeous transgender girl, have never dated, fearing the lack of eligible bachelors. *Ricky* considers dating *Francesca*, a beautiful debutante. *Robby* and *Francesca* strike up a friendship, and maybe a little more, which forces *Robby* to face his true feelings for *Ricky*.



95 Min / Color / WOL5298D

SRP \$24.95 • UPC 754703764218

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stone Films, extras include archival footage, interviews, a photo gallery, and bonus songs. Highly recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

Convicts ★★★

Olive, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Esteemed American playwright and Oscar-winning screenwriter Horton Foote adapted his own play for this modest 1991 drama, a coming-of-age story directed by Peter Masterson that is set on a turn-of-the-century Texas plantation. Robert Duvall stars as aging landowner Soll Gautier, a skinflint who uses convict labor on his spread, and Lukas Haas is 13-year-old Horace Robedaux, who is working in the plantation store to earn the money he needs for a headstone for his dead father. But Gautier doesn't part with cash easily (he owes the boy for six months' wages, an obligation that he keeps putting off), and the main story plays out over a long Christmas Eve day as Gautier loses his memory and slips into paranoid hallucinations. A small, intimate tale about mortality, *Convicts* benefits from strong performances by Duvall, who brings a mix of authority and fragility to his character; Haas, who has a clear-eyed attentiveness and child-like doggedness; and James Earl Jones as store manager Ben, Gautier's closest approximation of a friend. The second entry in Foote's nine one-act plays comprising *The Orphans' Home* cycle—and one of five to reach the big screen (along with *Lily Dale*, *Valentine's Day*, *Courtship*, and *1918*)—this is a loving adaptation that showcases Foote's lyrical language. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

A Day in the Country ★★★

Criterion, 41 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95



The great French film director Jean Renoir—son of Impressionist master Pierre-Auguste Renoir—paid tribute to his father's work in this beautiful film. Adapted from a short story by Guy du Maupassant, this delicate little piece centers on a petit-bourgeois Parisian family in the mid-19th century enjoying a weekend escape by the River Seine. When a pair of brash locals (Georges D'Arnoux and Jacques Brunius) set their sights on seducing the giggly wife (Jane Marken) and svelte, comely daughter (Sylvia Bataille) of the easily distracted husband and father (André Gabriello), the mood gradually shifts from lightheartedness to gentle melancholy. Shots of a picnic, women on swings, and couples rowing skiffs up the river, evoke specific paintings by the elder Renoir, while Jean's direction creates characters that are both familiar cultural types and unique individuals.

Bataille is especially luminous as the young woman who is expected to marry her father's dull-witted assistant (Paul Temps) but finds more excitement with the amorous country gentleman. Shot in 1936 and considered one of Renoir's minor masterpieces, *A Day in the Country* was left unfinished due to production delays and other commitments. The film was finally assembled in 1946 by Renoir's collaborators and released with explanatory notes to fill in a couple of un-filmed city scenes, but otherwise feels complete and has been beautifully restored for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, with extras including extensive outtakes, new and archival interviews, and a video essay on Renoir's working methods. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

Every Man for Himself

★★★1/2

Criterion, 88 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95



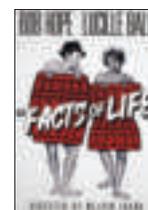
Twenty years after his landmark debut film *Breathless*, and nearly a decade after he turned his attention to cinematic essays and experimenting with video for TV productions, French New Wave pioneer Jean-Luc Godard returned to narrative with 1980's *Every Man for Himself*, which incorporated his nonfiction experiments and the interests of his new creative and personal partner, Anne-Marie Miéville (who co-wrote the script with Jean-Claude Carrière). *Every Man for Himself* explores the relationships among three characters—TV director Paul Godard (Jacques Dutronc), a self-involved divorced father whose anger at women extends to his teenage daughter; his former girlfriend, Denise (Nathalie Baye), who wants to quit working for TV and move to the country to pursue artistic interests; and Isabelle (Isabelle Huppert), a prostitute who understands that her clients are more interested in domination and humiliation than sex. Slow-motion and freeze frames interrupt scenes, abrupt intrusions on the soundtrack redirect our attention, and perverse requests by Isabelle's clients make prostitution just another form of alienating labor. Godard ridicules his alter-ego and explores the frustrations and aspirations of females in a culture that constantly demeans them. Featuring explicit nudity and language (including a conversation about pedophilia), this is an important entry in the career of one of the most influential filmmakers of all time. Remastered for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, extras include a video essay, Godard's 1979 video treatment for the film, and new and archival interviews. Highly recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

The Facts of Life ★★★

Olive, 103 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Well known for his pairings with Bing

Crosby, Bob Hope also collaborated regularly with Lucille Ball, as in this 1960 tale of marital infidelity, which offers relatively few opportunities for the leads' trademark slapstick zaniness, but is still far from dark. Director Melvin Frank's treatment is more in the vein of an extended sitcom, as married neighbors Kitty Weaver (Ball) and Larry Gilbert (Hope)—who don't much care for one another—find themselves alone in Acapulco after their spouses drop out of a joint vacation. Kitty and Larry soon discover that they have much in common during an idyllic week that ultimately leads to an abortive affair in which their every attempt to get together is foiled. But when they decide to run away, the trip turns into a disaster, and after coming to the realization that they can't leave their families, the pair struggle to return home before anyone finds out about their fling. While some of the script elements have aged badly, by and large this is a pretty entertaining film (although it was initially considered a bit naughty), and Hope and Ball deliver what, for them, are appropriately restrained performances. Recommended. (F. *Swietek*)

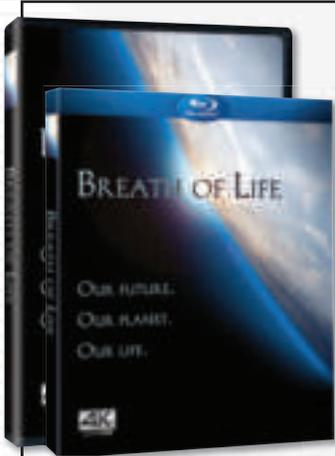


Far From the Madding Crowd ★★★

Warner, 171 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



Julie Christie is enchanting and luminous as Bathsheba Everdene, a beautiful young heiress who defies conventions and attracts the amorous attentions of three suitors, in John Schlesinger's epic 1967 film of Thomas Hardy's classic novel. Inheriting her uncle's farm, headstrong Bathsheba proves to be a smart and capable businesswoman, but she's capricious when it comes to romance. Alan Bates plays Gabriel Oak, the plainspoken shepherd and rejected suitor who manages her livestock; Peter Finch is William Boldwood, a wealthy older man with whom she flirts; and Terence Stamp is Sgt. Troy, the dashing cavalry officer she marries after a passionate courtship involving a flamboyant display of swordsmanship (one of the picture's most memorable scenes). Set in a lush countryside of rolling hills in the late 19th century, this is beautifully lensed by Nicolas Roeg (who soon became a major director in his own right). Schlesinger captures the era with meticulous attention to detail while also bringing modern flair to the storytelling, but the film was a financial and critical flop in the U.S. Still, its reputation has only grown over the years and it will likely attract renewed interest thanks to the current remake starring Carey Mulligan. Newly remastered for its Blu-ray debut, extras



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DVD VF-1028 UPC# 818522012124, SRP: \$19.95,
 BLU-RAY VF-1029 UPC# 818522012131, SRP: \$29.95, PPR: \$299.00 w/ study guide, 83 Min
STREET DATE: 6/2/15

THEMES/ STUDIES
History, Royalty, English Empire, European History

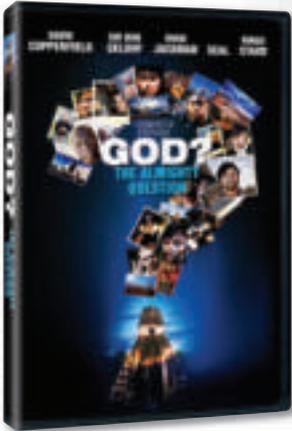
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Queen Elizabeth II has reigned for 60 years and has witnessed incredible social, political and cultural changes in her reign. From the death of her father King George VI, to the marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton, this is the true story of how the young Princess became a great Queen.

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VF-1016 UPC# 818522011738
 SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$249.00, 90 Min
STREET DATE: 5/19/15



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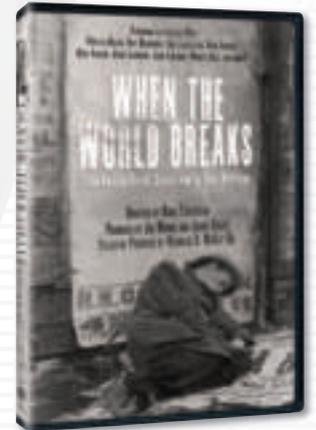
VF-1021 UPC# 818522011783
 SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$249.00, 93 Min
STREET DATE: 6/9/15

THEMES/ STUDIES
American History, Economics, Sociology

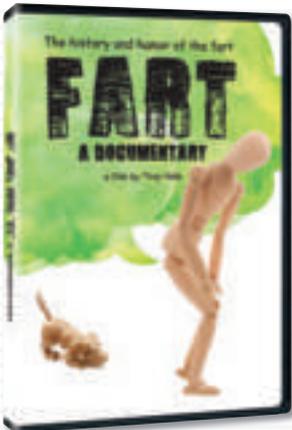
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STREET DATE: 4/21/15



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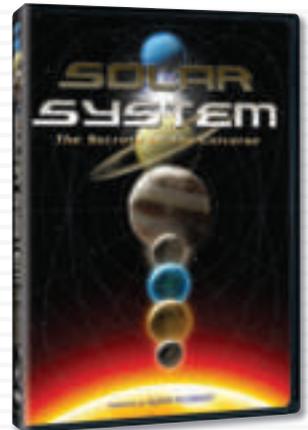
VF-1027 UPC# 818522012117
 SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$99.00, 80 Min
STREET DATE: TBD

THEMES/ STUDIES
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SOLAR SYSTEM THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE

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NARRATED BY: **Glenn McCready**



VF-1026 UPC# 818522012094
 SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$249.00, 92 Min
STREET DATE: 5/26/15

include an extended version of the film, and a location featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

A Hole in the Head ★★

Olive, 120 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Frank Capra made this 1959 comic drama—adapted from a Broadway play and starring Frank Sinatra as a widower trying to make his fortune while raising a young son alone—after an eight-year hiatus from feature filmmaking. Sinatra plays Tony Manetta, a hustling entrepreneur in Miami with a failing hotel. Tony's sexy, wild-child, bongo-playing girlfriend, Shirl (Carolyn Jones), is half his age; and his stuffy skinflint big brother, Mario (Edward G. Robinson), dismisses Tony's ambitions as unrealistic dreams. While this is familiar territory for Sinatra, who played charming heels and hustlers in films such as *Guys and Dolls*, *Pal Joey*, and *Some Came Running*, Capra here sentimentalizes the character of Tony, focusing on his playful relationship with his sharp, adoring kid, Ally (Eddie Hodges), and making him a well-meaning dreamer desperate for the big break that he's convinced is coming his way. Although it boasts a good cast (including Eleanor Parker, Thelma Ritter, and Keenan Wynn), and the Oscar-winning hit song "High Hopes," *A Hole in the Head* carries none of the emotional power that defines Sinatra's best films. In fact, Tony's contradictions here are glossed over for a happy ending that rings hollow and unearned in this second-rate Capra effort. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

In the Land of the Head Hunters ★★★

Milestone, 2 discs, 66 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



Although not a documentary per se, *In the Land of the Head Hunters* is nevertheless an invaluable historical document. Directed by legendary photographer Edward S. Curtis, who lived for a time with the Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl) people of British Columbia and filmed some of their traditional dances for his lectures, this dramatic feature showcases rituals from the pre-white settlement era within the context of a fictional tale of love and war among the coastal tribes of the North Pacific. The actors are non-professionals, and the costumes, masks, canoes, and longhouses were all made by the Kwakwaka'wakw to faithfully represent their ancestors. Orphaned for decades, the film only existed in an incomplete version (1973's *In the Land of the War Canoes*) until a 2008 restoration added newly discovered footage and still images, along with the score composed for the 1914 debut. The images are worn at best and badly decomposed at worst, but this is a unique

piece of film history that preserves some of the earliest visual depictions of North Pacific tribal culture and it anticipates the landmark documentary *Nanook of the North*. This Milestone release includes both versions of the film (2008 and 1973), along with extras such as a scholarly audio commentary, and featurettes on the film, restoration, and dances of the Kwakwaka'wakw tribe. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Kiss Me, Stupid ★★★

Olive, 125 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Billy Wilder was a master at sneaking sex into films like *The Apartment* and *Irma la Douce* in the years before the arrival of the ratings system, but 1964's *Kiss Me Stupid*—his most gleefully cynical and brash sex comedy—was so maligned that it almost sunk his career. Set in the town of Climax, NV (the first of many double-entendres), the story centers on amateur songwriters Orville and Barney (Ray Walston and Cliff Osmond), who scheme to sell their tunes to a boozing, womanizing Vegas singer by the name of Dino (played by Dean Martin in a knowing parody of himself), who is forced to make a detour when his car breaks down. The tunesmiths' plot is to tempt him with a woman, so they hire local prostitute Polly the Pistol (Kim Novak) to pose as Orville's wife after Orville gets his real spouse, Zelda (Felicia Farr), out of the house. Wilder and co-screenwriter I.A.L. Diamond, adapting a European farce, revel in the smutty garishness of the whole situation. Walston, a last-minute replacement for Peter Sellers, goes for big and goofy here, while Osmond is enthusiastically opportunistic. Novak both plays up and against her bombshell image as a workaday hooker, and Martin is pure cartoon wolf, sizing her up like a piece of meat. Although widely condemned, this is a weirdly, grotesquely funny movie—more cult film than classic—which remains an odd artifact of 1960s cinema. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Le Pont du Nord ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 128 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



French New Wave director Jacques Rivette wove his fascination with conspiracies, games, and theater throughout his films, including 1981's *Le Pont du Nord*, which unfolds in the shadow of the political activism and idealism of the late-1960s. Longtime Rivette collaborator Bulle Ogier stars as Marie, a former revolutionary who returns to Paris following a prison term to find that her erstwhile lover, Julien (Pierre Clémenti), is now involved in

the underworld. Pascale Ogier (Bulle's real-life daughter) costars as Baptiste, a young woman who arrives in Paris on a moped and immediately appoints herself guardian to the disillusioned Marie as they become caught up in a dangerous game. The actresses co-wrote the screenplay with Rivette, lending the narrative a decidedly female perspective (which is a hallmark of many of Rivette's pictures; in fact, *Le Pont du Nord* is ultimately something of a companion piece to Rivette's imaginative 1974 classic *Celine and Julie Go Boating*, which also charts the adventures of two women in Paris on a fantastic adventure). While not for all tastes, this is an engaging and inventive work that captures a unique sensibility in French filmmaking. Making its U.S. home video debut on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include video essays and a booklet. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Mark of the Devil ★★1/2

Arrow, 97 min., R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95



The horror of the Inquisition becomes fodder for exploitation in this 1970 film about witch-hunting and religious-based sadism in 1770 Austria. Herbert Lom stars as the Inquisitor, Lord Cumberland, while a handsome young Udo Kier takes a rare romantic lead as Count Christian von Meruh, a nobleman who rescues innocent barmaid Vanessa (Olivera Vuco) from the clutches of local witch-hunter Albino (the villainous-looking Reggie Nalder), only to run afoul of Cumberland. Directed by Michael Armstrong, this British/German co-production revels in the most barbarous torture scenes as the impotent Inquisitor punishes young maidens for his own unclean desires. This newly restored edition, the first American release from British label Arrow—which has earned a reputation as the "Criterion of Cult" for its high-quality restorations and supplements—is complete, uncut, and (in all honesty) pretty gruesome. Extras include a feature-length documentary on the "new wave" of British horror in the 1960s and 1970s, along with additional featurettes and interviews. The definitive version of a notorious cult film, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Musicals: 4-Movie Collection ★★★

Warner, 4 discs, 426 min., G/ not rated, Blu-ray: \$34.99

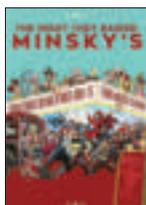


Talk about a glorious feeling: four classic MGM and Warner Technicolor musicals in one gorgeous, budget-priced Blu-ray boxed set. Making its Blu-ray debut here is *Kiss Me Kate* (1953), presented in both an eye-popping new 3D remastered cut and a standard 2D version. Based on the 1948 Broadway smash hit inspired by

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, director George Sidney's saucy battle-of-the-sexes rom-com stars Howard Keel and Kathryn Grayson as squabbling lovebirds, and features a sparkling Cole Porter score and fancy footwork courtesy of Bob Fosse and Hermes Pan. Also bowing on Blu-ray is *Calamity Jane* (1953), filmmaker David Butler's musical Western (featuring the Oscar-winning song "Secret Love"), starring Doris Day as the titular tomboy and Keel as archrival/love interest Wild Bill Hickok. 1953 was a stellar year for musicals: also new to Blu-ray, Vincente Minnelli's *The Band Wagon* is a hooper's dream, a musical-within-a-musical starring Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse that also boasts a few memorable tunes, including "That's Entertainment." The set is rounded out by the previously released on Blu-ray *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), co-directed by Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, and starring Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, and Donald O'Connor in a "let's put on a show" extravaganza that has become the gold standard by which motion picture musicals are judged. Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 (except for *Calamity Jane*, which is in DTS-HD mono), extras include audio commentaries, a 1973 special on Minnelli, and vintage shorts and cartoons. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (R. Pitman)

The Night They Raided Minsky's ★★★1/2

Olive, 99 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



Before making his name with *The French Connection*, William Friedkin directed this 1968 backstage comedy set in a failing music hall during the burlesque era in the early 20th century. Jason Robards and Norman Wisdom star as Raymond and Chick, the leading comics of the troupe, who perform vulgar baggy-pants routines with off-color humor to roaring approval from working-class and immigrant audiences. There is absolutely nothing classy about the place, but Amish runaway Rachel (Britt Eklund) begs for a spot as a dancer in a show that Raymond tries to sell to the audience as an exotic spectacle. Ostensibly about the accidental birth of striptease, *The Night They Raided Minsky's* really offers a nostalgic look at the forgotten world of New York burlesque, built on broad, suggestive comedy acts and the promise of sexy ladies ("ten terrific girls but only nine costumes," teases the MC—but all they deliver is bumps and grinds in skimpy outfits). Elliot Gould makes his cinematic debut as proprietor Billy Minsky, trying to keep his venue open after his landlord (and father), Louis (Joseph Wiseman), refuses to renew the lease. This was also the final film for real-life vaudeville legend Bert Lahr, who died before completing his scenes. *Minsky's* has a reputation for being a troubled production that was "saved" by its

editors after Friedkin left for another project. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

On Golden Pond

★★★★1/2
Shout! Factory, 109 min., PG,
Blu-ray: \$24.98



Director Mark Rydell's Academy Award-winning 1981 film, based on Ernest Thompson's play, marked the final appearance for Henry Fonda, who died soon after filming was completed. Fonda stars as retired college professor Norman Thayer—now facing his 80th birthday and the deterioration that comes with age—and he is joined by fellow legend Katharine Hepburn as his wife, Ethel. The story is simple and sentimental: while their daughter, Chelsea (Jane Fonda), is vacationing in Europe, the elderly married couple find themselves saddled with Billy Ray (Doug McKeon), son of Chelsea's fiancé, and crotchety Norman slowly bonds with the resentful teen, creating an opening for the old man to repair his estranged relationship with Chelsea. Jane Fonda optioned the rights to the play with the aim of working with her real-life father (it's the only film in which they both appear). The senior Fonda delivers one of his finest performances, heartbreakingly exemplified in an early scene in which

Norman gets lost walking through a forest that has been a second home for decades. Gorgeously photographed, *On Golden Pond* hits all the expected emotional beats, with Fonda and Hepburn superb in the lead roles (they both won Oscars, as did playwright Thompson for his screenplay). Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include audio commentary by Rydell and archival featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Pork Chop Hill ★★★

Olive, 97 min., not rated, DVD:
\$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Lewis Milestone directed some of the defining films about World War I (*All Quiet on the Western Front*) and World War II (*A Walk in the Sun*) during his long career. This gritty, grim 1959 Korean War drama adds another anti-war classic to his résumé. Gregory Peck stars as Lt. Joe Clemons, a tough but compassionate commander ordered to take a hill of no military value during the final days of the conflict. While diplomats and generals argue over peace negotiations (in an appropriately wordless montage under the opening credits), Peck leads a unit of 135 men into the grueling ordeal of charging a well-guarded area while miscommunication (and at times no com-

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—A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*



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—Keith Uhlich, *Time Out New York*



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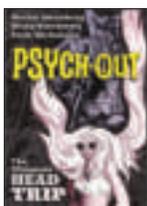
—Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*

munication) cuts them off from reinforcements and regimental command. Shooting against a bleak, battle-scarred mountain of white dust honeycombed in black trenches, Milestone presents the devastating battle as a meaningless sacrifice of hundreds of lives that are lost in a political game of chicken. Peck leads a strong cast of young talents and character actors, many of them just starting their respective careers: Rip Torn, Harry Guardino, Martin Landau, Norman Fell, George Peppard, Gavin MacLeod, and Harry Dean Stanton, along with veteran stalwarts Woody Strode, James Edwards, and Robert Blake. The film ends with a hollowly patriotic voiceover (reportedly added by Peck), but this coda doesn't trump Milestone's strong anti-war message. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Psych-Out ★★★

Olive, 101 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Dick Clark produced and Richard Rush directed this 1968 portrait of the Haight-Ashbury flower power scene centering on hippie communes, free love, bad trips, and rock happenings. Susan Strasberg stars as Jenny, a deaf girl who comes to San Francisco looking for her brother, Steve (Bruce Dern), an artist who followed Timothy Leary's injunction to tune in, turn on, and drop out. Jack Nicholson is Stoney, the callous leader of a jam band who helps Jenny dodge the cops and invites her to stay in his communal home (where there's always a party going on), and Dean Stockwell is Dave, the self-styled guru who brings his connections to her search. The music played by Stoney's group is shamelessly derivative, but *Psych-Out* also features the Strawberry Alarm Clock performing their hit "Incense and Peppermint" in front of a liquid light-show, and Sky Saxon (of *The Seeds*) leading a funky funeral march. Cinematographer Laszlo Kovacs (who went on to shoot *Easy Rider*) vividly captures the psychedelic look. For all the druggie stereotypes and free love displays, *Psych-Out* is more open to the positive aspects of San Francisco hippiedom than most movies of the era. One of the more interesting cultural portraits of the '60s, featuring pre-stardom turns by Nicholson and Dern, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Ride the Pink Horse

★★★

Criterion, 101 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Robert Montgomery directs and stars in this 1947 film noir—set in a dusty but strikingly atmospheric New Mexico border community—that explores themes typical of postwar dramas and crime movies. Montgomery is Lucky Gagin, a working-class thug who returns from combat disil-



lusioned and angry, and Fred Clark (looking more like a middle-management functionary than a criminal tough guy) is Frank Hugo, the war profiteer Gagin tries to blackmail as revenge for the murder of one of his pals back East. This is organized crime as big business, and our streetwise but unworldly anti-hero is clearly out of his depth, but he has guardian angels looking out for him: a paternal federal agent (Art Smith), the affable owner of a rickety carousel (Thomas Gomez), and a naïve but courageous Native American teenager (Wanda Hendrix) in town for a festival. Both tough and touching, with stylized scenes and crackling dialogue (scripted by the great Ben Hecht and Charles Lederer, from the novel by Dorothy B. Hughes), *Ride the Pink Horse* doesn't carry the sense of doom common to film noir, but the cast of crooks and double-crossing schemers is as mercenary and cowardly as any you'll find in the genre. Despite a devoted following among noir buffs, the film is only now making its debut on DVD and Blu-ray, with extras including audio commentary, an interview with film noir expert Imogen Sara Smith, and a 1947 radio adaptation. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Soft Skin ★★★

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

François Truffaut's cool, creamy-smooth 1964 film about a doomed affair channels the director's love of Hitchcock into a romantic melodrama that while not a thriller in any traditional sense still evokes the master of suspense. Respected publisher and literary critic Pierre Lachenay (Jean Desailly) doesn't have adultery on his mind when he becomes entranced with lovely stewardess Nicole (Françoise Dorléac), whose path he keeps crossing during a speaking engagement. Pierre is happily married to Franca (Nelly Benedetti), and the pair have a young daughter, Sabine (Sabine Haudepin)—but he plunges ahead anyways into an affair that, despite his best efforts, begins to unravel all of their lives. Truffaut brings a lush romanticism to this tale of indiscretion, which plays out in a cinematic world where sudden stabs of ominous music hint at a tragedy in the making, all the while investing the proceedings with Hitchcockian echoes of guilt and a fear of discovery. *The Soft Skin* reflects Truffaut's career-long fascination with philandering men, with Pierre not so much sordid as he is vain and pathetic, married to a woman who will come into her own following the heartbreaking discovery of his lies. Unavailable in the U.S. for years, *The Soft Skin* has been newly remastered by Criterion for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, with extras including an audio commentary, new video essay, archival interview with Truffaut, a 1999 documentary on the Truf-



faut/Hitchcock connection, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Syncopation ★★★

Cohen, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

This 1942 feature ostensibly presents the evolution of jazz—from the New Orleans clubs of the early 20th century to the swing bands of the 1920s—through the story of an amateur pianist named Kit (Bonita Granville), who learns jazz as a child and later introduces the music to young Chicago coronet player Johnny (Jackie Cooper) and his combo. The narrative is rudimentary as it charts Johnny's hard times trying to make a living and Kit's support of his dream along the way. *Syncopation* is also largely focused on white artists, although it does acknowledge the genre's black roots and features one African-American, Rex Tearbone (Todd Duncan), a master jazzman and inspiration to our plucky young hero. Overall, director William Dieterle, a specialist in studio bio-pics and cultured dramas, delivers an interesting, if historically incomplete, snapshot of jazz's inception, one full of swinging music. Incidentally, legendary figures Benny Goodman, Charlie Barnet, Harry James, Gene Krupa, and Joe Venuti are prominently featured in the credits but only appear at the end of the film, playing together in a scene that could be a prototype music video. Making its home video debut on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include nine archival music shorts made between 1929 and 1939 showcasing Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, Cab Calloway, Hoagy Carmichael, Artie Shaw, and others (some contain offensive stereotypes, but all are well-preserved and feature great music). An historically interesting film, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Tales of Terror ★★★

Kino Lorber, 89 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Vincent Price stars in this 1962 trilogy of Edgar Allan Poe stories, scripted by Richard Matheson (who takes liberties with the tales), and directed by Roger Corman. The first, "Morella," recalls "The Fall of the House of Usher," with Price playing haunted, hollow-eyed widower Locke—a man who has spent decades in isolation mourning a wife who died in childbirth—and Maggie Pierce as Lenora, the neglected daughter who rouses him from his walking death. The final tale, "The Case of M. Valdemar," costars Basil Rathbone as Carmichael, a mesmerist who hypnotizes the dying Valdemar (Price) in order to hold him in a state of suspended animation. The most famous (and enter-



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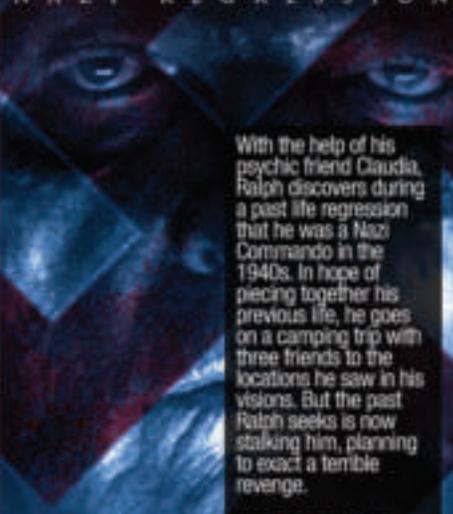
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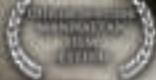
With the help of his psychic friend Claudia, Ralph discovers during a past life regression that he was a Nazi Commando in the 1940s. In hope of piecing together his previous life, he goes on a camping trip with three friends to the locations he saw in his visions. But the past Ralph seeks is now stalking him, planning to exact a terrible revenge.

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taining) entry is the middle piece: the comic "The Black Cat," which also borrows from Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado." Price is Fortunato Luchresi, a prissy, wine-tasting dandy who begins an affair with the wife of Montresor (Peter Lorre), a sloppy wino who poisons them both and bricks up their bodies in his cellar. All three parts play like miniature versions of Corman's earlier Poe features, all are moody and elegantly claustrophobic (shot in vivid widescreen color), and all end with vengeance from beyond the grave. While not one of Corman's best Poe adaptations—*The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, and *The Tomb of Ligeia* are superior—*Tales of Terror* remains a worthy classic, largely thanks to the comic chemistry of Price and Lorre and a woozy hallucination scene in "The Black Cat." Extras include audio commentaries, and an interview with Corman. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Thin Blue Line

★★★★

Criterion, 102 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Documentary filmmaker Errol Morris's 1988 third feature is a landmark of nonfiction filmmaking, both for its inventive style and advocacy stance. Morris investigates the case of Randall Adams—a man serving on death row in Texas for the fatal shooting of a patrolman—by analyzing the evidence and testimony that sent Adams to prison. At the center of his investigation is David Harris—whose trial account was instrumental in convicting Adams—a man who at the time of filming was himself on death row for murder. Morris uses interviews and stylized re-enactments of scenes described in the courtroom in order to contrast the different and sometimes contradictory evidence. The resulting film is as dramatic as any Hollywood thriller—featuring vivid cinematography and an ominous Philip Glass score—but it also turns a damning eye on a justice system that ignores contradictions to push for convictions. *The Thin Blue Line* led directly to the exoneration of Adams, thanks to the detail of Morris's inquiry (he once described himself as a "detective-director"), and it landed on many Top Ten lists of 1988, yet wasn't even nominated for an Academy Award—an oversight that launched a re-evaluation of the nomination process for documentaries. Newly remastered for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, extras include new interviews with Morris and filmmaker Joshua Oppenheimer, a 1989 news report on the Adams case, and a booklet. One of the most important and influential films in the history of American nonfiction cinema, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Axmaker)



Thunderbolt and Lightfoot ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 115 min., R, DVD: \$19.95

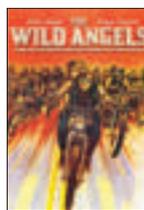
Clint Eastwood is Thunderbolt, an ex-thief on the run from former partners, and Jeff Bridges is Lightfoot, a hotshot kid who becomes the flinty veteran's sidekick in this offbeat 1974 caper. The pair make for unlikely partners in a film that takes a number of odd turns before finally setting its sights on the main event: robbing a government vault using military artillery and a team that includes Thunderbolt's erstwhile associates, hot-tempered Red (George Kennedy) and easygoing Eddie (Geoffrey Lewis). In his directorial debut, Michael Cimino (who also wrote the script) mixes character study with a lighthearted but slightly shadowy crime story, slowly revealing the twists while hanging out with his heroes in small Midwestern towns and winding country roads that offer plenty of opportunities for detours. The characters' chemistry carries the narrative, which ultimately delivers savage poetic justice and a bittersweet coda. Eastwood mostly stays back here, letting Bridges verbally dance through scenes like an overexcited kid trying to impress the cool crowd (Bridges earned his second Academy Award nomination for his performance). Although this Kino release is on DVD only, a Blu-ray edition is available online exclusively from Screen Archives Entertainment (www.screenarchives.com). A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



The Wild Angels ★★★

Olive, 93 min., R, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Always quick to catch the cultural zeitgeist, B-movie king Roger Corman anticipated *Easy Rider* with this 1966 drama starring Peter Fonda as Heavenly Blues, leader of a California chapter of Hells Angels, with Nancy Sinatra as his girlfriend, Mike. Blues and his gang are a collection of disaffected dropouts and scruffy road rats who live to ride in packs and parade their colors (black leather, mostly, adorned with swastikas and Iron Crosses) as a show of defiance to the establishment. These wild angels are truly rebels without a cause, but Corman takes their outlaw culture into nervy, nihilistic territory when they devolve into primitive savagery following the death of beloved member Loser (Bruce Dern in a swaggering performance of breezy disobedience). What makes them truly dangerous is not malevolence, but rather apathy and amorality: they just don't care who gets hurt in their search for the next thrill, and the



funeral for Loser descends into decadence and anarchy as Blues presides over the desecration of a church and the systematic trampling of every boundary of decency that Corman could push past the censors. A portrait of emptiness and hostility that branded Fonda as a counterculture icon, *The Wild Angels* is a more interesting work than its drive-in origins would suggest, a film that ultimately kickstarted a whole genre of 1960s motorcycle-rebel movies. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Witness to Murder ★1/2

Kino Lorber, 83 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

In this 1954 film from director Roy Rowland, Barbara Stanwyck stars as titular witness Cheryl Draper, a single professional who looks out of her apartment window one night and sees a man strangle a woman to death in a nearby flat. Police officers Lawrence Matthews and Eddie Vincent (a sympathetic but bland Gary Merrill and a wisecracking Jesse White) find no evidence to support her story, so they chalk it up to nightmares, but Cheryl continues to investigate. The cops are terribly condescending, even with Matthews making something of an effort to follow up on Cheryl's claims. But eventually the suspect, Albert Richter (George Sanders)—an arrogant, unreformed Nazi with Nietzsche on the brain—conspires to discredit Cheryl and get her committed (in a kind of B-movie *Gaslight* plot). Sanders oozes insincerity as a cool, sly, control-freak villain in his classic cultured manner, but Stanwyck is hobbled by poor writing, reduced to hysterical cries of "You must believe me! You must! You must!" rather than intelligent dialogue. *Witness to Murder* was released the same year as Alfred Hitchcock's similarly-themed *Rear Window*, which only makes this dull-witted thriller look worse. Not recommended. (S. Axmaker)



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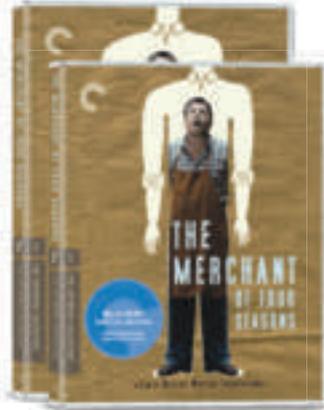
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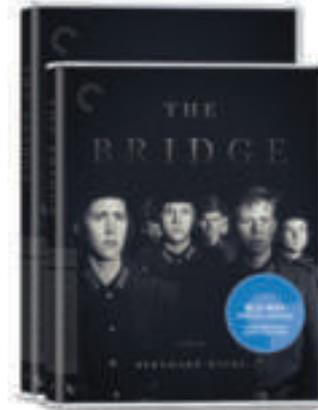
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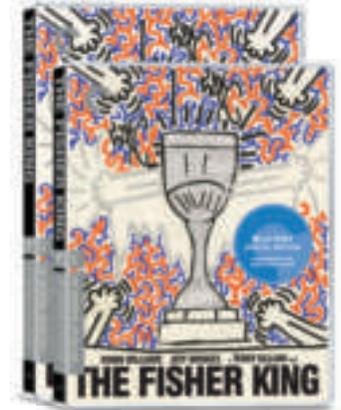
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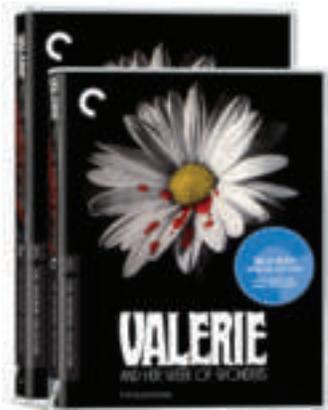
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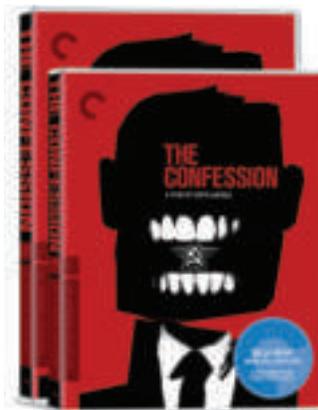
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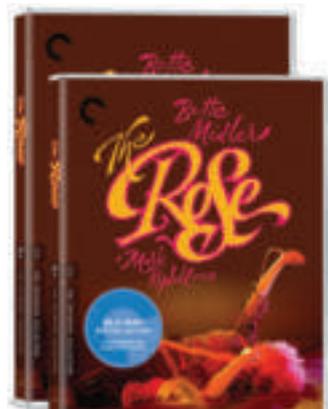
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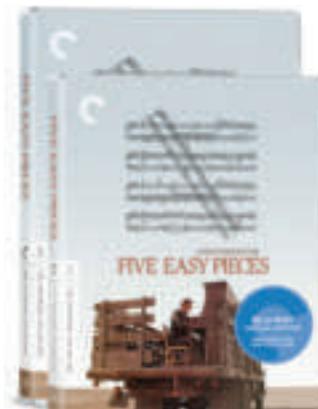
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Anzac Girls ★★1/2

Acorn, 2 discs, 363 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99



This six-part 2014 Australian television miniseries, broadcast in the U.S. on Acorn TV's streaming service, is based on Peter Rees's acclaimed book, *The Other Anzacs*, which draws on original diaries, letters, and historical records to recount the experiences of five young women from Australia and New Zealand who served as frontline nurses during World War I. Arriving in Egypt, the group—Alice (Georgia Flood), Hilda (Antonia Prebble), Elsie (Laura Brent), Olive (Anna McGahan), and Grace (Caroline Craig)—believe that their work will be rewarding (with romance and adventure), but when convoys of dead and injured arrive from the disastrous Gallipoli invasion, the women quickly face the cruelty of war, and are forced to deal with extraordinary circumstances as they move across the European battlegrounds. Despite some occasional detours into soap opera melodrama, this handsomely mounted series does a highly effective job of recreating harsh wartime conditions (while also touching on some unpleasant and little discussed aspects of World War I, including the snobbery of British nurses toward their antipodean colleagues and the rampant spread of venereal disease among the troops). Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, cast interviews, and photo galleries. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Archer: The Complete Fifth Season ★★1/2

Fox, 2 discs, 271 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99



The popular FX channel animated spoof of spy movies and TV shows takes an unusual turn in its fifth season after private intelligence agency ISIS is raided by the FBI for failing to obtain government permissions—just one of many administrative oversights by the agency's hard-drinking boss (voiced by Jessica Walter)—forcing the team to go on the run with the only assets left: a vault filled with a ton of cocaine. Dubbed *Archer Vice*, this season finds intellectually-challenged agent Sterling Archer (H. Jon Benjamin) and company deciding to smuggle the cocaine into South America and start a drug cartel (which works about as well as you would expect with these idiots). Plans go haywire due to the usual combination of bickering, incompetence, and poor impulse control, while number two agent, Lana (Aisha Tyler), tries to hold it together and manage her pregnancy. Meanwhile, Cheryl (Judy Greer) follows her dream of becoming an outlaw country star, and Cyril (Chris Parnell) assumes the role of dictator

of a South American country that is in the throes of revolution. All of this makes for an odd standalone season, and fans will appreciate the fact that the team is eventually sent home with a reinstated charter as a government contractor with a license to cause more mayhem and havoc. Full of mature (meaning extremely juvenile) humor, this set compiles all 13 episodes from 2014, with extras including music videos and an animated interview. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

The Chair: The Complete First Season ★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 5 discs, 667 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98



Indie film producer Chris Moore oversaw this Starz channel reality show about two young filmmakers vying for a \$250,000 prize (which comes across as a resurrection of *Project Greenlight*, also created by Moore to uncover nascent filmmaking talent via direct competition). The contestants here are YouTube virtuoso Shane Dawson and NYU film school grad Anna Martemucci, both of whom started with the same script and were tasked with fostering the filmmaking process through development, financing, production, marketing, and distribution. Along the way, both face setbacks and achieve successes as they each turn the screenplay into something personal, although not necessarily unique. Observing personality squabbles and the ways that Dawson and Martemucci approach various tasks is often interesting, but this is only slightly more compelling than a season of *Celebrity Apprentice*. For aspiring filmmakers *The Chair* might prove to be a kind of how-to tool, but most won't consider it to be gripping TV. As a bonus, the set include both wildly different finished films: *Hollidaysburg* (Martemucci) and *Not Cool* (Dawson), which received limited theatrical releases (box office appeal was part of the contest). One of them is actually quite good, although quality rarely translates as success in show business. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2014 debut season, this is a strong optional purchase. (T. Fry)

Doctor Who: Last Christmas ★★1/2

BBC, 60 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98



The Christmas special has been a *Doctor Who* tradition since 2005. For this 2014 offering, The Doctor teams up with another traveler who defies the physics of time, space, and reality as we know it: Santa Claus (Nick Frost). Here, The Doctor (Peter Capaldi) and Clara (Jenna Coleman)—reunited for the first time since the end of Season Eight—fly off to the North Pole to save a group of scientists from crea-

tures known as dream crabs, which trap their victims in fantasies while feeding off their psychic energy. When he realizes that they're also trapped, The Doctor calls upon Santa, who may or may not be merely a figment of their collective imaginations, to help save the day. This episode, written by showrunner Steven Moffat, features an intricately layered plot and a mix of whimsy and tragedy that has defined Moffat's contributions to the series, while the banter between Capaldi and Frost provides The Doctor with a friendly rivalry. Extras include an audio commentary and a behind-the-scenes featurette. Likely to be included in the Season Nine set expected later this year, this standalone release is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

The Game ★★★

BBC, 2 discs, 354 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.98



The titular game of this BBC miniseries is Cold War espionage during the 1970s. A driven young operative in Britain's MI-5 uncovers a Soviet plot—Operation Glass—so secret that even the Russians involved only know pieces of it. Tom Hughes plays young agent Joe Lambe—recently rescued from Soviet imprisonment and still haunted by a mission in Poland that went bad—who is tasked with uncovering double-agents involved in the operation. Led by a veteran officer known to all as Daddy (Brian Cox) and temporarily joined by Special Branch police officer Jim Fenchurch (Shaun Dooley), the team soon figures out that they have a mole in their midst. *The Game* plays like the BBC spy drama *MI-5* dropped back into the era of John le Carré's classic novels, where old-school technology helps make intelligence gathering more of a craft perfected by trained spies than an act of high-level computer hacking. The series builds towards the discovery of both the Soviet plan and the inner-circle informant, with each episode focusing on a new suspect within an atmosphere of wary distrust. Well-acted and directed, *The Game* is a standalone show, but ends with the possibility of a sequel. Compiling all six episodes that originally aired on BBC America in 2014, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.: The Complete Series

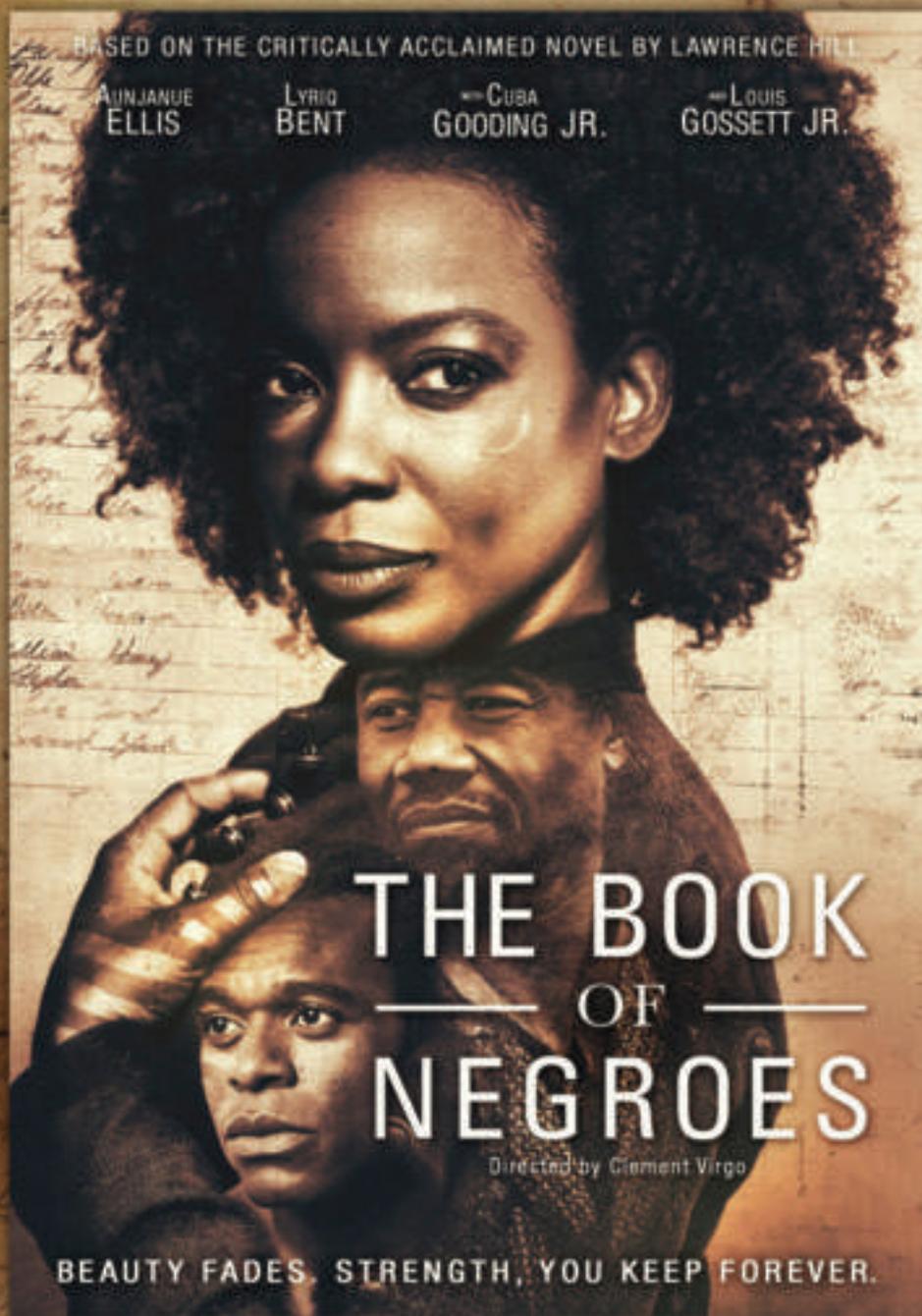
★★★

Paramount, 24 discs, 3,786 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.98



Surprise, surprise, surprise: *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* holds up surprisingly well. For this, we salute Jim Nabors, who first earned his stripes as bumpkin Gomer on *The Andy Griffith Show*, and Frank Sutton as Sgt. "I can't hear you" Carter, who spent five seasons

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trying to turn “good old happy Private Pyle” into a Marine. Gomer is an iconic character who is, admittedly, a “lunkhead,” “yo-yo,” “knucklehead,” and “meatball.” But his heart is always in the right place and he possesses an indefatigable spirit, can-do attitude, and boundless optimism, making this a series treasured by Baby Boomers. Attention should also be paid to the supporting cast members, who include Ronnie Schell and a pre-*That Girl* Ted Bessel as Gomer’s Marine buddies. Making some welcome visits from Mayberry during the series run are little Ron Howard as a runaway Opie, Frances Bavier as Aunt Bea, and George Lindsay as cousin Goober. Carol Burnett costars in an episode from season four, which also includes a series benchmark—a Frank Capra-esque four-episode arc that packs Gomer and Sgt. Carter off to our nation’s capitol for a concert to be attended by the President of the United States. And my mother always loved the episode that guest-starred Jewish theatre treasure Molly Picon as a lonely woman whom Gomer befriends. If this boxed set earns any demerits, it’s for jettisoning all the bonus features that were included on the individual season sets. Compiling all 150 episodes from the 1964-69 five-season run, this is recommended. (D. Liebenson)

Grantchester ★★★

PBS, 2 discs, 360 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99

This new *Masterpiece Mystery* series—set in a picturesque village near Cambridge in the early 1950s—at first glance appears to be another easygoing Brit mystery show. Based on a novel by James Runcie, the series stars James Norton as Sidney Chambers, the amiable, slightly eccentric Anglican priest of Grantchester, and British TV veteran Robson Green as Geordie Keating, a Cambridge police detective who is initially wary when (in the opening episode) Sidney insists that a recent suicide may in fact be murder. Their unlikely alliance turns to friendship and the two men wind up investigating a number of crimes together while bonding over 1) their shared experiences as war veterans and 2) a love of fine whiskey. As the mysteries continue, however, *Grantchester* starts to explore some of the shadows cast by the recent World War—including shell shock, racism, homophobia, and a suspicion of immigrants (especially Germans)—as well as some of the ugliness lying beneath small-town values. The characters also develop over the course of the season: Sidney’s opinionated housekeeper (Tessa Peake-Jones) proves to be caring and loyal under her flinty exterior, and she recruits help for Sidney in the form of a junior vicar (Al Weaver)—a young, inexperienced man whose horizons are expanded as his convictions are tested. And



Sidney struggles when his first love (Morven Christie) accepts another man’s proposal of marriage, revealing the very human side of this religious leader. Compiling all six episodes from 2014, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and cast interviews. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Longmire: The Complete Third Season ★★★

Warner, 441 min., not rated, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98, Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$40.99

The third season of the rural mystery series based on novels by Craig Johnson and starring Australian actor Robert Taylor as laconic Wyoming Sheriff Walt Longmire opens with fallout from the ongoing investigation into the killing of Longmire’s wife. Longmire’s best friend, Henry (Lou Diamond Phillips), is arrested on suspicion of murder, which sends Longmire searching for evidence to exonerate him. Meanwhile, one deputy, Branch (Bailey Chase), survives a vicious attack by the mysterious “white warrior”—ostensibly the spirit of a dead man from the nearby reservation, back for vengeance—and goes rogue to lead his own investigation. And another deputy, former Philadelphia homicide cop Vic (Katee Sackhoff), struggles to save a crumbling marriage as her past continues to haunt her. The wide-open landscape dominates the series, and the show has a pace and tone to match, but there’s also a tough, brutal edge to many episodes, which culminate here in a collision with a violent survivalist who has a paranoid streak. This set was almost the final run of *Longmire*, the top-rated scripted drama on A&E when it was canceled (it skewed to older viewers and the channel was looking for younger audiences). But passionate fans quickly expressed their outrage, and Netflix has since picked up the series. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2014 third season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Looking: The Complete First Season ★★★

HBO, 2 discs, 240 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

While it didn’t pull in enough viewers for HBO to order a third season, *Looking* has garnered wide and rightful acclaim as a smart, sensitive, entertaining, and disarmingly authentic look at contemporary urban gay culture. The lifestyle, dreams, and ambitions of a trio of San Francisco friends are at the center of this series, which follows the mostly romantic adventures of Patrick (Jonathan Groff), Dom (Murray Bartlett), and Agustín (Frankie J. Alvarez). Each character leads a rich life full of work pressures,



social largesse, and personal transformation, finding themselves in the midst of engaging tales of the city that are poignant, funny, and moving—honoring the quest of the human heart in a way that’s only incidentally specific to male anatomy. Patrick is torn between finding Mr. Right and Mr. Right Now; Agustín grapples with the universal angst native to committed-relationship territory; and Dom faces a crisis related to the middle-age need for more permanent personal and professional attachments, which have eluded him. *Looking*’s honesty extends to raw sexuality as well as raw emotion, but while the writing sometimes slips into glib half-hour sitcom territory, for the most part the show is entirely believable and uniformly engaging. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include episode commentaries. Recommended. (T. Fry)

Maison Close: Season One ★★★

Music Box, 480 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.95, Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.95

A high-class 1870s Parisian brothel is the setting for this 2010 French TV series, which mixes period décor with a rock score as it tells a tale of women struggling for empowerment in an often brutal, male-dominated society. The Paradise—the name of the bawdy house catering to wealthy clients—is run by Madame Hortense (Valérie Karsenti), whose position is threatened by a menacing debt collector and the return of her sleazy brother, Pierre (Nicolas Briançon). Making matters worse, Madame’s chief attraction, Véra (Anne Charrier), plans to become a nobleman’s exclusive mistress, but his murder forces Véra to remain, so she tries to organize the girls to demand better treatment. Simultaneously, Rose (Jemima West), a naïve provincial, arrives searching for her mother, only to be pressed into service herself. The twists and turns of these three women’s lives are at the center of the series, although other girls as well as patrons are featured, and room is made for historical context as activists try to reenergize the recently crushed socialist Paris Commune. *Maison Close* is basically a melodramatic soap opera in 19th-century dress, with numerous boudoir scenes that are fairly steamy. It’s also well acted (especially by West), handsomely mounted, and burnished with luscious cinematography. Compiling all eight episodes from the debut season, extras include an illustrated booklet. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Manhattan: Season One ★★★1/2

Lionsgate, 622 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98, Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98

Set on the Los Alamos, NM, military base in the early 1940s, *Manhattan* centers on the

development of the atomic bomb. John Benjamin Hick-ey and Olivia Williams lead the ensemble cast as Frank Winter, the brilliant but combative leader of one of the two research teams, and his botanist wife, Liza, who is stifled in the chauvinist culture. Ashley Zukerman and Rachel Brosnahan play new arrivals whose experiences introduce the audience to the surrounding culture. The second original drama from the Chicago cable superstation WGN, *Manhattan* reaches the level of human drama, social commentary, and historical perspective of shows such as *Mad Men*, *Boardwalk Empire*, and *Masters of Sex*. Granted, some of the storylines feature minor stumbles, but at its best the series illuminates both the scientific challenges faced by the competing teams and the tensions between the military structure and the civilian scientists and families on the isolated base in the New Mexico desert as it explores the social world of wartime America (with all its prejudices and anxieties) while also illustrating the huge stakes of the project. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include episode commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Maude: The Complete Series ★★☆☆

Shout! Factory, 19 discs, 4,260 min., not rated, DVD: \$159.99

This first spin-off of Norman Lear's groundbreaking sitcom *All in the Family* went in an opposite direction from blue-collar bigot Archie Bunker, spotlighting Maude Findlay (Bea Arthur), Edith Bunker's outspoken, liberal-minded feminist cousin. Maude and her fourth husband, appliance store owner Walter (Bill Macy), live in a suburban home with her divorced daughter, Carol (Adrienne Barbeau), and grandson. Housekeeper Florida Evans (Esther Rolle), a character that would later spin-off into the series *Good Times*, is hired in the third episode, in which Maude also first delivers her signature line: "God'll get you for that, Walter." Like *All in the Family*, the show took on issues including race, equal rights, the sexual revolution, drug laws, alcoholism, prescription drug addiction, therapy, and—in a landmark two-part episode—abortion, while satirizing liberal piety and double standards. But it also examined marriage, divorce, and adult relationships in modern culture, often in bantering arguments with conservative neighbor Art Harmon (Conrad Bain). A time capsule of sorts, *Maude* is well-written and driven by strong performances, especially Arthur's, whose spiky, sardonic delivery helped define the program. After Rolle left, British actress Hermione Baddeley joined the



cast as the household's new maid, a vulgar, hard-drinking foil for Maude. In the final installments, Maude heads to Washington, D.C., to pursue a future in politics. Presenting all 141 episodes from the 1972–78 six-season run, extras include two unaired episodes, Maude's two appearances on *All in the Family*, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Mystery Science Theater 3000: XXXII ★★☆☆

Shout! Factory, 4 discs, 480 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.98

The fact that this is the 32nd collection of MST3K episodes speaks not only to the dedicated original viewers who kept the show alive as a pop favorite of the 1990s, but also to the timeless mainstream appeal of its ingenious comedic premise of wiseacres (human and robot) stuck on a space station who crack jokes while watching bad movies. The four installments here feature original janitor/host Joel Hodgson and his replacement, Mike Nelson, leading bots Crow and Tom Servo in the peanut gallery. The set kicks off with 1969's *Space Travelers* (aka *Marooned*), directed by John Sturges and starring Richard Crenna, Gene Hackman, and James Franciscus as stranded astronauts aboard a malfunctioning spacecraft, with Gregory Peck as the NASA chief determined to get them back to safety. Next up is the original *Hercules* (1958), from Italian filmmaker Pietro Francisci, with Steve Reeves in the title role, muscling his way through the legendary labors. *Radar Secret Service* (1950), helmed by Sam Newfield, stars Ralph Byrd as one of a group of "radar men" who use nifty gadgets to track down hijackers of weapons-grade uranium. Finally, the 1970 TV movie *San Francisco International*, directed by John Llewellyn Moxey, features Pernell Roberts as an airport manager. What ties them together is the fact that all are equally worthy of ridicule, which is here peppered with pop arcana and showbiz trivia. Although carefully crafted by a clever writing staff, the nonstop riffing on dialogue, action, characters, acting, and the preposterousness of the plots comes across as completely improvised. *MST3K* is a cult classic ripe for continual discovery by new generations of fans. Compiling four episodes from 1992–94, extras include featurettes on the films. Recommended. (T. Fry)



Nurse Jackie: Season Six ★★☆☆1/2

Lionsgate, 336 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$29.98

What *Nurse Jackie* consistently captures is the insidious heart of addiction, which makes people return repeatedly to situations that consistently end badly. The insanity of Jackie Peyton's belief that engaging in the same behaviors will lead to different results is still present in the terrifically entertain-

ing sixth season. Star Edie Falco has pretty much left Carmela Soprano behind; she is Jackie in full. With its light comic touch, the show can sometimes seem a little glib, but Jackie's journey remains both joyous and heartbreaking, whether it's pill popping, romantic adventures, parenting challenges, tested friendships, or workplace shenanigans. This set displays a lot of growth for most of the characters: daughter Grace (Ruby Jerins) is steering into rebellious Jackie patterns; boyfriend Frank (Adam Ferrara) is bruised by Jackie's increasingly erratic antics; Zoey's (Merritt Wever) adulation of Jackie is heading for a big fall; and Jackie herself digs a pathological hole that will swallow her yet again. A moving appearance by an alcoholic ex-nun gives Jackie great pause, as does a slacker drug dealer who becomes her superficial BFF. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2014 sixth season (the series is scheduled to end with the seventh), extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. (T. Fry)



Olive Kitteridge ★★☆☆1/2

HBO, 2 discs, 240 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.99

Lisa Cholodenko, director of *High Art* and *The Kids Are All Right*, is yet another major filmmaker who has turned to the small screen to direct intimate human stories. *Olive Kitteridge*, adapted from the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Elizabeth Strout as a four-part miniseries for HBO that aired in 2014, covers 25 years in the life of the title character, a middle-school math teacher played by Frances McDormand with a perpetually dour expression. Prickly, sharp-tongued Olive finds fault in nearly everything and everyone, almost as if to balance the optimism and generosity of her husband, Henry (Richard Jenkins), who receives the worst of her derisive comments. Themes of depression and mental illness, as well as loss and guilt, run throughout the story, in which Olive seems to use her cutting and brutally frank remarks to keep emotion at arm's length. But she's also a caring person (albeit in her own way), who performs small acts of kindness without preamble. Olive is both entertaining and infuriating without ever becoming a cartoon curmudgeon, and Cholodenko slowly draws us beneath the surface to see her underlying humanity while detailing disappointments, frustrations, and losses; the emotional depth of her marriage; and earlier events that put her present life into perspective. Patient viewers will be rewarded with a rich story and complicated characters



in this fine series costarring Bill Murray and John Gallagher Jr. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Outlander: Season One, Volume One ★★½

Sony, 2 discs, 459 min., not rated, DVD: \$38.99, Blu-ray: \$45.99



Adapted from the best-selling novels by Diane Galbaldon, this handsomely produced, critically-acclaimed show—the Starz channel's most successful original series to date—mixes historical drama, romantic adventure, and time travel. Caitriona Balfe stars as British nurse Claire Randall, who is reunited with her husband, Frank (Tobias Menzies), at the end of World War II for a second honeymoon in the Scottish Highlands—until a ceremony at an ancient Druid shrine sends her back to 1743. Claire lands in the midst of war between the occupying British army and rogue Highland clans, where she must depend on her wits and historical knowledge to survive and try to return to her 20th-century life, especially since both sides believe that this strong-willed British woman is a spy. Filmed on location in Scotland, *Outlander* is an intelligent, compelling series, full of historical and cultural detail, that manages to embrace the idea of magic yet remain grounded in a physical world where violence and death are ever present. Ronald D. Moore, who rebooted the award-winning *Battlestar Galactica* for Syfy, developed the TV adaptation, and Balfe gives Claire a courage and strength that makes her character matter to us. Compiling the first eight episodes from the debut 2014 season, extras include behind-the-scene featurettes (exclusive to the Blu-ray release are additional featurettes and deleted scenes). Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

A Place to Call Home: Season 1 ★★½

Acorn, 4 discs, 591 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99



Set in the 1950s (featuring a background score filled with pop standards from the period), this handsome Australian soap opera series centers on Sarah Adams (Marta Dusseldorp), who after spending two decades in Europe, meets the members of the wealthy Bligh family while earning her way back to her homeland by serving as a nurse on the ship transporting them all Down Under. During the voyage, she not only catches the eye of widower George Bligh (Brett Climo), but also prevents his troubled son James (David Berry)—returning home with new bride Olivia (Arianwen Parkes-Lockwood)—from jumping overboard. Her knowledge of James's suicide attempt earns Sarah the enmity of George's imperi-

ous mother and family matriarch, Elizabeth (Noni Hazlehurst), who is determined to drive Sarah back to Europe for fear that she will air the Blighs' dirty laundry (and marry George). Other characters introduced along the way include a doctor who hires Sarah but is pressured by Elizabeth to fire her, Sarah's nosey landlady, James's sister Anna (who falls for a poor local farmer's son whom the Blighs consider an unsuitable marital prospect), and George's sister-in-law Regina (whom Elizabeth enlists to dig up dirt on Sarah, a task made easier by the fact that Sarah has secrets). While the plot twists are pretty predictable in this series that is reminiscent of old American primetime soaps, it's also a nicely mounted production featuring a strong cast. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2013 debut season, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Red Road: The Complete First Season ★★½

Anchor Bay, 2 discs, 264 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98



SundanceTV continues to establish its own brand of intelligent, compelling TV shows, here serving up an atmospheric series set in rural New Jersey, where small-town cop Harold (Martin Henderson) enters into a wary partnership with Phillip (Jason Momoa), a drug-dealing ex-con from a nearby Native American community, to cover up a hit-and-run that Harold's wife, Jean (Julianne Nicholson), committed during what seems to have been a mental breakdown. An uneasy relationship exists between the town and the tribe, the latter fighting for formal recognition from the government while also struggling with poverty and crime—a situation exacerbated by a forbidden romance between Harold's daughter, Rachel (Allie Gonino), and Phillip's half-brother, Junior (Kiowa Gordon). The physically imposing Momoa, who was the barbarian king Khal Drogo in *Game of Thrones*, adds a dangerous edge, radiating anger and resentment with his every glance. *The Red Road* has the look and feel of an American independent feature, and boasts strong supporting turns by Tamara Tunie, Tom Sizemore, Mike Farrell, and Lisa Bonet (Momoa's real-life wife). Compiling all six episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Red Tent ★★½

Sony, 176 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.99

Anita Diamant's bestselling novel inspired this two-part Old Testament miniseries, which exalts sisterhood but also almost plays like a tribute to polygamy, since each wife in the story brings something beneficial to the central marriage. The action begins with the arrival of Jacob, a shepherd, who marries all four of his boss's daughters: Leah, Rachel,

Zilpah, and Bilhah. Years later, more recognizable actors take on the primary roles. Leah (Minnie Driver), the oldest spouse, has borne Jacob (Iain Glenn) seven sons, while Rachel (Morena Baccarin), his favorite, gives birth to Joseph, who has the gift of prophecy. Leah then bears Dinah (played as an adult by Rebecca Ferguson), who narrates the tale. As a girl, Dinah spends much of her time in the red tent, learning about her ancestors from her mother and the sister-wives. A disagreement with his father-in-law leads Jacob and his tribe to return to his ancestral home, where Dinah meets her fortune-teller grandmother, Rebecca (Debra Winger). When the clan reaches its final destination, Dinah tangles with a royal family, falling under the control of an Egyptian queen (Hiam Abbass), while Joseph (Will Tudor) ends up as a slave, although both will rise from their lowly stations. With the exception of Tudor, whose performance ranges from naturalistic to over the top, this 2014 Lifetime channel production avoids the histrionics that have plagued several made-for-TV biblical adaptations. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)



Serangoon Road ★★½

Acorn, 3 discs, 557 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.99



This 2013 co-production of HBO Asia and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation is basically an old-fashioned PI procedural resembling many American network action shows. The only real distinction is the setting—Singapore in the 1960s, a time when the city is beset by gangs, economic unrest, and the machinations of agents from both the CIA and MI6. At the center is Sam Callaghan (Don Hany), a former army intelligence officer who's tapped by Patricia Cheng (Joan Chen)—now running the detective agency of her recently murdered husband—to investigate particularly sensitive cases. Some of the episodes involve political skulduggery, smuggling, and terrorism, but one resorts to a particularly hoary plot, in which Sam tries to prove that an old friend didn't commit a murder—a task made difficult because the man suffers from amnesia about the night of the crime. The stories also depend heavily on prolonged fistfights—at least one per episode—while making room for a couple of sidekicks and a romantic triangle consisting of Sam, an erstwhile flame, and her powerful husband. *Serangoon Road's* convincing period detail lends it an unusual ambience, but otherwise this show is pretty much formulaic. Compiling all 10 episodes from the first season, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, photo gallery, and production notes. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Shameless: The Complete Fourth Season

★★★

Warner, 642 min., not rated, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$49.99



The Gallagher clan's strife and successes grow farther afield in this latest season relating the stormy saga of a proudly pugilistic Irish-American Chicago family. As patriarch Frank, William H. Macy takes even more of a passive role as a result of a rotten liver that has him living out his last days (perhaps) in his son's bunk bed. Even so, he finds ever more inventive ways to keep injecting himself with alcohol. De facto matriarch Fiona (Emmy Rossum) enjoys a great job and a love life that's looking up, but everyone knows that having your boss as a boyfriend probably won't end well. Lip (Jeremy Allen White) discovers that cockiness can be a liability in college, Debbie (Emma Kenney) jumps onto the emotional roller-coaster of adolescence, and younger brother Carl (Ethan Cutkosky) comes up with a clever (and criminal) way to secure drug money for Frank. The Gallaghers and their über-motley extended tribe are sometimes hard to like, but the working-class, bootstrap grit that drives them is equally tough to resist as they continue to embark on rudely funny but often moving experiences. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2014 fourth season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes. Recommended. (T. Fry)

Sons of Anarchy: The Final Season

★★★
Fox, 831 min., not rated, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$59.99



This drama revolving around family ties, loyalty, betrayal, and bad-ass violence in an outlaw motorcycle gang in a small Southern California town grew from being a cult show to a surprise hit for the FX network over its seven season run. What began as *Hamlet* on Harleys evolved into a leather jacket soap opera and idealized portrait of underworld brotherhood under fire, with intense club president Jax (Charlie Hunnam) making plans to get the band out of criminal activities but getting pulled back in by blowback from his allies and by the death of his wife—killed by his own mother, Gemma (Katey Sagal). With another gang war underway, Jax attempts to sever ties with the gun-running business and protect his men from powerful Oakland operations through new affiliations, betrayals of old partners, and another round of killings. Creator Kurt Sutter shaped romanticized criminality into a brutal, blood-soaked melodrama of retribution and redemption, and here delivers an operatic finish to the show, while also providing happy endings for a few deserving characters. Com-

pling all 13 episodes from the 2014 seventh season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Turn: Washington's Spies, The Complete First Season

★★★1/2
Anchor Bay, 3 discs, 452 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.99



AMC's provocative dramatic series is inspired by the true story of Abraham Woodhull, head of the real-life Culper Ring that supplied intelligence to the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Jamie Bell plays Woodhull, a farmer recruited to use his smuggling lines to serve the cause of independence, while his town magistrate father (Kevin McNally) is a British loyalist. The good guys and bad guys are pretty clear-cut: the Brits, for the most part, are brutal and cruel and they treat the patriots as criminals rather than enemy soldiers, while the rebel sympathizers are largely moral folks caught in a difficult position. *Turn* has its share of romantic and dramatic complications and doesn't feature splashy action and spectacle, but it's an intelligent, handsomely produced series, full of interesting detail, that outlines how the civilian spy network was created and operated under the noses of the occupying British soldiers. Along the way, the show also explores the conflicted loyalties of those in the middle—friends, neighbors, even family members—and the hypocrisy on both sides on the issue of slavery. History is humanized here—viewers witness the iconic crossing of the Delaware from the perspective of a soldier in the back of the armada—in a drama that highlights the personal costs borne by those who fought. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Veep: The Complete Third Season

★★★
HBO, 2 discs, 307 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.99



The third season of HBO's insider political comedy starring Emmy-winner Julia Louis-Dreyfus as Selina Meyer, vice president of the United States, begins with Selina eyeing the Oval Office when the president (still unseen) decides not to run for another term. Even before she announces her candidacy, her staff members start jockeying for power and position on the campaign team, spending as much time bickering among themselves as managing her itinerary and writing statements that sound impressive while offering no substantial information about her position. The series was created by British satirist

Armando Iannucci, who finds humor not in political issues but in the process: bureaucratic dysfunction, mistakes made by functionaries, the overriding focus on PR over action, and the personalities with competing interests who trip over one another while trying to get something accomplished. *Veep* boasts witty, intelligent scripts and a strong supporting cast, including Anna Chlumsky as Selina's chief of staff, Amy; Tony Hale as her socially awkward aide, Gary; Matt Walsh as her director of communications, Mike; and Reid Scott as Mike's deputy, Dan. This set ends with a twist just as the primaries get underway. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2014 third season, extras include episode commentaries and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Z Nation: Season 1

★★1/2
Universal, 3 discs, 560 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98



Is there such a thing as too many zombies? Not according to the Syfy channel, which serves up this answer to *The Walking Dead* (et al.) with a more flamboyant and joyously comic book-like gore-fest of survivors battling the living dead in a post-epidemic U.S. It's not that *Z Nation* doesn't care about drama or nail-biting suspense, but it doesn't take itself too seriously, adopting a B-movie approach to the story and special effects (with splattering brains, black blood, and gross-out maiming). The narrative arc follows a ragtag band of ZN1 virus survivors escorting an ex-con guinea pig who unwittingly became immune and is the only hope for a cure. Led by tough former National Guard trooper Warren (Kellita Smith), the group wrangles its surly and resentful patient zero, Murphy (Keith Allan), on an odyssey from New York to California, where there may or may not be a research facility able to synthesize a vaccine from his blood. Their cross-country adventure naturally brings them into contact with hordes—HORDES!—of fast-moving zombies. While often outrageous and fun, *Z Nation* will have to be taken with the proverbial grain of salt by serious zombie connoisseurs. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2014 first season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a gag reel. A strong optional purchase. (T. Fry)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during May and June, including: *The Bridge: The Complete Season 2*, *Foyle's War: Set 8*, *Joe 90: The Complete Series*, *Metal Hurlant Chronicles: The Complete Series*, *Que Pobres tan Ricos*, 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

Barbie in Princess Power ★★★

(2015) 74 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$26.98. Universal Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

This latest addition to the computer-animated series ups the grrl-power ante with a contemporary tale featuring Barbie as Kara, a lively princess whose parents do not approve of her often-dangerous antics (including a fiasco with a jet-pack and several run-ins with a particular tree). Preferring excitement to simply cutting ribbons, Kara's plans for a community garden are derailed after she is kissed by a whimsical butterfly that was specially made from a sinister baron's magical elixir that he hopes to use to take over the kingdom. The bug's smooch gives Kara super magical powers, and—with the help of best buds Makayla and Madison—she hides her new identity as the heroic "Super Sparkle" who protects the townspeople from petty crimes. However, trouble arrives in the form of a jealous cousin who becomes "Dark Sparkle," and a nosy blogger who blows Kara's cover. Featuring a variety of upbeat pop songs and some solid jokes (the realm-threatening volcano is called "Mount Dormant"), this enjoyable entry in the series includes bonus features such as music videos, outtakes, and a webisode of *Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse*. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Blaze of Glory: A Mini-Movie ★★★

(2014) 68 min. DVD: \$14.98. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This hour-plus premiere episode from the Nickelodeon-aired animated series *Blaze and the Monster Machines* stars monster truck Blaze and his best pal, AJ, the latter an 8-year-old boy who drives Blaze through his many adventures. Blaze, a selfless and kind hero in a world of monster truck characters, wishes he could participate in a monster truck rally and race over an amazing course. When the villainous Crusher captures the other racer trucks in giant floating bubbles, Blaze and AJ come to the rescue, covering all kinds of terrain in order to free the other vehicles in time to get back to the race. In a companion bonus episode, "The Driving Force," Blaze and AJ must beat Crusher in a race to a tropical forest where another truck has lost a piston. Featuring crazy robots and pineapple-shooting cannons, as well as interactive interludes in which young viewers are encouraged to shout out helpful instructions to aid Blaze in carrying out his missions, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Boom Snot Twitty ★★★

(2014) 4 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-63379-220-3.

Narrated by Susie Berneis, this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2014 picture book by author Doreen Cronin and illustrator Renata Liwska centers on the titular friends—Boom the bear, Snot the snail, and Twitty the bird—who are relaxing by a tree. Each has a different idea about what to do as a super windy storm approaches ("let's go," "let's stay," "let's wait") and they wind up briefly separated (having taken alternate paths to run, hide, and just be overwhelmed by the rain). When the sun comes out, the friends rejoin, but while two of them are getting sleepy, little Snot—who sports cute red bows on her antennae—has other ideas. Backed by a jaunty soundtrack and featur-

ing a read-along option, this charming ode to friendship is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Daredevil: The Daring Life of Betty Skelton ★★★

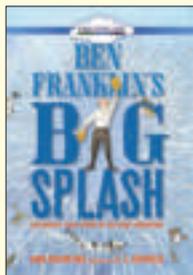
(2014) 11 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-63379-133-6.

Based on the 2013 picture book by author and illustrator Meghan McCarthy, this iconographic-animated adaptation features narration by Susie Berneis and very little music but some sound effects such as whirling propellers and men's laughter. Acrobatics pilot and land speed record holder Betty Skelton (1926-2011) is the subject of this biographical profile that finds young Betty playing with toy planes—not dolls—during the early 1930s, as military pilots fly overhead at her home in Pensacola, FL. At age 8, Skelton would send letters to plane companies, by 12 she was flying solo (even though it was illegal), and at the age of 16 she obtained her pilot's license. Although Skelton wanted to fly in the Navy—since only men were commercial pilots—she instead took to stunt work, flying with her dog beside her, and even barefoot, eventually getting her own "Li'l Stinker" plane ("I didn't just sit in that little airplane...I wore it."). Weary of the prejudice that women faced in the profession, Skelton retired in the 1950s to enter the fast lane of racecar driving, as well as dabbling in boat jumping, and even training with the Mercury Seven astronaut crew. A spirited portrait of a woman who "just like(d) to go fast," this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Dora and Friends ★★★

(2014) 92 min. DVD: \$14.98. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This sequel to the popular Peabody Award-winning *Dora the Explorer* preschool series turns Dora into a 'tween with four new explorer girlfriends and a boy buddy named Pablo, while retaining the earlier show's



Ben Franklin's Big Splash ★★★1/2

(2015) 9 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-63379-445-0.

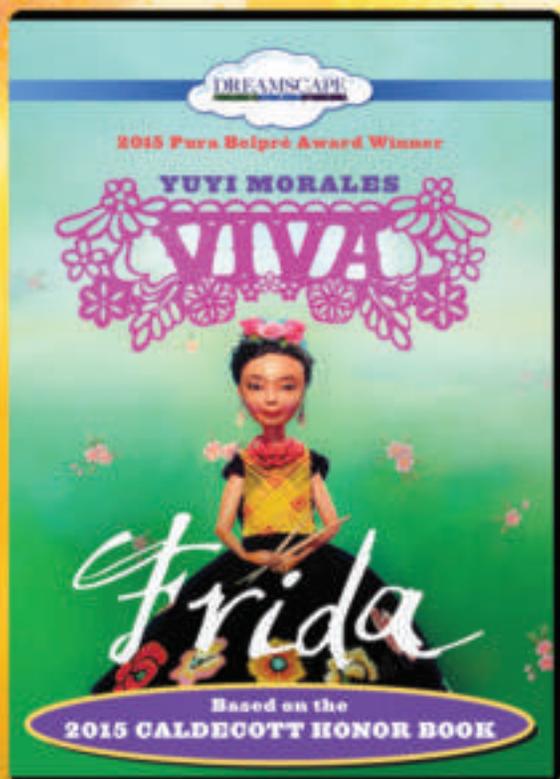
An iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2014 picture book written by Barb Rosenstock and illustrated by S.D. Schindler, *Ben Franklin's Big Splash*—narrated by Susie Berneis—looks at a specific event in Franklin's boyhood, when the 11-year-old tried to create a method for people to swim like fish. An avid swimmer himself, Franklin observes the way that fish glide through water with their various fins. Inspired by thoughts of artificial fins for a human's hands and feet, he finds a little bit of success paddling his way down river currents, but is soon exhausted. Undaunted, Franklin channels his early energy as an inventor toward other areas, and young viewers will see how he spent his life solving problems, creating American institutions such as the postal service, and serving as one of the new nation's Founding Fathers. Mixing delightful imagery with an engaging story, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (T. Keogh)

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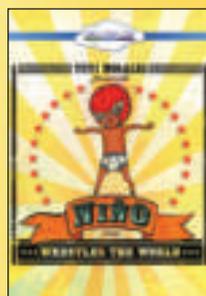
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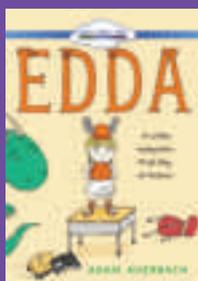
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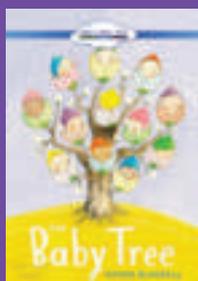


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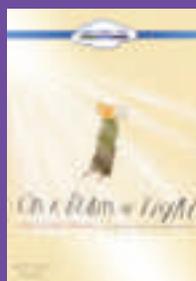
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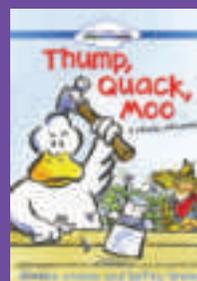
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focus on bilingual Spanish-building with high-energy songs, repetition, and interactive questions for viewers. The first of four compiled episodes, "We Save a Pirate Ship!" finds Dora using her head to transform a rowboat while working on a fundraising project to turn an old fort into a museum, after which she comes across real treasure and actual (singing, not too mean) pirates, with a little help from her "Map App" (our little Dora now has a smartphone). Dora also now has a special charm bracelet, allowing her to glean needed items, such as in "The Magic Ring," in which a rubber duck float comes in handy in a story about an ancient treasure and deductive reasoning. Also, the new Dora and her pals are very community-minded: in "The Royal Ball" they create a costume party for soccer kids who help clean up around town, and in "Dance Party," they raise money for a new dance school, while also bringing back grooves to a town that outlawed *baila* (dance). Colorful and engaging, this entry from the popular series is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Getting Through It: Kids Talk About Divorce ★★½

(2014) 19 min. DVD: \$139.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-019-6.

Hosted by Ariana Morales, this short guidance program features wordless vignettes to illustrate the stories of five young people who talk about their experiences with their parents' divorces. Also featuring commentary from expert Dr. Valerie Raymond, *Getting Through It* covers topics including the causes of separation and family conflict, receiving the bad news, working out a new living schedule (and the challenges faced when older children want to spend more time with peer groups than parents), and dealing with inevitable new relationships. Along the way, the program offers solid advice on keeping communication open and attempting to make a breakup into a positive experience. But this is not sugarcoated by any means: the participants relate stories of feeling guilt, suffering stress from arguments, and trying to balance the wishes of both parents. Ending on a hopeful note ("whatever happens, in the end, it's going to be okay"), this ALSC Notable Video selection is highly recommended. Aud: E, I, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Me and My Moulton ★★½

(2014) 13 min. DVD: \$129. DRA. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Writer-director Torill Kove's Oscar-nominated short film takes a cheeky look at the life of a little girl living in small-town Norway, circa 1965. The 7-year-old middle sister protagonist of *Me and My Moulton* is not altogether happy with the current state of affairs: she and her siblings absolutely need a bike to be like their peers and even offer

to "share one." Her bespectacled modernist architect parents pay no mind to following along with the crowd, but friends raise their eyebrows at the family's 2nd-floor duplex (where the girls often fall out of the avant-garde three-legged furniture), and the little girl herself has qualms about her father's prominent moustache in a town of bare faces ("It makes my stomach hurt"). Nevertheless, this unorthodox family enjoys a strange warmth, especially when compared to some others. Featuring imaginative vignettes, brightly-colored art, narration by Andrea Bræin Hovig, and jazzy music by Kevin Dean, this cute slice-of-life tale—an ALSC Notable Video selection—is highly recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

No Fish Where to Go ★★½

(2014) 13 min. DVD: \$129. DRA. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Based on the 2003 book by Marie-Francine Hébert, this strange fable is co-directed by Nicola Lemay and illustrator Janice Nadeau. A globe-spinning teacher is barely acknowledged as two best friends from rival clans in his class giggle and whisper-chant their ode to each other ("we are two and two are one...forever"). When the girls' fathers come to pick them up from school, our little heroine's doctor dad only receives a glowering "harummph" from her bestie's red-shoed parent. In fact, glares and slammed doors are the usual responses that non-red-shoe wearers receive when coming into contact with red-shoe-wearers ("What are the red shoes for?" the protagonist girl asks, "A carnival?"). Although the girl sleeps soundly, her parents worry at night, thinking that they will leave just as soon as the father finds a replacement physician for the town. But then the decision is taken from them when the red-shoe-wearers break into the house and separate the family. An uneasy string-heavy soundtrack adds to the disturbing watercolor images, which include a bird flying away with its nest on its back, a house being kicked over to expose plant-like roots, and the school being set on fire. A poignant, thought-provoking,

haunting story about intolerance, this ALSC Notable Video selection is highly recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

One Cool Friend ★★★

(2014) 13 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-545-67553-6.

Featuring three narrators, writer Toni Buzzeo and illustrator David Small's 2012 picture book was a Caldecott Honor Book as well as a *New York Times* bestseller. Somewhat visually reminiscent of *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, this mostly black-and-white animated tale (with dabs of color for the boy's pink cheeks and his father's red facial hair) focuses on proper young lad Elliot, who wears a tuxedo during a family fun day at the aquarium. Elliot does not find the other children entertaining, but he does perk up at the sight of penguins. A miscommunication when asking about penguins (his distracted father hands him money to buy a stuffed one) results in Elliot bringing home a real penguin in his backpack. Dubbing his new bird buddy Magellan, the duo enjoy each other's company, including an info-gathering trip to the library. But Magellan's overnight munchies on the family's seafood and a bathtub diving episode ultimately lead Elliot's father to suspect that something fishy is going on... Also featuring a read-along option, this cute tale—an ALSC Notable Video selection—is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Super Sentai Zyuranger: The Complete Series ★★★

(1992) 10 discs. 996 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$54.99. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).

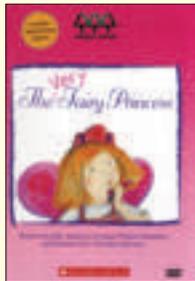
Behold in its original form (no English-language dubbing even) the rambunctious live-action 1992-93 Japanese children's-TV fantasy-action series, from which mayhem f/x and costume-stunt scenes were borrowed—and additional material extensively reshot/rewritten—before being unleashed on the West as *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. Some may detect Shinto-religion underpin-



The Museum ★★★★★

(2014) 5 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-962-0.

In this iconographic-animated adaptation of author Susan Verde and illustrator Peter H. Reynolds's 2013 picture book, narrator Elizabeth Cottle winningly provides the voice of a pig-tailed young girl who absolutely *loves* art. Clad in a cute striped shirt, the ebullient heroine bounces, glides, frolics, poses, and twirls her way through an art museum. "I cannot stifle my reaction...my body just goes into action!", she exclaims as she appreciates various works (including Rodin's "The Thinker" and Van Gogh's "The Starry Night"). She also notes that an empty canvas is "the strangest art I've ever seen" (good eye on this kid). A refreshing, infectious tale that imaginatively captures one youngster's excitement over art, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



The Very Fairy Princess ★★★

(2014) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-545-69505-3.

Co-authored by the inimitable Julie Andrews and her daughter Emma Walton Hamilton, this animated short is based on the titular 2010 picture book, from the duo's series with illustrator Christine Davenier. Young narrator Alison Cordaro voices Geraldine, a little girl who wears wings and a crown and has a "sparkly feeling of just knowing in my heart" that she's a fairy princess. Following the creative and confident Geraldine through a typical school day, *The Very Fairy Princess*

finds our heroine overturning preconceived notions about princesses (sliding down the banister is a must; scabby knees, dirty fingernails, and sneakers are normal), and drawing eye-rolling amused looks from her brother, best friend, etc. After her ballet class (and a pink lemonade and sugar cookie snack), Geraldine attends to her royal duties (building tiny garden houses for fellow fairies) and looks forward to Daddy coming home—the one person who truly understands that she's a princess. Featuring engaging music by Scotty Huff, a read-along option, and a featurette with the authors (who have written more than two dozen books together), this is recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

nings in this complete series set of 50 episodes, in which super-powered young princes and princesses (no schoolboy secret-identity stuff) are actually long-dormant "dinosaur rangers," spiritually bound to a pantheon of prehistoric animals/gods. All revive (the dinos in transforming-robot form) to battle the powerful, child-hating Witch Bandora ("Rita Repulsa" in the U.S. version) and her monster minions, who have returned to do mean stuff following 170 million years in space exile. The Zyurangers face off against an array of grotesque foes, many owing their origins to Greco-Roman mythology. The series also serves up odd nods here and there to Immanuel Velikovsky, golems, and popular Nippon theme parks. Juvenile collections should note that there is some PG-level swearing in the English subtitles. DVD extras include a panel discussion with the veteran Japanese performers. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

VeggieTales: Noah's Ark ★★★

(2015) 48 min. DVD: \$14.98. Big Idea Productions (avail. from most distributors).

Possibly due to DreamWorks's acquisition of the series, this latest addition to the long-running Christian children's show features spiffier animation and newly-colorful eyes for the anthropomorphic vegetables who are given to punning ("We should address the elephant in the room....Hey Roger!" to a nearby pachyderm). Focusing on Psalm 33:4 ("For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does."), this take on the story of Noah's ark focuses on newlywed Shem (voiced by Wayne Brady), who is distressed by his father Noah's (a mustachioed grape) decision to build an ark right on the fresh-from-the-honeymoon couple's home site. Even though Pa knows it sounds weird to construct a ship to protect the family

and animals from a flood, it's God's plan. Shem is discouraged even after the big boat is complete, but following some famous last words—"It's not gonna rain"—he begins to see the light, so to speak. The dramatic initial storm and flooding sequence may be a little scary for younger viewers, as the upside-down orange slice ark is buffeted around, but kids will enjoy the 40 days and nights of family and animal shenanigans and songs. Also featuring the voice of Christian pop singer Jaci Velasquez, this spruced-up next-generation entry in the series is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Be Safe—Teaching Edition: Movie & Companion Curriculum ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$74.95. Camino Cinema (dist. by The AV Cafe). PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9768222-2-6.

Aimed at teens and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), this helpful primer carefully explains protocols for police-and-civilian interactions and communication. The phrase "to be safe" is a mantra in this multi-part program, which offers a general explanation for why we have laws and why we need to know how to conduct ourselves in simple situations with law enforcement (getting stopped for a traffic violation, for instance). Created by ASD expert Emily Iland, the program also explores more complicated scenarios (such as being detained and handcuffed because one resembles a suspect), while also covering the finer points of cooperating with police—e.g., letting an officer know about a disability, or knowing not to pet a K9 police dog—as various scenarios are acted out using real police officers and actors.



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The major advice for staying safe is to do what one is told and not try to run from the police. Also featuring a curriculum on a bonus CD-ROM with games, activities, visual tools, and self-disclosure and emergency forms, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (T. Keogh)

Mind Zone ★★★

(2014) 50 min. DVD: \$25 (\$275 w/PPR). J Haaken Productions.

Filmmaker Jan Haakan's somewhat scattershot documentary partially overlaps with territory and issues covered in nonfiction films such as *The Soldier's Heart* (VL-9/05) and *Wartorn 1861-2010* (VL-9/11), exploring the psychological stress of waging war and the U.S. military's current practices regarding what used to be called "shellshock." Here, a new group of troops prepares for Afghanistan, among them the 113th Army Combat Stress Control detachment, whose mission is to implement a mental-resilience component of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program (surely a step up from Gen. Patton just slapping G.I.s in the infirmary). Naturally, the program boasts a great acronym—BICEPS (Brevity, Immediacy, Contact, Expectancy, Proximity, Simplicity)—but does it really help soldiers wounded in mind and body? Home-front psychologists are skeptical about the military's solutions, reminding viewers that unprecedented repeated tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan are terra incognita in the fight against PTSD. Meanwhile, returning veterans, some with fearful mental and physical scars, are introduced to a virtual-reality role-playing game that has surreal-absurdist overtones. Offering a questioning look at military efforts to deal with combat-related stress, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Song of the New Earth ★★★

(2014) 87 min. DVD: \$39.99 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$250 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. *Collective Eye*.

Ward Serrill's documentary traces Tom Kenyon's journey from Nashville musician to internationally celebrated sound healer and psychotherapist. Kenyon's Acoustic Brain Research, founded in 1983, has made intriguing discoveries about the effects of sound and music on the brain. In performance, Kenyon creates a diverse aural experience using bells, drums, a "singing bowl," and his own vocal prowess to recreate animal and nature sounds. The results can either be therapeutic or baffling, depending on one's approach to the subject; indeed, *Song of the New Earth* will likely polarize viewers into those who believe that Kenyon is bringing a profound new dimension to our understanding of the human experience, and those who think he is a New Age kook. The latter camp will find high-grade ammo in Kenyon's talk of encounters with aliens during his meditation spells and his repeated visions of whales in

flight (both of which are visualized here in animation). On the flip side, however, Kenyon is an articulate advocate of the importance of sound in achieving a body-mind-spirit balance, and his integration of contemporary sonic research with ancient traditions (Tibetan Buddhism, shamanism, Egyptian alchemy, etc.) is often fascinating. Bottom line: if viewers approach Kenyon with an open mind on some topics and a grain of salt on others, they may find themselves both entertained and enlightened. DVD extras include additional teachings by Kenyon, and a guide to overtone chanting. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Where Am I? ★★★

(2013) 43 min. DVD: \$250. Dreamfilm Productions (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-94154-518-1.

Originally aired as an episode of CBC's *The Nature of Things with David Suzuki*, Bruce Mohun's documentary *Where Am I?* attempts

to answer the age-old question of why some people have an excellent sense of direction but others constantly become lost whenever they leave home. In trying to understand the secrets of navigation, the film offers a wide variety of explanations, ranging from complex theories of neuroscience to elementary clues that help folks get between Points A and B. Complicating matters is the advent of GPS technology, which enables people to turn off their inner navigation skills, essentially letting a computer handle this function. The film also details how insects adapt to finding their way to and from their nests, and (in a remarkable sequence) looks at how an Inuit hunter can drive a snowmobile across the Arctic and know directions by assessing patterns in the vast snowy landscapes. Offering a fine introduction to understanding brain functions within distinctive environmental situations, this intriguing and entertaining documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Loyola Films Collection ★★★

(2014) 92 min. DVD: \$14.99. *Gospel Films Archive* (dist. by Vision Video).

Only eight films remain from a series of 16 original Bible-based shorts produced by Loyola University in 1946. Four of those surviving works—all directed by veteran B-movie filmmaker John T. Coyle (*The Living Christ Series*)—are compiled in this archival collection. Shot in black-and-white, this set kicks off with "The Boyhood of Jesus," an account of Christ's birth up through his experience at the age of 12 when he spoke with religious elders (the young actor playing the pre-pubescent Jesus has a slightly otherworldly quality that suits a self-aware messiah). "The Good Samaritan" offers a straightforward retell-

ing of the story of the put-upon Samaritan who stops to help a fallen man on the road to Jericho. "The Rich Young Man" recounts the parable about the wealthy landowner who is told by Christ that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Finally, "The Unmerciful Servant" dramatizes Jesus's parable about true forgiveness, in which a servant whose bad debt is dismissed learns nothing, since he throws a fellow servant into prison for a small, unpaid sum. A historically interesting collection of films—made through a joint venture between the Hollywood filmmaking community and religious academia—this archival series is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



The Ride: A Christmas Eve Parable ★★★

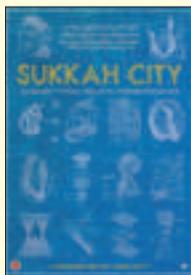
(2013) 33 min. DVD: \$9.99. *Vertical Church Films* (dist. by Vision Video).

Bored by the endless droning of his customers, a Chicago cabbie on Christmas Eve is eager to get home. After dropping off what he hopes is his last passenger, the call he's been dreading comes in: dispatch needs him to pick up one more fare. Before the evening is over, the ride will change the lives of both the driver (Kirk B.R. Woller) and the passenger (Brad Heller). Deeply troubled, the surly pickup asks to be driven to a bridge over a cold waterway across town, and as the journey progresses, the man behind the wheel finds himself in an unexpected situation. Filmmaker Dallas Jenkins weaves elements of the prodigal son narrative into this brief but well-crafted and touching Christian drama, centering on two individuals: one overcome with guilt and depression for his transgressions, who wants to end it all because he feels that his family will never welcome him back, and a Christian who needs to be shocked into remembering what grace is all about. Winner of several film festival honors, *The Ride* is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: P. (C. Block)

Sukkah City ★★★1/2

(2014) 67 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Jason Hutt's fascinating documentary centers on a compelling architectural project that marries the old with the new. Author Joshua Foer (*Moonwalking with Einstein*) organizes a competition in New York City to see who can design and create the most innovative and beautiful sukkah—a small hut that Jews traditionally build and live in for a week during the holiday of Sukkot. Although the basic parameters of a sukkah are widely known (and described in the Bible), much room remains for variations on the theme. Tired of seeing unimaginative versions of the sukkah around the city—made of plywood, tarpaulin, and the like—Foer put together the contest with a lot of help, including a jury of professional architects and critics. Out of a large number of submissions, 12 are chosen to be built and put on public display in Brooklyn. Hutt captures the jury's deliberations, but the bulk of the film follows the 12 design teams as they set about turning their visions into reality. The result is magnificent: a dozen unique representations of a sacred idea, made from materials that are often surprising (shims, wire, netting, an entire log). Along the way, *Sukkah City* offers stimulating reflections on ideas and arguments within the world of contemporary architecture. DVD extras include additional scenes, and a design gallery. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P, (T. Keogh)



Reunion ★★★

(2014) 55 min. DVD: \$14.99. Vision Video. SDH captioned.

In this documentary by Reuben Evans, Oregon couple Kim and Duane recount their experience as teens, when Kim became pregnant and the pair eventually gave up their daughter for adoption by a family in Seattle. Kim and Duane would marry and have more children, raising a family of their own. Years later, that first daughter, SaraAnn, tentatively reaches out to them via the Christian agency that brokered the adoption, and in time both families build a relationship that is heartening to see. A religious documentary, *Reunion* reminds viewers of just how flexible and emotionally durable people can be in the midst of a crisis, while also underscoring the concept that while situations may change, real grace and love can be enduring. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Unorthodox ★★★1/2

(2014) 50 min. DVD: \$199. DRA. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR.

Many modern Orthodox Jewish teens go to Israel following high school graduation for a year of religious studies before starting college, but not filmmaker Anna Wexler, who became an atheist when she was young. Her closest and equally rebellious friends, however, followed the custom and returned completely devoted to orthodoxy (the term “flipped out” is commonly used to refer to this transformation). Wondering how and why such a thing could happen, Wexler followed three contemporary students who went to Israel. Tzipi and Chaim are independent-minded, while Jake is committed to Judaism, but all say they don't want to “flip out.” Wexler documents three phases of the sojourn

abroad: ignoring school and experimenting with alcohol, drugs, and sex; becoming weary of the party scene and refocusing on religious studies; and finally making the commitment to faith. While the subjects vary in terms of how they experience these stages—Tzipi and Chaim become devout, while Jake remains firm in his belief—Wexler, who initially wonders if pressure from Israeli rabbis determines the religious evolution of young Jews, concludes that the explanation partially lies in simply having time for reflection before embarking upon adulthood. Along the way, Wexler interweaves her own spiritual journey, including how her relationship with her grandparents changes to the point where she can at least bear to be present for a Shabbos meal. A thoughtful and thought-provoking documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

YembiYembi: Unto the Nations ★★★

(2014) 30 min. DVD: \$12.99. Rough Acres Foundation (dist. by Vision Video).

Filmmaker Jesse Low's Christian documentary focuses on the colorful adventures of married American missionaries Brooks and Nina Buser, who left their comfortable San Diego life in the early 2000s to go to Papua, New Guinea, where they joined a new mission among the remote YembiYembi tribe. The film traces the hardships involved for the Busers in making both the move and the commitment to stay for years. But it also details the rewards that came with their methodical approach to integrating into the community and gaining trust through teaching the Bible. Cultural immersion, learning the language and customs, clearing an airfield, and building a solar-powered home were among the huge tasks before the Busers,

and along the way they won the confidence of the YembiYembi. Viewers will see footage of the Busers and other missionaries trying to explain the story of Christ's death and the concept of the Resurrection, although not everything was well-received by all of the native people (the Busers were the targets of death threats from non-believers). A solid and inspiring tale of a committed missionary couple, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

Blood ★★★

(2013) 59 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR.

Filming in black-and-white, director Alina Rudnitskaya's cinema vérité lens follows a group of feisty nurses and technicians in a mobile blood-collection squad as they make a circuit in the hinterlands of northwestern Russia. The people receive money when they “donate” plasma—ostensibly to help ensure that they are eating properly and maintaining their health—but many of the individuals here are clearly acting out of desperation for cash, and some are possibly infected. The nurses themselves have seen tainted blood come into the supply too often, and do not look forward to visiting certain towns that are notorious for HIV and hepatitis (but this is not all grim stuff; when the workday is over, the nurses can party and celebrate like any comrade). A political rally in which an orator calls out the government for sucking the blood of the people like leeches briefly offers a metaphorical twist, but overall this is a non-technical, insider glimpse of dedicated, unglamorous healthcare foot-soldiers in a formerly cloistered society. Viewers who are squeamish about needle-sticks will be relieved to hear that the phlebotomy scenes are fairly non-graphic. Offering an offbeat glimpse of life in a socially and economically transitioning Russia, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)

The Coal Miner's Day ★★★1/2

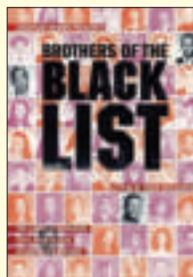
(2013) 80 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR.

August 29 is proclaimed throughout former states of the defunct Soviet Union as an occasion to honor the bravery of underground coal miners. Here, a celebration in the Ukraine bookends the cinema vérité ride-along, shot over the course of a year by French filmmaker Gaël Mocaër, following workers in the sometimes dangerous Buzhanska mine. “Is he doing a holiday film?” asks one miner about the never-shown (but much discussed) Mocaër. “No, I think it's professional. Anyway, everything is privatized in their country,” comes the response. In harrowing subterranean guided tours, the men strive to be on good behavior for French viewers (although they sometimes incorrectly believe

Brothers of the Black List ★★★

(2015) 74 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$249 w/PPR from *edu.passionriver.com*). Passion River (avail. from *www.midwesttape.com*).

Presented by Jonathan Demme, writer-director Sean Gallagher's documentary centers on one extreme example of U.S. law-enforcement racial profiling. In 1992, in the college town of Oneonta, NY, a senior citizen was brutally assaulted in a robbery. Although she barely saw her attacker, the woman said that his voice and a glimpse of his arm proved that he was black. This led to collusion between police and SUNY college administration in overwhelmingly white Oneonta to interrogate every Afro-American, African, and West Indian male student on campus—the area's only minority concentration. The search turned up no suspects but did create a longstanding climate of resentment, boycott threats by other campuses, and a historic civil rights lawsuit for damages. One black faculty member, SUNY student counselor Edward "Bo" Whaley, quit in protest, while others went with the flow and held their jobs. Although students on the "Black List" defiantly formed an association meant to keep the memory of 1992 alive, new arrivals are largely ignorant of the whole affair. Although the presentation often becomes a patchwork of pre-existing TV news exposés about the depressing case (key white people involved did not want to speak to Gallagher), this is certainly a timely documentary in light of the recent massive public outcry over a rash of police shootings of unarmed black men. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



that the camera is switched off). One miner pays emotional tribute to a now-deceased woman who was the mine's erstwhile doctor (he sings "Love Story" in her honor). Signs of old Soviet symbols and hardware may be a portent of pro-Russian rebelliousness in the Ukraine (although perhaps not), and the film creates a sympathetic vibe for these brave proletarians, who are proud of their dirty, sometimes absurdly primitive livelihood that draws on yesteryear's technology. Offering an intriguing glimpse of labor conditions in a far-flung area of Eastern Europe, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

DamNation ★★★

(2014) 87 min. DVD: \$295. Patagonia (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-94154-521-1.

Partially paddling the same waters as *Return of the River* (see review on this page), filmmakers Ben Knight (who also narrates and hosts) and Travis Rummel, both specialists in the fishing-adventure genre, depict the toll taken by rampant dam-building throughout the rapidly industrializing U.S. The once-triumphant engineering feats were instrumental in creating hydroelectric power and lakeside towns, but the dams also ruined salmon/trout runs, drowned sacred Native American sites, and occasionally caused flooding catastrophes (that well-engineered dams also prevented flooding isn't acknowledged). Recently, environmentalists—and the fact that aging dams are prohibitively costly to renovate—have inspired projects to raze the structures and let the rivers flow. Although the filmmakers seek input from the sputtering, offended pro-dam lobby, they obviously have no sympathy for that point of view, clearly siding with the "monkey

wrenching" of late eco-writer Edward Abbey, a vocal opponent of dams. Other authors interviewed include David James Duncan, Dylan Tomine, and Katie Lee, the latter showing her portfolio of nude pics she took in the "Eden" that was Glen Canyon before it was dammed. The filmmakers themselves boast of bending/breaking the law a few times, sneaking past safety barriers to lens a dam demolition close-up and also creating some epic anti-dam graffiti in Oregon. Featuring both the full-length original film and a 52-minute abridged version, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Letters from Pyongyang ★★★

(2014) 28 min. DVD: \$195. DRA. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Director Jason Lee's documentary short tells a touching story. As a child growing up in Montreal, Lee's father, Tae, would exchange letters with his own brother, Young Chol, in North Korea. After 25 years, those letters stopped, so Jason and Tae travel to Korea in an attempt to solve the mystery. They start by visiting Jeonju in South Korea, where Tae grew up with his nine brothers and sisters. In 1947, Tae's older brother went into exile for fear that his participation in opposition politics would put him and his family at risk. His wife and younger brother, Young Hong, would join him in Pyongyang, but after the Korean War broke out, the 38th Parallel dividing the country became permanent and communication came to a halt. Tae finally heard from Young Chol again in 1982. Since leaving the South, Young Chol had lost his wife, but had children and other relatives to keep him company, and he continued to send letters until 2007. After Jason and Tae finally receive permission to enter North

Korea, they find out that Young Chol has recently passed away, but they press on with their plan in hopes of meeting his family and paying their respects. Unfortunately, the authorities only allow them one afternoon in a public space to catch up with their northern relations. Although they receive permission to visit (and film) sites in Pyongyang, they cannot go to their cousins' homes, but are still grateful for the opportunity to solve a mystery and make a family connection. Relating a poignant experience that is no doubt also representative of ones shared by many others in a divided Korea, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Return of the River ★★★

(2014) 71 min. DVD: \$39.99 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye.

Although keyed to Pacific Northwest territorial interests, filmmakers John Gussman and Jessica Plumb's poetic eco-documentary captures the full story arc of a controversial "green" problem and how it was satisfactorily resolved. White settlers who came to the Port Angeles area in Washington state built numerous dams along the Elwha River in Olympic National Park, which supplied hydroelectric power and lake recreation, but also destroyed the salmon runs that were the river's literal lifeblood and offered subsistence to local Native American tribes. By the 1960s and '70s, tribal members were clashing with authorities over their fishing rights to nearly extinct local fish. With the aging dams requiring maintenance near the 100-year mark, a grassroots movement arose (spearheaded by *Mountain in the Clouds* writer Bruce Brown, one of several regional authors interviewed), urging that the dam system be dismantled. Ultimately (and remarkably, via a presidential order by George H.W. Bush), a plan was implemented to remove the dams, but local authorities fought it for many years before reaching a consensus solution. Dulcet-toned narrator Debbe Hirata literally speaks for the river here in this noteworthy environmental documentary with a rare happy ending. Aud: C, P. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Spilled Water ★★★

(2014) 54 min. in Chinese & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$125: public libraries & high schools; \$245: colleges & universities. Tchao Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

The title of Chinese-American filmmaker May May Tchao's documentary refers to an old saying in China that equated the birth of a daughter with spilled water. But do such barbaric notions still exist in the new modern China? To find out, Tchao returned to her place of birth to look at how China's economic transformation has impacted the lives of the nation's women. Despite becoming a dominant force in the global economy—which has opened new profes-

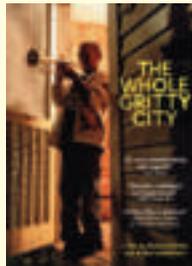
sional opportunities to women, primarily in urban settings—Chinese society is not entirely comfortable in fully embracing

Western-style gender equality. Still, there are plenty of Chinese women eager to dismantle traditional barriers, and Tchao focuses on

four from different socioeconomic situations: a high-powered international attorney, a divorced factory worker, a teacher in a rural school district, and a folk singer from the Dongzu ethnic minority who balances her performance schedule with duties on the family farm. DVD extras include bonus shorts and a discussion guide. Offering cogent insights into the role of women in contemporary China, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Whole Gritty City ★★★

(2014) 89 min. DVD: \$295. DRA. Richard Barber (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR.



Three Louisiana marching bands prepare for Mardi Gras in this CBS-aired documentary from filmmakers Richard Barber and Andre Lambertson, who alternate between the Algiers-based Chargers and the New Orleans-based Crusaders and Falcons. Wilbert Rawlins Jr., band leader at O. Perry Walker High School, does his best to keep the Chargers focused on work. While students may adopt a tough façade on the streets in order to protect themselves, Rawlins wants them to let down their guard at school.

"You have to show them compassion," he explains. Once they focus, he believes, "You can build them up to be somebody special." Rawlins can be tough, however, just like Falcons band leader Lonzie Jackson. Jaron "Bear" Williams, a middle-school horn player with the Crusaders, and Christopher "Skully" Lee, a high school drum major with the Falcons, shot video-diary segments in which they talk about their lives, with Bear pointing out the rough area he has to walk through to get to school and Skully giving the film its title when he refers to his neighborhood as "the whole gritty city." Skully credits Dinerral Shavers, a teacher and mentor who lost his life in a drive-by shooting, for encouraging him to join the band (Bear also lost his older brother to a shooting). Unfortunately, one of the featured musicians here gets into a violent altercation at a march and loses his place in the band. Statistically speaking, not all of these kids will be able to avoid the violence surrounding them, but it's abundantly clear that marching bands have saved lives in Louisiana. An inspiring documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

TEEN ISSUES

K2 Spice: A Nightmare Without End

★★★1/2

(2014) 21 min. DVD: \$249. Thomas Nash. PPR.

This cautionary video draws attention to the dangers of synthetic marijuana, aka K2 or spice. Although it takes the form of a documentary, the participants here are actors. Renee Hewitt, who introduces herself as a mom, recounts stories of users. In the first, "The American Dream," Eddie, the son of immigrants, attacked his friend, Joe, and ended up in the hospital the first time he tried spice. While he did get better, his parents wonder if their son will ever truly recover. In "The

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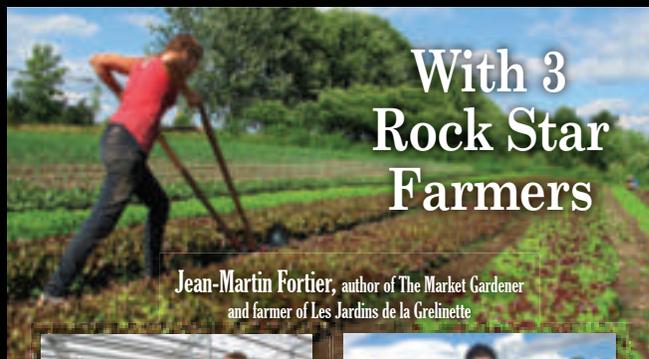
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Love of the Game,” Robin remembers her son Kyle, who loved to play football but started hanging out with a bad crowd in his teens. In a dramatic re-enactment, Kyle leaves school one day, loads a gun, and heads for the woods. After a moment of reflection, he calls his father. At the hospital, doctors treat Kyle with anti-psychotics, which have little effect, so they move him to a psych unit. After that, he continues to cycle in and out of the hospital. Another mother, Karen, talks about her son in “I Never Had to Worry About Max.” As with Eddie, it only took one encounter with spice to cause a psychotic break, which led to the car accident that took his life. As Karen puts it, “It’s just chemicals sprayed on leaves. It’s not a marijuana alternative.” The final story, “Max’s Hands,” features a college student who tried spice and came to believe that his hands were instruments of the devil. While there is useful (and alarming) information here, a conventional documentary would have served the material better. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Vaping: More Dangerous Than You Think ★★★

(2015) 21 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher’s guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-054-7.

This cautionary video takes on the rapidly spreading practice of ingesting various substances—including nicotine, alcohol, and liquid forms of marijuana—via special devices (often resembling cigarettes and pipes) that create an inhalable vapor from concentrated fluid, making the case that it represents a serious health hazard, especially for young people. Proponents of vaping as an alternative to cigarette smoking describe it as a way to get the chemical effects of nicotine without the carcinogenic byproduct caused by burning tobacco. Part of the issue here is the absence of regulation, making it possible for individuals to easily access and even overdose from heavy concentrations of nicotine. The program argues that THC (the chemical responsible for the “high” in marijuana) and alcohol—when vaped—deliver purified intoxicants directly to the bloodstream without the physiological benefits (and pacing) of the liver. A solid guidance title (bundled with a PDF teacher’s guide) on a rapidly developing and serious trend, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)

LAW & CRIME

15 to Life: Kenneth’s Story ★★★1/2

(2014) 52 min. DVD: \$24.99; individuals; \$295: institutions. DRA. Outcast Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Nadine Pequenez’s documentary about Kenneth Young explores the thorny issue

of sentencing juvenile criminals as adults. More than a decade ago, 15-year-old Young was tried as an adult and sentenced to four consecutive life sentences for his role in four armed robberies over 30 days across Georgia and Florida, when Young joined a crime spree orchestrated by his crack-addicted mother’s drug dealer. But Young’s lifetime imprisonment was shaken up after a 2010 Supreme Court ruling that life sentences handed to juveniles for crimes other than murder were unconstitutional, a decision that made Young and 76 other Florida inmates eligible for early release. The effort to determine Young’s fate is not by any stretch a fast track to freedom; while some of his robbery victims have no problems with him being released, one delivers a powerfully dramatic cry against having him freed. *15 to Life* argues that the brand of juvenile justice aimed at Young was not color-blind, as an overwhelming majority of minors sentenced to life for non-homicide crimes are non-white. It should be noted that this is an abbreviated version of Pequenez’s film—which aired on PBS’s *POV* series—but even in abridged form this is a powerful and disturbing documentary. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Keeping Earth Healthy ★★★1/2

(2014) 11 min. DVD: \$69.95 (teacher’s guide included). DRA. Visual Learning Systems. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-59234-895-4.

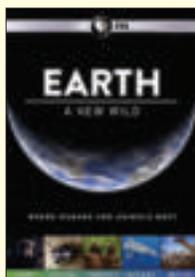
Aimed at primary grade viewers, this short introduction to environmental issues and responsibility begins with a simple study in contrast: a clean home vs. a dirty home, asking kids to consider which is better for living things. From there, “clean”

and “dirty” are applied to entire cities, with their smog-choked skies. Next, the topic of sustainability is raised: what happens if a group of neighbors cuts down all of the trees behind their houses? The answer is that if the practice spreads then soon everyone will run out of trees. Once established, this principle is used to talk about over-fishing, depleting fossil fuels, etc. Also featuring a short video quiz, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (T. Keogh)

Of Oozies and Elephants ★★★1/2

(2015) 89 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Mostly Movies (dist. by Dreamscape Media). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Suzanne Campbell-Jones’s fascinating documentary touches on the relationship between sustainable timber practices and elephant populations in Myanmar, following an international team of veterinarians who meet their local counterparts in the country for an extensive study of the dwindling birth rates of elephants both in captivity and in the wild, as well as research into the diseases that can affect the massive mammals. Some of those diseases also afflict humans—notably tuberculosis, which can be transmitted from handlers, known as “oozies,” to captive animals. From there, TB can hop to wild elephants, which are essential for the future of the nation’s logging industry since they are used in sustainable tree-by-tree logging. A lifelong personal relationship exists between an individual elephant and his or her personal oozie, and the sight of oozies giving their charges a daily scrubdown here is something to behold. A fine documentary about saving the Asian elephant—an animal critical to preserving one of the largest remaining forest habitations—this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)



Earth: A New Wild ★★★1/2

(2014) 2 discs. 300 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99 (\$59.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-214-8 (dvd), 978-1-62789-215-5 (blu-ray).

Biologist Dr. M. Sanjayan claims that the fresh spin in this globe-trotting National Geographic/PBS five-part series is that rather than ignore the human presence or portray humankind simply as an extinction-level menace, *Earth: A New Wild* focuses on situations in which nature and humans have reached accord. Which is not to say there is nothing here to alarm and dismay: on the contrary, viewers witness an almost apocalyptic depiction

of how one of Eurasia’s largest inland seas and the once-mighty Colorado River have both dried up due to unwise water use, and will see a sad case of how the collapse of the Soviet Union pushed a remarkable deer species towards extinction. On the other hand, enlightened cattlemen in the American West have discovered how to use their herds to enrich soil. Africans, both on a tribal and individual level, have created oasis blooms in the desert. And otherworldly underwater enclosures promise a revolution in fish-farming. Although it’s hard to escape a sense of the bad news outweighing the good, amiable host Sanjayan is hopeful in this eye-popping series that includes the episodes “Home,” “Plains,” “Forests,” “Oceans,” and “Water.” Extras include an interview with Sanjayan. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

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Show Me Science Advanced: Archaeology—Technological Advances

★★★1/2

(2014) 16 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR.

This short but fascinating overview looks at technological developments from various fields of science that have been repurposed for archeological research. Virtual image-building, for example, is being applied to excavations of ancient human sites. The Greek city of Troy has been reconstructed using a computer program to reveal 3D detail, all of it based on discoveries (some going back a century) made from Troy's ruins. Another technology useful to archaeologists is the spectral analysis of ancient objects made of metal, which helps pinpoint both the exact ages of and the means by which these items were created. Powerful, digitized versions of metal detectors also enable scientists to find the tiniest artifacts deeply embedded in the ground, while new software makes it possible to "see" purposeful patterns in the placement of stones. Serving up an intriguing overview, this is highly recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (T. Keogh)

A Sloth Named Velcro ★★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$42.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-203-2.

Sloths are unique animals—slow moving, frequently resting leaf-eaters who live in tree-top canopies, and are able to rotate their heads like owls. The sloth's native habitat is limited to the jungles of Central and South America, where their range is disappearing due to development. This PBS-aired *Nature* documentary follows Ana Salceda, a Spanish print and TV journalist, who acquires an orphaned sloth—nicknamed Velcro, for her habit of clinging to whatever (or whoever) is close at hand—and decides to raise and nurture her, before releasing her to the wild. Viewers will see Salceda and others on a "sloth patrol," helping to move migrating sloths across busy highways. Recent research has shown that male sloths maintain small harems, and that the animal is more social, active, and less "sloth-like" than previously thought, covering a large section of the jungle each evening. A remote island off Ecuador is home to the smaller and more compact pygmy sloth, which has become critically endangered of late. In addition to habitat loss, sloths are being sold illegally as pets, which often condemns them to an early death. Other topics include the sloth's multi-chambered stomach (similar to that of cows), and its constant need to use energy to maintain body temperature. Also visiting rescue centers, where orphaned and injured sloths are cared for with the ultimate goal of returning them to the wild, *A Sloth Named Velcro* serves up a fascinating look at these little-known or understood jungle animals. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

The Sun: Powerhouse of the Solar System ★★★1/2

(2014) 10 min. DVD: \$44.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR.

Part of the *Wonders of Astronomy & Space* collection in the *Show Me Science* series aimed at grades 4-9, this brief program explains the science behind our friendly neighborhood star, better known as the Sun. Combining striking photographs with computer graphics, *The Sun* presents facts and explores mysteries regarding the fiery orb, including its composition and the ongoing combustion that generates the heat that is essential for life on Earth. Viewers learn that various chemical reactions lead to eddies of activity (such as sunspots—areas on the surface of the

sun that are temporarily cooler than their surroundings), and about the conditions that create what is called "solar wind." The program also covers the life of a star, discussing such things as white dwarfs, red giants, and supernovas, and points out that even the sun's life-giving power will come to an end, billions of years from now. Putting the topic into a broader context, the film also describes the Milky Way and the larger, awe-inspiring span of the universe. Other titles in the series include *Asteroid*, *Galaxy*, *Jupiter*, *Mars*, *Mercury*, *Saturn*, *The Search for Extraterrestrial Life*, *Uranus & Neptune*, and *Venus*. Informative and visually captivating, this is highly recommended. Aud: E, I, J, P. (C. Block)

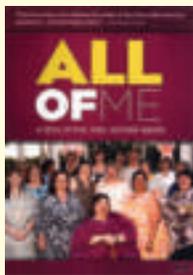
HEALTH & FITNESS

Chi ★★★1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$150. DRA. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Anne Wheeler's documentary follows the journey of Babz Chula (1946-2010), a 63-year-old Canadian actress engaged in a losing battle with cancer. Unhappy with the results from Western-style medical care, Chula travels to an Ayurvedic facility in India in order to pursue an alternative health treatment. At first, Chula experiences intense culture shock: the facility's hygienic standards are woefully inadequate, the food does not agree with her, and an oncologist who is brought in to consult turns out to

be barely functional in speaking English. Indeed, the first part of *Chi* could be seen as a slam against Ayurvedic treatment in general and India's healthcare system in particular. But Chula slowly begins to experience improvement, and it seems that her trip to India was not in vain. Even when she returns home and a medical checkup reveals that the cancer actually advanced while she was away, Chula never betrays signs of despair or self-pity, and her spirit remains indefatigable even as her health frays. As she actively fights cancer while still making the most of her life, Chula exhibits dry wit, patience, and



All of Me ★★★1/2

(2014) 53 min. DVD: \$89: public libraries & high schools; \$250: colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

In *All of Me*, which aired as part of PBS's *Independent Lens* series, filmmaker Alexandra Lescaze examines some less than obvious issues related to obesity and weight-loss surgery through the experiences of three people who are members of Austin's Big Beautiful Women (BBW) community (they call themselves simply "the girls"). After trying unsuccessfully for years to slim down via diets and other means, Dawn and Judy had lap-band surgery and a gastric bypass, respectively; Zsalyann (now starring on the TLC-aired reality series *My 600-lb Life*) is saving money for a bypass. Now middle-aged, they all found that excess weight affected their health in adverse ways, but their stories illustrate both the pros of being hefty (including the interest of men who are attracted to plus-sized women, and the joy of validation through BBW events and the Size Acceptance Movement) and the cons (such as coping with the social stigma, and dealing with mobility issues). The women talk about why food became important to them in childhood (Judy started adding pounds after her mother died; Dawn was prescribed diet pills and bulked herself up as a protection from abusive parents). Although more focused on the psychological than the physical aspects of the procedures, the documentary does feature doctors who briefly explain (with diagrams) the surgical options. Following Dawn and Judy for two years after their operations, Lescaze captures how these extreme weight loss methods can affect friendships and marriage, sometimes in dramatic and unexpected ways. An unusual examination of the often negative and unanticipated ramifications of weight loss, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

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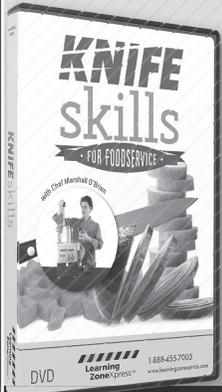
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Disease and Treatment ★★1/2

(2013) 23 min. DVD: \$129.95. DRA. VEA (dist. by Films Media Group). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-81609-113-3.

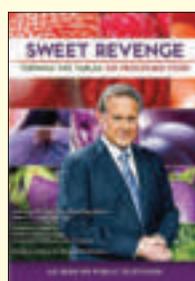
Disease and Treatment compiles two 12-minute programs: *Developing a Vaccine: Rotavirus* and *Treating Cancer: Radiation Therapy*. The first looks at rotavirus, an infection sometimes known as stomach flu that spreads through contact with contaminated water and feces. While adults are more or less asymptomatic (no obvious symptoms), it can be deadly for infants, and 85% of deaths take place in developing countries. Symptoms of this highly contagious gastrointestinal infection include acute diarrhea, fever, vomiting, and dehydration. Treatments include oral re-hydration, rest, and hospitalization, depending on severity. Fortunately, a couple of vaccines exist, and since distribution began, significant improvement has occurred in many countries, especially the United States, Mexico, Brazil, and Australia. Nonetheless, the trend among some parents not to vaccinate their children ends up reducing "herd immunity," whereby a substantial proportion of immunized patients (80-90%) are able to protect the non-vaccinated. Should this trend continue, rotavirus infections are likely to increase. The second program begins by explaining the difference between benign tumors, which are often concentrated in one area, and malignant tumors, which can spread cancer cells throughout the body.

Radiation therapy aims to reduce or eliminate these tumors, depending on location. Dr. Shankar Siva, a radiation oncologist, notes the differences between an X-ray and radiation therapy (mainly related to wave frequency). For patients, side effects include nausea, fatigue, and hair loss at the point of contact. Onscreen graphics and text offer clear explanations of medical terms in this solid but admittedly odd production that pairs overviews of widely dissimilar diseases and their treatments. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Flore ★★★1/2

(2013) 93 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries & high schools; \$350: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1508-4.

French filmmaker Jean-Albert Lièvre's intimate documentary follows his mother Flore's struggle with Alzheimer's disease. Once an active outdoors lover with a talent for painting, Flore found her vitality and strength deteriorating as the disease took control of her body. Unable to care for her at home, Lièvre and his siblings arranged for their mother to be moved to a special-care facility. But this only seemed to make things worse, as Flore's physical and mental condition continued to slide, and the decision to transfer her to another facility only exacerbated the problems. Eventually, Lièvre takes matters into his own hands, bringing his mother to Corsica, where the family had spent many happy summers. Far removed from the monotony of institutional care, Flore basks in the warmth of the Mediterranean climate and begins to show signs of improvement: not only is she able to leave her



Sweet Revenge: Turning the Tables on Processed Food

★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-182-0.

Millions of Americans are sick, while untold numbers aren't even aware of it, according to Dr. Robert H. Lustig, pediatric endocrinologist at the University of California, San Francisco, and author of the bestselling *Fat Chance: Beating the Odds Against Sugar, Processed Food, Obesity and Disease*. In a TED talk-style presentation before an attentive studio gathering, Lustig describes metabolic syndrome, the deadly cocktail of high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, and bad cholesterol that can affect even people who are slender and apparently fit. This situation is a direct result of the "standard American diet," which is loaded with fat, sugar, and refined starches, a combination that can lead to nonalcoholic fatty liver disease—cirrhosis without the alcohol. Lustig implores his audience to curtail fast food, avoid products with a long ingredient list, shop the produce sections located on the supermarket perimeter, and make nutritious, high-fiber, satisfying meals from scratch at home. Eye-opening statistics include the fact that sugar can be defined as any one of 56 ingredients, and nutrition labels will often list two or more in order to keep "sugar" from being first or second. Lustig's disarming, folksy, down-to-earth approach helps make his tough medicine go down, and he ultimately reminds viewers that eating well is the best revenge against some major potential health problems. DVD extras include an extended Q&A with Lustig. Recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

wheelchair to walk, but she's also cognizant enough to pick up her paints and brushes and resume the artwork that she had abandoned years earlier. While *Flore* features some excessively artistic flourishes used by Lièvre to illustrate Alzheimer's—most strangely, a giant soap bubble floating through the streets of Paris—this is an otherwise inspiring and timely documentary that points up the limitations and drawbacks of institutionalizing an increasingly elderly population beset by debilitating diseases such as Alzheimer's. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

I Am Breathing ★★★★★^{1/2}

(2015) 73 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$190 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from www.midwesttape.com)

U.K. filmmakers Emma Davie and Morag McKinnon captured the last year in the life of Neil Platt, a Scottish-born architect and young husband and father, who fell victim to inherited motor neuron disease (ALS) while still in his 30s (the pragmatic Neil had thought that, at worst, the fatal condition would strike him down in his 50s, as it had with his father). Gradually, relentlessly, the scourge takes away his power to walk, use his hands, or even move without assistance. Neil still maintains (via painstaking and buggy software word-processing interfaces) a widely read online blog, documenting his story and condition with mordant wit, a love for his wife Louise and toddler son Oscar, and a lack of self-pity. Much of his worry—besides how long he can hold out before directing that he be taken off his respirator—revolves around leaving tangible mementos of himself for Oscar, so that the growing boy will be able to experience a father he will never personally know. A powerful and inspirational portrait of an indomitable spirit, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Captive Hearts ★★★★★

(2014) 77 min. in Portuguese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$59; public libraries & high schools; \$249 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

In this clear-eyed Brazilian documentary, filmmaker Joana Nin spends time with seven women on the outside who fell in love with and married convicts. Her subjects vary in age and background, but most appear to be working class. In addition to telling their stories, the women also read from their correspondence, including some beautifully decorated cards and letters. The women prepare homemade dishes to bring to the correctional facility, where they must submit to a strip search before entering (although Nin doesn't show their faces, this sequence is fairly graphic; Nin also films a conjugal visit, indicating a closer-than-usual

filmmaker/subject dynamic). Some of the women admit that they do not know what crimes their husbands committed. Kamila finds out, but doesn't disclose the details—although it's clear that it has no effect on her feelings. Cida says she first saw her future husband on TV due to his criminal activity. She liked his looks and sought him out, but later realized he was using their relationship in order to secure an early release. One way or another, these women are all romantics who have overlooked trouble signs in order to feel less alone. Says Simone, "Knowing that I have someone who loves me...is better than in the past when I didn't have him in my life." A different Camila adds, "I believe love overcomes anything." Some have told their social circle the truth, while others have lied about their husbands' absence from their lives. United with their spouses after prison, Simone and Cida have also had to deal with drug addiction and domestic violence. But not all of the stories have unhappy endings in Nin's intriguing documentary, which explores rather than judges the actions of these hopeful women. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Brooklyn Farmer ★★★★★

(2014) 27 min. DVD: \$24.99; individuals; \$295: institutions. DRA. Outcast Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Michael Tyburski's documentary short looks at the mission of Brooklyn Grange, a cooperative consisting of NYC-based organic "urban farmers" who haul more than a million pounds of soil up to a suitably sturdy, sunlight-surrounded rooftop in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Their goal: to create one of the largest metropolitan roof-farms ever—complete with chickens and beekeeping (using a hive evicted from its former home, a fire hydrant)—with produce going directly to nearby markets. What is most interesting here is that the interviewed crop-growers are entrepreneurial young professionals from backgrounds in finance and non-profit management, who are seeking to make a more positive, sustainable change in the world. DVD extras include bonus scenes and a featurette describing more of the organic-food philosophy. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Great American Wheat Harvest

★★★★

(2014) 65 min. DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$125: public libraries w/PPR, \$250: colleges & universities w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from www.midwesttape.com). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Conrad Weaver's documentary shows the day-to-day activities and challeng-

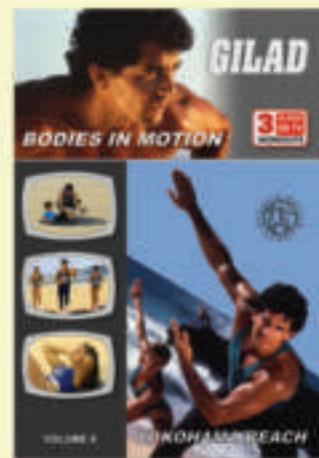
DVD PICKS

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TWELFTH NIGHT SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE ON SCREEN D4996 \$29.99

This stellar performance was captured at the reconstruction of the famous Globe Theatre and features two-time Tony Award winner Mark Rylance as Olivia plus Stephen Fry reprising his superb role as the wretched Malvolio. Spoken in Shakespeare's English and directed by Tim Carroll, this very popular comedy was wholeheartedly praised by the *Sunday Express*: "Five Stars: An unbridled pleasure, some of the best comic acting in the world." Also available in this series: HENRY V (D4997), TAMING OF THE SHREW (D4998), MACBETH (D5000).



GILAD – YOKOHAMA BEACH BV1470 \$14.99

Yokohama Beach is the most pristine area on the west coast of Oahu: an expansive and practically deserted white sand beach that's the perfect location for three concentrated workouts with Gilad and his team. The Bodies in Motion "As Seen on TV" series is a compilation of Gilad's favorite TV episodes from the last 30 years now digitally remastered for DVD. Also available: WAIKIKI SHORE (BV1471) and WAIKIKI BEACH (BV1472).



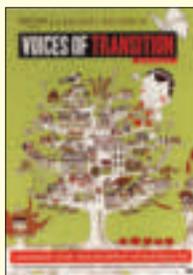
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es of five custom harvester outfits who follow the wheat harvest every year, starting in Texas and ending in southern Canada, bringing huge, expensive combines to the fields. Most are family operations, although one bigger firm goes all the way to the British Isles in search of workers. Wheat farmers, even those with lots of acreage, often can't afford to own the half-million-dollar machines that are only used for a few days to harvest their crop, creating a market for these itinerant summer harvesters. The job is complex, not only involving the operation of the towering vehicles but also preparing, cleaning, and repairing them as necessary. Families leave their regular lives behind as they spend June through September going from one place to another, while the farmers they service struggle with the vagaries of weather and drought. Sometimes the crop is so poor that the combine operators have to quickly move on to the next job without doing anything (and if they're late to a harvest, they could lose to a competitor). Beautifully filmed in 11 states and one Canadian province and told largely by members of the working families themselves, this documentary offers an interesting glimpse of an obscure but vital part of North American agriculture. DVD extras include related featurettes (such as a tour of a John Deere factory), bonus interviews, and deleted scenes and outtakes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

New Farms, Big Success ★★★

(2014) 52 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries & high schools; \$225; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Can organic farming play a substantial role in the fight to reverse—or, at least, halt—climate change? *New Farms, Big Success* visits a trio of small, independently-run farms that rely on sustainable methods and avoid using fossil fuels as much as possible. Author Kristin Kimball's (*The Dirty Life*) Essex Farm in upstate New York and writer Jean-Martin Fortier's (*The Market Gardener*) Les Jardins de la Grelinette in Quebec are both presented as economically and ecologically viable alternatives to contemporary agricultural approaches, complete with man-powered or horse-powered plowing instead of polluting tractors. Greenhouse manager Lauren Rathmell's Montreal-based Lufa Farms is unique because its commercial growing operations are located on the roof of a warehouse, offering evidence that agricultural endeavors can be brought to the heart of an urban center. Also included is input from environmentalist Bill McKibben on the dangers fostered by climate change, as well as video clips of United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon speaking about the contemporary state of the ecosystem. All three examples here are commendable, and the interviewees are highly articulate in explaining the benefits of their respective operations. Whether smaller-scale



Voices of Transition ★★★1/2

(2014) 65 min. DVD: \$49; public libraries & high schools; \$139; colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Nils Aguilar's documentary explores the changing face of agriculture—focusing on France, England, and Cuba—putting forth the hypothesis that the Green Revolution, which resulted in huge increases in agricultural production, has begun to falter. Land farmed with monoculture crops, non-renewing seed, and oil-based fertilizers and pesticides is starting to fail, as the earth is stripped of nutrients (and inclined to erode when fallow). The hope expressed by the assorted researchers, activists, and farmers

featured here is that intensive, small-scale organic farming can help replenish the soil and end reliance on increasingly expensive petrochemicals. Aguilar visits “agroforests” in France, where trees are integral to holding and enriching the soil, and “transition towns” in England, where communities are being forged as people farm together in the cities. In Cuba, where a U.S. embargo has prevented oil imports, citizens have been forced to be innovative, encouraging the development of small plots and urban agriculture. Organic has become the norm in Cuba because there are no oil-based fertilizers, pesticides, or fungicides; even tilling is done with animals instead of tractors. As the film notes, one often-overlooked side effect of small-scale sustainable farming is an increase in satisfaction of living—a point illustrated here in scenes of smiling people enjoying the results of their hard work. An inspiring documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

community-level farms can replace the larger commercial farms that are the mainstay of American agriculture remains uncertain, but this film certainly plants thoughtful seeds for discussion. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

The Sturgeon Queens ★★★1/2

(2014) 53 min. DVD: \$99; public libraries & high schools; \$295 w/PPR; colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Filmmaker Julie Cohen profiles four generations of the Russ family, who have owned and operated Russ & Daughters Appetizers on New York's Lower East Side for more than a century, serving fresh fish and other items to a (mostly) Jewish clientele. The documentary combines interviews, archival film, old photographs, whimsical animation, and narration from several of the store's oldest customers. Joel Russ started with a pushcart before opening his small storefront in 1914. His three daughters worked with him from childhood on, and after they were married, Russ made them partners in the business—something unheard of at the time. Anne, 92, and Hattie, 100, tell stories of flirty sales tactics, meeting their eventual husbands via the shop, and they recall their father's single-minded focus on the enterprise. Other interviewees include Anne's son and family historian, Mark; Dominican immigrant Herman Vargas, who came to peel onions in 1979, developed a knack for Yiddish, and became known for his “artistic” slicing skills; and famous patrons, including Mario Batali, Morley Safer, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Calvin Trillin, and Ruth Bader Ginsberg (who can't even find words for Russ & Daughters' smoked salmon: “So delicious, I can't ... I wish I *could* describe it”). Today, Joel Russ's great-grandchildren still schmooze

with patrons on Houston Street but are also automating orders and opening a branch café. Showcasing one family's humor, dedication, and pride, Cohen serves up a remarkable American immigrant tale. DVD extras include behind-the-scenes footage, more stories from the Russ family, and an interview with the director. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Crowdfunding and Grants: Developing a Persuasive Proposal ★★★1/2

(2014) 20 min. DVD: \$99.95. DRA. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-81609-102-7.

Using parallel storylines to compare and contrast the processes of seeking grants and crowdfunding a project, this opening volume in a two-part series offers expert guidelines and advice. Here, two examples are used—a media resource center for eldercare, and a budding garage band—to show the step-by-step process of seeking financial backing. Sources for grants (including large and small foundations) are given, as are online crowdfunding operations (some of which cost money). Viewers learn that research is important and can also lead to rewarding networking opportunities, such as when the musicians here talk to a local independent filmmaker who not only shares excellent tips, but also offers to help the band shoot a music video. In the case of the eldercare organization, the process of writing the grant proposal simply requires a lot of elbow grease. One of the best sequences is a montage demonstrat-

ing how both groups refine the descriptions of their ideas—starting with obscure statistics or clunky mission statements before eventually coming up with clear and persuasive messages. In the end, both attempts succeed, offering encouragement and by-the-book tools for other hopefuls. Along with the second volume in the series, *Reaching Your Financial Goal* (series price: \$199 for both), this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)

Suze Orman's Financial Solutions for You

★★★★

(2014) 70 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-085-5.

Financial guru-author Suze Orman, speaking before a group in Washington, D.C., archly begins with an observation that Americans in general have learned nothing about finances since the global economic crisis of 2008. Virtually all of the members of her audience admit to living in debt—credit card and second mortgages. Orman tells her own Cinderella backstory of being a struggling waitress (growing up with a speech impediment that impaired her employability), who after years of hardship and failure found her gift for being a financial advisor (even so, she was fired from her first firm after she discovered that they condoned unethical practices). Mostly working in a Q&A format, Orman counsels an engaged couple on their financial future, warns against reverse mortgages, and advises a man with no dependents that the pressure he feels to purchase life insurance is just the result of a hard-sell con job by the industry. Money should be your security, she says, explaining why a “living recoverable trust” is superior to a will, as well as why student-loan debt is the most “dangerous” of all. DVD extras include bonus Q&A footage. Likely to appeal to Orman’s fans, this also offers good financial medicine for newcomers. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

Advanced Toss & Batting Tee Drills

★★★★1/2

(2015) 38 min. DVD: \$24.95. Youth Sports Club. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-9839242-9-6.

This latest instructional program from acclaimed coach Marty Schupak is a surprisingly entertaining at-home guide aimed at young baseball players who want to improve their batting skills. Over 40 different drills are presented here—ranging from simple to more advanced and complex—most of which only require a tarpaulin, a tee, a bat, and a batch of balls (some drills require additional items). No actual pitching is involved: someone just needs to repeatedly drop balls via soft toss into a batter’s zone. The drills focus on improving the batter’s rhythm, balance, hip rotation, reaction time, control, and eye-hand

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coordination. Starting with simple soft-toss drops, the drills add increasing challenges, such as the one-hand batting tee, which requires the batter to swing alternately with top or bottom hand to understand better the role each plays in using the bat. Another drill involves two balls of different colors being simultaneously tossed, with the pitcher calling out the color that he or she wants the batter to hit. The target tee drill uses four targets (manila envelopes, for example) taped to the tarp's corners: the pitcher tosses a ball and calls out a specific target for the batter to hit toward, which intensifies control at the plate. Although carefully designed to create noticeable results, many of these drills look like they would be fun for anyone and would almost serve as party games for kids (such as hitting recyclable plastic objects of varying sizes). Highly recommended. Aud: E, I, J, H, P. (T. Keogh)

Algorithms: Blind Chess Players of India

★★★★

(2014) 100 min. In English, Hindi, Tamil & Odiya w/English subtitles. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Ian McDonald follows a group of sightless (or severely low-vision) boys in India as they represent their nation in international chess matches geared for the blind. That a blind chess league exists in the first place may be news to many, although chess is actually one of the few contests in which blind and sighted competitors can be on equal footing. A mentor here is adult Charudatta "Charu" Jadhav, a former chess great who lost his vision in adolescence and now coaches young contenders SaiKrishna, Darpan, and Anant in playoffs and tournaments around the world. Charu has a dream of discovering India's first blind chess grand master, but this does not override his sympathy for his students' emotional stresses and their family's anxieties. In a bonus Q&A with the director, McDonald says that he made the decision to shoot entirely in black-and-white because the vibrant color palette of India was too distracting, especially given the subject matter. Other extras include additional scenes, and the short film "Seescapes," an impressionistic piece on blindness that also profiles SaiKrishna and Darpan. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Clean Spirit: In the Heart of the Tour

★★★★

(2014) 88 min. In English, Dutch, French, Spanish & German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Cycling enthusiasts—especially ones who follow the Tour de France—will enjoy filmmaker Dirk Jan Roeleven's closely-observed documentary about the Argos-Shimano team, which did very well during the 2013 Tour, when German superstar athlete Marcel Kittel

took several victories. Roeleven was granted remarkable access to the daily goings-on of the stage-by-stage competition, which is really a long series of challenging races. No doubt this openness has much to do with the team's desire to shake off the sport's reputation for illegal use of performance-enhancing drugs (the riders and staff seem intent on having no suggestion of scandal mar their accomplishments). While the camera is ubiquitous, the film spends far more time capturing the athletes getting massages, eating, or talking shop than actually racing. While less dramatic, it's interesting to watch the cyclists as they cope with the physical and psychological toll of racing. Conflicts also flare up: when collisions and accidents or mistakes happen, the results can be catastrophic in a variety of ways, and the recriminations fly. Offering an often fascinating look at the human dimension of one of the world's most intense sports, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Dirt Track Danny Hanson: For the Love of the Game

★★★★

(2014) 35 min. DVD: \$22.99 (\$199.99 w/PPR). Hey! Original Television (dist. by Dreamscape Media).

There's NASCAR, and then there's dirt-track racing. *Dirt Track Danny Hanson* serves up a portrait of Wisconsin racer Danny Hanson, who sells farming equipment during the week, works on his beat-up car at night, and generally wins competitions on weekends racing in a dirt-track league. Naturally competitive but low-key, Hanson didn't begin racing until he was in his 40s, and only started picking up trophies in his 50s. Hanson races for the fun of it (at a steep

financial cost) and his wife supports his passion. Viewers will meet some of Hanson's competitors (a few more dangerous than others), while also getting glimpses of his home life, work, and efforts to add another national title to the several he has already won. A pleasant profile of a man pursuing a sport/hobby that truly makes him happy, this is recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The New Hooked on Fly Tying Series: Signature Invincible Mouse

★★★★ (2014) 138 min. DVD: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-934682-98-2.

Part of the *New Hooked on Fly Tying* series, this program features late host and fly tying master Chris Helm (1941-2014), who guides viewers in the creation of what he says is the most successful fly of all for catching fish. Helm's "Invisible Mouse" is a handsomely crafted lure, but before building one, Helm discusses the relative merits of white-tailed deer belly hair versus mule deer hair, explaining why some sections of deerskin are better than others for gathering hair with the right color and texture to make a mouse. From there, Helm takes a seat at his work table and points out the necessary ingredients: the right hook and thread, the correct type of suede, the ideal length of moose hair (for mouse whiskers) and the best nylon nose and plastic eyes. Equally important is using the optimum amount of glue, trimming all the hair to a proper length, and tying everything together using a very particular methodology. Fly fishing enthusiasts will appreciate this in-depth how-to from a fly tying legend. Recommended. [Note: also newly available in the series is *Moorish Mouse, Bomber & Hazel* featuring Chris Helm.] Aud: P. (T. Keogh)



Fight Like a Girl

★★★★

(2015) 82 min. DVD: \$19.95. Vision Films (avail. from most distributors).

Filmmaker Jill Morley begins her boxing documentary with a confession: "I know it's not your typical female fantasy, but I'm drawn to it in a sick way." Morley's husband, Gary, believes that she uses boxing to work through issues that therapy can't touch. Morley's father, on the other hand, believes that "girls should be sweethearts," but he helped inspire her by watching matches with her when she was younger. Morley spars at her local New York gym with Susan Merlucci, who introduces her to Kimberly

Tomes, a professional who finds boxing "viscerally satisfying." As an adoptee, Tomes, who is Asian, dealt with racist classmates, which spurred her desire to stand up for herself, while Merlucci describes herself as an "art school kid." Her boyfriend—captain of the New York City Fire Department's boxing team—encouraged her to take up the sport. Merlucci hopes to win the 2007 Golden Gloves competition, since it's the last year she can compete (the cut-off age is 34). Morley also profiles Maureen "Moe" Shea, who served as Hilary Swank's sparring partner for *Million Dollar Baby*. Shea turned to boxing to look better for her abusive boyfriend, and stuck with it because it made her feel better about herself (and gave her the strength to ultimately leave him). For all four subjects, money remains an issue, since women's boxing doesn't pay much. They also grapple with depression and relationship issues, but the support they show each other seems as much a positive force in their lives as boxing. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

CRAFTS, ARTS & HOBBIES

Tracing Roots ★★★1/2

(2014) 35 min. DVD: \$85; public libraries & high schools; \$225; colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-57448-459-5.

In *Tracing Roots*, filmmaker Ellen Frankenstein tells the story of master weaver and tribal elder Delores Churchill of the Haida people in Canada's Pacific Northwest, who makes spruce-root hats like the one discovered with "The Long Ago Person Found"—a mummy (at least 300 years old) uncovered in a retreating glacier in British Columbia in 1999. Scientists found mitochondrial links between the mummified remains and the current First Nations people, including Churchill, who is particularly interested in the well-preserved head gear and has performed detailed analysis of its materials and construction. Frankenstein provides a short biography of Churchill—both a craftsperson and a teacher—and follows her as she renews her investigation of the Long Ago Person's hat. Churchill and other experts explain what old weavings reveal about history and the artisans who made them, with Churchill adding that this particular specimen has a personal story to tell, perhaps illustrating that its maker cared for the individual who wore it. Churchill's mission is to pass along her skills to future generations, one that is even stronger after she learned about her genetic link to the Long Ago Person, which she feels further validates her as a true carrier of authentic ancient knowledge. *Tracing Roots* showcases the intriguing work of deciphering human history from artifacts, while also exploring the significance of the Long Ago Person to contemporary First Nations people, and it examines how traditional arts bridge the centuries. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

THE ARTS

Capturing Grace ★★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$199 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from www.midwesttape.com).

Filmmaker David Iverson's lovely documentary—largely shot at the Mark Morris Dance Center in New York, where classes for ordinary people who just want to move are regularly held alongside classes and rehearsals for professional dancers—centers on a Morris-sanctioned company of non-pro dancers with Parkinson's disease. As one of the dancers notes, the impulse of a person with Parkinson's is to attempt to constrict or restrain wayward movements of a shaking body, but the freedom to dance provides the opportunity to allow uncon-

trollable movement to extend into broader, expressive (and even somewhat controlled) motion. Led by a former principal dancer of Morris's troupe, this small community finds joy and shared experience, culminating in a stage performance before an audience of family and friends. *Capturing Grace* spends quality time with a few individual dancers, who tell their stories and also talk about what Morris's company means to them. One highlight is an appearance in class by the typically blunt Morris, who directs the thrilled dancers. An uplifting, beautiful film, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Cathedrals of Culture ★★★

(2012) 156 min. DVD: \$400. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from www.filmplatform.net). PPR.

In 2010, Wim Wenders made the 3D short *If Buildings Could Talk*, surveying the Rolex Learning Center in Lausanne, Switzerland, from many angles while a narrator spoke in the voice of the structure itself. Wenders employs the same tactic in this anthology feature, with the initial episode here being his own portrait of the postwar hall built for the Berlin Philharmonic, in which shots examining the architecture and background information about its design are juxtaposed with others showing the orchestra rehearsing and the staff working, all accompanied by the hall's own recitations. Wenders's chapter is followed by Michael Glawogger's on the National Library of Russia, which prowls about the stacks while a disembodied voice talks about the surrounding cultural treasury. Margreth Olin's piece on the Oslo Opera House muses (like Wenders's) on how these cathedrals of culture can have a transformative effect not only on their users but also on their neighborhoods. Karim Aïnouz's segment on the Pompidou Centre in Paris emphasizes the edifice's dizzying array of exhibits and functions. The two contributions that deviate somewhat from the pattern are Robert Redford's portrait of California's Salk Institute, serving up a more conventional combination of archival material and appreciative architectural shots, and Michael Madsen's take on Norway's Halden Prison, which is designed to provide more humane treatment of prisoners but doesn't always achieve that goal. *Cathedrals of Culture* loses the impact of its original 3D format on this standard DVD, but it nevertheless represents an imaginative attempt to convey the deeper purposes behind major architectural works. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

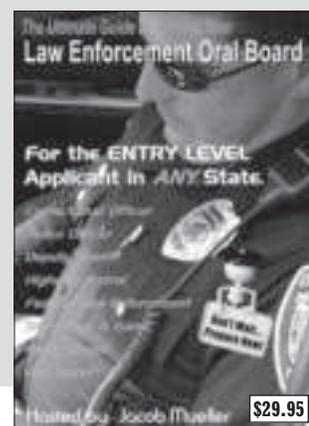
Come Worry With Us! ★★★

(2013) 82 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries & high schools; \$350; colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1489-4.

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filmmaker Helene Klodawsky's documentary centers on Montreal quintet Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra, which combines strings with traditional rock instrumentation and politically-oriented lyrics. Like singer-guitarist Efrim Menuck's previous post-punk outfit—Godspeed You! Black Emperor—the group emerged out of the city's underground with an aim of building a following, rather than trying to secure a major record deal (Thierry Amar and Sophie Trudeau also belong to both bands). When Menuck and violinist Jessica Moss have a baby, they take their new son Ezra along on tour, thinking it will be easy, but this winds up proving to be incredibly difficult. The couple constantly worry about finances, especially with new costs to cover, including a tour bus and a nanny. In addition, Menuck notes that record sales have declined as more fans download music for free, but he refuses to raise ticket prices, because he knows the fans face similar financial challenges. Since the band is a collective, everyone shares evenly in profits and expenses, and none of them complain about the higher overhead, possibly because they know the band would do the same for them. When Menuck revives Godspeed You! Black Emperor and heads off on another tour, he brings more money into the household, but loses time with his wife and child. Although Jessica says she feels like a housewife, the respite allows her to return to creating visual art. Jessica also speaks to other female musicians, including Matana Roberts and Julie Doiron, about balancing personal life with a music career, but finds that there are no easy answers. An interesting behind-the-scenes look at the uneasy intersection of music, family, and money, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Fifty Shades Uncovered ★★★

(2015) 70 min. DVD: \$19.95. Vision Films (avail. from most distributors).

This British documentary cashes in on the *Fifty Shades of Grey* book-and-film phenomenon that began with the publication of the 2011 bestselling S&M novel. "It's not just a book," enthuses the narrator, "it's a global sensation!" Considering that it has outsold *Harry Potter* on Amazon UK, this isn't complete hyperbole. Interviewees include journalists, booksellers, comedians, sex therapists, and even a *Playboy* Playmate. Notable by their absence: writer E.L. James (née Erika Mitchell), director Sam Taylor-Johnson, and actors Dakota Johnson, who stars as Anastasia Steele, and Jamie Dornan, who plays Christian Grey. Instead of clips from the feature film, which was in production when this documentary was made, director Sonia Anderson incorporates sequences from *The Whip and the Body* and *Lady Chatterley*. Anderson traces the book's history as initially *Twilight* fan fiction, then self-published electronic-book success story, and finally international bestseller. The speakers debate whether *Fifty*

Shades of Grey is erotic fiction, adult romance, or mommy porn, concluding that it is a page-turner despite some questionable writing. Once the novel blew up worldwide, ancillary sales were inevitable, and sex shop owners here cite increased business (one notes that "sales have gone up 626%" since the book's publication). Speakers also take care to differentiate between consensual bondage and domestic abuse, although they find parts of Christian's infamous contract with Anastasia fairly distasteful, including the stipulations that he pick out the latter's clothes and order her food, and that she avert her eyes during their encounters. While there is little here in the way of new information—especially for those who have read the entire trilogy—this documentary serves up some lively discussion and should be a popular addition. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Hitmakers: The Changing Face of the Music Business ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-191-2.

Filmmakers Carol Stein and Susan Wittenberg's PBS-aired documentary examines the different ways that music artists have become successful in the new digital era. Producer Richard Gottelher remembers when radio was king, but now YouTube, Spotify, and other services have eroded radio's former primacy. New Zealand singer-songwriter Lorde credits listeners for her success, while Steve Aoki, an electronic dance music artist, doesn't believe he would've survived during radio's heyday, since EDM receives more play

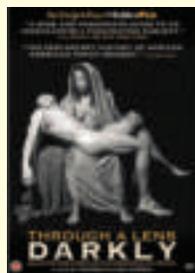
in clubs than on the airwaves. Other artists to benefit from new technology include Ed Sheeran and Sharon Jones, who says, "Thank God for the computer." Seymour Stein of Sire Records sees it as a challenge for labels, but believes that's the nature of the business. By contrast, Questlove of the Roots credits Atlantic Records for giving them time to build a fan base, which led to a gig as the house band on *The Tonight Show*. Most other acts have to work harder than ever though touring, licensing, and marketing merchandise, since record sales have been declining and streaming services simply don't pay as well. Blues powerhouses Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi say they have to take care of 18 people besides themselves, so they can't afford to sit around and wait for money to possibly roll in. Nonetheless, Melissa Etheridge, who left Island Records, is able to keep more of the profits she makes from sales since she owns the rights to her material. While no definitive conclusion is reached here, most speakers agree that labels will never completely disappear, since not all artists can or want to do everything themselves. Offering an interesting look at the contemporary music business scene, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: Enter Here

★★★

(2013) 103 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

The return—after two decades—of renowned conceptual artist Ilya Kabakov to



Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People ★★★

(2014) 92 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

Director Thomas Allen Harris traces his interest in African-American photography to his own early history. As boys, Thomas and his brother, Lyle, started taking pictures the minute their grandfather gave them cameras...and haven't stopped. In this PBS-aired *Independent Lens* documentary, Harris speaks to various photographers and historians about the images that shaped them and the work they create. Clarissa Sligh recalls that "everything...was negative" in terms of African-American imagery. Richard J. Powell remembers more positive images, but primarily from photo albums rather than ads, postcards, magazines, and the like. Harris's mentor, Deborah Willis, has done her part to change the conversation by collecting and displaying the work of black photographers from the 1800s and 1900s. The pieces include silvery daguerreotypes, images of black caretakers and white children, shots of Civil War soldiers, and photos of Reconstruction-era families building new lives for themselves. Harris holds up Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and Booker T. Washington as examples of historical figures who understood the power of portraiture and used it to their advantage, aiming to inspire African-Americans while also garnering respect from white America. Harris also profiles prominent practitioners like Harlem Renaissance photographer James Van Der Zee, photographer-turned-filmmaker Gordon Parks, and street photographer Jamel Shabazz, in this edifying appreciation of the African-American family photo album, inspired by Willis's 2000 book *Reflections in Black*. DVD extras include bonus shorts. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

his Russian homeland for the mounting of several of his “total installation” exhibits in 2008 is the centerpiece around which filmmaker Amei Wallach structures her documentary about Kabakov and his wife, Emilia. Wallach blends interviews with the couple, a biographical sketch of Kabakov drawn from conversations with scholars and fellow artists detailing his earlier years in Russia, and extended readings from the diary of his beloved mother to fashion a multifaceted portrait. Kabakov’s varied work is examined—from illustrations for children’s books and the more personal experimental drawings and paintings produced during the 1960s (including those centering on his signature “fly” motif), through the “albums” that profile fictional characters, to the room-sized installations designed to reflect Soviet history by recreating in exhaustive detail the living spaces of figures Kabakov invented (or, in one instance, a Soviet-style schoolhouse in Marfa, TX). The footage is flamboyantly edited (lots of overlaps and split images), and the chronology is scrambled, but *Enter Here’s* kaleidoscopic approach seems like an appropriate mirror of a man who progressed from impoverished youth, to official artistic status, to underground revolutionary activity, and finally to international celebrity

in exile. DVD extras include extended interviews with the Kavakovs, and outtakes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Invitation to Dance ★★★

(2014) 86 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). DRA. Kino Lorber Edu.

In 1972, Simi Linton was a 23-year-old anti-war activist traveling to a demonstration when a car accident killed her husband and best friend and left her severely disabled. After rehabilitation, Linton found that her use of a wheelchair made it nearly impossible to navigate streets and buildings, leading to a heightened awareness of the obstacles faced by others in similar circumstances that resulted in her becoming active in the struggle for the rights of the disabled—a campaign that turned out to be instrumental in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. But while this uplifting documentary, co-directed by Linton and Christian von Tippelskirch, admirably portrays that political fight in the broadest sense, it also focuses on Linton’s own life, becoming a virtual autobiography that emphasizes her indomitable will. As the title indicates, the film focuses on dance as a metaphor for access and acceptance, seizing on Linton’s love of rhythmic move-

ment—and refusal to give up the joy it brings her—as a symbol not only of her own liberation from the confinement that her physical condition imposes, but also as a signal to others in similar situations that they can express themselves in ways that carry their own beauty. *Invitation to Dance* is at once a solid account of a major social movement, the story of a courageous woman, and a celebration of how people who might have previously been warehoused by society can demonstrate their creativity and drive. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Reel Herstory: The Real Story of Reel Women ★★★

(2014) 147 min. DVD: \$300. DRA. Reel Women Media. PPR.

Actress and director Jodie Foster serves as host for filmmaker Ally Acker’s comprehensive documentary survey of women in film, which draws on Acker’s book *Reel Women: The First Hundred Years*, while also incorporating interviews, archival material, and film clips. This “herstory” begins in the silent era, during which women found fame through acting, although French filmmaker Alice Guy Blaché actually made the first narrative film in 1896—months before Georges Méliès. Historians also credit Blaché for bringing

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naturalism to screen acting. As author Molly Haskell notes, women were involved with all aspects of production in the 1920s, especially editing (Margaret Booth, who got her start at that time, would edit or supervise editing work through the 1980s). Mary Pickford also made her mark in the silent era, first as an actress, and later as a studio owner, when she co-founded United Artists. Lillian Gish remembers making *The Wind*, for which she selected the material, the writer (a woman), and the director. As filmmaking became a profitable business, however, women were moved to the margins. In the 1930s and 1940s, only Dorothy Arzner found regular work in the studio system, while in the independent arena Ida Lupino enjoyed success as a filmmaker (which she parlayed into a TV directing career), but these women were exceptions. The documentary also recognizes notable screenwriters, including Anita Loos, Leigh Brackett, and Lillian Hellman, some of whom lost ground due to the Production Code and McCarthyism. Acker ends by looking at contemporary writers, filmmakers, and producers, such as Greta Gerwig, Sarah Polley, and Sherry Lansing, former head of 20th Century Fox. A solid overview of women's notable contributions to film, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Sign Painters ★★★

(2014) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99. Bond/360 (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Faythe Levine and Sam Macon's documentary centers on the men—and handful of women—who in an age increasingly dominated by cookie-cutter forms of outdoor advertising still practice the craft of hand-lettering signs on the sides of buildings or shop windows. Combining interviews and footage of an assortment of sign painters nationwide, the film sketches the history of the trade from the 19th century onward (including its close connection with the development of the advertising industry), while also presenting incisive portraits of the often eccentric individuals who are still plying it, despite decreasing calls for their talents. The filmmakers also emphasize how the work is now being recognized as a form of popular art that should be preserved and appreciated (a sign museum, admittedly small scale, is one stop on the journey). The interviewees' commentary is especially useful in explaining the training that they received (often on-the-fly in what amounted to unofficial apprenticeships), as well as the special techniques they have developed to give their work stylistic distinction and precision. *Sign Painters* offers an informative overview of what's quickly becoming a lost art, but it also give viewers the opportunity to admire what so many brushes produced in decades past, before modernity's onslaught of technologically-based uniformity. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

1971 ★★★1/2

(2015) 80 min. DVD: \$300. Big Mouth Productions. PPR.

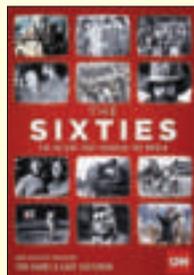
Small acts of rebellion can have momentous consequences—a lesson that is expertly conveyed in filmmaker Johanna Hamilton's documentary about a March 1971 break-in by anti-war activists at a tiny, seemingly insignificant FBI office in Media, PA. Documents taken during the burglary and released to the media revealed the illegal surveillance of American citizens by the FBI. Together with other nearly simultaneous actions—including the publication of the Pentagon Papers, and a raid on the draft board in Camden, NJ—the revelations from the Media break-in led to the formation of a special congressional committee headed by Sen. Frank Church that investigated the activities of U.S. intelligence agencies and helped fashion laws limiting their scope. Hamilton skillfully weaves together interviews with members of the group that committed the robbery (who remained unidentified until 2014 but are now willing to discuss their motivation, the details of the plan, and the fears they lived with afterwards), archival materials (including news footage and stills), and evocative re-enactments of the crime, which was meticulously planned, but still ran into

several unexpected obstacles as it unfolded. The group's success also raised the ire of J. Edgar Hoover, who deployed all of the FBI's considerable assets in an ultimately fruitless attempt to track down the perpetrators. *1971* manages to generate considerable suspense (even though the outcome is already known), while also raising questions about government overreach in response to perceived danger; questions that—considering Edward Snowden's revelations about contemporary NSA operations—remain painfully relevant. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Emperor's Ghost Army ★★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-133-2.

In 1974, Chinese farmers searching for water uncovered an astounding archaeological find: a massive terracotta army of 8,000 life-sized warrior figures, once fully armed with functional spears, lances, and other weapons. Who made these statues and to what purpose? Filmmaker Ian Bremner's PBS-aired NOVA documentary looks at the 40-year effort to solve this 2,200-year-old mystery. As the dig continued, archaeologists realized that the pit containing the soldiers was merely part of a vast complex meant to be a tomb honoring Qin Shi Huang Di, China's first emperor, who provided the name for China. Qin unified warrior states under one banner, but also proved to be a cruel ruler who was obsessed with his im-



The Sixties ★★★1/2

(2014) 3 discs. 510 min. DVD: \$69.99. PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-205-6 (dvd).

Executive produced by Tom Hanks and Gary Goetzman, this CNN original series offers a 10-episode survey of one of the most tumultuous decades in recent American history: the 1960s, from the first televised presidential debate in 1960 that captured a sweaty Nixon facing off against a cool Kennedy, to the murderous rampage by the Hells Angels at the Altamont rock concert in 1969. *The Sixties* does an excellent job of following a semi-chronological format that is nevertheless divided into chapters dealing with the heightened influence of TV, the Cold War, the assassination of President Kennedy, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, the British music invasion, the space race, 1968 (a seminal year that sadly witnessed the murders of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy), and the communal social experiment of the hippies in San Francisco. Along the way, the series also covers other touchstone moments (Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* kicking off the environmental movement, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* laying the foundation for women's liberation, and the Stonewall riot launching the fight for gay rights). Although sometimes reduced to mere sound bites, the series features a stellar array of commentators, including Robert Caro, Gloria Steinem, Richard Reeves, John Lewis, Gail Collins, Dan Rather, Lawrence Wright, Tim O'Brien, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Jann Wenner, Todd Gitlin, Grace Slick, and Tom Wolfe. But what makes *The Sixties* truly shine is the original video source material that includes so many iconic moments: the Zapruder film of Kennedy's assassination, the dogs and fire hoses in Birmingham, AL, Bob Dylan being booed after going electric at the Newport Folk Festival, and—wonder of wonders—a man stepping on to the Moon. One could rightfully quibble about the annoying commercial bumpers, but overall this is an incredible overview of a chaotic time that was well-documented by the camera's eye. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (R. Pitman)

mortality (some speculate that the warriors were meant to protect Qin from the ghosts of defeated armies, who might be seeking revenge for their deaths and humiliations). In addition to the tomb, the complex served as an “eternal pleasure palace,” with figures of horses, chariots, archers, cavalymen, musicians, and acrobats, all brightly painted in their day. The documentary reconstructs the deadly weapons—including the crossbow, once a key factor to defeating armies—that were found scattered and broken. The decades-long construction project took a deadly toll on workers; many were punished for perceived substandard work, and their bodies are located nearby in mass graves. Much of the site remains to be excavated, but enough has been found to testify to the legacy of great craftsmanship...and great cruelty. Serving up a fine mix of history and science, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Holy Land: A Year in the West Bank

★★★★1/2

(2014) 80 min. In Arabic, Hebrew & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$349. New Day Films. PPR.

Devoting equal time to Israelis and Palestinians across the cultural/political spectrum—from peace activists to hardlin-

ers—filmmaker Peter Cohn spends a year (winter 2011 to 2012) in the turbulent West Bank. Intransigent Hebrew settlers, including Los Angeles-born Aron Katsof, declare that their 120-odd homestead-villages are there forever. Meanwhile an Israeli anti-settler movement, Peace Now, seeks to obtain their eviction through the nation’s Supreme Court. A young Palestinian named Mohammad—taking his cues from the (semi-ill-fated) “Arab Spring” uprisings in Egypt and Syria—creates his own news agency and films the strong-arm tactics of Israeli soldiers against his family and people. Katsof blames those very same troops (the only key personnel here not conspicuously interviewed) for permitting Arab violence and lawlessness against Jews. A truly heroic figure is the much-loved Rabbi Menachem Froman, who is still building bridges with the Islamic community despite his advanced colon cancer. Froman’s 2013 funeral ends the real-life drama on a note of hopeful uncertainty (although we sadly know that nothing has much improved since). Although other documentaries have analyzed this agonized situation—including *Tears of Gaza* (VL-11/13), *Death in Gaza* (VL-5/06), and *Gaza Strip* (VL-7/07)—few have been as scrupulously nonpartisan in trying to present clashing viewpoints.

Featuring both the full-length documentary and a 56-minute abridged edition, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

The Italian Americans ★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 240 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$59.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-238-4.

John Maggio’s solid PBS documentary series presents the Italian-American experience as one of facing initial wariness and prejudice that gradually gave way to acceptance, even as the newcomers retained distinctive cultural features—most notably an emphasis on family. The first of four episodes covers the period of 1890–1910, when emigrants from South Italy, oppressed by their newly unified nation’s central government, came mainly to New Orleans, where they were considered criminal types. The second episode spans 1910–1930, as assimilation began in earnest, while the third segment, covering 1930–1945, is primarily concerned with World War II, when Italian-Americans’ enthusiasm for Mussolini resulted in suspicions concerning their loyalty and even the placement of some in internment camps. The final chapter, dealing with the postwar era up to the present, records their complete absorption into

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American society. The series doesn't ignore the public's fascination with Mafia-related material, from the Black Hand in New Orleans through Joe Valachi's revelations about the Cosa Nostra in the 1960s, and the *Godfather* phenomenon (although it gives surprisingly short shrift to *The Sopranos*). But it does situate Italian-Americans within a broader context that includes such figures as Sacco and Vanzetti, labor organizer Arturo Giovannitti, Rudolph Valentino, Bank of Italy founder Amadeo Giannini, San Francisco Mayor Angelo Rossi, and New York Governor Mario Cuomo, not to mention entertainment icons Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett. Blending archival footage with narration by Stanley Tucci and interviews with historians and notables such as Antonin Scalia, Nancy Pelosi, and Guy Talese, *The Italian Americans* is recommended. Aud: H,C,P. (F. Swietek)

Navy SEALs: Their Untold Story ★★★

(2014) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-154-7.

For many years, the U.S. Navy SEALs (Sea, Air and Land) operated without much notice. Recently, however, the SEALs have become the subject of media and public attention, most notably due to their successful assassination of Osama bin Laden at his secret Pakistan hideout. Narrated by Gary Sinise, filmmaker Carol L. Fleisher's PBS-aired documentary traces SEAL history beginning with the unit's inception, when the so-called "frogmen" of World War II were tasked with removing Nazi obstacles and traps from the Normandy beaches in advance of the D-Day invasion. The film follows the SEAL experience through the post-WWII years, including the transition away from naval-based endeavors to assignments in the Iraqi desert and the Afghan mountains. Along the way, viewers witness the strenuous training that the SEALs endure. Much of the footage and still photography featured here is being made public for the first time, along with interviews of ex-SEALs who are only now speaking out about their military campaigns. Offering an invigorating look at a key military group, this is recommended. Aud: P. (P. Hall)

Why Planes Vanish ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-148-6.

In March 2014, Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 took off from Kuala Lumpur on a routine flight to Beijing. After about an hour, communication with the plane was cut off. To date the plane's wreckage has not been found, and it is assumed that all 239 passengers and crew are lost. Was this a case of mechanical failure, a quickly moving fire, hijacking, or—even more sinister—a deliberate plan to disappear concocted

by someone on the crew? Directed and hosted by aviation expert Miles O'Brien, this PBS-aired NOVA episode reconstructs the airplane's presumed last hours. The pilots were seasoned professionals, and the aircraft, a Boeing 777, was considered a "pilot's plane." At first there were no signs of trouble, but as it was approaching the limits of radar tracking—transferring from one control center to the next—the plane went silent, and then changed direction, heading north, and then possibly south into the vast Indian Ocean. Airline authorities seemed overwhelmed and unresponsive, angering distraught families of passengers. Early reports of unstable lithium batteries on board, and a couple of Iranians traveling on phony passports, were eventually discounted as a possible cause of the disaster. The documentary describes the role of transponders (every plane has two), which help identify and track flight altitude, and the complex web of "handshakes" that relay information between plane and control center, which in this case continued for hours after direct contact was lost. The film also compares Flight 370 to previous disasters (notably a deadly crash off the coast of South America several years ago), but for 370 one researcher says "the dots don't line up," and it's hard to avoid the conclusion that human intervention was behind the crash. Experts feel that we have the technology (including space-based tracking systems) to make "blind spots" a thing of the past, but for the time being, everyone must wait for the sea to give up its secrets. Buttressed by in-depth scientific research, this timely documentary about a recent aviation tragedy is recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Across America, Route 66 and Beyond

★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. Globe Trekker (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 1-937103-19-4.

The *Globe Trekker* series, which usually spans the world, sticks closer to home here, presenting host Justine Shapiro on a road trip through America's heartland, from Lynchburg, VA, to Arizona, much of it following the famed former "Mother Road" of Route 66. From Lynchburg, Shapiro meanders south, visiting the Hermitage (Andrew Jackson's large slaveholding estate) and a civil rights museum at the Lorraine Motel (the site of the 1968 killing of Martin Luther King Jr.). On a lighter note, the program pays homage to Graceland, noting that Elvis's home is the second most visited residence in America (after the White House). Shapiro stops at Oklahoma City's massive stockyards, learning a little bit of the art and spiel of auctioneering, and then turns west on to Route 66, marking a recreation of the westward "Trail of Tears" taken by Native Americans who were forced from their tribal lands. Route 66, which opened in 1926, went on to win fame as the way west for Dust Bowl migrants seeking a new life in California. Today, this historic road exists only in bypassed fragments, but travelers can still find interesting sites and bits of roadside architecture. Shapiro ends her journey at a mammoth meteorite hole—some 50,000 years old—near Winslow, AZ. Along the way, music and cooking emerge as recurring themes, including southern barbecue, country and mountain music, the Nashville



Discoveries... America National Parks: Olympic National Park, Washington State ★★★1/2

(2015) 50 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-177-1 (dvd), 978-1-60490-200-6 (blu-ray).

The splendors of Washington state's Olympic National Park are on full display in this new entry from Jim and Kelly Watt's high-def filmed *Discoveries... America National Parks* series. A dense, isolated, old growth rainforest ecosystem, the park offers a wide array of hiking trails designed for every visitor, including wheelchair-accessible paths. Rivers full of migrating salmon, fallen trees that take a century to decay but feed other vegetation, and a general tone of magic help to make this park a genuine perennial lure for nature lovers. Viewers will also visit Hurricane Ridge (elevation: 5,000 feet), which offers incredible views of mountains and glaciers, and take in the wonders of the San Juan Island National Historical Park and Whidbey Island's Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, the latter featuring 22 square miles set aside for fishing and farming. Whidbey Island's charming town of Coupeville has successfully fended off developers in order to remain a small historic site, and it offers visitors a day trip to Fort Ebey State Park. Other notable stops include Fort Vancouver National Historic Site (with a recreation of the actual 19th-century fort), Whitman Mission National Historic Site near Walla Walla (once a regular stop for settlers heading west), and the North Cascade National Park. A beautifully-lensed travelogue capturing the verdant sights of the "other" Washington, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

sound, and blues music by way of Memphis's Beale Street. Likely to appeal to history buffs and armchair travelers, this is recommended [Note: this is also available in the 5-disc boxed set *Globe Trekker: Around the World*, priced at \$89.95, which also includes *East to West: Istanbul to Vienna, Pacific Journeys, The Silk Road* and *Conquistadors, Aztecs & Incas*]. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Great Estates of Scotland ★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 240 min. DVD: \$29.99 (\$59.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-162-2.

Some vast estates in Scotland are both tourist attractions and national treasures. This four-part PBS-aired series takes viewers behind the scenes to meet the family members running these sites. The combination of taxes and the enormous financial expense of operation and maintenance make these estates far removed from what is seen in *Downton Abbey*. Inveraray Castle is owned by the Duke and Duchess of Argyll (the Duke is clan chief of worldwide Campbell descendants). But rather than rest on titles, the Duke must run this large rural estate like a business, hosting clan gatherings, historians, tourists, cruise ship passengers, and an assortment of hunting and fishing enthusiasts. On top of that, the Duke finds himself wielding a chainsaw on fallen trees and contending with pesky neighboring sheep. Dumfries House, near Glasgow, has attracted the keen interest of Prince Charles. Originally a victim of neglect, the castle also contains a large number of original Chipendale furniture pieces. Charles, who wants to use the estate to employ and train young people from nearby deprived communities, is interviewed at length here, while an open house event also brings in Prince William and his wife Kate. Kincardine Castle is another property making money: from fly fishing, dinner parties, and weddings. Once used as a military hospital during World War II, the estate still features a working air raid siren. The final stop is Rosslyn Chapel, which recently won fame for being featured in the book and movie *The Da Vinci Code*. An offbeat travelogue series featuring great views, intriguing history, and engaging human interest stories, this is recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

BIOGRAPHY

Esther Broner: A Weave of Women

★★★1/2

(2013) 62 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$350; colleges & universities. *Women Make Movies*. PPR.

Feminist writer Esther Broner (1927-2011), co-author of *The Woman's Haggadah* (1977), is credited with creating the first women's seder—inventing new Jewish rituals from a feminist perspective while retelling traditional Jewish stories from a woman's point of



Edison: The Father of Invention ★★★1/2

(2015) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-220-9.

The inventions of Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) continue to touch the lives of people around the world. Although he came from a humble background, Edison was a driven and focused young man, determined to make "the world bend to his will." Filmmaker Michelle Ferrari's PBS-aired *American Experience* documentary—narrated by Michael Murphy—paints a portrait of a competitive figure who not only "loved the chase," but was also a genius when it came to problem-solving and self-promotion.

Although he would marry twice and have six children, Edison spent most of his time with his team of researchers at his Menlo Park laboratory in New Jersey. After the Civil War, America was in a headlong rush to usher in the modern age. In rapid succession, Edison and his co-workers worked on a phonograph using tinfoil—an invention that made him a national figure—and then moved on to the electric light, a world-changing device that freed families from darkness, lengthening their days for work or pleasure. Edison was reluctant to share credit with others, and he also displayed a stubborn streak, which led him to back the wrong technology (direct current as opposed to alternating current). Although his patents and inventions made him a millionaire, Edison's passions extended far beyond just making money. Edison pioneered the art of trademark recognition, and would become the very image of the modern inventor (even though much of his work was built on foundations laid by others). Edison took a late-in-life interest in developing motion pictures, churning out short subjects in his "Black Maria" NJ facility. Combining archival footage and stills with scholarly interviews, the documentary also touches on Edison's enduring friendship with Henry Ford. At his death in 1931, the "Wizard of Menlo Park" was hailed as a "miracle man"—not much of an exaggeration. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

view. Filmmaker Lilly Rivlin's moving profile explores the charismatic Broner's impact on Jewish women, made through her personal religious practices and her writing. Archival video and interviews with contemporaries capture Broner's infectious charisma along with the empowered community she fashioned with her new rites, prayers, and songs. Those who attended women's seders from the beginning recall her "magical vision," noting the significance of the experience, which allowed them to explore areas in Judaism where women had not been central (or even mentioned); recasting, for example, stories from the Jewish Exodus that focused on women's experiences (and asking how they might resonate with present-day women). Broner's new practices were important to the contemporary participants, but also served as a way of honoring mothers and grandmothers who had few such opportunities for validation or support within their own older religious traditions. A powerful portrait of a woman whose deep faith and powerful literary voice changed the language of Jewish religious practice, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

I Am Steve McQueen ★★★

(2014) 93 min. DVD: \$14.98. Blu-ray: \$29.95. *Shout! Factory* (avail. from most distributors).

Originally made for Spike TV (the cable channel of guy culture), Jeff Renfroe's documentary portrait of actor and icon of cool Steve McQueen is just as probing as

you'd expect in a production from McQueen Racing. Essentially offering a survey of his career—from the TV series *Wanted: Dead or Alive* to his defining films (*The Magnificent Seven*, *The Great Escape*, *The Thomas Crown Affair*, and *Bullitt* among them), the film also takes detours along the way to explore McQueen's love of cars and racing, an interest that competed (and at times dovetailed) with his film career. Robert Downey Jr. narrates, while family members (his son, Chad; plus his widow, ex-wives, and grandkids) remember him fondly, and a gallery of fellow actors (including Gary Oldman and Pierce Brosnan), stunt performers, and racing aficionados share appreciations of McQueen as an actor and a racer. *I Am Steve McQueen* is most interesting when it explores the actor's work as a stuntman (separating the myth from the reality) and looks at his labor of love project *Le Mans*, a financial flop that has become a cult movie among racing fans. But while it features a wealth of behind-the-scenes footage along with the usual film clips, there's nothing genuinely revealing or in the least bit critical here. Even when the film delves into his fight with cancer, it sidesteps the details of the controversial (and damaging) cancer treatments McQueen received outside of American borders. Despite the title, this documentary never really gives viewers an idea of who Steve McQueen was behind the image. Also including bonus featurettes, this is an optional purchase. Aud: P. (S. Axmaker)

Penton: The John Penton Story ★★★

(2014) 153 min. DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95. *Passion River* (avail. from www.midwesttape.com). Closed captioned.

Roots musician Lyle Lovett narrates this detail-oriented profile of off-road motorcycle pioneer John Penton. Lovett raced dirt bikes as a kid, and even met Penton on a long-ago visit to Houston (he also contributes a few songs to the soundtrack). Interviewees include 88-year-old Penton, his family and friends, members of the biking community, and biographer Ed Youngblood. Penton grew up on a farm in Cleveland, developing his love of cycling by way of his father, who owned a Harley Davidson. After serving in World War II, Penton and his brothers started racing, which led to a business selling cycles. After marrying and raising three sons, Penton received the devastating news that his wife had a rapidly-accelerating form of multiple sclerosis. Upon her passing, Penton raced across the U.S. and Canada (on one trip, he cycled from New York to Los Angeles in 52 hours, a record that would stand for 10 years). Some time afterward, Penton met his second wife on the racing circuit, a widow who brought three children to the mix. Penton also added Europe to his racing itinerary, where he met Steve McQueen (who was then shooting *The Great Escape*). All the while, Penton was customizing his own bikes, which led to deals with European companies to design and manufacture the "Penton" and other products. For off-road motorcycle racing enthusiasts, director Todd Huffman's gear-head documentary offers many pleasures, and even general viewers may enjoy Penton's storied past. Recommended. Aud: P. (K. Fennessy)

Richard Pryor: Icon ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-181-3.

Raised in a brothel, comedian Richard Pryor (1940-2005) was always "connected to the streets." The son of violent alcoholic parents, Pryor was bullied in schools but found a defense in humor. This PBS-aired documentary chronicles the creative yet troubled life of Pryor, who broke barriers related to race, sex, and poverty, using language as a weapon. After an unhappy stint in the Army, Pryor set out for New York City's Greenwich Village, eventually securing repeated gigs on talk shows such as Merv Griffin's, where he acted the part of a "proper black man," noted for his rubber-faced, non-confrontational style of comedy. By the late 1960s, however, the counterculture was taking root, and while performing in Las Vegas in 1967, Pryor experienced an epiphany, developing a cutting-edge humor that reached across lines of race and class, launching his career with a string of comedy albums and roles in popular movies. By 1980, Pryor had a serious drug problem, nearly killing himself when he was badly

burned while freebasing cocaine (naturally, he turned this tragedy into a routine). *Icon* covers Pryor's multiple marriages, explosive temper, heart attacks, and finally, the multiple sclerosis that ended his career. Comedians Tracy Morgan, George Lopez, and Louie Anderson here remember Pryor as a trailblazer and inspiration, who paved the way for the likes of Eddie Murphy and Chris Rock. Regrettably, the documentary features no clips from Pryor's films, but aside from some lapses into hyperbole, this is a solid portrait of a true comic artist. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Ripley: Believe it or Not ★★★

(2015) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-222-3.

In the days before YouTube, Americans were diverted by Robert Ripley's (1890-1949) stranger than fiction cartoon panels. Directed by Cathleen O'Connell and narrated by Oliver Platt, this PBS-aired *American Experience* documentary charts the durable career of Ripley, portrayed here as both a world traveler and a hayseed. Ripley was a rather homely, awkward man, with an impressive set of buck teeth. Starting out as a local newspaper sports cartoonist, Ripley began filling the slack time between seasons with drawings of odd and little known sports facts and feats, in a regular feature he called "Champs and Chumps." A world tour exposed Ripley to the wonders of China, which would become a lifelong obsession, but it was India that provided him with a wealth of material—"the best of the weirdest"—to draw for a receptive audience. After securing a job with the Hearst newspaper chain, Ripley abandoned sports, aiming to provide a worldview of "curiosity mixed with education." Ripley used gimmicks, sponsoring contests and inviting reader submissions, and while he was a world traveler, much of his material was supplied by a researcher working out of the wilds of the New York Public Library. A born showman, Ripley quickly branched out to radio and motion pictures (once even broadcasting from underwater). As Ripley's career progressed, he gave Americans a chance to see his wonders up close in his museums (supplying nurses on call for the faint of heart), although he forbid his employees from referring to his subjects as freaks, preferring the term "oddities." An entertaining tribute, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during May and June, including: *American Barn Stories: Barn Quilts & More*, *John Ford: Dreaming The Quiet Man*, *On Any Sunday: The Next Chapter*, *Wagonmasters*, and much more!

Series Update

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

The Legend of Korra—Book Four: Balance (297 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$19.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$35.98), the latest compilation from Paramount's



Nickelodeon-aired series, follows Avatar Korra as she recovers from an extreme battle only to face a new threat from the power-crazed Kuvira. See review of *The Legend of Korra—Book One: Air* in VL-9/13.

Peg + Cat: Peg Rocks (85 min., DVD: \$12.99) is the newest entry in the PBS Kids series featuring sweet youngster Peg and her feline friend Cat, who use their math skills to tackle mini-crises. See review of *Peg + Cat: Chickens on the Loose and Other Really Big Problems!* in VL-11/14.

Wild Kratts: Shark-Tastic (60 min., DVD: \$12.99), the latest addition to the live-action/animated PBS Kids series featuring wildlife aficionado brothers Martin and Chris Kratt, includes four episodes: "Stuck on Sharks," "Octopus Wildkratticus," "Tortuga Tune-Up," and "Speaking Dolphinese." See review of *Wild Kratts: Creative Adventures* in VL-7/11.

Subtitled "German Engineering in WWII," **Nazi Mega Weapons: Season Two** (360 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99) compiles the 2014 second season of the PBS series that looks at military technology projects developed by the Nazis as part of their effort to achieve world domination. See review of *Nazi Mega Weapons* in VL Online-3/14.



In **Monster High: Haunted** (76 min., DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$26.98), the newest entry in Universal's popular doll-franchise computer-animated series, the Monster High fashionista teens aren't welcome at a spirited Ghost World school, but must save their friend Spectra VonDergeist. See review of *Monster High: Ghouls Rule* in VL-1/13.

Der Rosenkavalier

★★★

(2014) 215 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



Richard Strauss was too harsh when he called himself only a “first-rate second-rate” composer, but while this 2014 Salzburg Festival production of his lushly romantic 1911 comedy is hardly mediocre, it’s not outstanding either. In *Der Rosenkavalier*, the wise Marschallin ensures that her young lover, Octavian, is united with the beautiful Sophie, despite the attempts of her boorish cousin Baron Ochs to woo the girl. The playing of the Vienna Philharmonic is predictably polished, but Franz Welser Möst’s conducting is more efficient than affectionate; and while Günther Groissböck makes an imposingly smug Ochs and Krassimira Stoyanova an elegant Marschallin, the rest of the cast—particularly Sophie Koch as Octavian and Mojca Erdmann as Sophie—are less impressive. Harry Kupfer’s tasteful but unimaginative staging situates the tale roughly at the time of the work’s composition, while the sets—employing gigantic rear projections of Viennese landmarks, as well as some large mirrors, and only modest bits of furniture in the first two acts (things open up in the third)—are pleasing but tend to dwarf the characters. On the other hand, the costumes—mostly in whites, blacks, and shades of gray—are quite lovely. Essentially, the strengths and weaknesses are pretty evenly divided between this performance and an earlier Salzberg mounting staged by Robert Carsens (VL-3/07), which was more ardently conducted by Semyon Bychkov but made the mistake of situating Act III in a brothel rather than a simple hotel. Presented in DTS 5.0 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this somewhat uneven but often enjoyable rendition of Strauss’s greatest opera is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Die Zauberflöte

★★★★1/2

(2012) 163 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

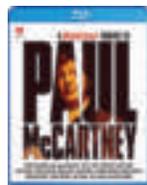


Imaginative and charming, this 2012 Dutch National Opera production of Mozart’s magical 1791 masterpiece is not traditional but almost always works. Maximilian Schmitt is physically a bit beefy but sings well as Tamino, the prince recruited by the Queen of the Night—portrayed as a decrepit old woman by Iride Martínez (who hits her high notes expertly)—to rescue her daughter Pamina (lovely Christina Landsamer) from the clutches of Sarastro (Brindley Sherratt, cutting a noble figure while also flawlessly

managing his low notes). Sarastro turns out to be the good guy, introducing Tamino and Pamina to enlightenment while defeating the vengeful queen. Their idealistic love is contrasted with the more earthy desires of birdcatcher Papageno (exuberant Thomas Oliemans), who is finally rewarded with his Papagena (engaging Nina Lejderman). The soloists receive nimble support from the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra under Marc Albrecht, who miscalculates only by inserting a few pauses that hinder the music’s momentum. Simon McBurney’s staging sports some missteps—modernizing costumes and other details (like a gun for Papageno’s suicide attempt) and eroticizing the ladies-in-waiting, who undress Tamino in the first scene—but mostly the low-tech effects here (such as having supernumeraries flick pages to simulate flying birds) and the decision to have the singers interact with orchestra and audience come off as nicely amusing. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

A MusiCares Tribute to Paul McCartney ★★★

(2014) 59 min. DVD: \$16.98, Blu-ray: \$21.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).



Sir Paul McCartney is honored as 2012’s MusiCare’s Person of the Year in this gala concert held in Los Angeles, featuring a varied slate of performers serving up (mostly) Beatles songs and a few Macca numbers from his years with Wings and as a solo artist. The show kicks off with members of Cirque du Soleil’s “Love” cast dancing in the aisles to a medley of “Get Back/Hello Goodbye/Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band,” followed by the guest of honor and his band delivering spirited renditions of “Magical Mystery Tour” and “Junior’s Farm.” During the 15-song set (including medleys), artists put their own particular stamp on McCartney-penned tunes, ranging from the familiar Sergio Mendes version of “The Fool on the Hill” to the not-so-familiar rendition of “I Saw Her Standing There” by Neil Young & Crazy Horse in full guitar-thrash mode (making the song about twice as long as the original—a hands-down highlight). Also on hand are Alison Krauss & Union Station with a countrified take on “No More Lonely Nights,” soulful piano turns by Alicia Keys (“Blackbird”) and Norah Jones (“Oh! Darling”), and a wonderful granola-crunchy “We Can Work It Out” by Coldplay. James Taylor and Diana Krall team up to perform “Yesterday” (a song that sounds even more mournful with Taylor’s signature voice), and McCartney returns with a closing medley (“Golden Slumbers/Carry That Weight/The End”), in which he’s joined by

Joe Walsh and the Foo Fighters’ Dave Grohl. Sure to be appreciated by Beatles fans and celebrity gawkers (periodic audience shots capture David Crosby, Tom Hanks, Smokey Robinson, and others), this entertaining concert is presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo. Recommended. (R. Pitman)

Parsifal ★★1/2

(2013) 2 discs. 270 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$54.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Richard Wagner’s final opera, one of his most difficult, features a libretto based on Wolfram von Eschenbach’s 13th-century epic, but extends the highly allegorical source material to extraordinary length (four-hours-plus). The narrative centers on an order of knights guarding the Holy Grail and the spear that pierced the crucified Christ. Amfortas, their leader, lies mortally wounded after being seduced by the wild Kundry and losing the sacred weapon. Amfortas can be cured only by its touch, and it falls to Parsifal—a young woodsman introduced to the group’s rituals by Amfortas’s lieutenant, Gurnemanz—to recover the spear. The musical aspects of this 2013 Royal Opera House production are very strong, with René Pape and Gerald Finley delivering powerful performances as Gurnemanz and Amfortas, Simon O’Neill an effective Parsifal, and Angela Denoke a thrilling Kundry. Antonio Pappano’s conducting is masterly, while the company orchestra plays magnificently. But Stephen Langridge’s staging is peculiar, not just because the cast wears vaguely modern costumes in a sort of impressionist forest built around Amfortas’s sickroom (a transparent cube), but also due to some strange imagery in scenes such as the Eucharistic ritual that closes Act 1, which features the stabbing of a boy whose blood is then sipped by the monks (the result is more unsettling than insightful). Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include interviews with O’Neill and Pappano. A better choice here would be Nikolaus Lehnhoff’s 2004 Baden-Baden production (VL-9/05). A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

New to Blu-ray

Debuting on Blu-ray (Eagle Rock, \$17.98), *Live at Knebworth* (VL-9/97 ★★) boasts better image quality and sound—DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo—but the 31-song selection for this 1990 concert still feels unsatisfying (four tunes by Status Quo, none of which are “Pictures of Matchstick Men”).



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

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3212 Duke St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: (800) 889-5937
Web: academicvideostore.com

The AV Cafe
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Tel: (877) 228-2233
Web: theavcafe.com

Bennett-Watt HD Productions
13021 244th Ave. SE
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Tel: (800) 327-2893
Web: bennett-watt.com

Big Mouth Productions
68 Jay St., Ste. 304
Brooklyn, NY 11201
Tel: (646) 456-8545
Web: bigmouthproductions.com

Bullfrog Films
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Tel: (800) 543-3764
Web: bullfrogfilms.com

The Cinema Guild
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Tel: (800) 723-5522
Web: cinemaguild.com

Collective Eye
2305 SE Yamhill St., Ste. 101
Portland, OR 97214
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Web: collectiveeye.org

Dreamscape Media
6940 Hall St.
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Tel: (877) 983-7326
Web: dreamscapeab.com

Film Movement
109 West 27th St., Ste. 9B
New York, NY 10001
Tel: (866) 937-3456
Web: filmmovement.com

Films Media Group
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New York, NY 10001
Tel: (800) 322-8755
Web: films.com

First Run Features
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Green Planet Films
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Tel: (415) 377-5471
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Human Relations Media
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Web: hrvideo.com

Icarus Films
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Brooklyn, NY 11201
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Web: icarusfilms.com

J Haaken Productions
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Tel: (503) 657-1501
Web: mindzonemovie.com

Kino Lorber Edu
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Web: kinolorberedu.com

Music Box Films
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Tel: (312) 241-1320
Web: musicboxfilms.com

National Film Board of Canada
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Web: passionriver.com

PBS Video
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Arlington, VA 22202
Tel: (800) 344-3337
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Tel: (818) 784-1702
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Tel: (800) 523-0226
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Visual Learning Systems
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Tel: (800) 453-8481
Web: visuallearningsys.com

Weston Woods Studios
90 Old Sherman Tpke.
Danbury, CT 06816
Tel: (800) 243-5020
Web: westonwoods.scholastic.com

Women Make Movies
115 W. 29th St., Ste. 1200
New York, NY 10001
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Web: wmm.com

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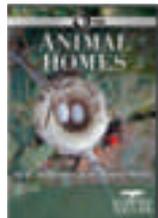
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Measuring Streams

A recent conversation on the Videolib listserv (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/vrtlists.html>) about annual data for video circulation in academic libraries caught my eye. Jane B. Hutchison, Associate Director, Instruction & Research Technology, at William Paterson University in NJ posted a chart comparing hard copy (DVD/Blu-ray) vs. streaming circulation. In 2010, the number of hard copy circulations appeared to be around 5,600, while streaming circulations numbered about 4,000. In 2014, hard copy circs had dropped to 4,000 and streaming circulations jumped to a jaw-dropping 18,000-plus.

While I was trying to wrap my brain around this incredible statistical disparity, Jo Ann Reynolds, Reserve Services Coordinator at the University of Connecticut's Homer Babbidge Library, responded with some pertinent comments/questions regarding how streaming statistics are measured (which can be done on either the library or vendor's side).

Jo Ann noted that "different vendors count views or engagement differently." She added: "I was recently looking closely at views/engagement for some streams from different vendors...comparing vendor data with data from Ares [an e-reserve system], which shows

user ID by date/time. When you look at this level of granularity you see multiple hits by the same user within very short periods of time, sometimes 10 hits or more in a minute. Clearly they are not watching a full film...nor are they gaining a meaningful browse or 'engagement'... Someone should be able to devise an algorithm based on data (patron behavior, hit length, and computer issues) that could be applied to the hit data to provide a more realistic picture of what patrons are actually watching."

Jo Ann continues: "Engagement, depending on how it is defined by the vendor, is probably a better measure but still requires some framing. For me, engagement would have to be at least 15% or more of the total run time. Certainly not a hit of 30 seconds or less; even a couple of minutes for a two-hour film is questionable."

Jo Ann appended several questions to ask vendors about circulation data, including:

What data are you counting? Hits to a URL or some percentage of the total film length that a user spent with a film (engagement)?

If it is number of minutes watched, what percentage of the total film did those minutes comprise?

Were the hits/engagement all for the same portion of the film (clips vs. watching a film)?

These questions are, of course, unique to

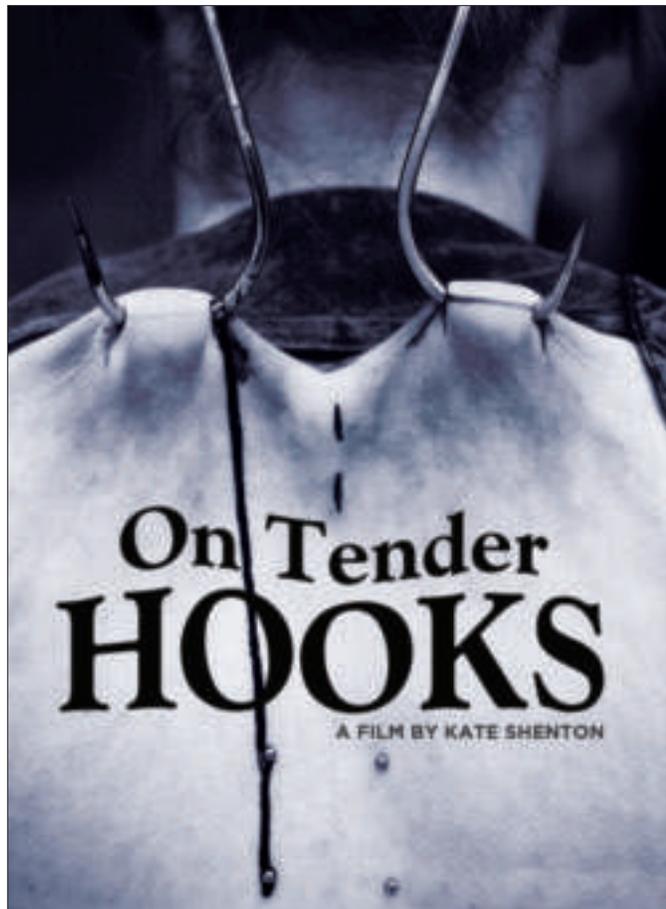
current technology. In ages past, no one could accurately measure what percentage of a book checked out by a patron was actually read (or even if the spine was cracked at all). And what are we to make of the qualifier "meaningful" in regards to a browse or circulation? What does "meaningful" mean? (Sorry, I just finished Rebecca Newberger Goldstein's *Plato at the Googleplex*, which has left me in a philosophic frame of mind.) A particular clip that a patron is specifically looking for could be found in the first 2% of a film, just as a quick index browse could lead someone to the exact page of a book containing a relevant piece of information. 15%? No. Meaningful? Yes.

But these are devil's advocate questions.

Jo Ann is clearly trying to frame a necessary conversation about accountability and pricing.

We are at the relative dawn of the digital age, faced with new issues that are bringing new questions. If libraries are going to pay to license the same content every one, three, or five years (as opposed to yesteryear's outright purchases of physical copies), then accurate and meaningful usage measurements make sense and new pricing models may be in order.

Randy Pitman



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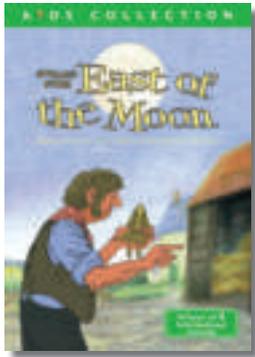
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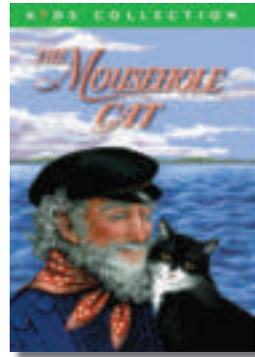
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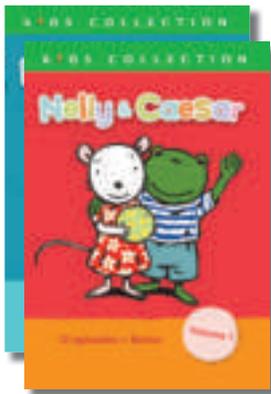
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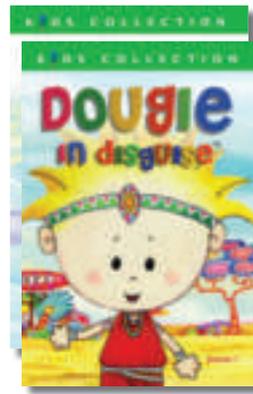
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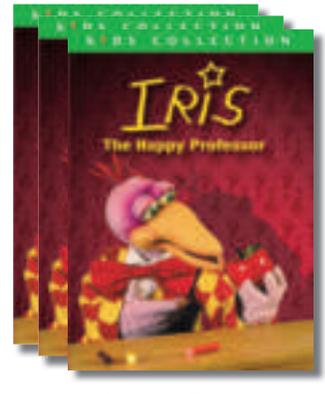
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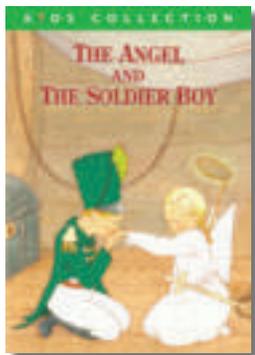
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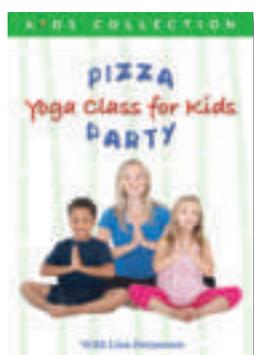
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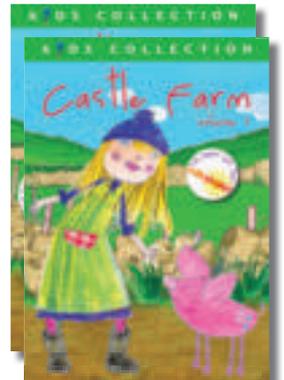
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