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Video Librarian

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Life Itself | ALA Notables | Vaccines: Calling the Shots | Robin Williams Remembered | Kids for Cash | Sex (ed): The Movie

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Spotlight Review

Life Itself ★★★★★

Magnolia, 120 min., R,
 DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray:
 \$29.98



Film critic Roger Ebert knew he would not live to see this documentary based on his same-titled 2011 memoir. In a particularly poignant scene, Ebert tells director Steve James (*Hoop Dreams*) that his thyroid cancer has metastasized to his spine. Ebert died in April 2013, at the age of 70. Filmed during what would be the last five months of his life, the renowned critic here shares his regret that he never got to say goodbye to his contentious “frenemy” Gene Siskel, who concealed his brain cancer diagnosis in 1998, fearing that Disney would replace him on *Siskel & Ebert*. That secrecy affected Ebert so much that he was determined not to make the same mistake, even as numerous surgical procedures left him without a lower jaw and unable to normally eat, drink, or speak. Ebert’s wife, Chaz, is equally forthcoming, admitting for the first time publicly that she met Roger at Alcoholics Anonymous. Chaz also reveals that she was not aware that Roger had a “do

not resuscitate” order until the day he died. Beginning with Ebert’s definition of cinema as “a machine that generates empathy,” this bio-pic covers Ebert’s career and personal life—from his early days at the *Chicago Sun-Times* up through his popular TV show and final years. While Ebert was both celebrated and criticized for his thumbs-up-or-down judgments, he was also the first film critic to win a Pulitzer Prize. Included are interviews with directors Martin Scorsese, Werner Herzog, Errol Morris, and Ramin Bahrani, along with critics A.O. Scott and Richard Corliss. Extras include deleted scenes, an interview with director Steve James, and a Sundance tribute to Ebert. Unflinching and engrossing, this inspirational appreciation of America’s most influential film critic is highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.** (S. Granger)

VL at ACRL

Video Librarian will be exhibiting at the Association of College & Research Libraries Annual Conference in Portland, OR, from March 25-27. Please drop by our booth (#671) to say hello!

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ORDER NOW BLACK HISTORY MONTH & WOMAN'S HISTORY MONTH

THEMES:

*Black women's struggle
against racial exploitation.
Social redemption.
Justice for the oppressed.*

STUDIES:

*Civil Rights, Paramour
Rights, American History,
Law, Women's Rights*

Study Guide available

YOU BELONG TO ME: SEX, RACE AND MURDER IN THE SOUTH

A powerful, eye-opening documentary about the sexual assault, trial and incarceration of Ruby McCollum, a black woman convicted of murdering a prominent Southern white doctor in 1952. The film delves into researching every aspect of her trial and consequent conviction, and serves as an important historical account of a tragic civil rights incident, the repercussions of which can still be felt today.

FEATURING: **Sam McCollum, Jr** (son), **Tracy Long** (granddaughter), **Henry Curtis Ave** (juror)
VF-1006 UPC# 818522011639, SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$299.00, 88 Min

STREET DATE: 2/3/15



THEMES:

*Child abuse.
African Civil Wars.
Self redemption
through helping others.*

STUDIES:

*Civil Rights,
African History,
Slavery, Religion*

MACHINE GUN PREACHER DOCUMENTARY

THE "REAL" MACHINE GUN PREACHER

Pennsylvanian biker Sam Childers overcame a life of drugs and violence to become a rebel of hope, waging a 13-year war to free enslaved children in Uganda and Southern Sudan, Africa. This film takes a peek inside the life of a missionary who preaches justice with a machine gun.

STARRING: **Sam Childers** a.k.a. The Machine Gun Preacher and **Gerard Butler** (title character in "Machine Gun Preacher")

VF-1002 UPC# 818522011493, SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$249.00, 71 Min

STREET DATE: 3/17/15



THEMES:

*Women and men
exploring new
relationships.
Breaking down
social conventions.
Social phenomena.*

STUDIES:

Psychology, Health

FIFTY SHADES UNCOVERED

Take an in-depth look into why this trilogy has become such a runaway success, whether classified as erotic fiction, adult romance or mommy porn, it lifts the lid on a cultural and sexual phenomenon that won't be restrained as it reaches world domination!

FEATURING: **Jenny Éclair** (writer of "Grumpy Old Women"), **Emily Shaw** (Playboy playmate), **Aura Borealis** (acclaimed Erotic Fiction writer), **Mistress Josephine** (Dominatrix trainer), **Sara Nelson** (Amazon Books) and more!

VF-1007 UPC# 818522011646, SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$199.00, 70 Min

STREET DATE: 2/10/15



THEMES:

*Women overcoming
adversity. Women
empowerment.
Women healing
through sports.*

STUDIES:

Women's Issues, Health

"...it's about women making
the choice to stand up and
fight for their life" -Huffington
Post, Gerry Gavin

FIGHT LIKE A GIRL

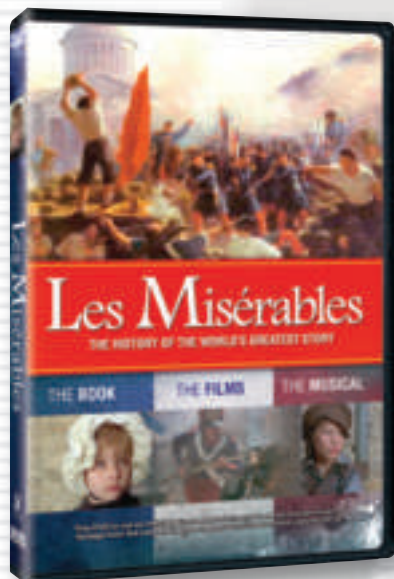
Follow Jill Morley as she delves inside the world of female boxing with the women who are passionate about fighting hard. Real emotional histories and traumas bubble up, fleshing out a compelling story about women overcoming adversity.

FEATURING: **Jill Morley**, **Maureen** ("The Real Million Dollar Baby") **Shea**, **Susan Merlucci-Reno**, **Kimberly Tomes** and **Melissa Hernandez**

VF-1011 UPC# 818522011684, SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$199.00, 82 Min

STREET DATE: 3/10/15

Educators please contact: sales@visionfilms.net for university classroom pricing, screenings, study guides and speaking engagements.



LES MISÉRABLES: THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST STORY

Delve into the history behind one of the greatest novels of the nineteenth century, one of the greatest musical stage plays of the twentieth, and now one of the greatest box office successes of the twenty-first century.

INTERVIEWS WITH: **Cameron Mackintosh** (Producer), **Hugh Jackman** (Jean Valjean), **Tom Hooper** (Director), **Anne Hathaway** (Fantine), **Isabelle Allen** (Young Cosette) and more!

THEMES: Classical literature. Struggle against oppression.
STUDIES: European History

VF-1012 UPC# 818522011691, SRP: \$16.95, PPR: \$199.00, 60 Min
STREET DATE: 4/14/15

ORDER NOW HISTORY

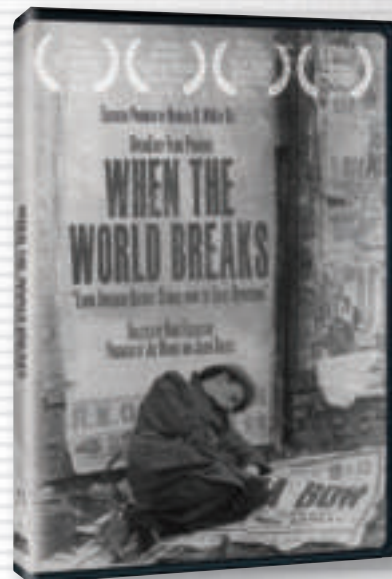


TO GO VIKING

Follow the spectacular journey of a Viking Age group, as they make their way across Europe, where they participate in massive-scale viking reenactments and a series of epic competitive battles, including full contact fighting.

THEMES: International cooperation. Living history.
STUDIES: European History

VF-1001 UPC# 818522011608, SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$199.00, 95 Min
STREET DATE: 3/17/15



WHEN THE WORLD BREAKS

In 1929 the world was launched into the darkest time in modern economic history. Ernest Hemingway wrote: "The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong in the broken places." Depression-era life and art comes alive with film clips and personal stories from survivors.

FEATURING: **Ray Bradbury**, **Jerry Stiller**, **Mickey Rooney**, **Jerry Stiller**, **Buzz Aldrin**, **Jack Lalanne** and **Phyllis Diller**

THEMES: Economic and social struggles.
Shared sacrifice and renewal. The American experience.
STUDIES: American History, Economics, Finance

VF-1013 UPC# 818522011707, SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$249.00, 88 Min
STREET DATE: 4/21/15

THEMES:
Success through persistence and discipline.
International appeal of sports.

STUDIES: Sports,
Physical Education

CRISTIANO RONALDO: THE WORLD AT HIS FEET

Follow the life of Cristiano Ronaldo from his humble upbringing to winning practically every honor there is in the world of football and becoming the star player for Real Madrid.

FEATURING: **Cristiano Ronaldo**, **David Beckham**, **Victoria Beckham**, **Sir Alex Ferguson** (Former Manchester United Manager), **Jose Mourinho** (Chelsea Manager), **Lionel Messi**, **Eva Longoria**, **Gary Lineker**, Narration by **Benedict Cumberbatch**.

VF-1010 UPC# 818522011677, SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$199.00, 70 Min
STREET DATE: 3/3/15



THEMES:
Supporting the troops.
Music heals the world.
Social responsibility.

STUDIES:
Sociology

OPERATION ROCK THE TROOPS

1 Dream. 1 Runway Rock Show.
4 World Tours. 12 Countries. 1 Mission.
Rock The Troops.

The hit rock band, The JC Allstars, teams with hot models and makes it their mission to travel the globe to entertain the troops. On their journey they realize that the real success isn't winning an Emmy or Grammy - it's the magical feeling of changing people's lives with music.

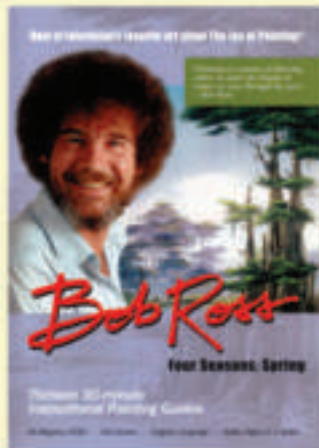
From Award-winning Producer **Matthew JC**

VF-1003 UPC# 818522011523, SRP: \$19.95, PPR: \$199.00, 90 Min
STREET DATE: 4/7/15

**Distributed through the AV Dept. of Allied Vaughn (<http://www.alliedvaughn.com/>) and all major distributors.
View Trailers online www.visionfilms.net.**

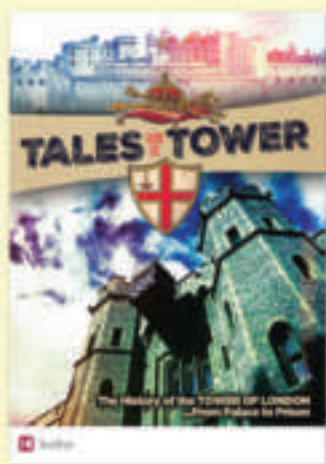
DVD PICKS

Sponsored by BayView Entertainment



BOB ROSS - THE JOY OF PAINTING: SPRING COLLECTION BR1PD \$45.99

Bob Ross' Four Seasons: Spring is a packed three DVD set running for over six hours that brings you cool lemony breezes and baby green foliage, plus much more - everything you love most about Bob Ross' landscape painting techniques in this special collection. Across this program Bob patiently teaches you his world famous **Wet-on-Wet Technique** for painting your very own relaxing springtime scenes.



TALES FROM THE TOWER: The Story of the Tower of London D4994 \$19.99

Tales from the Tower brings to life just a few of the more amazing episodes in history that involve the Tower of London. For those who were suspected to be enemies of the state and sent to the Tower, life was a potentially hazardous occupation that invariably leads to death. These stories about torture, murder and rare escapes date from the 11th to the 20th century and are not for the squeamish or faint hearted.



Order from your distributor or
call BayView at 201-488-6110
WWW.BAYVIEWENTERTAINMENT.COM

Video Newsbriefs

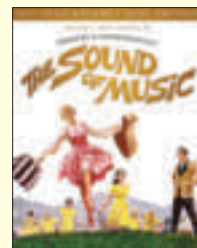
Criterion's April Slate Includes Blu-ray Debuts of "Sullivan's Travels" and "The River"

In April, Criterion will present a selection of golden-age classics by some of the world's greatest directors. Arriving April 14 is Preston Sturges's 1941 comedy masterpiece *Sullivan's Travels* (DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), starring Joel McCrea as a Hollywood director who goes looking for enlightenment (disguised as a hobo) and meets a lovely, no-nonsense young woman (Veronica Lake). Also slated for April 14 is Carol Reed's 1947 psychological noir *Odd Man Out* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), starring James Mason as an ex-con leading a robbery that goes horribly wrong. Coming April 21 is Jean Renoir's 1951 Technicolor spellbinder *The River* (DVD \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95), based on the novel by Rumer Godden, which contrasts the growing pains of three young women with the immutability of the holy Bengal River in India. Bowing April 28 is the Blu-ray debut of Peter Yates's evocative 1973 crime drama *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, starring Robert Mitchum as a small-time gunrunner in an adaptation of George V. Higgins's acclaimed novel. Also arriving on April 28 is Jean-Pierre Melville's 1949 debut, *Le Silence de la Mer* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray: \$39.95), a tale of French resistance during World War II that follows an idealistic, naive German officer assigned to the home of a middle-aged man and his grown niece. Also, on April 21, look for the latest entry in Criterion's extra-less Eclipse series, *Silent Ozu: Three Crime Dramas* (DVD: 3 discs, \$44.95), featuring a trio of works from Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu: *Walk Cheerfully* (1930), *That Night's Wife* (1930), and *Dragnet Girl* (1933).

"The Sound of Music: 50th Anniversary" Set Arrives March 10 from Fox

Twentieth Century Fox will honor the 50th anniversary of the 1965 box office smash and five-time Academy Award-winning *The Sound of Music* with an unprecedented year-long, company-wide celebration that will bring one of the world's most "favorite things" to millions around the globe. Coming March 10 is *The Sound of Music: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$24.99), which is also being released in an *Ultimate Collector's Edition* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 5 discs, \$49.99) that features over 13 hours

of bonus content, highlighted by the all-new documentary *The Sound of a City: Julie Andrews Returns to Salzburg*, detailing Andrews's recent return to the magical city where she was filmed in her iconic role of Maria half a century ago. Here, Andrews visits key sites in the story of the von Trapps, including Nonnberg Abbey, Mondsee Abbey, and the "Do-Re-Mi" steps at Mirabell Gardens. The *Ultimate Collector's Edition* will also feature an exclusive, 50th anniversary soundtrack from Legacy Recordings/Sony Music, with eight international bonus tracks never before released in the U.S. An Oscar winner for Best Picture, the film follows a warm-hearted young woman (Best Actress winner Andrews) who brings joy and music to Captain von Trapp (Best Actor winner Christopher Plummer) and his seven children in a story that features unforgettable songs, including "Do-Re-Mi," "My Favorite Things," and the title track.



Latest "Shakespeare Uncovered" Set Now Available from PBS Distribution

PBS Distribution has just released *Shakespeare Uncovered: Series 2* (DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Combining history, biography, iconic performances, analysis, and the personal passions of its celebrated hosts, each episode here explores the extraordinary world and works of William Shakespeare, and includes interviews with actors, directors, and scholars, along with visits to key locations, clips from some of the most-celebrated film and television adaptations, and illustrative excerpts from the plays staged specially for the series at Shakespeare's Globe in London. The hosts include: Christopher Plummer (who has starred in *King Lear*) Kim Cattrall (who has played the Egyptian queen in *Antony and Cleopatra*), Morgan Freeman (who has appeared as Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*), Joseph Fiennes (whose work in *Shakespeare in Love* underscores his appreciation of *Romeo and Juliet*), Hugh Bonneville (who began his career as an understudy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and David Harewood (the first black actor to play the role of *Othello* at London's National Theatre).



VANDAL

84 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916417D
NOW AVAILABLE

Both a coming of age tale and a searing social drama, this new French film set in Strasbourg centers on a wayward young man who joins a gang of urban teens and finds himself coming of age in the world of graffiti art.

"This portrait of the artist as a young tagger is a unique cinematic experience."

-The Hollywood Reporter

"Transfixing...organic, raw and unforced. The sublime score is ethereal."

-VeryAware.com



ILYA AND EMILIA KABAKOV: ENTER HERE

103 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916431D
STREET DATE: MARCH 3

Two of Russia's most celebrated artists, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, now American citizens, try to come to terms with the new Russia.

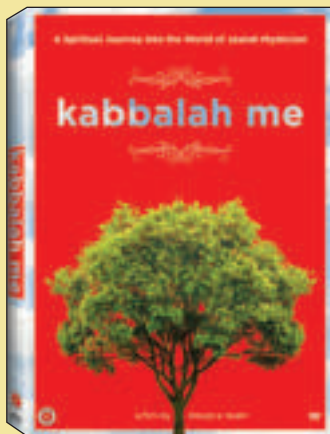
The film explores the ways in which art can outwit oppression, offering a beacon of light for repressed societies everywhere.

"A marvelous documentary."

-The New Yorker

"A graceful, enormously moving portrait."

-Artforum



KABBALAH ME

80 minutes, color, \$27.95, FRF 916424D
STREET DATE: MARCH 24

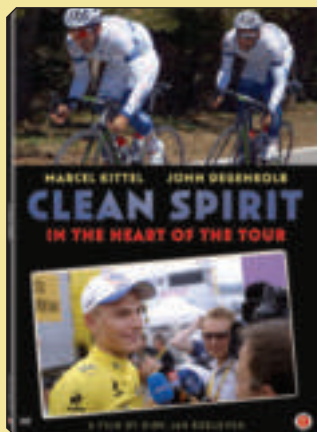
Director Steven Bram embarks on a personal journey into the esoteric spiritual phenomenon known as Kabbalah, which ultimately leads to profound changes across all aspects of his life.

"A fascinating and inspiring story! But on another level, it is also a revelatory documentary about how faith and religious observance are marginalized in our society."

-Jewish Daily Forward

"Welcoming and intriguing."

-Village Voice



CLEAN SPIRIT IN THE HEART OF THE TOUR

88 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916448D
STREET DATE: MARCH 24

Too many doping scandals have damaged the sport of cycling. But *Clean Spirit* introduces us to one pro cycling team that strives to compete the "right way."

"Truthfully captures the glorious highs and dramatic lows of professional cycling through the eyes of its new, young stars."

-Cycle Sport Magazine

"This intimate, authentic film encapsulates the agony and ecstasy of the world's biggest bike race: the Tour de France."

-The Independent (UK)



CAPTIVE

122 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916400D
STREET DATE: MARCH 3

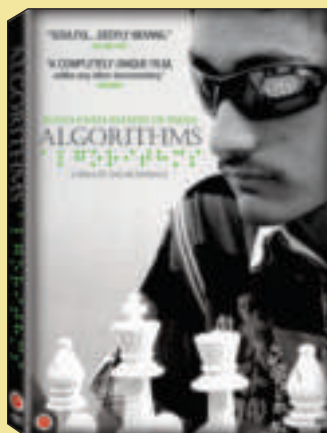
French star Isabelle Huppert brings passion and courage to her portrayal of a social worker taken hostage by an Islamic separatist group in the Philippines. As the army closes in, she'll do anything to survive.

"Raw, visceral immediacy...harrowing. On the level of total authenticity, it's entirely successful."

-Variety

"Powerful...relentless in its action. Huppert is always beguiling."

-Screen Daily



ALGORITHMS

100 minutes, b/w, \$27.95, FRF 916394D
STREET DATE: MARCH 3

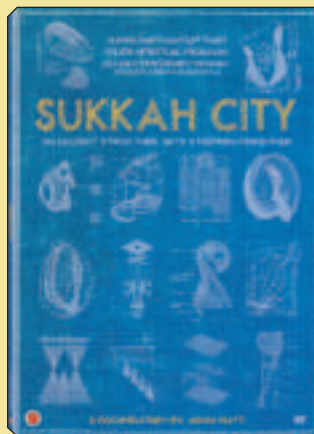
In India, three boys dream of becoming chess grandmasters. But these are no ordinary players.

This "soulful, deeply moving" film (*Village Voice*) transports us into the little known world of blind chess.

"A deeply absorbing, timeless, and universal tale. Completely unique, unlike any other documentary."

"A winning documentary that develops into a story as intense and focused as its subjects."

-The Guardian



SUKKAH CITY

67 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916455D
STREET DATE: MARCH 24

Sukkah City chronicles the architecture and design competition in New York City conceived by best-selling author Joshua Foer that explores the creative potential of the ancient Jewish sukkah.

"A fascinating film that finds spiritual meaning in contemporary design."

-Jerusalem International Film Festival

"'Sukkah City' captures the excitement around an art installation in one of New York City's great public spaces."

-Steven Heller, The Atlantic



POPULATION BOOM

90 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916462D
STREET DATE: APRIL 14

How many people are too many? 25 years ago we were at 5 billion; today, it's 7 billion. Dwindling resources, mountains of toxic waste, hunger and climate change – the results of overpopulation?

Werner Boote (director of *Plastic Planet*) traverses the globe to examine the facts and myths about overpopulation. Speaking with everyone from demographic researchers to environmental activists, he comes to a surprising conclusion.

"Powerful!" -Tagesspiegel

"An important film." -NDR Kulturjournal



DARK HOLLOW FILMS

BRINGING INDEPENDENT
ARTS AND VISIONS
TO THE CLASSROOM

DREAM: AN AMERICAN STORY

Chronicles the national conversation about the DREAM Act, immigration and immigration reform.



"This revelatory film is highly recommended."
-Video Librarian

BRINGING KING TO CHINA

A cross-cultural dialogue about the relevance of MLK's philosophy of peace, civil rights and non-violence in America and China.



"...a fascinating and thought-provoking film. Highly recommended."
-Video Librarian

OFF THE FLOOR

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



"An engaging documentary..."
-Video Librarian

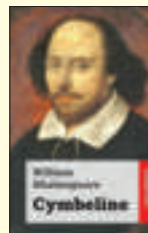
To purchase these and other great docs, visit:

darkhollowfilms.com

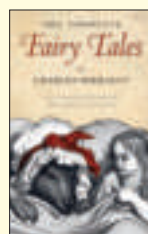
The following films based on books are slated to open during March and April. Movie release dates are subject to change.

Coming in March

Anarchy (Mar. 13) is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's early 17th-century romantic tragedy *Cymbeline*. Directed by Michael Almereyda, this contemporary update stars Ethan Hawke, Ed Harris, John Leguizamo, Dakota Johnson, Penn Badgley, and Milla Jovovich.



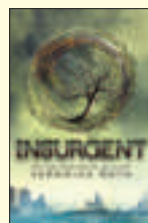
Cinderella (Mar. 13) is based on Charles Perrault's classic 1697 folk tale adaptation *Cendrillon*. Directed by Kenneth Branagh, this live-action remake of the beloved Disney animated film stars Cate Blanchett, Helena Bonham Carter, Derek Jacobi, and Lily James as Cinderella.



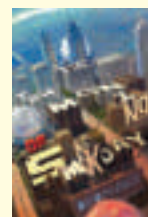
The Gunman (Mar. 20) is based on Jean-Patrick Manchette's 1981 crime novel *The Prone Gunman*. Directed by Pierre Morel, the action-thriller stars Sean Penn, Idris Elba, Javier Bardem, and Ray Winstone.



Insurgent (Mar. 20) is based on the 2012 second novel in Veronica Roth's dystopian sci-fi YA trilogy. Directed by Robert Schwentke, the film stars Shailene Woodley, Theo James, Kate Winslet, Zoë Kravitz, and Ray Stevenson.

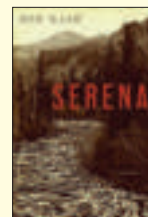


Home (Mar. 27) is based on Adam Rex's 2007 children's novel *The True Meaning of Smekday*. Directed by Tim Johnson, this animated buddy comedy features the voices of Rihanna, Jim Parsons, Steve Martin, and Jennifer Lopez.



Serena (Mar. 27) is based on the 2008 *New York Times* bestseller from

author Ron Rash. Directed by Susanne Bier, the Depression-era timber-business drama stars Jennifer Lawrence, Bradley Cooper, and Rhys Ifans.



Coming in April

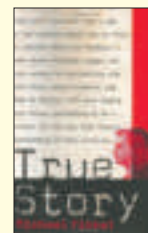
The Longest Ride (Apr. 10) is based on bestselling romance author Nicholas Sparks's 2013 novel. Directed by George Tillman, Jr., the film stars Britt Robertson, Scott Eastwood, and Alan Alda.



The Moon and the Sun (Apr. 10) is adapted from the 1997 sci-fi/alternate history romance by Vonda N. McIntyre. Directed by Sean McNamara, the film stars Pierce Brosnan, William Hurt, and Kaya Scodelario.



True Story (Apr. 10, in limited release) is based on the 2005 memoir by journalist Michael Finkel, who explored the story of a man who murdered his own family and used Finkel's name as an alias. Directed by Rupert Goold, the film stars James Franco, Jonah Hill, and Felicity Jones.

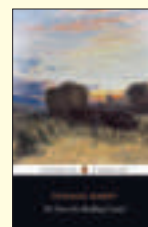


Child 44 (Apr. 17) is adapted from Tom Rob Smith's 2008 thriller, the first in a trilogy based on the crimes of "The Rostov Ripper," Andrei Chikatilo. Directed by Daniel Espinosa, the film stars Tom Hardy, Noomi Rapace, Gary Oldman, Joel Kinnaman, and Vincent Cassel.

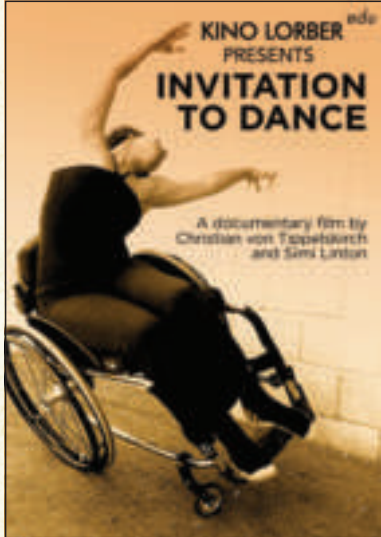


Looking Ahead

Coming in May is **Far from the Madding Crowd**, an adaptation of Thomas Hardy's 1874 Victorian romance. Directed by Thomas Vinterberg, the film stars Carey Mulligan and Michael Sheen.



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



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

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



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



FAREWELL HERR SCHWARZ

Uncle Feiv'ke was presumed to have died in the concentration camp at Buchenwald, but when his great niece, Yael Reuveny, researched his death, she found something almost incomprehensible: Without reconnecting to his birth family, Feiv'ke returned to East Germany, changed his name, married a gentile, and inexplicably lived amidst the concentration camp ruins where he was once a prisoner. A cinematic journey about buried family secrets, the Holocaust and how it's never too late to reclaim your heritage.

WINNER - BEST DOCUMENTARY PRIZE, HAIFA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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



KIDS FOR CASH

In the wake of the shootings at Columbine High School, a small town in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania elected a charismatic judge who was hell-bent on keeping kids in line. Under his reign, over 3,000 children were ripped from their families and imprisoned for years over petty crimes. Soon, it was revealed the judge had received millions of dollars in payments from the privately-owned juvenile detention centers where the kids were incarcerated. Go behind the headlines, including extensive, exclusive access to the judges behind the scheme.

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.

WINNER - SPIRIT OF ACTION PRIZE, SANTA CRUZ FILM FESTIVAL

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

Video Games

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

Available Now

Rugby 15 (Maximum Games, PS3/PS4/XOne: \$39.99-\$49.99, Rated: E). In the first next-gen rugby simulation game, players take the helm of teams and clubs from leagues including Aviva Premiership Rugby, Pro12, TOP 14, and Pro D2, and are able to perform technical moves such as cross passes, up-and-unders, and behind-the-back passes.

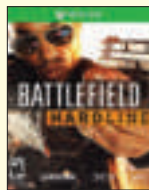


March 8—March 14

Atelier Shallie: Alchemists of the Dusk Sea (Tecmo Koei, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: E10+). In this third-person RPG final chapter in the Atelier Dusk series, players can be either reserved Shallistera, who embarks on a voyage to find a cure for her ailing father, or ambitious Shallotte, who struggles to bring success to the alchemy workshop after her dad's passing.

March 15—March 21

Battlefield: Hardline (Electronic Arts, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). From the makers of the popular *Battlefield* war series, this first-person shooter finds players stepping into the role of detective Nick Mendoza in an episodic crime drama.

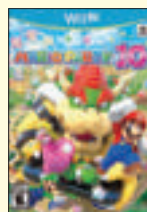


Bladestorm: Nightmare (Tecmo Koei, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person strategy game, players take on the role of a mercenary, choosing to fight either for England or for France in missions inspired by real events and battles during the Hundred Years War (1337-1453).

Final Fantasy Type-0 HD (Square Enix,

PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this third-person action-RPG, players join the fray as Class Zero—a group of 14 students from an elite military academy whose country is attacked by an aggressive neighboring empire—who draw on powerful abilities and magic in fast-paced combat.

Mario Party 10 (Nintendo, WiiU: \$49.99, Rated: E). In the first installment of this popular franchise to appear on the WiiU, players will be able to control Bowser and wreak havoc during the numerous mini-games in this latest edition of a classic party favorite.

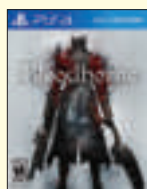


Project CARS (Bandai Namco, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: E). In this simulation racing game, players will be able to create a driver, pick from a variety of motorsports, and shift into high gear on over 60 unique tracks.

Resident Evil: Revelations 2 (Capcom, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$39.99, Rated: M). In this sequel in the spin-off series from the popular third-person survival horror franchise, players step into the shoes of fan-favorite Claire Redfield, who finds herself in an abandoned detention facility facing hordes of the Afflicted.

March 22—March 28

Bloodborne (Sony, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: M). In this highly-anticipated third-person action-adventure game from the creators of *Demon's Souls* and *Dark Souls*, players search for answers in the ancient city of Yharnam, where danger, death, and madness lurk around every corner of a dark and horrific world.



Borderlands: The Handsome Collection (2K, PS4/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). This popular first-person shooter franchise makes its debut on next-gen consoles in this collection that includes the previously released titles *Borderlands 2* and *Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel*, both presented here with upgraded visuals.

March 29—April 4

MLB 15: The Show (Sony, PS3/PS4: \$39.99-\$59.99, Rated: E). This 10th entry in the long-running Major League Baseball simulation franchise serves up substantial improvements in the areas

of gameplay and graphics.

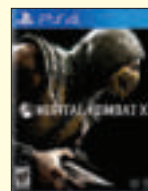
Toukiden: Kiwami (Tecmo Koei, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: T). In this third-person action-hunting game, players will battle numerous monsters in areas inspired by various historical periods in Japan.

April 5—April 11

Dark Souls II: Scholar of the First Sin (FROM Software, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$39.99-\$59.99, rated: T). This third-person action sequel to the extremely challenging action-RPG hit *Dark Souls* (which featured the prophetic tagline "prepare to die") makes its next-gen debut with improved graphics as players struggle in the vast menacing world of Drangleic.

April 12—April 18

Mortal Kombat X (Warner, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: M). The long-running and famously brutal fighting game series makes a next-gen console debut with favorite characters such as Scorpion, Sub-Zero, Raiden, and Kano, as well as new faces.



TV on DVD/Blu-ray

Available Now

Anzac Girls (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$49.99). Based on true events, this six-part 2014 miniseries starring Anna McGahan and Caroline Craig draws from Peter Rees's book *The Other Anzacs* (along with real diaries and letters) to explore the story of five nurses from Australia and New Zealand during the First World War.

Atlantis: Season Two, Part One (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$24.98). Jason of Argonauts fame (Jack Donnelly) and allies Hercules (Mark Addy) and Pythagoras (Robert Emmet) are back in this first set of episodes from the 2014 second season of the BBC-aired family fantasy.



The Chair: The Complete First Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 5 discs, \$19.98). Aired on Starz, this 2014 reality competition series follows two novice directors who are provided with identical screenplays and budgets, with the grand prize winner

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art & design

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
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rehabilitation · animal rights

DOGS ON THE INSIDE follows prison inmates as they learn to care for a group of neglected dogs while preparing for a new life outside. This heart-warming story shows the resiliency of dogs' trust and the generosity of the human spirit in the unlikeliest of places.

RUN TIME: 80 MINUTES
UPC: 6 16892 27214 4

\$24.99 SRP | PPR AVAIL



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
Available March, 2015
Contact hello@bondinfluence.com to pre-order

\$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
Available April, 2015
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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
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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

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Breastmilk

BREASTMILK is an unflinchingly provocative and humorous exploration into how the next generation gets fed—simultaneously uncovering the most surprising, and the most concealed, aspects of what it means to have milk.

RUN TIME: 91 MINUTES
UPC: 0 91037 50689 4

\$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 Pluijlyte, 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

About Bond/360

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

decided by a voting audience.

The Jewel in the Crown: Remastered Anniversary Edition (PBS, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99). Filmed on location in England, Wales, and India, this newly remastered Golden Globe and BAFTA-winning 1984 miniseries about the end of British rule in India stars Peggy Ashcroft, Charles Dance, Tim Pigott-Smith, and Geraldine James.



Nicolas Le Floch, Volume Two (MHz, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). Starring Jérôme Robart as the titular commissioner of the 18th-century Paris police, this second volume continues with aristocratic mysteries based on the contemporary French novels by Jean-François Parot.

Sons of Anarchy: The Final Season (Fox, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$59.99). Motorcycle club leader Jax Teller (Charlie Hunnam) steers SAMCRO down the path to revenge in this explosive 2014 final season of the popular FX-aided action series.

Tyrant: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Aired on FX, this 2014 debut season centers around a notorious dictator's son (Adam Rayner), whose return to his homeland becomes turbulent after his vicious brother (Ashraf Barhom) assumes power.



Wahlburgers: The Complete Second Season (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). Brothers Mark, Donnie, and Chef Paul Wahlberg continue to mix family and business matters in this 2014 sophomore season of the A&E-aided reality series.

Z Nation: Season 1 (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98). Heroes embark on a mission to escort the sole zombie-attack survivor cross-country in this post-apocalyptic horror series starring DJ Qualls, Kellita Smith, Tom Everett Scott, and Harold Perrineau.

March 3

CHiPs: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 5 discs, \$29.98). Erik Estrada and Larry Wilcox are back as California Highway Patrol motorcycle officers in this 1979-80 third season of the crime comedy series, featuring guest appearances by Ed McMahon and Michelle Pfeiffer.

Da Vinci's Demons: The Complete Second Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 3 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$54.99). This 2014 sophomore season of the Starz-aided historical fantasy series centers on Renaissance artist/inventor Leonardo da Vinci (Tom Riley).

Hill Street Blues: Season Four (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$34.95). This 1983-84 fourth season of Steven Bochco's acclaimed police drama features guest appearances by David Caruso, Alfre Woodard, and Jeffrey Tambor.

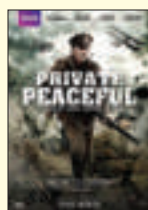
Longmire: The Complete Third Season (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$40.99). Wyoming Sheriff Walt Longmire (Robert Taylor) is re-elected but still faces issues in both his professional and personal lives in this 2014 third season that also features Bailey Chase and Lou Diamond Phillips.

Outlander: Season One, Volume One (Sony, DVD: 2 discs, \$38.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.99). Married WWII-era combat nurse Claire Randall (Caitriona Balfe) mysteriously goes back in time to 18th-century Scotland in this first volume of episodes from the 2014-15 debut season of this Starz series based on the novels by Diana Gabaldon.



A Place to Call Home: Season 1 (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Set in post-WWII New South Wales, this 2013 first season of the rural drama series chronicles the life of a woman (Marta Dusseldorp) who returns home after being away for 20 years.

Private Peaceful (BBC, DVD: \$24.98). Based on the YA novel by Michael Morpurgo, this 2012 BBC adaptation centering on the lives and loves of two poor Devonshire brothers who join the service in WWI stars Jack O'Connell, George MacKay, Richard Griffiths, and Maxine Peake.



March 10

A Chef's Life: Season One (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Winner of a Peabody Award, this first season of the part-documentary/part-culinary series features Chef Vivian Howard and her husband, who run a fine dining restaurant in North Carolina. Also newly available at

the same price is **A Chef's Life: Season Two**.

Quincy, M.E.: The Final Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.98). Medical examiner Dr. Quincy (Jack Klugman) solves LAPD crimes using fine details in this 1982-83 eighth and final season that includes guest appearances by June Lockhart and Keenan Wynn.

The Red Road: The Complete First Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Aired on SundanceTV, this 2014 debut season of the drama series centers on a small-town cop (Martin Henderson) with a dysfunctional family who partners up with a dangerous neighboring tribe member (Jason Momoa).

The Red Tent (Sony, DVD: \$26.99). Based on the *New York Times* best-seller by Anita Diamant, this Lifetime-aided two-part 2014 miniseries telling the Old Testament story of Jacob's four wives stars Rebecca Ferguson, Minnie Driver, Iain Glen, and Debra Winger.



Shane: The Complete Series (Timeless, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.95). Adapted from Jack Schaefer's 1949 book, this 1966 Western series stars David Carradine, Bert Freed, Jill Ireland, and Diane Ladd.

Treehouse Masters: Season 1 (Gaiam, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95). This first season of the Animal Planet series follows a Washington state-based family with a treehouse-designing business.

March 17

Maude: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 19 discs, \$159.99). Created by Norman Lear, this controversial 1972-78 sitcom spin-off from *All in the Family* stars Emmy-winner Bea Arthur as outspoken liberal Maude Findlay.

Transporter—The Series: The Complete First Season (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$29.99). Based on Luc Besson's action feature film series, this 2012 first season of the high-octane show stars Chris Vance as a mysterious courier-for-hire.



Turn—Washington's Spies: The Complete First Season (Anchor Bay, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99). Star-

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I AM BREATHING

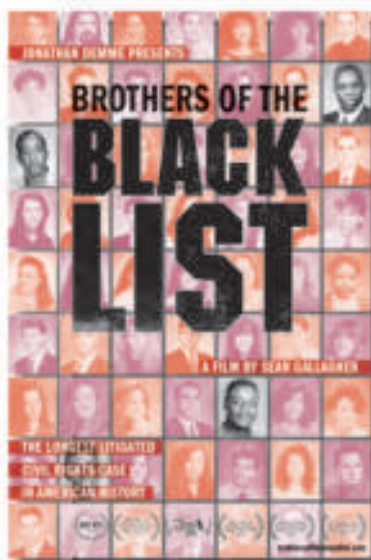
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"AMONG THE YEAR'S MOST MOVING FILMS" - The Hollywood Reporter
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"IMPORTANT...DESERVES TO BE SEEN" - Roger Ebert
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Within a year, Neil Platt develops Motor Neuron Disease and goes from being a healthy young father to becoming completely paralyzed from the neck down. Knowing he only has a few months left to live, and while he still has the ability to speak, Neil compiles a letter and memory box for his baby son Oscar. *I Am Breathing* listens to Neil as he asks 'what makes us human' in the last months of his life.

72 min. | UPC: 013964695007 | SRP: \$59.95 | PPR: \$190
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 - IndieWire

"WILL OPEN YOUR EYES...TROUBLING"
 - The Village Voice

Presented by Jonathan Demme (*Silence of the Lambs*, *Philadelphia*), this timely story of equal rights gone wrong tracks the longest litigated civil rights case in American history.

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KUMU HINA (frameline)

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"ONE OF THE BEST STANDOUT FILMS"
 - IndieWire

"A STUNNING EYE-OPENER"
 - Filmmaker Magazine

Kumu Hina tells the inspiring story of a native Hawaiian mahu, or transgender, teacher who uses traditional culture to empower her students and herself.

77 min. | UPC: 888295172226
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CONDUCTING HOPE

"HEART-WARMING"
 - Mary Cohen, Ph.D., Area Head, University of Iowa School of Music

"INSPIRING... A PROGRAM THAT GIVES PRISONERS A WAY TO MOVE FORWARD"
 - Booklist

Conducting Hope explores an inspiring solution to recidivism. It tells the story of the East Hills Singers, the only men's prison choir in the country to perform outside prison walls.

57 min. | UPC: 861490000105
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"Phenomenal... a story we can't wait to share" - Ronnie Green, Ph.D. Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources

The Great American Wheat Harvest is a behind-the-scenes look at modern farming culture and the families who bring food to our plates.

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 SRP: \$24.95 | Blu-Ray UPC: 861490000112
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ring Jamie Bell as a farmer doubling as a undercover agent during the Revolutionary War, this 2014 debut season of the AMC historical thriller series is based on the 2006 book *Washington's Spies* by Alexander Rose.



WKRP in Cincinnati: The Complete First Season and WKRP in Cincinnati: The Complete Second Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs each, \$24.98 each). Previously released as a complete collection, these compilations feature the first two seasons (1978-1980) of the sitcom starring Howard Hesseman and Loni Anderson, set at a struggling Ohio radio station.

March 24

Mr. Bean: The Whole Bean (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$24.98). This re-mastered 25th anniversary collection starring Rowan Atkinson as the titular bumbling slapstick character includes all 14 episodes from 1990-95.

Mystery Science Theatre 3000: XXXII (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98). This latest compilation featuring movie-snarking hosts Joel Hodgson and Mike Nelson and their robot pals Tom Servo and Crow includes *Space Travelers*, *Hercules*, *Radar Secret Service*, and *San Francisco International*.

March 31

Miss Marple, Volume 2 (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.98). Starring Joan Hickson as Agatha Christie's iconic sleuth, this compilation of re-mastered high-definition mysteries features "They Do It With Mirrors," "Pocket Full of Rye," "4:50 from Paddington," and "The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side."

Mortal Kombat—Conquest: The Complete Series (Warner, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Based on the popular video game franchise, this 1998-99 live-action martial-arts action series stars Paolo Montalbán, Daniel Bernhardt, and Kristanna Loken.

Silicon Valley (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Inspired by creator Mike Judge's own career, this 2014 debut season of the HBO comedy series follows a panicky programmer (Thomas Middleditch) who works on



building a successful business.

Veep: The Complete Third Season (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). This 2014 third season featuring Julia Louis-Dreyfus in an Emmy-winning role as the American Vice-President features guest appearances by Christopher Meloni and Kathy Najimy.

April 7

Barney Miller: The Complete Seventh Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98). Amiable police captain Barney Miller (Hal Linden) is back in this 1980-81 penultimate seventh season of the Emmy and Peabody Award-winning comedy series.

Grantchester (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$39.99). Aired on *Masterpiece Mystery*, this 2014 drama series—based on the Sidney Chambers mysteries by James Runcie—is set in 1950s Cambridge and follows a quiet vicar (James Norton) at the center of a suspicious local death.

Inside Amy Schumer: Seasons 1 & 2 (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$26.99). Bawdy comedienne Amy Schumer takes center stage in this 2013-14 first and second season compilation from her Comedy Central sketch, standup, and interview series, which includes guest appearances by Parker Posey, Paul Giamatti, and Patrick Warburton.



King of the Hill: The Complete 9th Season and King of the Hill: The Complete 10th Season (Olive, DVD: 2 discs each, \$34.95 each). These compilations showcase the 2004-06 9th and 10th seasons of Mike Judge's animated series about a family and their friends in small-town Arlen, TX.

April 14

Foyle's War: Set 8 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Set at the start of the Cold War, this 2015 eighth season of the *Masterpiece Theatre*-aired detective series features three mysteries starring Michael Kitchen as scrupulous Detective Chief Superintendent Foyle: "High Castle," "Trespass," and "Elise."



Little House on the Prairie: Season Five (Lionsgate, DVD: 5 discs, \$21.98, Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$24.98). Adapted from the classic pioneer books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, this re-mastered high-definition 1978-79 fifth season of the family series features guest appearances by Ray Bolger and John Hillerman.

Metal Hurlant Chronicles: The Complete Series (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$34.95). Inspired by the French sci-fi and horror comic anthology magazine, this 2012-14 series stars Dominique Pinon, Scott Adkins, Rutger Hauer, Michael Jai White, and James Marsters.

The Missing (Starz, DVD: 2 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$54.99). Starring James Nesbitt and Frances O'Connor, this 2014 BBC One and Starz limited series centers on a missing 5-year-old boy and the search for answers about his disappearance.



The Mystery of Lord Lucan (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Centered on the suspicious November 1974 vanishing of the 7th Earl of Lucan following a vicious murder, this set includes two TV movies: 2013's *Lucan* (starring Rory Kinnear, Christopher Eccleston, and Michael Gambon) and 1994's *The Trial of Lord Lucan* (with Julian Wadham and Anthony Head).

April 21

Fortitude (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: \$44.99). Featuring Sofie Gråbøl, Christopher Eccleston, Michael Gambon, and Stanley Tucci, this 2015 psychological thriller series revolves around a violent killing in a previously peaceful Arctic Circle community.

The Musketeers: The Complete Second Season (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.98). The titular royal bodyguards (Luke Pasqualino, Tom Burke, Santiago Cabrera, and Howard Charles) for King Louis XIII return in this 2015 sophomore season based on the classic novel by Alexandre Dumas.



April 28

Covert Affairs: Season Five (Universal,

Out of Despair... Hope



On January 12th, 2010, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti, bringing devastation to an already impoverished nation. Hundreds of thousands lost their lives; more than 1 million were displaced, and tens of thousands were injured—including countless children and young people who suffered the loss of limbs.

Against this backdrop, two American organizations stepped in to provide aid. Facing political corruption and the threat of failure, Project Medishare successfully set up clinics for the victims, and the Knights of Columbus ensured that prosthetics limbs would be made available for every young amputee.

But this was only the beginning of the story. Amidst incredible odds, a small group of earthquake victims became emboldened to defy deeply entrenched Haitian stereotypes against people with disabilities. Team Zaryen was formed, an amputee soccer team that transformed victims into beacons of hope, creating real possibilities for those attempting to rebuild their lives—including U.S. soldiers returning from wars overseas.



At times a searing analysis of the post-earthquake horrors and Haiti's turbulent history, and at times a poignant sports story about overcoming insurmountable odds, *Unbreakable: A Story of Hope and Healing in Haiti* ultimately a powerful reminder of the triumph of the human spirit, and of how the bonds of hope are oftentimes born out of the shackles of despair.

LENGTH: 73 Minutes • MRSP: \$19.95 • CATALOG #20587 • UPC #: 6-4603205879-6 • PRICE WITH PPR: \$295 • PRICE WITH DSL: \$495 • PRICE WITH PPR AND DSL: \$595

KANDOTE

ONE WORLD, ONE TEAM, ONE DREAM



Kandote chronicling the journey of Africa's first national men's lacrosse team, Team Uganda, as they work towards achieving their goal of competing in the 2014 World Lacrosse Championships held in Denver, Colorado. The film focuses on five players with differing pasts and presents as they experience the trials and tribulations of life, love, and lacrosse. During *Kandote*, viewers will step into the lives of a group of men who have lost parents to HIV/AIDS, lost homes to the government, and lost their adolescence to the violent life of an LRA child soldier; but who have all found solace, escape, and a family through the brotherhood of lacrosse.



INSPIRATIONAL



LENGTH: 61 Minutes • MRSP: \$19.95
CATALOG #20583
UPC #: 6-4603205839-0
PRICE WITH PPR: \$295
PRICE WITH DSL: \$495
PRICE WITH PPR AND DSL: \$595

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DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98). Piper Perabo is back as linguistics specialist CIA trainee Annie Walker in this 2014 fifth and final season of the USA Network drama series that also features Christopher Gorham and Peter Gallagher.

The Jeffersons: The Complete Season Seven (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$24.98). Sherman Hemsley and Isabel Sanford star as the titular wacky couple in this 1980-81 seventh season of the popular NYC-set sitcom, which includes the springboard episode for costar Marla Gibbs's short-lived spin-off *Checking In*.

The Mentalist: The Complete Seventh and Final Season (Warner, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Supposedly "psychic" bureau consultant Patrick Jane (Simon Baker) balances his career and his deepening romance with a fellow agent (Robin Tunney) in this 2014-15 seventh and final season of the police drama series.

New Tricks: Season 11 (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99). Tamzin Outhwaite, Denis Lawson, Nicholas Lyndhurst, and Dennis Waterman star in this 2014 11th season of the British procedural dramedy series featuring former police officers who tackle cold cases.

Royal Pains: Season Six (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$26.98). Centered on doctor-for-hire Hank Lawson (Mark Feuerstein), who caters to wealthy patients in the Hamptons, this 2014 sixth season of the USA Network series features guest appearances by Henry Winkler, Danny Masterson, and Khloé Kardashian.

Sgt. Bilko—The Phil Silvers Show: The Second Season (Shout! Factory, DVD: 5 discs, \$34.95). Sgt. Ernie Bilko tries to scheme against his comrades at Kansas's Ft. Baxter Army Post in this compilation from the 1956-57 sophomore season of the Emmy-winning series.

Suits: Season Four (Universal, DVD: 4 discs, \$44.98). The team at the Pearson Specter law firm deal with secrets and major changes in this 2014-15 fourth season of the USA Network drama starring Gabriel Macht, Patrick J. Adams, and Meghan Markle.

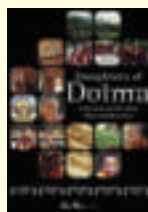


Looking Ahead

Slated for May is the sophomore season of **Father Brown**, third seasons of **DCI Banks**, **Death in Paradise**, **Mr. Selfridge**, **Scott & Bailey**, and **Welcome Back, Kotter**, the fifth season of **Hill Street Blues**, the sixth seasons of **Mister Ed** and **White Collar**, the 11th season of **Dalziel & Pasco**, and the complete series sets of **The Colbys** and **Jamaica Inn**. Slated for June is the second season of **A Place to Call Home**, and the miniseries **New Worlds**.

Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

Daughters of Dolma (Kino Lorber, DVD: \$29.95). Centering on how young Tibetan Buddhist nuns in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley blend old rituals and study with contemporary activities such as watching horror movies, filmmaker Adam Miklos's documentary (VL-1/15 ★★1/2) looks at three generations inside the walls of remote religious institutions. Also newly available on home video are **Tricked** (VL-5/14 ★★) and **The Bridge** (VL-7/07 ★★1/2).



Faith Connections (Kino Lorber, DVD: \$29.95). Filmmaker Pan Nalin's documentary (VL-11/14 ★★) looks at the 2013 celebration of the massive Hindu "Kumbh Mela"—in which believers gather every three years to wash in a confluence of sacred rivers—capturing both large-scale moments from the event and a few individual stories that are illustrative of the tens of millions of attendees. Bonus features include a podcast with Nalin.

Lomax: The Songhunter (Icarus Films, DVD: \$348, web: icarusfilms.com). Filmmaker Rogier Kappers follows the route that musician Alan Lomax (1915-2002) took across America and to remote villages in Spain and Italy while following his life's devotion to recording the world's folk tunes in this 2005 documentary.

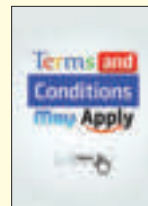


Mondovino: The Series (KimStim, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.99). Expanded from documentarian Jonathan Nossiter's edited-down 2004 feature film on the world of winemaking, this original series (VL-3/10 ★★) of 10 hour-long TV episodes contrasts increased globalization and standardization in wine production with the traditional family-based system.

Molecularium: Molecules to the Max! (Passion River, DVD: \$59.99). This 2009 musical science documentary aimed at younger viewers explores molecular environments with fun computer-animated characters. Bonus features include behind-the-scenes segments, science shorts, and filmmaker commentaries.

Terms and Conditions May Apply

(Anderson, DVD: \$14.99). Filmmaker Cullen Hoback's unsettling and timely portrait (VL Online-2/14 ★★1/2) of digital-age surveillance looks at popular online sites and services that are complicit in collecting user data and selling it to ready bidders.



Web Junkie (Kino Lorber, DVD: \$29.95, Mar. 3). Filmmakers Hilla Medalia and Shosh Shlam's intriguing documentary (VL-11/14 ★★) goes behind-the-scenes of a rehabilitation center in Beijing that treats individuals—mostly teen males—diagnosed with what the Chinese government has officially declared to be "Internet addiction." Bonus features include deleted scenes and a podcast interview with the filmmakers.

When the World Breaks (Vision Films, DVD: \$19.95, Apr. 21). Featuring interviews with Jerry Stiller, Mickey Rooney, Phyllis Diller, and Ray Bradbury, this 2010 documentary by Hans Fjellestad explores the Depression era through film clips and personal stories.

A Will for the Woods (First Run, DVD: \$24.99). Filmmakers Amy Browne, Jeremy Kaplan, Tony Hale, and Brian Wilson's documentary (VL-11/14 ★★1/2) follows the carefully planned memorial of North Carolina-based Dr. Clark Wang, a lymphoma-stricken psychiatrist who supports the "green burial" movement. Bonus features include extended and deleted scenes.



You May Call Her Madam Secretary (Alexander Street Press, DVD: \$179, web: academicvideostore.com). Actress Frances Sternhagen plays Frances Perkins, the first woman cabinet member in history, in Robert and Marjory Potts's excellent 1987 documentary (VL-10/87 ★★1/2) on the social reformer who became U.S. Secretary of Labor under FDR.

COMPELLING NEW DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO



NEW!

Exploring Ephesus

Ephesus is one of the best reconstructed Greco-Roman cities in the world, and was once the hub of Christianity in Anatolia (modern Turkey). For decades biblical Turkey has been the focus of study for distinguished historians, Dr. Mark Wilson and Dr. Andrew Jackson. Now these old friends reunite and travel together on the road to Ephesus. As they walk the ancient streets and visit the extensive ruins, they share their combined historical, archeological, and biblical expertise. Documentary, 60 minutes.

DVD - #501629D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01629 3



NEW!

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



NEW!

In the Footsteps of St. Peter with David Suchet

Join beloved actor David Suchet (PBS's *Poirot* series) as he embarks on an epic journey in search of the Apostle Peter. In this major two-part documentary series produced for the BBC and aired on PBS, Suchet explores how a humble fisherman, known for his stubborn and impetuous personality, became a leading figure in the early church. The series follows the biblical account and other historical sources to reveal the extraordinary life of one of the most important figures in church history. Documentary, 135 minutes.

DVD - #501580D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01580 4



Come Follow Me

From the producers of *The Road to Emmaus* comes a gripping new biblical drama. *Come Follow Me* dramatizes the relationship between Jesus and the Apostle Peter. From the day Peter heard Jesus call his name to the post-resurrection conversation in which Jesus charges Peter to "feed my sheep," this short film beautifully illustrates Peter's transformation from fearful denier to the bold leader of the early church. Starring Bruce Marchiano as Jesus and Emilio Doorgasingh as Peter. Drama, 30 minutes.

DVD - #501561D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01561 3



The Apocalypse

In the late first century the Roman Emperor Domitian unleashes a virulent campaign against Christians. Held captive by the Romans on the Island of Patmos, the aged Apostle John receives strange visions, including messages to the seven persecuted churches on the nearby mainland. Entrusting the written record of his visions to a young woman, Irene, John begs her to spread its message among the people. These visions form the contents of the biblical book of Revelation. *The Apocalypse* features a brilliant performance by Richard Harris in one of his final roles. Drama, 96 minutes.

DVD - #501632D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01632 0



Towards Belief

This ten-episode series addresses the top belief blockers of our time—the most frequently cited reasons that people have lost confidence in the Church and its message. Over 30 leading Christian academics, pastors, authors, and apologists discuss questions such as sexual abuse in the Church, religious violence, the existence of suffering, the credibility of the Bible, the compatibility of science and faith, and the Church's teaching on homosexuality, among many other important topics. Hosted by Karl Faase. Documentary, 280 minutes total.

DVD - #501558D, \$39.99, UPC 7 27985 01558 3



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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

23 Blast ★★1/2

Capitol Christian, 98 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.98

Actor Dylan Baker's debut directorial effort is an uplifting true story about Travis Freeman (Mark Hapka), a talented high school football player whose life is abruptly changed when an ocular infection literally leaves him sightless. A film with an inspiring Christian subtext, *23 Blast* briefly features the real Freeman as the preacher he always wanted to become, but the script thankfully doesn't pound home the religious message with a sledgehammer, instead adopting the earnestness of a cable-telefilm, with all the virtues and flaws that suggests—i.e., it is well-meaning and high-minded but also predictable. Baker, who also plays Travis's father, coaxes good performances from Hapka as his straight-arrow son and Bram Hoover as the reckless quarterback who is Travis's best friend. Meanwhile, Becky Ann Baker, Dylan's wife, brings infectious energy to her role as a social worker who forces Travis to shake off his self-pity and go back to school. And Stephen Lang is genially gruff as the coach who puts the blind boy back on the field as a center. *23 Blast* actually plays fairly fast and loose with the facts, but this is an often engaging inspirational sports movie, overall. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



1,000 Times Good Night

★★★1/2

Film Movement, 117 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Although not strictly autobiographical, Norwegian writer-director Erik Poppe's English-language drama is certainly informed by his former career as a war photographer. Juliette Binoche



delivers a brilliantly layered performance as Rebecca, a photojournalist working in the world's most dangerous trouble spots. While documenting the journey of a female suicide bomber en route to her target in Kabul, Rebecca is injured when the bomb goes off prematurely (partially due to Rebecca's own last-minute squeamishness), and she returns home to recuperate. Her husband (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) says that he and their daughters can no longer live with the uncertainty created by her long absences and the fear that she might never return, so she decides at last to settle down. When her socially-conscious teen daughter (Lauryn Canny) talks her into a visit to a supposedly safe refugee camp in Kenya, however, an outbreak of violence forces Rebecca to choose between her child and what she sees as an obligation to show the world what's happening. An emotionally complex and dramatically challenging film that will have viewers questioning whether Rebecca is a principled reporter or an adrenaline addict, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Ai Weiwei: The Fake Case

★★★

Kino Lorber, 85 min., in Mandarin and English w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Andreas Johnsen's documentary centers on the plight of Ai Weiwei, an artist best known for his design of the "bird's nest" stadium used in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. An outspoken critic of the government, Weiwei was jailed for tax evasion in what was derisively labeled the "Fake Case," with the artist contending that he was punished for blogging and other "Internet activities." Weiwei was held for a time in solitary confinement before being released on probation and house arrest, but forbidden to give interviews. We see Weiwei in his apartment, which he shares with his wife and son, unable to travel because of a revoked passport. Weiwei says he is a victim of state kidnapping in a case marked by so many lies that "even the truth becomes false." He meets with fellow artists and sympathizers, and goes through donations and expressions of support sent from around the world. Constantly trailed by government officials, Weiwei pushes the limits by turning the tables, following the agents around. The film follows the "Fake Case" as it wends its way through the Chinese courts, noting the many legal roadblocks thrown in Weiwei's path. Sadly, in today's China, social order and conformity are still prized more than justice. While the film would have benefited from more background and context on the Communist system and its war on dissidents, this will appeal to those who have been following the Weiwei case. Recommended. (S. Rees)

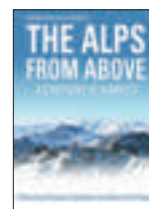


The Alps From Above: A Symphony of Summits

★★★1/2

Strand, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

Filmmakers Peter Bardehle and Sebastian Lindemann's spectacular documentary is shot entirely from the sky, where the full majesty of the Alps can best be appreciated. While highlighting the geological splendors of the region uniting Switzerland, France, Austria, Germany, and Italy, *The Alps From Above* also zeroes in on historical curiosities, such as a church tower emanating from a lake (the only visible remnant of a village sacrificed to a dam project); time-honored human trades (herding dairy cows, strip-mining for ore); natural disasters (avalanches); and the appeal of the surrounding environs for thrill-seekers such as climbers, skiers, hang-gliders, and rock climbers. While the beauty of ancient glaciers and miles of snow can be mesmerizing, the film also addresses the impact of global warming on the Alps, offering clear evidence that hundreds of glaciers are already gone. Combining a cautionary environmental message with eye-popping shots of green valleys, blue lakes, and jutting towers of rock, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



Annie ★

Sony, 118 min., PG, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$38.99, Mar. 17

Based on Harold Gray's popular comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*, this beloved Depression-era story revolves around an optimistic moppet, her dog Sandy, and her benefactor, billionaire Oliver "Daddy" Warbucks. Updated to the present with a multicultural cast, the sassy, spunky titular tyke (Quvenzhané Wallis) is here temporarily adopted by a cynical cell phone mogul, Will Stacks (Jamie Foxx), as a ploy to enhance voter appeal when he runs for mayor of New York City. At his side are his assistant Grace (Rose Byrne) and campaign manager Guy (Bobby Cannavale). Meanwhile, in Harlem, bitter, alcoholic Miss Hannigan (Cameron Diaz) takes in foster kids to obtain a monthly stipend from the city. Sensing the possibility of riches, she passes off imposters as Annie's birth parents. Superficially directed by Will Gluck (who hasn't a clue about helming a musical), much of the original music is unwisely discarded here, replaced by new songs from Sia, Greg Kurstin, and Gluck that are abysmal. One of the worst stage-to-screen adaptations, this is even more disappointing than John Huston's 1982 version. Here, the bling-besotted waif advises, "Save your dreams for good stuff, like shopping



with an unlimited credit card." Not recommended. (S. Granger)

Apaches ★★★

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

Actor-turned-director Thierry de Peretti's low-key, straightforward youth tragedy is set in the filmmaker's native Corsica, here portrayed as a resort-island community in which a permanent underclass (mostly ethnic-Arab north African) services the elite, super-rich socialites from France who come to vacation or rent. Aziz (Aziz El Hadachi), the teenage son of a family who cleans and maintains a luxury villa, uses the new (French) owner's absence as an opportunity to hold a small house party with a few friends and hangers-on. Unfortunately, some of the young people help themselves to household possessions, including a stereo, some music CDs, and a few expensive hunting rifles. The latter prove to be too "hot" to fence in the local outlaw subculture, but their lethal presence serves as a ticking reminder of the guilt, fear, and mistrust that begins to gnaw away at the boys. Told without major histrionics or sensation, in a Bressonian-sober moral-fable fashion, *Apaches* is a powerful foreign film. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)



App ★★1/2

RAM Releasing, 80 min., in Dutch w/English subtitles & English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

An efficient though silly horror movie about a killer cell phone application, *App* stars Hannah Hoekstra as a feisty college student named Anna, who mysteriously acquires a nasty app called IRIS on her phone. With a mind of its own, IRIS soon begins recording video of embarrassing scenes from Anna's life and uploading them onto computer networks. Worse, IRIS invades other people's computers and devices, leading to the spread of secrets, the murders of friends, and a situation that puts her younger brother—recovering from surgery—at risk. The uncharismatic Hoekstra isn't quite convincing as an avenging warrior fighting against a viral enemy, although director Bobby Boermans keeps the action moving at a crisp pace. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



Art and Craft ★★★

Oscilloscope, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99

Most art forgers are in it for the money, but not eccentric Mark Landis, who is profiled by filmmakers Sam Cullman, Jennifer Grausman, and Mark Becker in this entertaining



documentary. The elderly Landis used relatively simple means to copy works, mostly by lesser-known artists, and then donated the forgeries to museums. Matthew Leininger, an Oklahoman who became aware of Landis's peculiar avocation made it his mission to expose him. With his bulldog intensity, Leininger comes across as a one-man truth brigade, while Landis seems to be a solitary craftsman with a drive that he can't shake. But while the directors follow Leininger's efforts, they mostly concentrate on Landis as he putters about his apartment, visits places like Home Depot to pick up painting supplies, shows off his technique, and talks about whatever pops into his head, offering some revealing biographical information in the process. The film culminates in an exhibition of Landis's work—including some of his own paintings—arranged by none other than Leininger, who seems amazed and pleased that his nemesis accepts an invitation to attend but then slightly peeved when Landis holds court in his disarmingly genteel manner. *Art and Craft* raises serious questions about the trustworthiness of experts' opinions about the provenance of paintings—especially when an easygoing con-man like Landis can so easily pull the wool over their eyes—but the film's real strength lies in its character study of a stooped, soft-spoken gent who managed to fool people for years and now seems to be savoring his notoriety. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Babadook ★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.95, Blu-ray: \$24.98, Apr. 14

A combination of horror movie and psychological thriller, filmmaker Jennifer Kent's *The Babadook* is essentially a two-character piece in which Amelia (Essie Davis) and her 6-year-old son Samuel (Noah Wiseman) remain traumatized long after the death of Amelia's husband, who was killed in a car crash while driving her to the hospital to give birth to Samuel. Actually, there's a third key character: Mr. Babadook, a figure in a children's pop-up book who mysteriously appears in the boy's bedroom. Mr. Babadook is a ghoulish fellow with a stovepipe hat and sinister grin who proves impossible to remove. Even though Amelia burns the book, he reappears—more menacing than ever—and then eventually shows up outside the pages, affecting both the isolated mother and her son in fearsome ways. Samuel becomes more and more frenzied, while Amelia seems bent on hurting the boy, leaving the latter no choice but to defend himself. Of course, the question is whether Mr. Babadook is an evil entity that has taken possession of Amelia, or a deadly manifestation of her own inner torment. *The Babadook* boasts its fair share of shocks, but



none are cheap. Rather, the film ultimately makes the rather grim observation that sometimes we just have to learn to live with our demons rather than exorcizing them. Brilliantly acted by both stars, this stylish, sophisticated horror fantasy will stick with viewers much longer than its bloodier, more gruesome genre cousins. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Best of Me ★★

Fox, 118 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Yet another tearjerker based on a bestselling novel by Nicholas Sparks, *The Best of Me* spins a tale of doomed romance that shifts back and forth between the past and present. The contemporary segments show oil-rig worker Dawson (James Marsden) and Amanda (Michelle Monaghan), a woman trapped in an unhappy marriage, reuniting after more than two decades. In flashbacks, we see Dawson (Luke Bracey), the shy, abused son of a feral criminal, and Amanda (Liana Liberato), the daughter of a wealthy businessman, as high-school sweethearts whose relationship is ruptured by a violent episode that sends Dawson to prison. Now, brought back together through the funeral of the man who took in Dawson and raised him as his own, the pair embrace their former love, but tragedy again intervenes in a staggeringly mawkish twist. Director Michael Hoffman's *The Best of Me* features all of the familiar elements of the Sparks formula, from cardboard characters to inane plotting and soap-opera dialogue, sprinkled with pseudo-profound observations about life and love. It's the sort of cloying junk that gives chick flicks a bad name, made worse by the fact that there is almost no physical similarity between the younger and older versions of the lead characters. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)



Big Hero 6 ★★★

Walt Disney, 102 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Walt Disney Animation Studios has been revitalized in recent years with fine animated films including *Frozen*, *Tangled*, and *Wreck-It Ralph*. That trend continues with this action-packed Marvel comic book collaboration revolving around Hiro Hamada (voiced by Ryan Potter), who lives in the futuristic East/West multicultural hybrid called San Fransokyo. A cocky 14-year-old tech geek who already graduated from high school, Hiro spends his time engaged in back-alley robot-battles, much to the dismay of his Aunt Cass (Maya Rudolph) and older brother Tadashi (Daniel Henney), who want him to go to college. Hiro eventually becomes enthusiastic about the

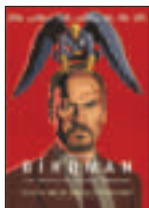


idea, ultimately impressing stern Professor Callaghan (James Cromwell) with his knowledge of "microbots" (nano technology used to form anything). And then tragedy strikes, after which heartbroken Hiro bonds with gentle Baymax (Scott Adsit), an inflatable, translucent vinyl robotic healthcare companion designed to help ease pain. The odd couple's friends include adrenaline junkie GoGo Tomago (Jamie Chung), laser-blade innovator/neat freak Wasabi (Damon Wayans Jr.), chemistry specialist Honey Lemon (G  nesis Rodr  guez), and Godzilla-obsessed fanboy Fred (T.J. Miller). Together, they use their creativity to morph into high-tech avengers, battling a kabuki-masked villain. Directed by Don Hall and Chris Williams, *Big Hero 6* is bouncy and beguiling family fare, a charming film that values brains over brawn. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Birdman ★★★★★

Fox, 120 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

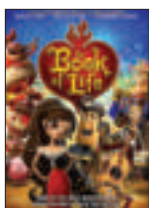
Director Alejandro Gonz  lez I   rritu's multi-Oscar nominated *Birdman* is a satirical backstage comedic drama that occasionally soars off into hallucinatory flights of fantasy. Oscar nominee Michael Keaton is Riggan Thomson, a fading, egocentric movie star, renowned as the black-winged comic book big screen hero Birdman. Now, Riggan is determined to prove himself on Broadway by directing and starring in an adaptation of Raymond Carver's short story "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love." Facing mounting casting and financial adversities, Riggan must not only cope with his just-out-of-drug-rehab daughter (Oscar-nominated Emma Stone) and embittered ex-wife (Amy Ryan) but also his harried lawyer/manager (Zach Gal  fianakis), actress girlfriend (Andrea Riseborough), insecure leading lady (Naomi Watts), and the latter's supercilious boyfriend/actor (Oscar-nominated Edward Norton). But Riggan also hears the delusory voice of his alter-ego, Birdman, who enables Riggan with mystical telekinetic powers. Featuring a brilliant performance by Keaton, this is an exhilarating film, deftly mixing imaginative cinema, celebrity in-jokes, and sly digs at the subversive role of social media. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)



The Book of Life ★★1/2

Fox, 96 min., PG, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Animation veteran Jorge R. Guiterrez makes his feature-length writing-directing debut with this colorful, cross-cultural story of love, death, and duty. A group of mischievous children touring a museum are told by their guide

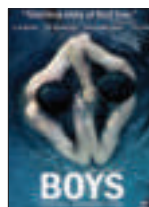


(voiced by Christina Applegate) a legend about Mexico's fabled Day of the Dead. Two skeletal spirits—La Muerta (Kate del Castillo), the gentle Queen of the Land of the Remembered, and her grim husband, Xibalba (Ron Perlman), the manipulative ruler of the Land of the Forgotten—made a wager. If the strutting, self-absorbed warrior Joaqu  n (Channing Tatum) can win the hand of the lovely Maria (Zoe Saldana) in the fantastical town of San Angel, Xibalba can usurp La Muerta's kingdom, but if Joaqu  n's sensitive friend Manolo (Diego Luna), who was born into a family of matadors but yearns to be a musician, instead claims her heart, the bet will be won by La Muerta, and Xibalba must stop meddling in the lives of humans. *The Book of Life* is an overly-ambitious adventure about the afterlife with dazzling visuals (inspired by Mexican folk art, the computer-generated, mythological characters resemble handcrafted wooden dolls), but a familiar, formulaic story that is crowded with far too many disparate characters, including the Candle Maker (Ice Cube), the metallic monster Chakal (Dan Navarro), and caustic Grandma (Grey Griffin). Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

Boys ★★1/2

Wolfe, 78 min., in Dutch w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Dutch director Mischa Kamp's *Boys* captures one young man's coming-of-age with sensitivity and grace. Since the death of his mother, 15-year-old Sieger (Gijs Blom) has shared a home in the country with his affectionate father, Theo (Ton Kas), and delinquent brother, Eddy (Jonas Smulders). Sieger's best friend, Stef (Stijn Taverne), a fellow runner, is interested in girls, but Sieger isn't (although he keeps that to himself). When the pair make the relay-race team, Sieger finds himself attracted to Marc (Ko Zandvliet), a teammate who is both confident and shy. After their first kiss, Sieger tells him, "I'm not gay," but Marc finds that doubtful. The two continue to see each other in private, while Sieger also hangs out with Stef and two female friends, leading Marc to assume that Sieger is dating one of the girls. Kamp has a knack for shooting the boys from unusual angles as they're running, biking, and swimming, which lends the film a dreamy, kinetic feel. Sieger's attempts to please everyone hurts Marc the most, especially since Sieger fails to explain what's going on, which isn't fair, but does feel true to the experience of teenagers who are trying to do too many new things at once. An exceptional gay love story that eschews melodrama, this is highly recommended. (K. Fennesy)



Curling ★★★

Big World, 92 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Apr. 14

Some mysteries just never get solved. What's the deal with that caged tiger rolling in snow on the rural fringes of Quebec? Why is there a pile of frozen human corpses in a wooded area just off the main highway? How come the mother of 12-year-old Julyvonne (Philom  ne Bilodeau) is incarcerated, and why is the girl's father, Jean-Fran  ois (Emmanuel Bilodeau, real-life dad of Philom  ne) intent on keeping Julyvonne all but locked away from the rest of the world? Director Denis C   t   doesn't supply clear answers to these questions, but he's not a fanciful storyteller either. Rather, his stoic, atonal way of moving *Curling* along without every narrative touchstone squarely in place makes for oddly compelling viewing. What is apparent here is that taciturn and socially isolated Jean-Fran  ois is raising Julyvonne as if she were a puppy: kept at home, with no schooling, no peers for friends, and no real chance of anyone having any influence on her. Meanwhile, Jean-Fran  ois holds down two jobs, one in a bowling alley and the other as a cleaner in a motel. Life goes on, day to day, but random events will collide with this carefully controlled bubble-existence. A highly-disciplined, unsettling, yet also mesmerizing film, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)



The Dark Matter of Love ★★★

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

Filmmaker Sarah McCarthy's engrossing documentary captures both the joys and difficulties facing Claudio and Cheryl Diaz—Wisconsin suburbanites with a teen daughter named Cami—who adopt three Russian orphans: 11-year-old Masha and 5-year-old twins Marcel and Vadim. *The Dark Matter of Love* also looks at the scientific aspects of developing a loving bond between an existing family and children invited into an established home dynamic, as the Diazes hire Dr. Robert Marvin, a developmental psychologist who specializes in techniques that might help in bridging the emotional and cultural gaps that will need to be closed if the six members are to achieve a true familial connection. Marvin's comments are periodically enhanced with black-and-white archival footage illustrating early experiments in parent-child bonding, some of which are chillingly at odds with modern notions of nurturing. But the greater part of the screen time is devoted to following the ups and downs in the Diaz household, ranging from temper tantrums by the boys (often exacerbated by the language barrier),



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to the tension that develops between Masha and Cami, to the despair felt by Cheryl as she begins to fear that she's taken on more than she can handle. McCarthy successfully transforms what might have been a dry case study into a personal story of courage and growing affection among individuals hailing from very different backgrounds. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Dark Valley ★★

Film Movement, 114 min., in German w/English subtitles & English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Andreas Prochaska's German-language Western is—like many of its Italian spaghetti brethren—an old-fashioned revenge tale. Here, handsome stranger Greider (Sam Riley) arrives in a snowy logging town, ostensibly to photograph inhabitants. In reality, Greider has come to take vengeance on brutal patriarch Brenner (Hans-Michael Rehberg)—who abused Greider's mother many years earlier—by killing his six sons before doing in the old man himself. Unfortunately, what should have been a story told with some degree of passion turns out to be a slow and stately affair, dragged down by unnecessary narration flatly delivered by Gaderin (Carmen Gratl)—the young woman whose family Greider lodges with—and dull shootouts. What is impressive, however, is the cinematography in this handsome-looking adaptation (Austria's official submission for the 2014 Oscars) based on Thomas Willmann's 2010 novel *Das finstere Tal*, which captures the rugged beauty of the mountains in winter near the Italian-Austrian border. Still, *The Dark Valley* is not in the same league as Hollywood genre classics or Sergio Leone's operatic re-workings. Optional. (F. Swietek)

Dead Snow 2: Red vs. Dead ★★½

Well Go USA, 101 min., R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$34.98



Filmmaker Tommy Wirkola returns with this sequel to his 2009 cult hit *Dead Snow*, serving up a bigger, bloodier, and more overtly jokey tale once again centered on Nazi zombies. In the original, a group of medical students were systematically dispatched by reanimated Nazi soldiers after uncovering a stash of gold. Now, Martin (Vegar Hoel), the massacre's sole survivor, awakens to discover not only that he is suspected of killing his mates, but also that the hospital has made a terrible error—attaching to his shoulder the severed arm of brutal Nazi Col. Herzog, which has a vicious mind of its own (shades of *Dr. Strangelove*). The wayward arm creates obstacles in Martin's attempts to stop Herzog and his troops from

wiping out a nearby town, but it also proves beneficial since it allows him to reanimate a bunch of Russian POWs (slaughtered by Herzog) to serve as Martin's own undead army. Martin is also joined by a gay museum worker (a terribly swishy stereotype) and a trio of nerdy American zombie hunters who have apparently spent too much time watching *The Walking Dead*. Although it tries very hard to be ghoulishly funny, *Dead Snow 2* only fitfully succeeds (the Keystone Kops treatment of the local police especially falls flat), while its unfortunate tendency to make victims of children, the elderly, and the disabled comes across as more tasteless than outrageous. Still, fans of the first film will likely enjoy this gory second helping. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

East Nashville Tonight ★★

Bond/360, 76 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



Two Tennessee singer-songwriters take center stage in this rambling pseudo-documentary. Scruffy-looking Todd Snider and glamorous Elizabeth Cook seem to take their singing seriously, but when they aren't making music, the pair carry on conversations that feel stiff and scripted. The story begins when Cook returns to Nashville from a trial run with a New York producer who wanted to build a talk show around her (in clips, she meets David Letterman and interviews Anthony Bourdain on the set of *Late Show*). Cook didn't like their ideas, so Snider suggests they make their own. The documentary itself represents an abridged version of a show in which Cook interviews local figures, although during filming she also decides to create a fragrance ("it's mood maintenance and aromatherapy in one bottle")—a wrinkle that comes out of left field. Mostly, however, the singers drink, smoke pot, trade quips, and make faces at the camera, although occasionally musicians show up to play songs with them, including Chuck Mead, Jeff Austin, Tanya Coe, and the Turbo Fruits. As a transition between scenes, co-directors Brad and Todd Barnes (Snider refers to the duo as "some douche whistles from New York") throw in post-production animated effects that add little. The roots-based music isn't bad, but everything else feels extraneous. It seems likely that the Barnes brothers were aiming for humor over realism, but *East Nashville Tonight* falls short on both counts. Optional, at best. (K. Fennessy)

Exodus: Gods and Kings ★★

Fox, 165 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Mar. 17

What was director Ridley Scott thinking? Not only does this underwhelming \$140-million epic spectacle pale in comparison with

Cecil B. DeMille's classic *The Ten Commandments*, but Scott depicts God as a petulant British boy. The main biblical story elements are here: baby Moses being found in the reeds and raised as companion to Pharaoh's son Ramses, the slavery of the Hebrews, the plagues, and the business with the Red Sea. But the Ten Commandments seem like an afterthought. When first seen, Moses (Christian Bale) and Ramses (Joel Edgerton) are grown men, warriors charged with caring for each other by Pharaoh Seti (John Turturro), whose soothsayer warns him of an ominous prophecy. After a sneaky viceroy exposes Moses's lowly Hebrew lineage, he's banished. Wandering through the wilderness, Moses meets and marries a winsome wench, but obviously suffering from an identity crisis the brooding Moses is only reluctantly compelled to free the Hebrews from slavery. When Pharaoh refuses, Egypt endures frogs, gnats, boils, and locusts, until the final plague—the death of his firstborn son—convinces the Pharaoh. And instead of the Red Sea parting, the water simply recedes, in a much less dramatic fashion. Working from a lame, revisionist script (Moses never even says, "Let my people go."), the actors here mostly flounder. Optional. (S. Granger)



Fagbug Nation ★★★

Garden Thieves, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Openly lesbian filmmaker Erin Davies's 2009 *Fagbug* (VL-11/10) centered on how—after finding homophobic graffiti on her Volkswagen—she turned her car into a rainbow-hued vehicle and hit the road in an effort to inspire public dialogues on homosexuality. Here, Davies continues her mission, driving the eye-catching car through all 50 states (separating Davies for long periods from her wife). Early on, someone tells Davis that she is doing the gay community no favors by getting major mileage out of a minor slur incident (Davies, typically, invites the critic to come on camera to talk; but no go). Most other reactions are more positive, even grateful, as Davies meets a rapper who initially felt queer-bashing rage when seeing the car, but instead wrote rhymes in tribute to it; visits a rainbow-colored Kansas house maintained in defiance of the notoriously hateful Westboro Baptist Church across the street; and tours the gay-friendly state of Hawaii. Getting the Fagbug across the Pacific is one thing, but the roughest road turns out to be a marathon non-stop solo drive from Seattle to a gay-pride rally in Alaska, which is played here for maximum drama by the filmmaker, who is plagued by engine trouble and odd hitchhikers. Although charges of

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Street date: **Mar. 17, 2015** | Pre-book: **Feb. 17, 2015**

DVD Product #: 3406-2 | UPC: 7 12267 34062 9 | **SRP: \$27.99**

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88 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated

THE WAY HE LOOKS is a fun and tender story about teenage friendship and young love. Leo is a blind teenager whose best friend, Giovana, grows jealous of Leo's blossoming affection for the handsome Gabriel, the new kid in town. Featuring the music of Belle and Sebastian.



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While travelling to meet his idol, John Lennon, Antonio, a kind-hearted grade school teacher, inspires two runaways: Belén, a pregnant girl fleeing a convent, and Juanjo, a boy escaping a dictatorial father.

Street Date: **Apr. 21, 2015** | Pre-book: **Mar. 24, 2015**

Product #: 3502-2 | UPC: 7 12267 35022 3 | **SRP: \$27.99**

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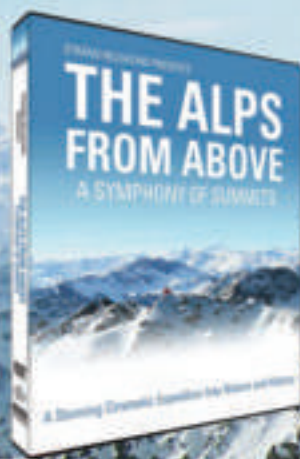
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Street Date: **Apr. 1, 2015** | Pre-book: **Mar. 3, 2015**

DVD #: 3419-2 | UPC: 7 12267 34192 4 | **SRP: \$24.99**

81 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated

This Film Contains Mature Subject Matter



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the history and geography of the Alps.

Street Date: **Feb. 24, 2015** | Pre-book: **Jan. 27, 2015**

Product #: 3417-2 | UPC: 7 12267 34172 6 | **SRP: \$19.99**

90 Minutes - Color - Widescreen - Not Rated

grandstanding may or may not be valid, it's hard to deny the reality that Davies has changed some of the social atmosphere with her stunt. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Farmland ★★½

Freestyle, 77 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99, Mar. 3

Filmmaker James Moll's enlightening documentary looks at the endless burdens and occasional rewards of family farming in America. Focusing on several farming and ranching families in Texas, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and elsewhere, Moll is able to encourage hardworking people to open up about the complicated rhythms of trying to make a living from the land. Viewers hear about the risks involved with tying up one's immediate assets in next year's crops, the tax obstacles that make it both expensive and difficult to pass on a family farm from one generation to the next, and the challenges in trying to market organic crops and meat to a public wary of "all natural" claims. *Farmland* also touches on the pervasive disconnect between the food that we eat and our ignorance about its source. Combining valuable insights into the American food chain with inspiring profiles of strong individuals, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



Force Majeure ★★★

Magnolia, 119 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

A picture perfect Swedish family is introduced in the opening scene, as Tomas (Johannes Bah Kuhnke), wife Ebba (Lisa Loven Kongsli), and their two beautiful children, Vera and Harry (real-life siblings Clara and Vincent Wettergren), pose for a photographer on the first day of their skiing vacation at Les Arcs in the magnificent French Alps. The following afternoon, while they're enjoying a festive lunch at an outdoor café, a terrifying cascade of snow appears to be headed directly towards them. "It's a controlled avalanche," explains Tomas. "It doesn't look controlled to me," retorts Ebba, when they are suddenly blanketed in an eerie mist. In that moment, a panicked Tomas grabs his iPhone and flees, while Ebba tries to protect the frightened children. Sheepishly returning shortly afterwards, Tomas realizes that their family dynamic has changed. And it is not just because of what he's done, but also because he lies about leaving, a denial that infuriates Ebba even more, as they recount their contrasting versions of what happened to Norwegian friends (Kristofer Hivju, Fanni Metelius) at their Alpine hotel. Written and directed by Ruben Östlund, this is a provocative psychodrama, revolving around one man's survival instinct and

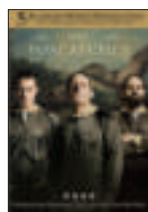


subsequent guilt that lead to marital discord. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Foxcatcher ★★★

Sony, 134 min., R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99, Mar. 3

Based on true events, Oscar-nominee Bennett Miller's chilling crime drama centers on the ultimately tragic relationship between John Eleuthère du Pont, a delusional, eccentric multi-millionaire, and two freestyle wrestling champions. Brothers Mark (Channing Tatum) and Dave (Mark Ruffalo) Schultz are preparing for the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics when they catch the attention of lonely, socially inept, 57-year-old du Pont (Steve Carell), a wrestling aficionado who lives on Foxcatcher Farm, a 416-acre horse-racing compound on Philadelphia's Main Line, owned by his imperious mother (Vanessa Redgrave). Impressed by the du Pont wealth (stemming from the world's largest chemical company), taciturn 27-year-old Mark becomes John's protégé, submitting to the strict discipline and isolation enforced by his benefactor/surrogate father, who is a passionate patriot, philatelist, and ornithologist. But Mark realizes that the training he needs can only come from his older brother Dave, who is initially reluctant to uproot his wife (Sienna Miller) and two children from Colorado to the Valley Forge area. Eventually, not only Dave but also the entire U.S. Olympic wrestling team makes Foxcatcher Farm their state-of-the-art headquarters...until one, ill-fated night. A sorrowful, sordid tale featuring fine Oscar-nominated performances by Carell and Ruffalo, this is recommended. (S. Granger)



Fury ★★★

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

Not since Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* has there been a WWII film as brutal as David Ayer's depiction of the physical and emotional horror of "boots on the ground" in *Fury*. Set in 1945, the story revolves around the 2nd Armored Division, which has faced combat for years and is now on its last reserve of manpower. After slogging through Africa, to Normandy, across the Rhine, and into Germany, the crew members of the M4 Sherman tank dubbed "Fury," led by Sgt. Don "Wardaddy" Collier (Brad Pitt), are exhausted. They've lost one of their original five squad members, who has been replaced by fresh-faced, raw recruit Norman Ellison (Logan Lerman), a former office clerk/typist who has just finished basic training. If Norman cannot function as a team player, his ineptitude will endanger everyone else. So Wardaddy must get him hardened and battle-



ready in 24 hours. "Ideals are quiet. History is violent," he explains. "We're not here for right and wrong. We're here to kill." Also on hand are deeply religious Boyd "Bible" Swan (Shia LaBeouf), a gunner who quotes scripture; Trini "Gordo" Garcia (Michael Pena), the Mexican-American driver; and ordinance loader Grady "Coon-Ass" Travis (Jon Bernthal), a Southern redneck. A bleak, intensely savage film with a pervasive sense of authenticity and consistent emotional tone—as Norman's innocence is completely corrupted—this is recommended. (S. Granger)

The Guest ★★★

Universal, 101 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98

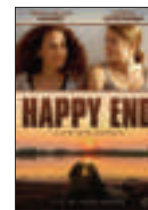
An absurdly enjoyable piece of pulp hokum, filmmaker Adam Wingard's *The Guest* is an unapologetic throwback to some of the best B movies of the '70s and '80s. The Peterson family—father Spencer (Leland Orser), mother Laura (Sheila Kelley), bullied son Luke (Brendan Meyer), and rebellious daughter Anna (Maika Monroe)—are mourning the death of oldest child Caleb, a soldier killed in Afghanistan, when a young man knocks on their door. David (Dan Stevens) is a handsome fellow claiming to have been Caleb's squad mate and best friend, come to deliver his buddy's final goodbyes. Before long he has taken up residence in Caleb's old room and ingratiated himself with the family, even if they're unaware of the violent lengths to which he will go to secretly help them. Only Anna harbors suspicions, which are certainly confirmed with the arrival of an enforcer for a hush-hush government-affiliated corporation, who brings a complement of SWAT-type underlings to capture David, at which point the film takes a turn from creepy suspense thriller to conspiracy extravaganza in which the mysterious stranger proves more than a match for his pursuers. An amusement-park-ride of a movie, *The Guest* is recommended. (F. Swietek)



Happy End ★★★

Wolfe, 86 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

German director Petra Clever's touching debut is as much the story of a journey of discovery as it is about a relationship. Rule-abiding Lucca (Sinha Melina Gierke) lives with her overprotective lawyer father (Sascha Tschorn), her mother having left when Lucca was young. Although planning to attend law school, Lucca isn't really sure whether this is what she wants or what her father wants. After drawing community service as a punishment for an incident of accidental vandalism (she entered



an unlocked aquarium at night, but didn't touch anything), Lucca meets free-spirited nightclub singer Valerie (Verena Wüstkamp), whose friend Herma is in the hospice where Lucca volunteers. Out of curiosity, Lucca visits the nightclub where Valerie performs, and when the latter asks if she's gay or straight, Lucca replies, "I don't want to be labeled"—but seems intrigued. After Herma dies, Valerie worries over whether Herma's homophobic son, Rüdiger (Klaus Nierhoff), will bury her in the family plot. Lucca offers to accompany Valerie to the Netherlands to sort things out, leading to a scenic (if occasionally stressful) road trip full of rule-breaking and bonding between the ladies. Later, Lucca will realize that everything is not what it seems. Although the narrative sometimes seems schematic, these likeable actresses make it work. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Hector and the Search for Happiness ★★

Fox, 114 min., R, DVD: \$29.99

A would-be feel-good movie, Peter Chelsom's slick but sappy adaptation of the 2002 novel by François Lelord follows one man's globetrotting efforts to find the secret to inner contentment. Simon Pegg stars as Hector—a London psychiatrist with a beautiful girlfriend (Rosamund Pike)—whose rigidly ordered, predictable life has left him miserable. So he decides to go off on a journey of self-discovery that takes him first to Shanghai, where a rich, dour businessman introduces him to the city's fleshpots, and he falls for a beauty who turns out to be a call girl (which teaches him that sometimes it's best not to know the whole story). Hector then visits a wise Tibetan monk and an old college buddy who runs a clinic in Africa to learn about the joys of solitude, contemplation, and service to one's fellow man. Then he's off to L.A. to see both his old college flame, now a happily-married wife and mother, and a renowned professor who has invented a machine that can disclose the range of emotions within the human brain. Occasional eruptions of cutesy animation underscore the banalities that Hector learns along the way. Despite the presence of a supporting cast that includes Christopher Plummer, Toni Collette, Jean Reno, and Stellan Skarsgård, this is a cinematic misfire. Not recommended. (F. Swietek)

Honey ★★★

Kino Lorber, 97 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Valeria Golino is best known in the U.S. as the leading lady in *Rain Man* and a star of the *Hot Shots!* comedies. In Golino's first feature-length film as a director—winning the Ecumenical Jury Prize at the 2013 Cannes

Film Festival—Honey is the nickname of Irene (Jasmine Trinca), a young woman who makes her living by traveling to Mexico from Italy once a month to buy dog-euthanizing barbiturates that she then delivers to terminally ill individuals seeking to end their lives. Irene's family and friends are unaware of her "job," and she herself gives little thought to its moral dimensions—until she discovers that one of her clients, Mr. Grimaldi (Carlo Cecchi), obtained the drugs for a different reason: he's not dying, but suicidal. As Irene tries to recover the lethal drugs from Grimaldi, the pair form a distinctive intellectual and emotional bond. Golino wisely avoids sermonizing about the thorny central subject, instead offering a complex story of two emotionally isolated people brought together through the unlikely of situations. A commendable effort from Golino, who seems poised for a great second career behind the camera, this is recommended. (P. Hall)

Honeymoon ★★1/2

Magnolia, 87 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Director Leigh Janiak's minimalist suspense-horror film creates a memorable sense of unease despite a clichéd payoff. Newlyweds Bea (Rose Leslie) and Paul (Harry Treadaway) travel to the bride's family's lakeside getaway cabin in rural New York for an isolated honeymoon idyll, an environment in which the outdoorsy Bea is far more at home than tenderfoot Paul. After an unexpected encounter with Bea's surly ex-flame (and his fearful wife), Paul notices that Bea's behavior is becoming strange and erratic. Paul catches Bea allegedly "sleepwalking" in the woods at night, finds curious sores on her inner thighs, and discovers her nightgown in the brush, covered with a sticky substance. Someone also seems to be shining a light in their windows at night. When Paul finds that unstable Bea has hidden his car key, the question is raised of how well he really knows his new wife after all. What starts like a psycho-thriller with overtones of sexual betrayal takes a turn toward the paranormal, which is something of a letdown, even if Janiak resists indulging in CGI monsters and real gore, instead opting for mere suggestion. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Horrible Bosses 2 ★★

Warner, 108 min., R, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99

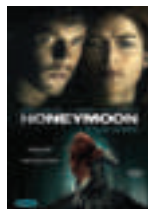
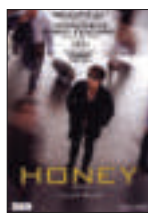
One of 2014's most idiotic and unnecessary sequels, this action-comedy caper reunites Jason Bateman, Jason Sudeikis, and Charlie Day—the three beleaguered underlings who

decided to kill their bosses in the raunchy 2011 original. Tired of working for oppressive supervisors, Nick (Bateman), Kurt (Sudeikis) and Dale (Day) have formed their own company—built around a self-shampooing shower head invention called Shower Buddy—but they need a wealthy investor to manufacture and distribute their product. Enter formidable CEO Bert Hanson (Christopher Waltz), who offers to bankroll the first 100,000 units for \$3 million—only to back out of the deal and try to steal their business. With no legal recourse, the trio decide to kidnap Hanson's pompous playboy son, Rex (Chris Pine), demanding \$500,000 ransom, but find that Rex hates his dad as much as they do. Once again, the guys seek advice from seedy characters played by Jamie Foxx and Kevin Spacey. And Jennifer Aniston reprises her role as Dr. Julia Harris, a sexually rapacious dentist. The problem here is that director Sean Anders's revenge fantasy is just not funny, instead trolling for cheap, vulgar laughs with cringe-worthy misogynistic dialogue, particularly a barrage of tasteless jokes about rape and race. Optional, at best. (S. Granger)

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1 ★★

Lionsgate, 122 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Mar. 6

How often have you heard readers complain that parts of books were cut in the movie version? Well, that is not true of the first installment of this adaptation of the final novel in Suzanne Collins's dystopian action-adventure trilogy: every grim detail has been faithfully rendered, mostly in order to pad the story out until next year's concluding film. Rescued from the Quarter Quell by a rebel alliance, Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) is sequestered in District 13's subterranean hideout. Led by ambitious President Alma Coin (Julianne Moore) and former gamemaker-turned-advisor Plutarch Heavensbee (Philip Seymour Hoffman, who died mid-production), the insurgency is preparing to liberate Panem's Capitol from vicious, oppressive President Coriolanus Snow (Donald Sutherland). Brave, bow-wielding Katniss becomes their symbolic Mockingjay, the defiant figurehead of the revolution. Mostly presented with a drab, funeral pallor look, *Mockingjay, Part 1* features few battle sequences and none of the glitzy costume changes of *Catching Fire*—much to the dismay of ever-chirpy Effie Trinket (Elizabeth Banks). Instead, director Francis Lawrence concentrates on Katniss's inner turmoil—her heart torn between Gale Hawthorne (Liam Hemsworth) and Peeta Mellark



(Josh Hutcherson)—as preparations are made for the climactic battle between the two contending forces. Woody Harrelson, Sam Claflin, and Stanley Tucci return, joined by Natalie Dormer, among others. Dour, dreary, and disappointing, this sequel is mainly about squeezing every last dime out of the franchise's devoted following. Optional. (S. Granger)

The Internet's Own Boy

★★★

Kino Lorber, 105 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Computer whiz Aaron Swartz skirted the boundaries and ethics of Internet activism, passionately believing in the values of free expression and equal access as a fundamental tool for democracy. Directed by Brian Knappenberger, *The Internet's Own Boy* outlines the story of the price that Swartz paid for his beliefs. A child prodigy, Swartz taught himself to read at age 3, quickly "learning how to learn," and becoming fascinated with computers. Frustrated in school, where he constantly questioned the status quo, Swartz briefly attended Stanford before dropping out. A perfectionist who wanted to be taken seriously, Swartz became obsessed with the issue of copyright vs. the public interest, creating or joining many organizations, such as "Open Library," which advocated that a web page be created for every book, with information on where to buy or borrow the item. An early success led to a lucrative buyout and a brief stint at Conde Nast's *Wired* magazine, but the business world bored him. Always asking "who gets heard?", Swartz made the fateful decision to hack MIT computers, illegally downloading thousands of academic journal articles. Arrested and strip searched, Swartz was threatened with big fines and long jail time by authorities who decided to make him an example. Although Swartz's activities were illegal, there were no victims, and he had no expectation of financial gain. Fearing the "politics of fear and anger," Swartz hanged himself at age 26. The film interviews Swartz's brothers, parents, and girlfriends, who express confusion and anger at both the government and MIT. A provocative film about free speech in the Internet age, this is recommended. (S. Rees)

Interstellar

Paramount, 169 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Mar. 31



Visionary filmmaker Christopher Nolan's speculative, mind-bending sci-fi adventure is set sometime in the future as Earth is dying. Famine is rampant, yet science is so derided that rewritten history books claim the *Apollo* missions

were a hoax meant to force the Soviets into a bankrupting space race. Aeronautical-engineer-turned-farmer Cooper (Matthew McConaughey) is secretly recruited by his physics professor (Michael Caine) to pilot a NASA spacecraft through a mysterious deep space wormhole in order to choose a suitable planet for humans to colonize. But widower Coop's heart belongs with his family, particularly his precocious 10-year-old daughter Murph (Mackenzie Foy). Coop is well aware that Murph could be his age when and if he ever returns. Nevertheless, Coop and his crew (Anne Hathaway, Wes Bentley, David Gyasi), along with the robot TARS (voiced by Bill Irwin), embark on a spectacular thrill ride in which they will witness incomparable beauty and inconceivable terror. As the years pass, now-grown Murph (Jessica Chastain) comes to realize that in order to see her father again, she must solve an essential equation involving time, gravity, and space. Much like Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, this ambitious film also eventually serves up somewhat bewildering metaphysics, but the journey itself is most entertaining. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

The Interview

Sony, 112 min., R, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$19.99



Thanks to the cyber-warfare launched against Sony and the terrorist threats from North Korea, this controversial black comedy starring James Franco and Seth Rogen achieved instant notoriety. Unfortunately, to paraphrase Shakespeare, *The Interview* turns out to be much ado about very little. Sleazy TV interviewer Dave Skylark (Franco) and his buddy, producer Aaron Rapoport (Seth Rogen), are tabloid journalists who specialize in celebrity interviews. When these megamorphs learn that North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un (Randall Park) is a fan of the show, they arrange for an interview. "This will be as big as Frosty Nixon," Dave enthuses. In short order, the pair are recruited by manipulative CIA Agent Lacey (Lizzy Caplan) to use their visit to Pyongyang as an opportunity to assassinate the notoriously humorless, thirtysomething Supreme Leader. Rogen, who directed along with Evan Goldberg, plays the straight man, while Franco overdoes his caricature of a dimwit TV host who is far more concerned with popularity than credibility. Opening with a sweet little North Korean girl singing a song about launching nuclear war against the United States, the provocative premise is never truly developed, and the farce quickly fizzles in this would-be political satire. Libraries will likely want to pick up because of the film's incredible impact on world affairs, but this sophomoric slob-comedy full of repetitive potty jokes fails to live up to its hype. Optional. (S. Granger)

Jimi: All Is by My Side

★★1/2

Xlrator, 118 min., R, DVD: \$20.99, Blu-ray: \$24.99



Novelist and screenwriter John Ridley's directorial debut is a bio-pic about Jimi Hendrix, starring Outkast's André Benjamin, who may not bear much of a physical resemblance to the legendary guitarist, but does successfully capture Hendrix's graceful movements and epigrammatic speech. Ridley wisely bypasses the birth-to-death narrative structure—which tends to flatten multi-dimensional human beings into bullet points—instead focusing on Hendrix's move from New York to London, where he meets Linda Keith (Imogen Poots), an admirer with connections (such as her boyfriend, Keith Richards), and former Animals bassist Chas Chandler (Andrew Buckley), who becomes Hendrix's manager. With Chandler's help, Hendrix puts together the Experience, forming the power trio that would make his name. Unfortunately, the Hendrix estate refused access to Hendrix's music unless they could have final approval, so the trio here performs cover songs, which capture Hendrix's sound, but fail to convey his strengths as a songwriter. Hendrix also comes across as a man with a propensity for violence towards women, particularly his girlfriend, Kathy Etchingham (Hayley Atwell), although both Hendrix scholars and Etchingham herself have taken issue with this portrayal. Since Hendrix is such an amiable character in other respects, these dark sequences feel simultaneously incongruous and off-putting. While the film ably captures the look of Swinging London, Hendrix deserved a more respectful treatment. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Jingle Bell Rocks!

★★★

Oscilloscope, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99



Christmas music aficionado Mitchell Kezin turns filmmaker here, documenting his passion for the most unusual, eccentric, and unbelievable Christmas songs ever released, while also visiting fellow collectors (from filmmaker John Waters, to radio deejay Dr. Demento, to Joseph Simmons of Run DMC) to share favorite songs. *Jingle Bell Rocks!* is not about the beloved hits everyone knows, but rather forgotten greats such as Nat King Cole's devastating "The Little Boy That Santa Claus Forgot" (Kezin's favorite song), alternative Christmas songs with a cultural spin (the very sweet "Santa Claus is a Black Man" and El Vez's "Santa Claus is Sometimes Brown"), novelty numbers ("Santa Came on a Nuclear Missile") and unexpected discoveries ("Close Your Mouth (It's Christmas)" by the Free

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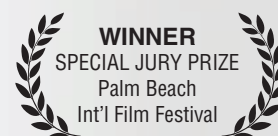
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Design). A few songs are explored in depth but mostly this is an easygoing survey of odd and unusual holiday songs and a look at the people who love them—shining a spotlight on a seasonal music genre that is maligned by many, tolerated by some, and embraced by a few obsessive fans. An entertaining curio that is likely to be popular during the Christmas holiday season, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

John Wick ★★½

Lionsgate, 101 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Keanu Reeves stars as the taciturn titular character, a grieving widower whose sanity tips over the edge when Daisy, his beloved beagle puppy—a posthumous gift from his wife Helen (Bridget Moynahan)—is slaughtered and his classic 1969 black Mustang is stolen by a young thug, Josef Tarasov (Alfie Allen). Wick, a legendary mob hit man who retired to New Jersey, is determined to wreak homicidal vengeance. Josef turns out to be the son of a Russian crime lord (Michael Nyqvist), who tells the lad, “It’s not what you did that angers me so, it’s who you did it to.” In paternal protective mode, dad puts a \$2 million price on Wick’s head. So the carnage continues—as Wick is hunted by various assassins (Willem Dafoe, Ian McShane, Adrienne Palicki) who hang out in a shadowy safe house called the Continental Club. After laying out an initial series of improbable coincidences, director Chad Stahelski (a former stuntman) serves up a series of action set pieces, featuring acrobatic, cartoonish violence centered on dapper, daredevil killer Wick, who can efficiently annihilate dozens without wrinkling his black, three-piece suit. Revolving around revenge, retribution, and redemption, the relentlessly violent *John Wick* is a strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)



Keep On Keepin’ On

★★★½

Anchor Bay, 86 min., R, DVD: \$24.98

Produced by Quincy Jones and directed by Alan Hicks, who—like Jones—is a former student of the film’s subject, this beautifully filmed documentary centers on legendary jazz trumpeter Clark Terry. A member of the orchestras of both Duke Ellington and Count Basie, and also the first African-American to join *The Tonight Show* band (Johnny Carson presented Terry with an award for being inducted into the Jazz Hall of Fame), Terry was 90 at the time of filming. Suffering from ill health, particularly complications due to diabetes, Terry is unable to get around much, but remains an active pedagogue, working from his Arkansas home.



At the center of *Keep On Keepin’ On* is Terry’s close relationship with 23-year-old jazz pianist Justin Kauflin, a brilliant musician—blind since early childhood—who absorbs Terry’s lessons on music and life, which are delivered with love and grace. Hicks’s own intimate relationship with Terry and the latter’s family allows access to some very personal and even painful moments in the winter of this great man’s life. An inspiring, joyful, and also profoundly moving film, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Kids for Cash ★★★★★

Kino Lorber, 102 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95

Producer-director Robert May’s sobering exposé probes a scandal of Dickensian proportions in modern Luzerne County, PA. Mark Ciavarella, a highly visible, stern judge—whose 1995 campaign TV ad opens the documentary—sentenced 3,000 juveniles to incarceration, sometimes for paltry violations such as mocking a teacher on MySpace or accidentally buying stolen property. In 2009, journalists revealed that Ciavarella secretly received \$2 million in “finder’s fees,” ostensibly for shuttling children to a privately owned detention center, leading to screaming headlines over a “kids for cash” deal. Ciavarella, here awaiting trial, defends himself on camera, claiming that the money was fairly earned in consults he made to upgrade a dilapidated prison system, and that the same sentences would have been dealt regardless. This latter argument only serves to make May’s point: namely, that Ciavarella’s case was merely a visible pathology of a virtual War on Children that has been perpetrated by U.S. authorities spooked by the Columbine massacre (although the American horror of “juvenile delinquency” dates back to the paranoid 1950s). Even as Ciavarella is publicly pilloried, PA school bureaucrats continue to champion harsh enforcement of “zero tolerance” policies for students. Meanwhile, the film interweaves the stories of several kids sentenced in Luzerne County, one of whom later committed suicide. Offering a sobering look at rough and questionable juvenile “justice,” this is highly recommended. **Editor’s Choice.** (C. Cassidy)



Levitated Mass ★★★★★

First Run, 89 min., not rated, DVD: \$27.95

Modern sculpture doesn’t get much more monumental than Michael Heizer’s titular installation—unveiled in 2012 on the grounds of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)—a two-story high, 340-ton granite boulder perched atop a concrete-and-metal walkway that visitors pass beneath.



Doug Pray’s documentary offers an artistic mini-biography of the reclusive Heizer, a pioneer in “land sculpture” (which focuses on what’s been called the “negative space” around an object), while also serving up an account of how LACMA officials worked to raise the \$10 million required to realize his vision. But most of the film follows the building of the walkway—an engineering feat in itself—as well as the transportation of the huge rock from a quarry in Riverside, a logistical nightmare that required not only the fashioning of a mammoth reinforced football-field-length tractor-trailer, but also negotiations with officials in the 20-plus cities through which the convoy would pass. The boulder’s 100-mile journey drew crowds of spectators—some enthusiastic, others dismissive—while episodes such as the temporary halt of the truck in front of a chapel called the Rock of Salvation even led some to read religious significance into the event. Pray weaves these various elements into an engaging whole that celebrates Heizer’s work while also leaving it up to the viewer to judge whether the project was worth all of the time, money, and effort. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Little Bedroom

★★★

Cinema Libre, 87 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A young home caregiver grieving over her own recent miscarriage befriends a gruff elderly patient in this moving Swiss drama from filmmakers Stéphanie Chuat and Veronique Réymond. The inability of Rose (Florence Loiret Caille) to come to terms with the loss of their child disturbs her husband (Eric Caravaca), who must travel to America on a business trip. When Edmond (Michel Bouquet), whose son is also departing permanently for the United States, takes a tumble in his apartment, Rose—who has a special bond with the irascible old man—spirits him from the nursing home to her place, where she hides him from authorities while he recuperates. Rose tends to Edmond until he can deal with his changed situation on his own terms—even putting him up in the nursery that she has not been able to dismantle—while he in turn helps her overcome her pain and get on with life. While some of the psychological aspects of *The Little Bedroom* are obvious—clearly Rose is transferring the care she would have given her child to Edmond, as her returning husband explicitly says—the performances, especially by leads Bouquet and Caille, are so subtly drawn and the direction so natural that even occasional banalities are transformed into something touching and real. A gentle, honest tale about aging and renewal, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



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Marius & Fanny

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 195 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$34.95



Marcel Pagnol's beloved French *Fanny* trilogy (1931-36), a heartfelt saga of waterfront life and love in Marseilles, France, is faithfully recreated in this wonderful homage/remake by noted actor-turned-director Daniel Auteuil. Pagnol's deceptively simple story revolves around a young man named Marius (Raphaël Personnaz) who lusts for the sea; Fanny (Victoire Bélézy), the woman who loves him; and Marius's lovable bear of a father, César (Auteuil). *Marius & Fanny* serves up the first two films (the final entry, *César*, has not yet begun filming). The basic plot revolves around Fanny becoming pregnant on the eve of Marius's departure on a ship, after which an elderly shopkeeper named Panisse (Jean-Pierre Darroussin) weds her in order to save her honor—an act that will lead to further complications. What makes Pagnol's trilogy so special is the depth of character—the smitten Marius (whose mistress is the sea); the feisty Fanny, who suffers immeasurably before being rewarded; and the crochety but fiercely loving Cesar, who wins the audience's undying devotion whether he's lying, cheating at cards, or scheming with Fanny's mother to get the two lovebirds together. Although many critics balked at the narrative's sentimentality (Auteuil's only modern concession is a brief and tasteful nude shot of Fanny and Marius sleeping in bed), fans of the original will appreciate this beautifully-lensed tribute that perfectly captures the flavor of master storyteller Pagnol. Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

May in the Summer

★★★1/2

Cohen, 99 min., in English & Arabic w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



Cherien Dabis wrote and directed this vaguely Chekhovian comedy-drama, in which she also stars as May, a successful author who returns to her native Jordan to prepare for her wedding. Her fiancé, a Columbia University professor, has remained behind in the States to finish the semester, which gives May plenty of time to reconnect with her two sisters and divorced mother, Nadine (Hiam Abbass). The reunion is not all roses: her siblings squabble about their unfulfilling lives, while Nadine, a devoted Christian, frets over the fact that May is marrying a Muslim, which she insists will cause problems—even if he claims not to be religious. Adding to the tension is the presence of May's American father (Bill Pullman), whose young Indian girlfriend questions his fidelity, a situation that only adds to May's own doubts about

going through with the ceremony—an uncertainty that only increases following her chance meeting with an attractive young tour guide. The strength of the film lies in the natural quality of Dabis's script and solid work by the cast to create the family dynamic during the first half. Unfortunately, the plot grows increasingly artificial, and when Dabis adds a touch of political comment—the sudden appearance of a warplane that interrupts the sisters' day at a resort—the effect feels hollow. Still, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Memphis

Kino Lorber, 78 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Eerie and evocative, this second feature from indie auteur Tim Sutton serves up a cinematic poem about a city and a state of mind. The ostensible story is of a failing musician named Willis (Willis Earl Beal) who is facing a crisis of confidence on the eve of a recording session in perhaps the most musically rich city in the world. Just as important is the film's mysterious mood during this voyage of self-discovery. With the camera and microphone as both guide and companion, Willis roams the streets, churches, recording studios, and train yards of Memphis, seeking not only inspiration, but also existential redemption. Sutton's composition of mesmerizing visuals becomes a kind of emotional soul food for Willis and for viewers, as grace is gleaned from children, preachers, lovers, and others, even as the film seems to skirt the realm of magic. The expressive soundtrack of bluesy R&B and fervent gospel music (most of it written and performed by Beal) heightens the contemplative mysticism in this daring semi-experimental film that offers a genuinely unique American vision. Highly recommended. (T. Fry)

Middle of Nowhere

★★★

Lionsgate, 97 min., R, DVD: \$26.98



Before directing the acclaimed, Oscar-nominated *Selma*, Ava DuVernay made her breakthrough with this intimate American independent drama about a woman who puts her life and ambitions on hold to support her husband after he's sent to prison for an eight-year term. Ruby (Emayatzy Corinealdi) drops out of medical school and takes a nursing job so that she can be at home for daily calls from Derek (Omari Hardwick) and also make the two-hour bus ride from the Los Angeles suburbs to the prison every week. But more than just her career, Ruby has put her entire life in a holding pattern, a truth she refuses to acknowledge until an easygoing bus driver (David Oyelowo) engages

in friendly but sincere flirtation and she realizes how much she's sacrificed. Corinealdi delivers a quietly expressive performance as a woman who initially does not realize her growing sense of malaise and loneliness. DuVernay avoids any of the expected dramatic revelations or charged confrontations, instead focusing on Ruby's evolution, while also making Derek a complicated, nuanced character—neither judging nor forgiving him as Ruby faces the reality of the cost of her commitment to his support. DuVernay won the Best Director award at Sundance, but the film itself was not widely distributed. Hopefully it will reach a wider audience on home video. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Missionary

Freestyle, 90 min., R, DVD: \$14.99



The LDS Church pretty much ignored this mediocre Mormon-proselytizer-turned-stalker thriller, as did audiences. Dawn Olivieri is Katherine, estranged wife of Ian (Kip Pardue), a woman struggling to raise their son (Connor Christie) on her own. When Mormon missionary Kevin (Mitch Ryan) helps the boy prepare for football tryouts, a sultry affair develops with Katharine—until Ian comes back into the family's life. In short order, Kevin turns possessive and menacing, leading to a confrontation between him and Ian that becomes decidedly nasty—although not as much as the subsequent attempt by spurned Kevin to kidnap Katharine and her son to form the perfect unit. Of course, by this time it's evident that Kevin is unhinged: Katharine learns about a previous stalking incident, and he's also had a run-in with his brethren. A protracted face-off in a junkyard will finally settle the issue. While there are a few suspenseful moments in director Anthony DiBlasi's *Missionary*, this is ultimately little more than a pallid gender-reversal take on *Fatal Attraction* with a gratuitous religious twist. Not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

A Most Violent Year

★★★

Lionsgate, 125 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99, Apr. 7



Set in New York City during the violent winter of 1981, filmmaker J.C. Chandor's intense and richly atmospheric noir-thriller combines political intrigue with industrial corruption. Ambitious, idealistic Hispanic immigrant Abel Morales (Oscar Isaac) starts out as a fuel truck driver for a heating oil distributor. But after marrying the mob-connected boss's daughter (Jessica Chastain) and taking over the family business, he discovers that it's not easy being honest in the crime-riddled city. Following a deal to purchase a waterfront storage facil-



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ity, Morales is faced with a series of brutal anonymous attacks in which his drivers are hijacked and his fuel is stolen. Egged on by his wife and a lawyer (Albert Brooks), Morales turns to desperate measures in order to protect his property, his family, and his sliver of the American Dream. Isaac evokes memories of Al Pacino's Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* series, while Chastain is a formidable foil, and both are supported by a solid cast that includes David Oyelowo, Eyles Gabel, Alessandro Nivola, and Jerry Adler. A gritty, savvy, and impeccably crafted tale that evokes a turbulent time, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

The Mule ★★1/2

Xrator, 102 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.99, Blu-ray: \$20.99

Viewers with an aversion to the scatological would be well advised to avoid this Australian import, a reality-based crime drama shot through with moments of dark humor. Angus Sampson stars as Ray, a beefy, rather dim young man who takes a trip to Thailand with his soccer team and is reluctantly persuaded to swallow 20 condoms filled with heroin for smuggling back to Melbourne. Naturally he's stopped by airport security and turned over to the police, who place him in a hotel under guard until he relieves himself a couple of times to prove that he's not hiding anything. Ray's ordeal will drag on for over 10 days as the poor guy attempts to hold everything in (even when he has an accident, Ray goes to desperate—albeit nauseating—lengths to conceal the goods again). Much of the time spent with Ray is stomach-churning in other ways as well, with the sound effects perhaps even more upsetting than the action. Still, the script features some nifty twists, and the acting is good, not only by the long-suffering Sampson (who helped write the screenplay and co-directed with Tony Mahony), but also by Hugo Weaving, who plays a brutal cop with leering intensity. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Mystery Road ★★★

Well Go USA, 120 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Writer-director Ivan Sen's laconic, racially-tinged police thriller is suspended somewhere between the mythic and the moody, with an ominous narrative that commands attention. *Mystery Road* is set in a corner of the Australian Outback known as Masacre Creek, where rookie police detective Jay Swan (Aaron Pedersen), of Aboriginal descent, serves on the laidback local force in the torpid native settlement where he grew up and left behind a daughter and



ex-lover a decade before. When the corpse of an indigenous teenager is found by the roadside showing signs of addiction and brutalization, Swan learns that the insular community has been haunted by the shadow of drugs, disappearances, and rumors of child prostitution/victimization by outsiders. Swan also discovers that his fellow officers are curiously unconcerned about the crimes, and that his own wayward daughter may be somehow involved. Filmmaker Sen uses the wide skies, blazing sunsets, and long horizons in a way reminiscent of the Coen Brothers' incorporation of wintery landscapes in *Fargo*, capturing a distinct regional flavor while also creating an environment of foreboding and danger that will pay off in a violent finale. Also featuring noted Australian actors Hugo Weaving and Bruce Spence in supporting roles, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

The New Public ★★★

Kino Lorber, 87 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Trying to improve the performance of public schools, New York City has established smaller campuses with various focused curricula designed to excite student imagination. Jyllian Gunther's documentary follows the fortunes of the first class—both students and teachers—at the Brooklyn Community Arts & Media High School (BCAM) in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, covering the initial year (2006-07) and then skipping ahead to the fourth, as the original freshman class—or what's left of it—prepares for graduation. The change in attitude is quickly apparent: Principal James O'Brien has grown considerably less ebullient even by the end of the first year, and three years later seems to be much more pragmatic about what is possible. The same can be said of English teacher Kevin Greer, while other instructors have simply moved on by 2010. Some originally enthusiastic students have also departed by senior year, while others—and their disappointed parents—are far less optimistic about the future. The imposition of increasingly rigorous academic standards to meet state requirements has also fomented discontent. But there are definite success stories here, such as the young man with an ill mother who, following a stack of rejection letters, is finally accepted into college. And the film closes with a note that BCAM's graduation rate had climbed to 74% by 2012—marking a huge improvement over the regional norm. Serving up an incisive portraits of students, teachers, administrators, and parents, *The New Public* offers a perceptive, honest, and ultimately hopeful glimpse inside the workings of an experimental public school. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Nocturna ★★1/2

Cinedigm, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95

It's taken seven years for this flawed but visually sumptuous Franco-Spanish animated tale to reach home video in the U.S. While nobody credits Winsor McCay's surreal comic-strip *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (itself the basis for a so-so 1989 feature film) as inspiration, there are definite similarities. Here, an orphan boy named Tim (voiced by Lloyd F. Booth Shankley), who is afraid of the dark and unable to sleep one night, crawls out onto the roof seeking the comfort of his favorite star—which he suddenly cannot find. Eventually, Tim stumbles across the realm of Nocturna, a hidden society of night-dwelling creatures who orchestrate various non-daylight routines, ranging from scripting dreams to tousling the hair of unwary sleepers. Meanwhile, stars keep disappearing, and Tim tries to find out who or what is responsible. The actual culprit is the film's weakest aspect—a spreading phantom called the Shadow, which is artfully rendered but mystifying in terms of origin, motivation, operation, and just about everything else (including how Tim finally triumphs over it). Co-directed by Adrià Garcia and Victor Maldonado, *Nocturna* is a wonderful-looking film with eye-catching designs and unusual character concepts, but it's hobbled by a disappointingly sketchy narrative. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)



Once Upon a Time Verônica ★★

Big World, 91 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Serving up a modest character study, filmmaker Marcelo Gomes's *Once Upon a Time Verônica* centers on the titular Verônica (Hermila Guedes), a thirtysomething recent graduate from medical school now working as a new psychiatric intern at a bustling public hospital in a Brazilian coastal town. At work, Verônica sends her chart notes about an endless stream of patients upstairs for more experienced shrinks to pass judgment. At home, she lives with her ailing father and basks in his special love, but eschews his advice about developing a serious relationship with a man or letting her hair down more often. In private moments, she enjoys the occasional girls' night out, or loses herself in athletic if empty sex with a would-be boyfriend. Unfortunately, that's as far as Gomes's ambition with Verônica goes: the tale of someone stuck in a rut. And while that's not an absolute killer, precious little in this cyclical story puts any of this in a larger, more interesting context, or suggests the possibility of change on the horizon. Not



a necessary purchase. (T. Keogh)

Penguins of Madagascar

★★★

Fox, 92 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$36.99, Mar. 17



Viewers need not be familiar with the first three *Madagascar* movies to appreciate this animated spin-off origin story about the show-stealing penguins. Here, we see how the early antics of self-appointed leader Skipper (voiced by Tom McGrath), clever Kowalski (Chris Miller), Cheezy Dibbles-gobbling Rico (Conrad Vernon), and little hatchling Private (Christopher Knights) were filmed by a documentarian (Werner Herzog) who wanted to observe the flightless birds in their natural Antarctic habitat. Their nemesis is Dr. Octavius Brine—aka Dave (John Malkovich)—a villainous octopus disguised as an eccentric scientist, who is resentful of penguins because they perennially outperform other aquatic creatures (including his octopi brethren) at zoos, aquariums, and marine parks. Brine leads an eight-armed octopus army determined to kidnap the waddling penguins and turn them into dreadful mutants. Aid comes from Agent Classified (Benedict Cumberbatch), a gray wolf who is part of an undercover task force called North Wind. He's supported by Short Fuse (Ken Jeong), an explosives-expert seal; Eva (Annet Mehdreu), a beautiful, brainy owl; and Corporal (Peter Stormare), a brawny polar bear. Celebrity name puns abound (such as "Nicolas—cage them!" and "Drew, Barry—more power!") in co-directors Eric Darnell and Simon J. Smith's fast-paced, globetrotting lark, which travels from Antarctica to Venice to Shanghai to Kentucky's Fort Knox to New York. Recommended. (S. Granger)

Pioneer ★★½

Magnolia, 111 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, Mar. 10



Director Erik Skjoldbaerg attempts to create a Norwegian version of the kind of paranoid thriller that flourished in American film during the 1970s, with mixed results. The plot centers on an actual event in the early 1980s—an effort to train divers to be able to survive the physical stress involved in laying a pipeline on the bottom of the North Sea off Norway's coast, where rich deposits of oil have been discovered. An American firm is hired to prepare the locals, who endure long sessions in a pressure chamber before undertaking an actual dive that leads to disaster when a man is killed in an accident, and his brother, Petter (Aksel Hennie), finds himself accused of causing the tragedy. But Petter is convinced

that the Americans were responsible, and he engages in a one-man crusade to prove that a cover-up has been engineered between the Americans and the Norwegian government in order to save the lucrative project. The first half of *Pioneer*—built primarily around gritty and realistic training sequences—is tense and effective, but the second, following Petter as he tries to prove the perfidy of the trainers and secure justice for his sister-in-law, generates little suspense. Nor does the presence of Wes Bentley and Stephen Lang as the on-site Americans add much to the mix. An optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Playing Dead ★★★

First Run, 104 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98



An amusingly twisty murder mystery with darkly comic overtones, Jean-Paul Salomé's film would likely resist a Hollywood remake since it's based on an unusual practice in the French judicial system that allows a magistrate to re-enact a crime, with the participation of the accused perpetrator, to test whether a case holds water. In this instance, neophyte prosecutor Noémie Desfontaines (Géraldine Nakache) wishes to analyze the confession of a man who claims to have killed two brothers at an Alpine ski resort. To play the victims she hires actor Jean Renault (François Damiens), a former star whose career derailed due to his insufferably perfectionist attitude. Naturally, he proves resistant to direction, pointing out holes in the prosecution's case while also undertaking his own investigations—which point toward other possible culprits, as well as a motive tied to a long-ago death (and possibly involving official corruption). At the same time, however, Jean and Noémie begin to harbor feelings that could blossom into romance. *Playing Dead* is somewhat contrived (plenty of suspects are on hand, and the killer naturally turns out to be someone you'd never suspect, with a pretty far-out motive), but it's entertaining, overall, with loads of beautiful scenery. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

The Retrieval ★★★

Kino Lorber, 94 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Set during the American Civil War, this moving indie drama is centered on a 13-year-old black boy named Will (Ashton Sanders), who serves as a kind of Judas goat to a band of Southern bounty hunters tracking escaped slaves. Although Will is not technically their slave, he lives in fear of the men and his mercenary uncle (Keston John), who is all-too-willing to sacrifice Will for his own gain, and is therefore too cowed to escape

when they are sent across enemy lines to lure Nate (Tishuan Scott)—a free man with a bounty on his head—back to the South and into the arms of the gang. As Nate becomes a father figure to the boy, Will struggles with his conscience. The high stakes of this situation—Will being an African-American child in the South during the Civil War, as well as an orphan under the control of an outlaw—frame an intimate coming-of-age story that plays out on a vast historical canvas. Director Chris Eska films his low-budget production against alternately lovely and desolate landscapes in the unnamed setting, with hints of the broader war delivered in a single battle scene that is more of a chaotic skirmish in the brush. Sanders brings both a nervous vulnerability and sincere yearning for connection to the central role of Will, while Scott is also effective as Nate, who slowly bonds with the boy in this provocative and affecting drama. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Richard Pryor: Omit the Logic ★★★

Magnolia, 83 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98



The triumphs and tragedies of comedian Richard Pryor's life are the subject of Marina Zenovich's documentary, which explores Pryor's genius as a comic artist while also bluntly surveying his phenomenally self-destructive experiences with drugs and personal demons. Pryor's childhood in a brothel as the son of a prostitute and pimp—he was famously raised by a violent grandmother, who ran the establishment—is covered in detail, along with his troubled years in the U.S. Army. Interviews with his numerous wives, business associates, and celebrities—including Whoopi Goldberg, Dave Chappelle, Lily Tomlin, and Bob Newhart—paint a portrait of a volatile but brilliant man with numerous allies who tried to protect him, both from his addictions and the brutal nature of show business. Co-writing the script for Mel Brooks's *Blazing Saddles* helped Pryor to get a foot in the door of Hollywood movies, but being subsequently rejected by the film's studio as a co-lead (opposite Gene Wilder, whom Pryor would later star with in hit comedies) sent him into a personal and professional spiral. More pitfalls would follow, as well as good times on screen and on stage (where he delivered devastatingly funny standup routines). But as *Omit the Logic* sadly illustrates, cocaine would come to cast a long shadow over Pryor's gifts and accomplishments. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Rosewater ★★★

Universal, 104 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98

Jon Stewart, host of *The Daily Show*, wrote and directed this political drama adapted

from *Newsweek* correspondent/broadcast journalist Maziar Bahari's bestselling memoir, *Then They Came for Me: A Family's Story of Love, Captivity, and Survival*. *Rosewater* begins with 42-year-old Bahari (Gael García Bernal), who holds Iranian/Canadian citizenship, arriving in Tehran to interview Mir-Hossein Mousavi, a challenger to incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the 2009 election. Befriended by his driver (Dimitri Leonidas), Bahari is able to film Mousavi's young supporters protesting Ahmadinejad's declaration of a "landslide victory" hours before the polls closed. Immediately afterwards, however, Bahari is accused of espionage by the Islamic Republic. Spending the next 118 days in solitary confinement, surreally haunted by the ghost of his father (Haluk Bilginer), who had been imprisoned by the Shah in 1953, Bahari is brutally interrogated and tortured by Jabadi (Kim Bodnia), who the blindfolded Bahari can only identify by his rosewater-scented cologne. Meanwhile, in London, Bahari's pregnant wife (Claire Foy) leads an international campaign to obtain his freedom, which is picked up by media outlets, including Comedy Central. An intriguing political drama that is particularly relevant today—given ISIS's capture, torture, and killing of journalists—*Rosewater* smartly illustrates the absurdity of totalitarian regimes. Recommended. (S. Granger)



Rudderless ★★½
Paramount, 105 min., R, DVD: \$21.99

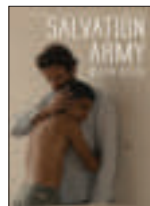
William H. Macy makes his theatrical directorial debut with this uneven yet compelling drama about a man learning to push beyond tragedy. *Rudderless* begins when advertising executive Sam (Billy Crudup) loses his aspiring musician son, Josh (Miles Heizer), in a school shooting. Two years later, Sam has downsized to a houseboat and a house-painting gig. Old passion is reawakened when his ex-wife (Felicity Huffman) gives Sam a box of Josh's belongings in preparation for a move. In reading through his son's lyrics and listening to his demo CDs, Sam learns how to play one of his songs, which he performs at an open mic night, meeting the excitable Quentin (Anton Yelchin), who likes the song so much that he offers to sing harmony with Sam. Soon, the duo evolves into a full band with the addition of a drummer (Ryan Dean) and a bass player (Ben Kweller). Laurence Fishburne is also on hand as a music shop owner who encourages Sam not to let age deter him from moving ahead. Sam doesn't tell Quentin that his son wrote their songs, but once Josh's ex-girlfriend (Selena Gomez) finds out, she attempts to put the kibosh on



the project. Macy saves a detail about the shooting for the end, which puts preceding events in a different light. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

Salvation Army ★★★
Strand, 81 min., in French & Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Mar. 31

This autobiographical drama from novelist-turned-filmmaker Abdellah Taïa tells the melancholy story of a young, gay Moroccan man who neither fits into the communal life of his large family, nor later is comfortable as a college student in Paris. We meet 15-year-old Abdellah (Said Mrini) as a glum outcast, wandering the streets where he is picked up for sex by unknown men. At home, Abdellah seeks refuge from his mother's ill-disguised disgust by lingering in the bedroom of an older brother who is absent for long stretches of time. Abdellah's incestuous yearning for his sibling is yet another complication that sets him apart from his family, although his father is not above using Abdellah as sexual bait to obtain favors from local merchants. *Salvation Army's* second act finds Abdellah (now played by Karim Ait M'hand) becoming a lost soul in Europe, short on cash with nowhere to live before the school year starts. Abdellah's various relationships with older men are still without substance, in part because he remains emotionally hidden and unable to connect. Taïa's low-key storytelling effectively captures Abdellah's sadness and rage, serving up a powerful portrait of isolation, and a reminder of the deep human hunger to be loved. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



Salvo ★★★
Film Movement, 108 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A ruthless Mafia hit-man shows his soft side in this Italian noir from filmmakers Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza. We meet Salvo (Saleh Bakri) on a Palermo street, where he dispatches a bevy of rival killers who are trying to assassinate him. Salvo then takes out the man who hired them, but can't bring himself to kill the victim's sister, Rita (Sara Serraiocco), a beautiful blind girl. Instead, Salvo takes her to an abandoned building where he holds her captive, treating her gently until his boss shows up to demand that he get rid of the inconvenient witness. *Salvo* does a good job of depicting the title character's empty life—he rents a dreary room from a couple who fret over his failure to eat enough—but is less successful in bringing much depth to Rita (whose sudden recovery of at least partial sight at a crucial moment breaks the realistic mood). Nonetheless, *Salvo* exudes a strong



sense of place and a menacing atmosphere as it generates considerable suspense, especially in the final stretch. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Sex (ed): The Movie ★★½
First Run, 76 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

This brisk, illuminating, and frequently entertaining documentary offers a historical overview of the "official" and "unofficial" channels for teaching and learning about sex in America over the last 100 years. Looking at different eras during the 20th century as well as more recent history, *Sex (ed)* digs deep into film archives, noting that movies have always been a primary source of information—or, more often, propaganda—concerning sexual anatomy, behavior, morals, diseases, and attitudes. While sex education curricula has varied wildly depending on locale and time, films have run the gamut from illustrating basic biology, to warning servicemen about venereal disease (while also strongly suggesting that women are unclean and untrustworthy), to teaching safe sex rituals in the age of AIDS. Some of the old footage is truly fascinating, including clips from great American filmmaker John Ford's World War II-era *Sex Hygiene* and the Disney studio's typically magical, hand-drawn animation films about female reproductive organs. Jumping into the 1950s and '60s, government-sponsored sex-ed movies often looked like mainstream drive-in fare, featuring sex-crazed young people with too much freedom (especially after the arrival of birth-control pills). The '70s and '80s brought their own zeitgeist to the sex film genre, with a later tilt toward safe sex themes. The last part of *Sex (ed)* addresses the contemporary Internet era, a time when the easy availability of pornography online is yet again reshaping sexual consciousness. Serving up a fascinating and enjoyable history of sex education, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

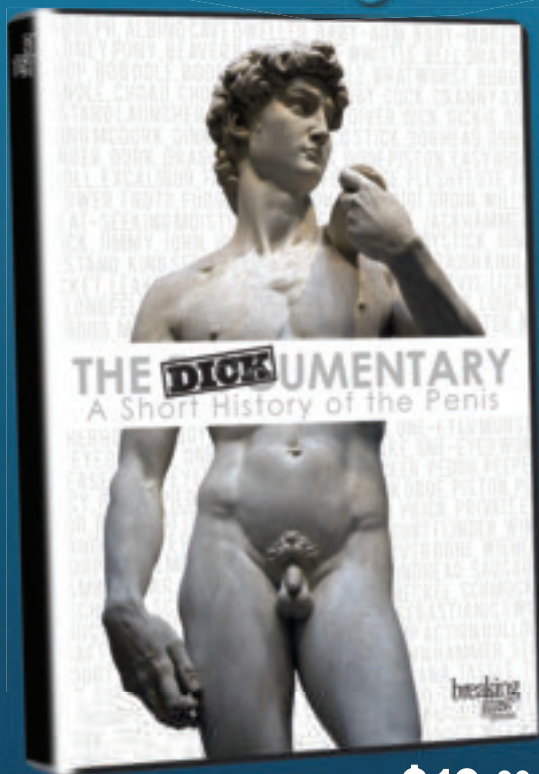


St. Vincent ★★★
Anchor Bay, 102 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.99

Bill Murray stars as Vincent, a crusty curmudgeon who lives with his Persian cat Felix in a rundown house in Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn. When Maggie (Melissa McCarthy), a newly separated mother, moves in next door, the moving van knocks down a tree branch that crashes into Vincent's ancient Chrysler convertible—making him furious. Maggie is a harried nurse/technician who works long hours at the hospital, so her politely precocious 12-year-old son, Oliver (Jaeden Lieberher), winds up spend-



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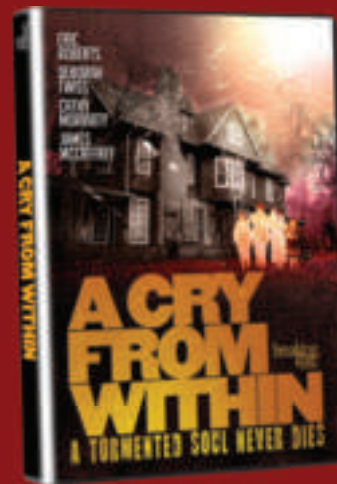
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Cult favorite THE PET is a shocking dramatization, based on actual events, by director D. Stevens. A young woman who, in an emotional and financial crisis, succumbs to the charm of an aristocratic benefactor. She agrees for a considerable sum of money to become his human pet, to sleep in a cage, never wear clothes, and to be led on a leash for a period of six-months.

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MARCH 17TH
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After a devastating miscarriage, a family trades their city lifestyle for a quiet life in the country. Jonathan (Eric Roberts), Cecile (Deborah Twiss) and their two children Ariel and Morgan soon find themselves at the mercy of a terrifying and violent manifestation that Ariel identifies as a young boy named Sebastian.

STARRING:
ERIC ROBERTS, DEBORAH TWISS,
JAMES MCCAFFREY, AND
LEGENDARY ACTRESS
CATHY MORIARTY

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ing his after-school hours with unkempt, foul-mouthed Vincent, who demands to be paid as his bracingly unorthodox babysitter. Vincent's weekly routine revolves around sessions with a pregnant Russian stripper/prostitute (Naomi Watts), who charges by the hour, and visiting his Alzheimer's-stricken wife (Donna Mitchell) at the swanky nursing home he can no longer afford. Otherwise, Vincent is busy drinking at a local bar or betting on the races at Belmont Park, where he dodges a bookie (Terrence Howard) to whom he owes a bundle. Wherever world-weary Vincent goes, Oliver tags along, learning life lessons from a man that Oliver comes to see as embodying an observation by his Catholic school teacher (Chris O'Dowd): namely, that potential saints are among us, if only we look hard enough. Adroitly avoiding schmaltz, writer-director Theodore Melfi's *St. Vincent* is an enjoyable, slyly subversive comedy. Recommended. (S. Granger)

The Strange Little Cat

★★★
KimStim, 72 min., in German
w/English subtitles, not rated,
DVD: \$29.99



Ramon Zürcher was a student at the film school founded by esteemed director Béla Tarr when he made this offbeat debut feature, which is set almost entirely in a small middle-class apartment in Berlin. The narrative, such as it is, is filled with the odd quirks, personality traits, and daily details of life in the apartment as two grown children come back to visit and the family prepares for guests who are coming to celebrate the reunion. Despite the title, the cat is actually the least strange thing in the movie, which features a little sister (Mia Kasalo) who gleefully screams at the top of her lungs every time the blender is turned on, a mother (Jenny Schily) who seems to be off in her own world, an unseen upstairs neighbor who lowers a pail past their window to get groceries, and siblings who fall into old patterns with jokes that make no sense to the viewer. Characters enter and exit, stopping to swap stories that are both mundane and weird in this engaging film that is decidedly more art house than mainstream traditional fare. A celebration of the strange magic of everyday existence and the bizarre dimensions of human behavior that make families at once unique and alike, *The Strange Little Cat* is refreshingly playful and affectionate rather than satirical or critical. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Tale of the Princess Kaguya ★★★

Universal, 138 min., PG, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98;
Blu-ray/DVD Combo: 3 discs, \$34.98

Visually ravishing, Studio Ghibli co-founder Isao Takahata's Oscar-nominated animated adaptation of a 10th-century Japanese folk tale

centers on Kaguya (voiced by Chloë Grace Moretz), princess of the Moon, who descends to Earth as a tiny, doll-like urchin, and is discovered in a bamboo stalk by an elderly woodsman (James Caan) who, along with his wife (Mary Steenburgen), raises the foundling. Kaguya undergoes sudden, inexplicable growth spurts, while still playing blissfully with an infatuated young huntsman (Darren Criss). But when Kaguya's adoptive father discovers another stalk containing gold and silken garments, he concludes that heaven intended his daughter to be treated as a princess. So the family moves to the capital, where news of her beauty attracts suitors of the highest class—whom Kaguya puts off by assigning them to seemingly impossible tasks—and matters turn darker when the emperor himself desires her. The tale offers many lessons regarding the pressure children feel to conform to parental expectations and social conventions, the cruel effect of societal categorization and gross materialism, and the ultimate impossibility of bridging the chasms between different worlds. But the film also captures the way human existence passes from milestone to milestone, as perceived by an outsider who cannot quite experience it all herself. Sporting luscious visuals with a luminously glowing watercolor effect, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)



The Theory of Everything

★★★★
Universal, 124 min., PG-13,
DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD
Combo: \$34.98



Oscar nominee Eddie Redmayne stars as renowned astrophysicist Stephen Hawking in this poignant, revelatory biopic. Hawking's story begins in 1963 at Cambridge University, where he falls in love with Jane Wilde (Felicity Jones). Diagnosed with ALS (aka Lou Gehrig's disease) at the age of 21, the frustrated yet fiercely independent Hawking continues his cosmology studies, encouraged by his mentor (David Thewlis). Hawking's fame increases with the publication of *A Brief History of Time*, detailing his groundbreaking theories. Although Stephen and Jane had three children, they drift apart emotionally and Jane takes up with a choirmaster (Charlie Cox), while Stephen subsequently marries one of his nurses (Maxine Peake). Adapting Jane Hawking's memoir *Travelling to Infinity: My Life with Stephen*, director James Marsh's Best Picture-nominated film reveals the complicated, sensitive man behind the genius IQ, using Hawking's own speech synthesizer to replicate his iconic voice. It's astonishing how Redmayne is able to communicate Hawking's emotions by mirroring the expressive, often mischie-

vous movements of his eyes and eyebrows. Redmayne has already received his highest compliment from now 73-year-old Hawking, who called this extraordinary and inspirational film "broadly true," adding that there were certain points where he thought he was watching himself. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. (S. Granger)

To Kill a Man ★★★

Film Movement, 82 min., in
Spanish w/English subtitles, not
rated, DVD: \$24.95



No ordinary vigilante-bent-on-revenge movie, this somber Chilean drama follows the slow transition of passive, low-key family man Jorge (Daniel Candia) into a desperate killer. At home in a dangerous neighborhood plagued by street thugs, Jorge's world is forever altered when his son is shot by local bully Kalule (Daniel Antivilo). Kalule serves a brief sentence and then returns to harass Jorge, threaten his wife, and sexually assault his school-age daughter. As Alfred Hitchcock observed in his thriller *Torn Curtain*, killing a man is a difficult task, and Jorge's efforts to eliminate Kalule and deal with his remains becomes an all-consuming preoccupation. Writer-director Alejandro Fernandez Almendras has made a taut tale of crime and tragedy, yet he ingeniously keeps the main action at a certain emotional distance, focusing instead on the rhythms of ordinary life: going to work, watching television, and checking blood sugar levels (Jorge is diabetic). The emphasis on such prosaic moments keeps Jorge's murderous actions from looking simply like the righteous deeds of a protective father or even a moral failure; instead, Jorge's experience suggests an unhappy inevitability as he becomes caught up in a destiny that can't be controlled. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Top Five ★★1/2

Paramount, 102 min., R, DVD:
\$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo:
\$39.99, Mar. 17



Chris Rock offers a glimpse of what life is like in the celebrity bubble, here playing comedian-turned-actor Andre Allen, who agrees to a day-long interview with *New York Times* journalist Chelsea Brown (Rosario Dawson). Standup comic Allen's fame and fortune derive from a starring role in a fictional trilogy of dumb *Hammy the Bear* movies, where he played a policeman's ursine partner. A recovering alcoholic, Allen has embarked on two midlife endeavors. Determined to be recognized as a serious artist, his new film is the historical drama *Uprize!* about a 1791 Haitian slave rebellion, and he's celebrating his upcoming wedding to beautiful Erica Long (Gabrielle Union), a shallow reality-TV star. As Andre

and Chelsea walk-and-talk, they learn a great deal about each other, particularly when they encounter Allen's dad (Ben Vereen) in the neighborhood where he grew up. All of this is punctuated by hilarious cameos from Kevin Hart, JB Smoove, Tracy Morgan, Whoopi Goldberg, Adam Sandler, Jerry Seinfeld, and Cedric the Entertainer. Writer-director Rock's *Top Five* is an ambitious film full of revealing observations about a black man working in a predominantly white business. Obviously influenced by Woody Allen—there are nods here to *Annie Hall* and *Stardust Memories*—the humor nevertheless sometimes feels superficially sketch-like. Recommended. (S. Granger)

The Two Faces of January ★★★

Magnolia, 97 min., PG-13, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Screenwriter-turned-director Hossein Amini here adapts Patricia Highsmith's 1964 thriller, centering on three Americans who become hopelessly entangled in Europe. In 1962, photogenic couple Chester (Viggo Mortensen) and Colette MacFarland (Kirsten Dunst) are visiting Athens, where they meet fellow American tour guide Rydal (Oscar Issac), whom they hire. Rydal, who speaks Greek, has been seeing a young tourist (Daisy Bevan), but he has eyes for Colette, who seems equally interested. Much like Highsmith's infamous Ripley character, Rydal's attractive appearance disguises threadbare finances and petty schemes. Just as the MacFarlands are preparing to leave the country, Chester scuffles with a detective and leaves him near death. Rydal helps him to move the body, secure fake passports, and make a speedy exit. As the three travel through Crete, Rydal and Colette grow closer, while Chester becomes increasingly jealous and belligerent, leading him to threaten Rydal with exposure as an accomplice. An atmospheric psychological thriller with a charismatic cast and evocative location filming, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)



Two Mothers ★★★1/2

TLA Releasing, 75 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99

When Katja (Sabine Wolf) and Isabella (Karina Plachetka), a married lesbian German couple in their late 30s, decide to start a family they quickly discover that government, nature, and a profit-driven fertility industry are all working against them. While gay marriage is legal, the right to receive service at a sperm bank is not universally recognized, and private contracts with individual doctors involve financial criteria that Katja and Isabella cannot meet (and



which straight couples don't have to worry about). Out-of-pocket costs for insemination treatments not covered by insurance are hefty, and the chances of getting pregnant are low. As the months pass and the bills pile up, Katja and Isabella turn to semi-hucksters and sketchy donors in a desperate bid to succeed—but at great personal cost. Writer-director Anne Zohra Berrached and her two leads do a remarkable job of tracing the gradual emotional disintegration between a couple in love but undone by a challenging goal. Presenting an intimate and powerful study of human behavior under duress, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Unbroken ★★★1/2

Universal, 138 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98, Mar. 24

Adapted from Laura Hillenbrand's 2010 bestseller, this epic survival story follows Olympian and WWII war hero Louis "Louie" Zamperini (Jack O'Connell), beginning with Zamperini's bomber crashing into the Pacific Ocean. He and two other survivors spend 47 days adrift before they are rescued by the Japanese and sent to POW camps, where cocky, grimly determined Zamperini is singled out for relentlessly brutal torture by cruel imperious camp commander Mutsuhiro Watanabe (Takamasa Ishihara, aka singer Miyavi), who wields a bamboo cane. Scattered throughout are flashbacks to Louie's rough childhood and rebellious youth as a high school, college, and Olympic runner. Joel and Ethan Coen adapted Hillenbrand's book, working with director-producer Angelina Jolie, who also enlisted the Coens' cinematographer, Roger Deakins, and French composer Alexandre Desplat (Oscar-nominated for this score). The solemn weight of this vivid (if overly long) drama rests directly on O'Connell, who convincingly embodies Zamperini's indomitable integrity. Also featuring Garrett Hedlund, Domhnall Gleeson, and Finn Wittrock as Zamperini's courageous cohorts, this story had one of the longest gestation periods in Hollywood history, taking 57 years to bring to the screen (along the way, various actors including Tony Curtis and Nicolas Cage were attached to the lead role). A powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit, this is highly recommended. (S. Granger)



The Way He Looks ★★★

Strand, 96 min., in Portuguese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Blu-ray: \$32.99, Mar. 17

A low-key story of first love, this Brazilian film centers on a blind adolescent named Leonardo (Ghilherme Lobo), whose narrow existence



under the watchful eyes of overprotective parents and a longtime best friend, Giovana (Tess Amorim), is shaken by his emerging interest in independence. Seizing on the idea of becoming an exchange student traveling abroad, Leonardo's sudden restlessness is enhanced by a new relationship with Gabriel (Fabio Audi). Although the boys remain chaste and only talk about girls, an energy develops between them that looks like a tentative romance. Writer-director Daniel Ribeiro doesn't make that angle any more important than others in this tender tale, which is really about the disruption in Leonardo's life once the status quo of dependence on his family and Giovana (who is secretly in love with him) no longer feels like enough. Ribeiro deftly captures the familiar rhythms of a teenager's life, suspended somewhere between pushing boundaries and clutching for security in this film that features winning performances by the three young leads. Brazil's official entry for the 2014 Oscars, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Ways to Live Forever ★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 99 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95

Filmmaker Gustavo Ron's film adaptation of Sally Nicholls's acclaimed 2008 novel centers on a painful subject—a child facing terminal illness. Sam (Robbie Kay) is a 12-year-old English lad with leukemia who knows he will not live to see adulthood. Thanks to the efforts of his extremely supportive best friend (Alex Etel) and the patience of his parents (Ben Chaplin and Emilia Fox), Sam is still able to enjoy as much out of life as he can. At the suggestion of his tutor (Greta Scacchi), Sam begins to produce a video journal that details his life while also presenting hard questions that do not have easy answers. While some of Sam's endeavors seem perfectly in sync with how children really behave—especially his fascination with UFOs and giddy joy in being able to take his first airplane ride—other aspects of Sam's video diary inevitably stray into territory that sounds less like your typical 12-year-old and more like the words of a writer trying to make a family-friendly film about a difficult issue. Still, while *Ways to Live Forever* occasionally feels like a disease-of-the-week TV movie, it nonetheless derives abundant energy from the honest and sincere performance by Kay as the child who cannot fully understand why he will not live to become an adult. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)



Why Don't You Play in Hell? ★★1/2

Cinedigm, 129 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.95

This wildly energetic and outrageously violent comedy about turning a yakuza mob war into a movie spectacle will certainly not be

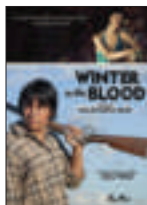
for all tastes. The plot is pure fantasy: a mad collision of gang war, teen runaway tale, revenge movie, star-crossed romance, wrong man nightmare, and movie club dream come true. The characters, who have a cartoonish quality, include the dubiously-talented but enthusiastic film club members who are devoted to making "the movie of a lifetime"; mob boss Muto (Jun Kunimura), who is determined to make his daughter, Michiko (Fumi Nikaido), a movie star; and rival gangster Jun (Shinichi Tsutsumi), who is infatuated with Michiko—a spoiled, reckless girl who takes pity on an innocent guy her father wants to make into an example. All are driven by obsession and emotion, which is why the gang leaders agree to dress their yakuza soldiers as samurais and fight it out with swords while a young director films it all with multiple cameras—giggling with delight as they cut one another to pieces. Writer-director Sion Sono stirs in some hearty dark humor as the blood spurts in geysers and the limbs fly (at one point a Bruce Lee knock-off in a *Game of Death* yellow tracksuit is seen swinging a sword and windmilling his nunchucks). A pure midnight movie celebrating and satirizing the love of film, this over-the-top effort will likely appeal to fans of Quentin Tarantino and Japanese genre movies. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Winter in the Blood

★★★
Kino Lorber, 98 min., not rated,
DVD: \$29.95

The opening shots of Alex and Andrew Smith's *Winter in the Blood* offer a pretty credible impression of a Western by Clint Eastwood, with wide-angle wintry stark imagery of a ranch, cutting to a cowboy and his horse, half-draped in shadow. And then the ugly truth kicks in: it's all just a dream in the hung-over brain of Virgil First Raise (Chaske Spencer), who awakens in a ditch. The young Native American anti-hero at the center of this feverish tale, based on a seminal 1974 novel by the late James Welch, is about to embark on another day of boozing, violence, and random visions. The line between reality and hallucination is blurred both for Virgil and the viewer in this audacious, funny, and often tender film. Spencer, best known from the *Twilight* series, delivers a brutally honest performance as the dissolute Virgil, a drunk whose wife (Julia Jones) has run off with his keepsake rifle while he is left to stumble through the days at home and his visits to the seedier side of a small Montana town. The Smith brothers don't distinguish between the real and surreal—or even the past and present. Virgil, carrying lingering grief over family deaths, as well



as the pain of an identity crisis, just spins through his memories, fantasies, and bizarre adventures (some featuring a crazy con man, played by David Morse). A fine supporting cast—including Gary Farmer, Dana Wheeler-Nicholson, Saginaw Grant, and Richard Ray Whitman—join Virgil on his jumbled vision quest, a journey to knowledge through the back alleys of a nightmare. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

Wrestling With Satan

★★★★1/2
MVD, 78 min., not rated,
DVD: \$14.95

Can a Christian find salvation with the help of XL-sized men in tights who pummel each other with folding chairs? That is the premise behind the Christian Wrestling Federation, a Texas-based ministry/sports entertainment operation that offers independent professional wrestling bouts punctuated with evangelical Christian sermons by the grapplers in the ring. This fascinating documentary by Paul Aldridge and Tom Borden follows the federation from 2000 through 2006, detailing a number of serene high points (most notably the gathering of an exuberant lineup of wrestlers) and some harrowing low points (including repeated obstacles in financing the endeavor, and personality conflicts that split federation founder Rob Vaughn from several of his most popular athletes). While Vaughn and his team are on somewhat shaky theological ground when it comes to using biblical passages to justify spiritual wrestling, it's hard not to be impressed with the distinctive character and unmistakable sincerity of their proselytizing efforts. And to its credit, this wrestling league has none of the vulgarity that has marred Vince McMahon's WWE extravaganzas for many years. Ultimately, the real power and glory here belongs to the wrestlers, who are some of the most charismatic and talented athletes in the under-the-radar world of independent wrestling. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)



The Zigzag Kid

★★★★1/2
Menemsha, 95 min., in
English, French & Dutch
w/English subtitles, not rated,
DVD: \$29.95

Based on the 1994 YA novel by David Grossman, filmmaker Vincent Bal's *The Zigzag Kid* is a fine example of cosmopolitan, magical-realist children's entertainment that avoids condescension. The titular character is Amnon "Nono" Feiberger (Thomas Simon), the 12-year-old son of a widowed, famously tough Benelux police inspector (amusing pseudo-TV-cop-show imagery is used as a funny stylistic gimmick here). When Nono's active imagination



lands him in trouble one too many times, he is ostensibly sent off to a disciplinarian uncle, but a last-minute note reroutes him to a very different mentor—dad's old nemesis: Riviera jewel thief and international master-of-disguise Felix Glick (Burghart Klausner). Felix trains Nono in techniques of criminal mischief so that he can be a great lawman like his dad, but there is also a secret agenda: namely, to enlighten the boy (on the eve of his Bar Mitzvah) about his late mother and true heritage. Bal's fleet directorial touch and a fine cast (including Isabella Rossellini) make this smart coming-of-age tale a winner. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Classic Films

4 Adventures of Reinette and Mirabelle ★★★

KimStim, 99 min., in French
w/English subtitles, not rated,
DVD: \$29.99

Eric Rohmer's slight but sweet 1987 comedy centers on two young women—self-assured rural lass Reinette (Joëlle Miquel) and sophisticated, easygoing city gal Mirabelle (Jessica Forde)—who meet by chance in the country and become roommates after Mirabelle offers to share her Paris apartment so that aspiring painter Reinette can study art. As the title suggests, the story consists of four separate episodes that play more like a series of sketches than a feature film. Rohmer shot this on 16mm during a break from making *Summer* (one of his greatest films), with the two unknown actresses largely improvising the dialogue around situations (dealing with a rude waiter or panhandlers on the street) in which their different approaches to life are contrasted and debated—especially debated, since Rohmer's films are mainly about talk, although behind the discussions of morality and philosophy lie revelations about character and personality. Compared to the *Comedies and Proverbs* series that Rohmer was filming at the time, this is more of a comic lark with a lighthearted air, but that only helps underscore its carefree unassuming charm. Extras include an interview with Forde. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Adua and Her Friends

★★★
Rare, 129 min., in Italian w/
English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.95

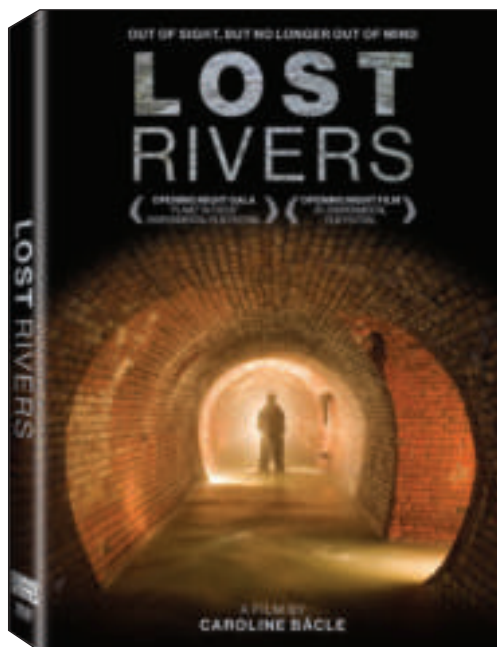
Simone Signoret stars as Adua, a veteran prostitute who tries to take charge of her life after her brothel is shut down in the aftermath of Italy's Merlin Law, which ended legalized prostitution in 1958. Adua's friends (Emmanuelle Riva, Sandra Milo, and Gina Rovere) pitch in as partners in a restaurant—meant to be a



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front for their own bordello upstairs—which enjoys unexpected success, offering hope for something better. Marcello Mastroianni costars as Piero Salvagni, a charming hustler who hawks cars and woos Adua, but the focus is on the female foursome as they develop camaraderie through a shared effort. Director Antonio Pietrangeli offers a mix of warm character study and spiky social commentary, clearly empathizing with the women as he explores sexual double standards and cultural chauvinism. Made in 1960, the film is frank about their work and their lives, underscoring how the Merlin Law actually made things worse for sex workers, whether they remained prostitutes (with no legal protection) or attempted to transition into another career. There are no happy-ending fantasies here for Adua and her friends, but they do have moments of triumph, solidarity, and defiance, offering hints of freedom in a daily existence that otherwise eludes dreams of self-determination. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include an introduction by Italian film historian Maurizio Poro, a short by Pietrangeli, and a booklet. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Appointment with Danger ★★

Olive, 89 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Alan Ladd is a different kind of P.I. in this 1951 crime drama: a postal inspector, who nevertheless has a hard-boiled private-eye attitude. Obsessive, jaundiced veteran investigator Al Goddard (Ladd) is flinty towards colleagues and witnesses alike but is knocked off balance when the only person who saw the murder of a colleague turns out to be a determined and courageous nun named Sister Augustine (a sunny and sweet Phyllis Calvert), who has an unshakable commitment to the case and to the truth. In a pre-*Dragnet* pairing, Jack Webb and Harry Morgan (using the name Henry Morgan) play partners in crime Joe Regas and George Soderquist, respectively, while Paul Stewart is cool-headed gang leader Earl Boettiger, who has masterminded a major heist involving the postal service. Director Lewis Allen doesn't exactly deliver film noir in this routine blend of urban crime, wise-guy crooks, and snappily cynical lines (although it does feature Webb as a sadistic killer!). Jan Sterling injects a little energy into the mix as Dodie, a jazz fan who plays her dance records for Al when he goes undercover, but this is otherwise quite generic, and Ladd's terse, cold, wound-up performance is a pale echo of his earlier hard-bitten roles in *This Gun for Hire* and *The Glass Key*. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

The Boys from Brazil ★★½

Shout! Factory, 125 min., R, Blu-ray: \$24.98

Based on the high-concept potboiler by

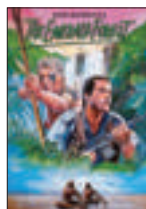
Ira Levin, this 1978 film is built around a neo-Nazi conspiracy, masterminded by the infamous Auschwitz physician Dr. Josef Mengele and carried out by a group of war criminals meeting secretly in Paraguay. A scenery-chewing Gregory Peck stars as Mengele, while Laurence Olivier hams it up in an Oscar-nominated role as Nazi hunter Ezra Lieberman, whose investigation into the mysterious deaths of dozens of aging civil servants in countries around the world leads to troubling discoveries involving surrogate mothers who are being secluded at a clinic in Brazil, where they produce strangely similar offspring. The final big revelation has long been known, and has made the film more notorious than famous. Director Franklin J. Schaffner, who previously helmed *Patton* and *Papillon*, here fails to generate excitement or create a credible thriller, and the leading men seem determined to overplay their roles, as if cueing the audience not to take any of it seriously. More curiosity than classic, *The Boys from Brazil* is a minor cult item with a stellar cast, which also includes James Mason, Lilli Palmer, Uta Hagen, Denholm Elliott, Rosemary Harris, and Bruno Ganz. Debuting on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



The Emerald Forest ★★★

Kino Lorber, 114 min., R, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

In this 1985 adventure film, director John Boorman explores the intersection of civilized and primitive cultures, as well as the roles of myth and ritual, and the notion of supernatural power in nature. Based on a true story, *The Emerald Forest* stars Powers Boothe as Bill Markham, an American engineer building a dam in the Amazon basin, whose 7-year-old son, Tommy, is "rescued" by a rainforest tribe and raised as one of their own. After searching for 10 years, Markham finds the boy (played as a young man by Charley Boorman, the director's son) fully assimilated and resistant to leaving, and he comes to understand the damage that Western civilization has done to the jungle habitat. Shot on location in Brazil and filled with lush primal imagery (ravishingly photographed by Philippe Rousselot), the narrative is equal parts vision quest, revisionist Western, and environmental statement. Boorman idealizes indigenous tribal life as being in total harmony with nature (although a rival clan displays more savagery), as father and son bond in epic experiences, shared rituals, and mystical moments. Remastered for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Jean de Florette / Manon of the Spring ★★★½

Shout! Factory, 2 discs, 233 min., in French w/English subtitles, PG, Blu-ray: \$34.99



French filmmaker Claude Berri enjoyed the greatest success of his estimable career with this two-part 1986 adaptation of Marcel Pagnol's titular novels spanning two generations. Gérard Depardieu is the title character in *Jean de Florette*, a hunchbacked city dweller who inherits a lovely piece of rural property that neighbors Cesar (Yves Montand), a weathered, childless old man, and his gnomish nephew, Ugolin (Daniel Auteuil), expected to buy cheap after the death of the original owner. Jean wants to give his wife and child a better life in the country, but Cesar and Ugolin block the spring on the land, forcing Jean to haul water from a faraway stream like a beast of burden, an effort that will eventually result in his death. *Manon of the Spring* opens 10 years later, with Emmanuelle Béart as Manon, Jean's grown daughter, who discovers the treachery that killed her father and plots her revenge. Set and filmed in the green hills of Provence, the narrative transforms from a tale of hope and possibility into a drama of pitiless retribution with a devastatingly tragic twist. Here, the villains are full, rounded personalities, and Berri reminds us that the villagers are almost as culpable due to their silence. One of the most beloved French imports to reach the U.S., this powerful double feature boasts vivid characters, heartbreaking performances, and a compelling story that is simply and elegantly told. Although the films were released individually in theaters, they were made together and meant to be viewed as a single work. Bowing on Blu-ray, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Kinoshita and World War II ★★★

Criterion, 5 discs, 412 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$69.95



The first five films by Japanese director Keisuke Kinoshita, collected here in this set from Criterion's Eclipse line of bare-bones releases (aside from liner notes), offer a rare glimpse into Japanese movies that were made during World War II—a time when filmmakers were required to promote the military effort. *Port of Flowers* (1943) centers on two con-men who try to bilk the inhabitants of a small island, until the declaration of war ignites their sense of patriotic duty. *Port of Flowers* is a relatively light and amiable film, conveying a warm sense of community and purpose, but the propaganda becomes more insistent in *The Living Magoroku* (1943), which promotes the need for agricultural production, and *Jubilation Street* (1944), which follows the inhabitants of a Tokyo

thoroughfare who are forced to relocate. Kinoshita's wartime productions culminate in *Army* (1944), which serves up nationalistic zeal with such blind fervor that it borders on political cartoon. Throughout these films, however, Kinoshita remains sensitive to the emotions of his characters, such as the fears and anxieties of a mother sending her son off to battle in *Army*, a tack that infuriated military censors, who forbade Kinoshita from making another picture until after the surrender. With *Morning for the Ozone Family* (1946), Kinoshita finally offers a scathing indictment of Japan's nationalism in an intimate story of a family torn apart by the conflict and a militaristic uncle whose hypocrisy is revealed in Japan's defeat. Some scenes are heavily damaged with wear, scratches, and missing frames, but it's a small miracle that these films survived at all. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Knack...and How to Get It ★★★

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

In Britain during the early 1960s, while "serious" directors were making socially aware "kitchen sink dramas," American-born Richard Lester was creating comedies inspired by the zany humor of the radio program *The Goon Show* and the freewheeling cinematic vocabulary of the French New Wave. Lester was fresh off the playful Beatles movie *A Hard Day's Night* when he directed this 1965 adaptation of Ann Jellicoe's play *The Knack*, applying the same acrobatic, tongue-in-cheek style for a satirical take on Swinging London and the sexual revolution. Michael Crawford stars as grade school teacher/landlord Colin, who turns to his ladies-man tenant, Tolen (Ray Brooks), for lessons in the ways of seduction. Rita Tushingham is Nancy, the free spirit Colin falls for—only to find Tolen moving in on his new crush. Crawford's underdog desperation—a mix of innocence and desire—makes him an appealingly nerdy hero, while Tushingham's kooky charm and bright comic delivery practically steal the film. Lester's offbeat sense of humor and zippy pace drive this goofy romance loaded with sight gags and non sequiturs, while John Barry's lovely score balances the manic energy with a tender romanticism. Despite all the talk of sex, *The Knack* is a delightfully innocent and sweet film. Long out of print but newly available again as part of MGM's manufactured-on-demand "Limited Edition Collection," this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Kung Fu Girl/Whiplash ★★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 207 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.98

Pei-Pei Cheng might be best known to-

day for her iconic role as the villainess in the Oscar-winning *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, but during the 1960s and '70s she was a heroic icon in Hong Kong's martial arts film world. This double-feature set offers a pair of entertaining films highlighting the star in her full-throttle glory. Directed by Wei Lo, 1973's *Kung Fu Girl* (also known as *Attack of the Kung Fu Girls*) finally receives its long-overdue U.S. premiere in its original uncut version, telling a wonderfully convoluted tale about Chinese villagers fighting off treacherous Japanese interlopers who are in search of missing jewels. The plot admittedly makes little sense, but the overheated kung fu choreography coupled with Cheng's dynamic presence as the combative daughter of one of the locals make this an endlessly diverting romp (look for a then-unknown Jackie Chan in a small role as a Japanese villain). Shan-Hsi Ting's *Whiplash* (1974), set in the early 20th century, finds Cheng singlehandedly forcing a gang of ruffians to help her look for her long-lost brother. While both movies lack the polish of contemporary *wuxia* epics, they nonetheless deliver a pure adrenaline rush, fueled by Cheng's vibrant performances as a leading lady/action heroine. Highly recommended. (P. Hall)

The Long Hair of Death

★★★1/2

Rare, 94 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

This minor classic of gothic horror from Italy stars British actress Barbara Steele—a genre icon—in a dual role. In the first scenes, she plays Helen, the daughter of a woman burned alive as a witch by the corrupt Baron Kurt Humboldt (George Ardisson), a man who also subsequently kills Helen. After Helen's innocent young stepsister, Lisabeth (Halina Zalewska), grows into a beauty and is forced to marry the scheming nobleman, Steele reappears as a spirit named Mary, acting on behalf of the slain mother to take revenge on the aristocrats. While this 1964 film is short on traditional horror set pieces (and plot), it boasts plenty of lovely imagery and ominous atmosphere. Director Antonio Margheriti's camera lingers on the gorgeous castle locations—secret passageways, crypts, and dungeons—as well as the mesmerizing Steele, whose scary beauty is delicate and vulnerable, yet also feral and fierce. *The Long Hair of Death* meanders more than it unnerves, but the finale is perfectly orchestrated, delivering deliciously cruel poetic justice that carries echoes of Mario Bava's *Black Sunday*. Remastered for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, the image features good detail but also some damage from the original print. Extras include bonus interviews, and a booklet.



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—Jean-Francois Rauger, Le Monde

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Likely to appeal to genre fans, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington ★★½

Sony, 129 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$19.99



Upon its initial release in the banner movie year of 1939 (which also saw *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*), Frank Capra's beloved Everyman classic was hailed by film critics and the general public alike, but also criticized by politicians and the news media for (cough, cough) presenting an unfavorable image of the Senate. After a senator dies, naïve Jefferson Smith (James Stewart), head of the Boy Rangers, winds up being conscripted into legislative service as the junior senator to fellow congressman Joseph Paine (Claude Rains), who is conspiring with cronies to get a bill passed that carries an unethical bit of pork for creating a dam on Willet Creek in Smith and Paine's home state. Paine encourages Smith to work on the latter's pet project—a bill to create a national boys' camp—unaware that Smith's intended site is that same Willet Creek. Stewart is at his boyish best here, wide-eyed in front of the Lincoln Memorial, but rising to the challenge when he's figuratively tarred and feathered by corrupt politicians—ultimately holding the Senate floor for hours during an impassioned filibuster in which he reminds his colleagues what democracy is all about. Based on Lewis R. Foster's unpublished novel *The Gentleman from Montana*, the film earned 11 Oscar nominations—including Best Picture, Director, and Actor (Stewart)—but only won for its screenplay. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include audio commentary by Frank Capra Jr., the feature-length 1997 documentary *Frank Capra's American Dream* (hosted by Ron Howard), and retrospective featurettes. A true American classic that continues to resonate in these sorry legislative times, this is highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

My Winnipeg ★★½

Criterion, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



This 2007 feature by Canadian filmmaker Guy Maddin—whose career has been spent making strange, surreal, absurdist films that look as if they could be lost movies from the past—serves up a tribute to his hometown presented as a documentary, but is actually a complete fiction, full of dubious facts concocted with a child's imagination. This city is “in the heart of the heart of the continent,” says Maddin (who also narrates), describing the locale solely in metaphors. His Winnipeg is a living thing—with underwater rivers serving as the veins that pump through the heart—that is home

to a population of sleepwalkers. Here, the ghosts of the past coexist with the living, the homeless reside on rooftops, and one terrible winter long ago, a herd of panicked horses were flash-frozen in a lake and transformed into a temporary ice sculpture park. Somewhere between nightmare and fairy tale, the black-and-white production offers an equally perverse autobiographical tale roiling with unresolved issues. Maddin, who coaxed long-retired B-movie siren Ann Savage (of the cult film *Detour*) to play the role of his mother in this strange and surreal remembrance, creates his own archival footage (to illustrate his “facts”), lending a ghostly, time-worn texture to the film that evokes silent cinema and home movies while also suggesting fading memories and half-remembered dreams. Extras include five bonus shorts by Maddin, four brief “cine-essays” on Winnipeg, a conversation between Maddin and art critic Robert Enright, a 2008 featurette on the film's theatrical showing in Winnipeg, and an essay by critic Wayne Koestenbaum. Likely to mainly appeal to Maddin's fans, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmayer)

The Night Porter ★★½

Criterion, 118 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



Liliana Cavani's daring 1974 drama about a former concentration camp officer who meets one of his victims—a woman he tormented and seduced during her imprisonment—was notorious in its day for its suggestion of sexual depravity and emotional bondage, as well as explicit nudity and hints of sadism. Dirk Bogarde plays Max, a one-time SS official guilty of heinous war crimes, a past that he has managed to keep hidden while he works as the night porter at a hotel in Vienna, circa 1957. Charlotte Rampling costars as Lucia, once his prisoner and teenage plaything during the war, who willingly resumes their sado-masochistic relationship. While it might sound like a Nazi exploitation film, Cavani uses the provocative story to explore the legacy of fascism, along with issues of power, abuse, guilt, and the emotional and mental damage borne by survivors of the Holocaust. A challenge for audiences of the time (some critics called it pornographic), *The Night Porter* remains controversial, but also features compelling and complicated performances from Bogarde and Rampling in an ominous portrait of war-related criminality that remains relevant today. Remastered in HD for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, extras include a new interview with Cavani, plus her 1965 documentary *Women of the Resistance*, which centers on female partisans who survived the German invasion of Italy. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

The Ninth Configuration

★★★½

Her's Tooth, 118 min., R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$29.95



William Peter Blatty's darkly comic 1979 psychodrama—adapted by the first-time director from his own novel *Twinkle, Twinkle “Killer” Kane*—is set in an anarchic mental hospital, established in a castle in the Pacific Northwest (the film was actually shot in Germany and Hungary) late in the Vietnam era to serve an alarming number of mentally unhinged military officers. Enigmatic Army psychiatrist Col. Vincent Kane (an excellent Stacy Keach) arrives to find an institution where the boundaries between doctors, guards, lunatics, and faking malingerers are imperceptible. Kane attempts to bring a fresh approach to therapy, particularly with rebel NASA astronaut Billy Cutshaw (Scott Wilson), who aborted a moon launch at the last minute out of existential dread. In this cult movie that feels like a DNA mix of *Catch-22* and *Shock Corridor*, Blatty stages funny, compelling, and alarming debates about science vs. religion, faith vs. cynicism, and good vs. evil—not to mention the difficulties inherent in trying to stage Shakespeare with dogs. Making its Blu-ray debut here, extras include an audio commentary by Blatty, an introduction by film critic Mark Kermode, and deleted scenes and outtakes. Highly recommended. (C. Cassady)

The Palm Beach Story

★★★★

Criterion, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95



The classic Hollywood romantic comedy doesn't get any better than this 1942 film made at the height of writer-director Preston Sturges's astounding career. Claudette Colbert stars as Gerry, a flirtatious pragmatist with a clear-eyed take on the realities of men, women, and sex, while Joel McCrea costars as her inventor husband, Tom, a would-be Horatio Alger with a sense of honor at odds with Gerry's willingness to leverage her sex appeal. When Gerry runs off, convinced that Tom will do better on his own, the latter endeavors to win her back, while eccentric millionaire J.D. Hackensacker (Rudy Vallee) also attempts to woo her, and J.D.'s cheerful man-hopping sister, Princess Centimillia (a sparkling Mary Astor) sets her sights on Tom. Sturges, a lover of slapstick comedy, was one of the wittiest writers of the era and a master of dialogue that defined character while also lobbing punch-lines like a tennis volley. Colbert's physical grace and laughing voice contrast sharply with McCrea's stiffness and deliberate manner, yet these opposites spark desire when they get up close. This cockeyed romantic odyssey also features some of the director's most inspired

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comic creations, from the Wienie King (an elderly eccentric with a romantic streak and a hearing problem) to the Ale and Quail Club (whose intoxicated antics unleash mayhem). Newly remastered for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, extras include video appreciations of Sturges by film historian James Harvey and actor Bill Hader, a World War II propaganda short written by Sturges, and a 1943 radio adaptation of the film. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. *Axmaker*)

The Picture of Dorian Gray ★★★1/2

Warner, 110 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$21.99



This elegant 1945 interpretation of Oscar Wilde's only novel remains the best adaptation, with Hurd Hatfield starring as Dorian Gray, a handsome, earnest young man who stops aging after having his portrait painted. George Sanders costars as Lord Henry Wotton, the hedonistic cynic who tempts Dorian to indulge in worldly pleasures. As Dorian becomes corrupted and cruel, the painting begins to change, manifesting his sins in visual form. Director Albert Lewin leaves the debauchery offscreen and only hints at the depths of Dorian's bad behavior, but otherwise is faithful to the source's story, themes, and language. Hatfield is an inexpressive actor but a very effective personification of hollow beauty, and the rest of the cast is strong, with Sanders delivering Wilde's sarcastic aphorisms with a cultured purr. Also featured are Angela Lansbury as Sibyl Vane, the beautiful young music hall singer who Dorian drives to suicide, and Donna Reed as Gladys Hallward, the adoring innocent and idealist who Dorian is fearful of destroying through his vice. The film's beautiful Oscar-winning black-and-white cinematography is briefly interrupted with a striking cinematic device used to great effect: a momentary shift to full color when the new portrait is first unveiled and again when Dorian's aged, diseased image is revealed, serving up a visual shock that only heightens the horror of the grotesque mutation. Bowing on Blu-ray, extras include an audio commentary with Lansbury and film historian Steve Haberman, and two archival Oscar-winning shorts. Highly recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

Pocketful of Miracles ★★

Kino Lorber, 136 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Frank Capra's last film—a remake of his 1930s comedy *Lady for a Day*—was a throwback to the big studio pictures of the postwar era that featured large casts, bright sets, and full-color splendor. By 1961,

however, Capra was an old-fashioned filmmaker, and his take on the cute shenanigans of Damon Runyon gangsters in a harmless New York City fantasy underworld felt out of place in a culture where even TV crime shows had a hard edge. Glenn Ford stars as Dave the Dude—a mob boss surrounded by eccentric criminals—who never seems to do anything illegal or dangerous himself but is under threat from a Chicago thug, while Bette Davis is his good luck charm, street peddler Apple Annie. The story turns on Dave's efforts to pass Annie off as a high-society lady to her daughter, Louise (Ann-Margret in her screen debut), who was schooled in Europe for most of her life and thinks her mother is rich—and is now returning to the States with her wealthy fiancé. The film suffers from a meandering script stuffed with too many characters and unnecessary detours, but features a roster of Hollywood pros in supporting roles (including Thomas Mitchell, Arthur O'Connell, Edward Everett Horton, Sheldon Leonard, and Jack Elam), as well as an Oscar-nominated performance from Peter Falk as Dave's lieutenant, Joy Boy. Although one of Capra's less accomplished films, this still may have nostalgic appeal for some. Optional. (S. *Axmaker*)

The Quatermass Xperiment ★★★

Kino Lorber, 82 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Before becoming a leader in the production of lurid horror movies, British studio Hammer Films made this fascinating and—for its day—rather sophisticated sci-fi thriller, adapted by screenwriter Richard Landau from BBC TV serials written by Nigel Kneale. *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) stars American actor Brian Donlevy as Professor Bernard Quatermass, a brusque and arrogant scientist who joins Scotland Yard's Inspector Lomax (Jack Warner) to unravel a mystery after the first manned flight into space crash-lands back on Earth with two astronauts inexplicably missing and the third in shock with a fungus-like growth on his arm. Richard Wordsworth is haunting as tormented survivor Victor Carroon, who is gaunt and silent as he transforms into a completely alien life-form that is poised to disperse its seeds across the city. The dialogue falls back on scientific bluster, but the story and concept were fresh and exciting at the time (this was the most ambitious British sci-fi film since 1936's *Things to Come*), and director Val Guest injects a moody gothic atmosphere, thanks to urban locations in London and shadowy nighttime shooting. This Blu-ray debut from Kino represents a major upgrade from the previous manufactured-on-demand DVD release from MGM. Extras include an audio commentary, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and an interview with filmmaker John Car-

penter. A fine presentation of a key genre film, this is recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

Rope of Sand ★★★

Olive, 104 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.95



This 1949 thriller with a noir sensibility, set in the unforgiving desert badlands and cutthroat diamond trade of South Africa, is notable for—among other things—reuniting *Casablanca* cast members Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, and Peter Lorre. Star billing, however, goes to Burt Lancaster, who plays Mike Davis, an American whose thoughts turn vengeful after an earlier trespassing incident on property owned by the Colonial Diamond Company—one that led to mistreatment at the hands of the sadistic head of security, police commandant Paul Vogel (Henreid in a striking about-face from his honorable *Casablanca* character). Returning to recover the hidden treasure that he found during his previous adventure, Davis is again subject to interrogation, but this time company exec Arthur Martingale (Rains) attempts to obtain information by way of seduction in the form of mercenary gold-digger and femme fatale Suzanne Renaud (French actress Corinne Calvet), who—it turns out—is also seeking to blackmail Martingale. Lorre turns up as a minor character named Toady, a perpetual drunk who befriends Davis. Director William Dieterle deftly sinks his teeth into the competitive game of double-crossing and betrayal in this engaging Hollywood adventure that is waiting to be rediscovered. Recommended. (S. *Axmaker*)

Sands of Iwo Jima ★★★

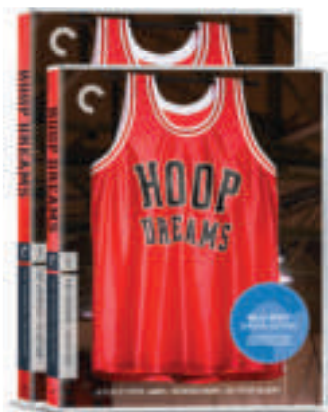
Olive, 109 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



John Wayne never fought in World War II, but he came to define Hollywood's ideal American soldier—relentless, unstoppable, and unfailingly patriotic. In 1949's *Sands of Iwo Jima*—inspired by the iconic photo of the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima that was featured on the cover of *Life* magazine—Wayne plays Sgt. John Stryker, who is tough and pitiless whether he is preparing recruits or leading men into battle. Stryker is despised by his troops for what they see as sadistic abuse, but of course it is precisely that training which ultimately keeps them alive and binds them as a fighting force. Working in a postwar environment, veteran director Allan Dwan was free to present a more complex portrait of men in combat. Audiences knew Wayne for his portrayals of uncomplicated heroes, so the shading here—including a drinking binge that leaves Stryker an angry, somewhat self-pitying drunk—was unexpected,



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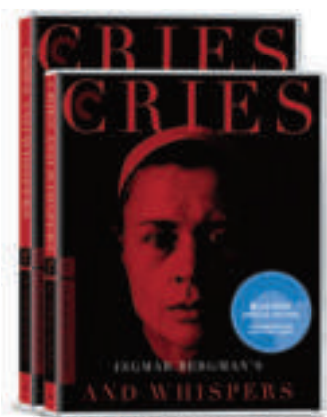
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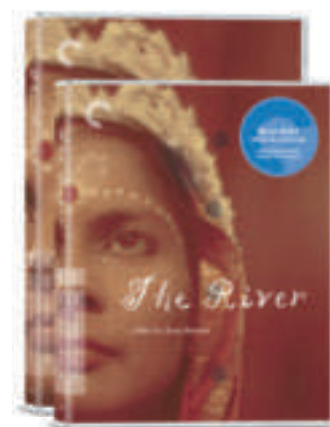
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revealing the character to be a vulnerable and damaged man who sacrificed almost everything for service to his country. In addition to Wayne (who here earned his first Academy Award nomination), *Sands of Iwo Jima* also features John Agar, Richard Jaeckel, and Forrest Tucker in supporting roles. Newly remastered for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, this is one of the most interesting World War II movies to come out of the classic Hollywood era. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

The Skin ★★★

Cohen, 142 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

Based on an autobiographical 1949 novel by Curzio Malaparte, filmmaker Liliana Cavani's 1981 film *The Skin* (*La Pelle* in Italian) is ostensibly a war drama that is set during the American liberation of Sicily from the Fascists, but it winds up really being more about the politics and economics of occupation. No military battle needs to be waged due to the German retreat, so the arriving Allies find themselves busy with public relations and local issues, on which they defer to Curzio Malaparte (Marcello Mastroianni), an aristocrat and former Fascist who has switched allegiance. Claudia Cardinale costars as Princess Consuelo, Malaparte's sexually autonomous companion (whose escapades involve various other partners), and Burt Lancaster is Gen. Mark Clark, the American commander struggling to play diplomat while staging the next leg of the Allied sweep through Italy. But the more interesting story here is about the civilians who are caught in the middle. Cavani takes viewers down the sordid streets, where the new occupiers naturally take advantage of displaced women whose only means of survival is prostitution, and into the heart of the Sicilian mafia as they negotiate a ransom for their kidnapped German POWs. Extras include audio commentary by film critics Wade Major and Andy Klein, and behind-the-scenes featurettes. Finding both the humor and the horror in the lives of people just trying to survive in difficult circumstances, *The Skin* offers an interesting Italian perspective on WWII. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)



The Story of Adèle H. ★★★

MGM, 98 min., PG, DVD: \$19.98

François Truffaut's 1975 dramatization of the true story of Adèle Hugo, daughter of French author-in-exile Victor Hugo, and her romantic obsession with a young French officer is a cinematically lovely and emotionally wrenching



portrait of a headstrong but unstable young woman. Isabelle Adjani stars as Adèle, who follows Lt. Pinson (Bruce Robinson) to Halifax, Nova Scotia, despite the fact that he has broken off their relationship. Sinking further into her own internal world, Adèle passes herself off as Pinson's wife and pours out her stormy emotions in a diary filled with delusional descriptions of her fantasy life. Beautifully shot by Nestor Almendros in vivid color, Truffaut's re-creation of 1860s life is accomplished not only with impressive sets and locations but also in the very style of the film, which features narration and voiceovers, written journal entries and letters, locations established with map reproductions, and a judicious use of stills. The result is a powerful, haunting portrait of obsessive love and madness. Long out-of-print but newly available again as part of MGM's manufactured-on-demand "Limited Edition Collection," *The Story of Adèle H.* is unfortunately not remastered and it sports the same non-anamorphic transfer as an earlier DVD release. Regardless, this is still recommended. (S. Axmayer)

A Tale of Winter

★★★★1/2

Big World, 114 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Apr. 14



This 1992 film—the second in French filmmaker Eric Rohmer's *Tales of the Four Seasons* cycle—is not quite the chilly story that its title would suggest. Félicie (Charlotte Véry) is a single mother who has two lovers but feels little passion for either—and Félicie knows passion. In the opening scene, Félicie frolics in youthful abandon with Charles (Frédéric van den Driessche), an American she falls for while on holiday. But a careless mistake—she gives him a wrong address, and doesn't have his—means that they will never reconnect despite her best efforts, although his presence continues to permeate her life as she raises their child. The sunny warmth of carefree youth and emotional ecstasy transmute into the cool colors of winter as Félicie tries to make the best of it by choosing one of her paramours, but—in the tradition of willful Rohmer women—finds it hard to settle for second best. Rohmer made a number of small, intimate films about the foibles of people in love—both young and not-so-young—with wit and understanding, and this remains one of his best. Félicie is a delightfully contradictory woman: headstrong, petulant, indecisive, and flighty, but dedicated to her search for true love, and actress Véry invests the character with a spark that shines even when Félicie is at her most exasperating—eventually leading to one of the most magical and compassionate endings in all of Rohmer's works. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Viva Maria! ★★★

Kino Lorber, 119 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Seen today at a considerable distance from the fashionable leftism of the 1960s, Louis Malle's 1965 comedy about revolution plays like a magical-realist fairy-tale farce, featuring visual gags that owe more to Chaplin and Keaton than Che and Fidel. *Viva Maria!* benefits from the pairing of sexy and charming leads Jeanne Moreau and Brigitte Bardot, who play daughters—both named Maria—of bomb-throwing fathers: Maria I (Bardot) is the offspring of an English anarchist, and Maria II (Moreau) hails from an Irish revolutionary (her non-Hibernian looks explained by a French mother). They come together in 1907 as showgirls in a multinational caravan circus touring the mythical South American country of Saint Miguel, where "Maria y Maria" becomes a sensation after they improvise/invent the striptease. Maria I, normally jaded when it comes to romance, falls for handsome political martyr Flores (Hollywood star George Hamilton), supporting his uprising against the local despot, and Maria II joins in, along with the other circus folk. Remastered for DVD and its Blu-ray debut, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Coming Soon

Doris Day, America's cinematic sweetheart during the 1950s and '60s, is showcased in Warner Bros. Home Entertainment's *Doris Day: The Essential Collection* (DVD: 15 discs, \$79.98), coming April 7. The set contains Day's blockbuster screen debut *Romance on the High Seas* (1948), as well as other Warner classics, including *My Dream is Yours* (1949), *On Moonlight Bay* (1951), *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* (1953), *Calamity Jane* (1953, with the Oscar-winning song "Secret Love"), and *Lucky Me* (1954). Also featured here: *It's a Great Feeling* (1949), *Tea for Two* (1950), *Lullaby of Broadway* (1951), *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955), *The Pajama Game* (1957), *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* (1960), *Billy Rose's Jumbo* (1962), and *The Glass Bottom Boat* (1966).



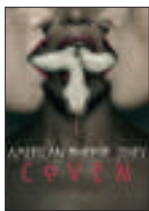
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American Horror Story: Coven ★★★

Fox, 594 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.99

After their first genre-bending outings in a haunted house and an insane asylum, *American Horror Story's* stock company of actors and writers take a bewitching turn towards New Orleans for a third season, where the sumptuous atmosphere pervades a creepy tale of an ancient society of witches that has been haunting the city since its earliest days. Jessica Lange stars as Fiona Goode, the elegant, modern-day coven queen who fears being dethroned by a younger, more powerful sorceress. She is joined by a terrific cast that includes Taissa Farmiga, Gabourey Sidibe, and Emma Roberts as Zoe, Queenie, and Madison, respectively—new students at Miss Robichaux's Academy (aka witch school). Following *AHS's* formula of shifting historical timelines within its anthology structure, the characters here pass through the narrative's chapters in increasingly inventive ways. Angela Bassett plays hairdresser/voodoo priestess Marie Laveau, who's been casting spells for centuries, while Kathy Bates is delightful as Delphine LaLaurie, an antebellum belle whose immortal evil has been felt through the ages. Sarah Paulson returns for another first-rate performance as Cordelia Foxx, Fiona's good-witch (sort of) daughter; and Frances Conroy shines as Myrtle Snow, a wacky enchantress on the coven's governing council. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2013–14 third season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (T. Fry)



The Americans: The Complete Second Season ★★★½

Fox, 4 discs, 585 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

Season two of the FX-aired series about deep-cover Soviet agents living as typical parents in early 1980s Washington, D.C., was heralded by many critics as one of the best shows of 2014. Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys play Soviet spies Elizabeth and Philip Jennings, raising two youngsters in suburbia by day while dutifully carrying out acts of espionage at night. This season focuses on their efforts to protect the kids from their work after fellow operatives are murdered—along with two of their three children—during an assignment. Elizabeth is also conflicted when her daughter starts attending church, although as a zealot for the Communist cause, the irony of Elizabeth's fear of religious indoctrination is not lost on viewers as she herself blindly serves a government that represses its citizens and jails dissidents in the name of the Soviet



ideal. Meanwhile, neighbor Stan (Noah Emmerich), an FBI agent on the trail of their network, becomes the victim of a beautiful Soviet double agent and is blackmailed into treason. The spy-TV tropes and low-tech tools brought to their assignments add suspense and tension, but the human element—love, resentment, suspicion, jealousy, and trust—is what makes *The Americans* compelling TV. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2014 second season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Banshee: The Complete Second Season ★★½

HBO, 4 discs, 511 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.99

This Cinemax-aired drama centering on career criminal Lucas Hood (Antony Starr)—who poses as a small-town sheriff while continuing his exploits as a thief—is pure small screen pulp fiction. Almost every episode features a heist or robbery, gritty action scenes with visceral violence, and plenty of nudity and sex. Our anti-hero teams up with his former lover and partner-in-crime, Carrie (Ivana Milicevic), now married with two children; deals with the son of the dead man whose identity he appropriated; and goes to war with local crime lord Kai Proctor (Ulrich Thomsen), a ruthless Amish outcast who teaches his rebellious niece his version of the family business. Tensions between the townsfolk, the Amish population, and the nearby Kinaho tribal members heat up after the murder of a young Native American girl and the disappearance of an Amish boy—a volatile situation that Sheriff Hood only makes worse with the ill-advised invasion of the reservation to question a suspect. While this standout narrative finds the series at its best—using a splashy killing to explore resentment in the community and bring antagonists together for a common mission—the rest of the show isn't always as compelling. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2014 second season, extras include audio commentaries, “prequel” webisodes, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and deleted scenes. Somewhat uneven, but also often clever, energetic, and entertaining, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



Black Sails: The Complete First Season ★★½

Anchor Bay, 3 discs, 456 min., not rated, DVD: \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.99

Cable channel Starz's pirate series is inspired by characters from Robert Louis Stevenson's



Treasure Island, but is set 20 years earlier. John Silver (Luke Arnold) is actually a supporting player here, a young ruffian who steals a vital piece of information related to a fortune in gold being secretly transported by a Spanish galleon, which Captain Flint (Toby Stephens) is busy pursuing, with little success. Flint has to deal with the British Navy, an impatient crew, rival ships, and politics on the sea and in the haven of New Providence, where cagey Eleanor Guthrie (Hannah New) runs the tavern and brothel while also fencing the brigands' booty. A few historical figures also show up, including Charles Vane (Zach McGowan) and Anne Bonny (Clara Paget). *Black Sails* has fun with the premise without tipping into comedy, making Flint a driven anti-hero who isn't above killing a friend or colleague to further his goal, but his chase for the treasure drags on, and other stories and characters tend to overshadow his quest. The series is shot in South Africa, which successfully stands in for the Caribbean, giving the show a sunny, exotic backdrop, while director Neil Marshall (who helmed some epic battle episodes in *Game of Thrones*) incorporates plenty of hard-edged action sequences and striking visuals (with the usual cable staples of sex, nudity, and explicit violence). Compiling all eight episodes from 2014, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

Dallas: The Complete Third Season ★★

Warner, 3 discs, 633 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

The original version of this Texas-based primetime soap opera lasted 14 seasons, but TNT's reboot managed to survive only three, for reasons that are obvious in this final set. Despite the presence of veteran regulars Patrick Duffy as goody-two-shoes Bobby Ewing and Linda Gray as alcoholic Sue Ellen (with Ken Kercheval making brief, sporadic appearances as Ewing nemesis Cliff Barnes), the show suffers mightily from the absence of Larry Hagman, who died midway through the second season; his cunning J.R. Ewing is sorely missed here. The attempt to replace J.R. with his equally underhanded son, John Ross (Josh Henderson), never really clicked, and the rest of the newcomers are pretty pallid as well. This year's overarching plot—involving a drug cartel's attempt to take control of Ewing Oil as a prelude to seizing the Mexican government—serves up skullduggery and double-crosses, but in the end comes across as awfully thin gruel. Since filming was completed before TNT's cancellation axe fell, moreover, the finale ends on a cliffhanger note. DVD extras include deleted scenes. Diehard *Dallas* fans will undoubtedly be interested, but this is an optional purchase otherwise. (F. Swietek)



Doctor Who: The Complete Eighth Series

★★★1/2

BBC, 586 min., not rated, DVD: 5 discs, \$79.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$89.98



Peter Capaldi takes over the role of The Doctor in the eighth season opener "Deep Breath," in which the transition from the title character's boyish incarnation (Matt Smith) to the new significantly-aged version is rough on both the Doctor and his companion, Clara (Jenna Coleman). This extended segment drops viewers into Victorian London, where the pair face a dinosaur and a rash of spontaneous combustions, and they meet old allies: high-society lizard-woman agent Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh), and her loyal soldier, Strax (Dan Starkey). The rest of the set charts the evolution of the new dynamic as the Doctor and Clara come to terms with their sudden age discrepancy, meet Robin Hood, shrink down to deal with a supposedly "good" Dalek (Nicholas Pegg), take on a mummy, and cope with Clara getting a boyfriend (Samuel Anderson), whose fate takes Clara and the Doctor on a unique journey. Series showrunner Steven Moffat tosses in assorted end-of-the-universe situations, while also introducing a newcomer to the Whoniverse: Missy (Michelle Gomez), whose obsessive interest in the Doctor is made clear in the season finale. Once a cult show, *Doctor Who* has in recent years found a much wider audience, thanks to witty scripts, colorful adventures, and character chemistry. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2014 eighth season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews, a post-premiere-episode audience Q&A, and a music video. Highly recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Dominion: Season One

★★

Universal, 2 discs, 379 min., not rated, DVD: \$44.98, Blu-ray: \$59.98



Yet another apocalyptic series airing on the Syfy channel, *Dominion* mixes biblical lore with science-fiction. Essentially a TV sequel to the 2010 film *Legion*, the show is set about 20 years after the angel Gabriel unleashed a war on humanity and archangel Michael turned his back on Heaven to protect humanity and the "chosen one." The savior has since grown into Alex Lannon (Christopher Egan), an earnest soldier in Vega, which is a future incarnation of Las Vegas as a walled city under military command. Various factions vie for power, while Gabriel (Carl Beukes) prepares his army for another assault. Gabriel and his fellow black-winged creatures look more like demons on Earth, but otherwise *Dominion* treads familiar territory:

Alex is in love with the daughter of Vega's ruler, but she is betrothed to the son of the city's most powerful man, and everyone here is driven by their own interests and alliances (despite the angels, this is hardly what you would call a religious series). TV veterans Anthony Head and Alan Dale are on hand as the two competing patriarchs, but none of the other cast members stand out, nor do their characters. *Dominion* is unlikely to offend believers, or impress many fantasy fans. Compiling all eight episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include an extended season finale on the Blu-ray edition. Optional. (S. Axmayer)

Downton Abbey: Season 5

★★★★

PBS, 3 discs, 525 min., DVD: \$49.99, Blu-ray: \$54.99



A hit Edwardian soap opera in Britain and a cult show for PBS fans drawn to British costume drama and aristocratic ritual, *Downton Abbey* eases into 1924 in its fifth season. The times they are a-changin'—a Labour government has been voted into power, so class mobility and education are overarching themes here—but change is slow. Lord Crawley (Hugh Bonneville) again represents the conservatives who see social adaptation as an affront to tradition, while Lady Mary (Michelle Dockery) unexpectedly takes a stand for sexual freedom when she daringly (and secretly) agrees to an un-chaperoned holiday with a marriage-proposing beau in order to, um, test their compatibility. Plenty of subplots are interwoven (sister Edith conspires to adopt the daughter she secretly had out of wedlock, and Mr. Bates is yet again suspected of murder), but this season's focus falls on bubbly cousin Rose (Lily James) and her marriage to the son of a Jewish businessman, which brings out bigotry on both sides of the family. *Downton Abbey* remains an elegant melodrama that addresses various issues (from birth control to political engagement) as old-world pillars are confronted with the demands of modernity. Compiling all nine episodes (seen here in the uncut British versions) from the 2014 fifth season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

Extant: The First Season

★★★

Paramount, 4 discs, 540 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.99, Blu-ray: \$69.99



Extant has a wonderfully ripe high concept premise; namely, something in outer space impregnates a beautiful astronaut. Halle Berry is sexy and sharp as Molly Woods, who introduces each segment by saying, "I went to space on a 13-month solo mission. I didn't come home alone." After being unable to

conceive a child, Molly's roboticist husband, John (Goran Visnjic), created a prototype android child named Ethan (the piercingly creepy Pierce Gagnon). Over the course of the first season, Molly faces her immaculate conception and the wild conspiracies surrounding it with a strong cast of friends and enemies who are either in on the mystery or struggling to figure it out. The story includes regular flashbacks to Molly's time beyond Earth's bounds and the events surrounding her supernatural encounter. After much cloak-and-dagger action involving government conspiracies, corporate greed, and family turmoil (of the human, robotic, and unearthly variety), Molly returns to orbit in the zingy season finale. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2014 debut season, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and a gag reel. Offering a fine blend of high-tech style and human melodrama, this is recommended. (T. Fry)

Game of Thrones: The Complete Fourth Season

★★★1/2

HBO, 545 min., TV-MA, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 7 discs, \$79.98



HBO's sprawling fantasy epic, faithfully adapted from George R.R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* fantasy series brings in more viewers every season, thanks to a smart and intricate storyline, a massive cast of vividly drawn characters, and beautiful location filming (the series is shot in Ireland, Iceland, Morocco, Malta, and Croatia). This fourth season of the show, which plays like an alternate reality take on Europe during the Middle Ages, features yet another shocking murder that changes the reins of power and puts Tyrion Lannister (Peter Dinklage in an Emmy-winning role) on trial for a killing (in which he's clearly been framed). The surviving Stark girls—court-trained princess Sansa (Sophie Turner) and scrappy young warrior Arya (Maisie Williams)—learn hard lessons here, while across the sea, barbarian queen and Mother of Dragons Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke) frees the slaves of the desert kingdoms on her march to retake the throne, but finds herself bogged down by the responsibilities of rule and justice. While not quite as exciting as past seasons—much of the story finds the characters simply trying to hold things together in crisis—the ninth episode does deliver a massive battle with literal giants attacking the Night's Watch, and Jon Snow (Kit Harington) leading the defense (while also facing the woman he betrayed). Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2014 fourth season, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, a roundtable discussion, deleted scenes, and a blooper reel (exclusive to the Blu-ray release are a pair of interactive features). A show loaded with sex,

nudity, gory violence, foul language, and exceptionally sophisticated storytelling, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Girls: The Complete Third Season ★★

HBO, 2 discs, 360 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$39.98, Blu-ray: \$49.99

While there are plenty of YA shows on TV, Lena Dunham's acclaimed HBO series centers on a much less explored demographic: single, aspiring, well-educated twentysomething women struggling to find their place in New York City. Dunham lets her four female characters be as self-absorbed, irritating, jealous, rude, sexually-obsessed, petty, and unrepentant as the young men routinely presented on TV and in movies, and her talent as a writer-producer-star has only grown. The third season finds Hannah (Dunham) addressing her mental health issues while also trying to sustain a relationship with Adam (Adam Driver), her underemployed actor boyfriend, and succeed in her writing career, which makes significant headway here. Meanwhile, Marnie (Allison Williams) obsesses over a bad breakup, Shoshanna (Zosia Mamet) prepares to graduate from college, and Jessa (Jemima Kirke) continues to manipulate and lie her way through life as the group's train-wreck of a friend—although it's hard to tell if these four are actually even friends anymore, given the way they treat one another. These girls are not necessarily likable, and not everyone will relate to them, but this often-cutting satire has developed a loyal audience. Compiling all 12 episodes from 2014, extras include audio commentaries and brief interviews with Dunham for each episode (exclusive to the Blu-ray release are a "making-of" featurette, deleted and extended scenes, a gag reel, and music videos). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Houdini ★★

Lionsgate, 2 discs, 150 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99

This lavish 2014 History Channel-aired biographical miniseries—directed by Uli Edel and written by ace screenwriter Nicholas Meyer—chronicles the life of illusionist Harry Houdini (1874-1926), the subject of earlier films starring Tony Curtis and Paul Michael Glaser. Here, wiry Adrien Brody takes on the role of the iconic escape artist who started out as the driven Ehrich Weiss, Wisconsin son of a struggling, unassimilated Hungarian rabbi. Renaming himself in honor of another popular magician, Harry took a shine to onstage prestidigitation (as did one of his brothers; the pair remained friendly competitors), slipping out of handcuffs, chains, straitjackets, and sealed



tanks as a real and metaphorical release from his limited, mundane existence. *Houdini* is based on the 1976 book *Houdini: A Mind in Chains—A Psychoanalytic Portrait* (written by Meyer's father, Bernard C. Meyer), although the Freudian overtones are mostly left out in favor of questionable Houdini assertions, such as his possible espionage work during overseas tours (debated by scholars), and the degree to which he was unfaithful to his wife/stage assistant, Bess (Kristen Connolly). The film also suggests that Houdini's odd Halloween death from a ruptured appendix arose in part from the magician's high-profile campaign against spirit-mediums and their fakery (David Calder here portrays Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—a believer—as a dazed cult convert). Along the way, some of Houdini's escape-trick secrets are revealed. Presenting both the original broadcast and an expanded 174-minute cut, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

House of Lies: The Third Season ★★½

Paramount, 2 discs, 329 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98

Showtime's decidedly adult-oriented satire of big-business consultants begins the third season with Marty (Don Cheadle) opening his own firm while his former colleagues head to competitors. Jeannie (Kristen Bell), who previously confessed her love to a panicked Marty, is miserable when an old foe takes over her company and vows to destroy her career, and Clyde (Ben Schwartz) finds working for Marty's volatile ex-wife, Monica (Dawn Olivieri), to be a trial. So it isn't long before the band is back together, conniving under Marty's proudly unscrupulous direction as he endeavors to expand a fashion line created by two hip-hop moguls (Mekhi Phifer and Tip "T.I." Harris). Although this is ostensibly a cynical look at American corporate culture and cutthroat schemes that skirt (or even cross the lines of) legalities, it is really more of a glossy soap opera with lead characters who are so competitive that they don't just collude for mutual gain, but they also actively sabotage one another. While often entertaining, *House of Lies* also tends towards the familiar while serving up unethical acts in an amoral environment, without attempting to broach more complex commentary. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2014 third season, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)



The Inspector and the Sea: Season 1 ★★

MHZ, 3 discs, 536 min., in German w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.95

Another solid international police procedural with character-driven mysteries, *The Inspector and the Sea* is based on a series of

popular books by Swedish author Mari Jungstedt. Her Anders Knutas novels center on a German police inspector who relocates to a village on the Swedish resort island of Gotland, his wife's homeland. Each of the six episodes from 2007 is a self-contained feature-length film carrying an evocative European aesthetic and boasting a strong ensemble of (mostly Swedish) actors. The hook has Anders (Walter Sittler) as an aquaphobic fish-out-of-water foreigner solving heinous mysteries in a lush, scenic location. While there does seem to be a disproportionately large number of major crimes for such a small town—murder, kidnapping, extortion, and so on—Anders is equal to the challenge, coming across as a laidback guy with a cozy, seemingly dysfunction-free home life. The locals naturally bristle at this outsider, especially when he butts his nose into the dark secrets hiding behind the colorful sun-swept seascapes, where the townsfolk and tourists indulge in base criminal instincts at their beach cottages and art galleries. [Note: *The Inspector and the Sea: Season 2* is also newly available.] Recommended. (T. Fry)



Inspector Lewis: Series 7 ★★

PBS, 2 discs, 270 min., DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99

The seventh season of this spin-off from *Inspector Morse* finds Detective Inspector Robert Lewis (Kevin Whately) technically retired, with his classically educated junior partner, James Hathaway (Laurence Fox), now promoted to DI and overseeing his own younger colleague, the smart and professional Detective Sergeant Lizzie Maddox (Angela Griffin). On the first case in his new role, Hathaway has trouble delegating or even sharing with Maddox, so Lewis is coaxed back as an advisor—much to Hathaway's frustration. The situation creates a sometimes rocky working relationship initially, and just when the trio finds its equilibrium and Maddox comes into her own, they're confronted with a controversial case that reaches back 13 years. A prisoner that Lewis put away for three murders challenges his conviction—when evidence is discredited or goes missing—and a new series of killings begins with the same *modus operandi*, putting Lewis on the defensive. *Inspector Lewis* exhibits the subdued style of British crime drama—heavy on procedure and intricately designed narratives, but light on action—and it boasts strong characters. Compiling three feature-length mysteries (seen here in the original, uncut British versions) that aired on PBS's *Masterpiece Mystery* in the U.S. in 2013, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



Justified: The Complete Fifth Season ★★

Sony, 3 discs, 607 min., not rated, DVD: \$55.99, Blu-ray: \$65.99



The penultimate season of this popular FX-aired crime drama—based on a short story (followed by a novel) by Elmore Leonard—finds maverick U.S. Marshall Raylan Givens (Timothy Olyphant) once again tangling with Kentucky's underworld culture, this time squaring off against a new criminal family. Michael Rapaport guest stars as Florida smuggler, poacher, and drug dealer Darryl Crowe, a backwoods would-be crime boss who decides to relocate to Kentucky and begin a new enterprise smuggling drugs from Mexico in partnership with Boyd Crowder (Walton Goggins), Raylan's longstanding frenemy. Family plays a central part in the series, and the Crowe clan has a complicated dynamic that makes Raylan even more committed to shutting them down and saving the youngest member from ending up dead or in jail. Meanwhile, Boyd is set on freeing his imprisoned lover and partner in crime, Ava (Joelle Carter). Other guest stars this season include Alicia Witt as Darryl's sister and legal counsel, Amy Smart as a social worker who starts dating Raylan, Danielle Panabaker as Ava's ally in prison, and Mary Steenburgen as a fixer who arrives to resolve the conflict between Boyd and the Chicago mob. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2014 fifth season, extras include audio commentaries, a "making-of" featurette, and deleted scenes. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Mork & Mindy: The Complete Series ★★

Paramount, 15 discs, 2,385 min., not rated, DVD: \$129.99



Robin Williams was a standup comedy sensation when he was cast as Mork from Ork, a fun-loving alien sent to Earth to observe human society in an episode of *Happy Days*—making an appearance that led to a full sitcom tailored to showcase Williams's antic style in the beloved role of the uninhibited Mork, playing opposite Pam Dawber's Mindy, a young woman who lets Mork live in her attic and helps him understand the often confusing ways of humans. Much of Williams's performance was improvised on the set, an offbeat approach that made the show a huge hit from the moment it launched. The supporting cast includes Conrad Janis as Mindy's father, joined later by Tom Poston as a morose neighbor, Jay Thomas and Gina Hecht as siblings running a local deli, and Robert Donner as the possibly schizophrenic Exidor—but they essentially serve as recurring characters in a show that stayed focused on the two stars. In the fourth and final set,

Mork marries Mindy, who gives birth to a child, which is born (or rather hatched) with a full-grown body but an infant's mind, and is played by Jonathan Winters—perhaps the only performer who could match Williams's comic energy. Compiling all 95 episodes from 1978–82, extras include the two episodes of *Happy Days* featuring Mork, and gag reels. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Mystery Science Theater 3000: XXXI—The Turkey Day Collection ★★

Shout! Factory, 4 discs, 480 min., DVD: \$64.99



This new collection of episodes from Comedy Central's *Mystery Science Theater 3000* uses a Thanksgiving theme (but only in the title) to showcase four more cinematic turkeys roasted by the show's cast. The movies heckled by Joel Hodgson (replaced by Mike Nelson after five seasons) and the bots on the "Satellite of Love" space station kick off with the 1948 B-movie adventure *Jungle Goddess*, directed by Lewis D. Collins and starring George Reeves as a pilot who sets out to rescue a millionaire's daughter—the sole survivor of an airplane crash, who's been living with an African tribe. Next up is the 1951 Lassie movie *The Painted Hills*, from filmmaker Harold F. Kress, a gold rush tale in which the intrepid canine seeks revenge after her master is murdered. Director Alex Nicol's 1958 ghost story *The Screaming Skull* stars John Hudson and Peggy Webber as a married couple haunted by the husband's deceased first wife. Finally, the 1976 killer-worm horror flick *Squirm*, helmed by Jeff Lieberman, features Don Scardino as a New Yorker who travels to Georgia to visit his girlfriend only to find himself in the midst of an invasion of man-eating crawlers. Extras include introductions by Hodgson, bonus shorts and featurettes, and an interview with Scardino. Likely to appeal to fans of *MST3K*, which continues to boast a minor cult following, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

The Nativity ★★

BBC, 113 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.98



The "greatest story ever told" returns in this 2010 BBC drama directed by Coky Giedroyc. The narrative begins as the carpenter Joseph (Andrew Buchan) and his teenaged wife, Mary (Tatiana Maslany), approach Bethlehem, to both pay their taxes and deliver their child. *The Nativity* then flashes back to their betrothal. Mary is a devout, pure, and "not scarred by the world" young woman when the couple's plans—which include building a house—are sidetracked by an unexpected visit from a heavenly host announcing that, despite her virginity, Mary

will give birth to the son of God. At first not believing Mary, but still concerned for her safety, Joseph embarks with her on the perilous journey to Bethlehem. Also present here are three wise men who have detected signs in the heavens that a Messiah will be born and decide to follow the star to pay tribute; the increasingly paranoid King Herod, who sees a threat to his reign from the infant Jesus; and a shepherd, who is sorely tested by money woes and a sickly wife. Director Giedroyc mostly sidesteps the sentimental, even building a bit of dramatic tension toward the conclusion, as the characters come together at the stable. A worthy and sincere retelling of one of the most famous stories in the Bible, this is recommended. (S. Rees)

Penance ★★

Music Box, 2 discs, 300 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Writer-director Kiyoshi Kurosawa, known for unsettling films such as *Cure* and *Tokyo Sonata*, brought his distinctive touch to TV with this five-part 2012 miniseries based on a novel by Kanae Minato. The episodic structure follows waves that ripple from a single disturbance—the murder of a schoolgirl who was lured away while playing with four friends. The dead girl's mother, Asako (Kyoko Koizumi), is furious with her daughter's playmates for being unable or unwilling to identify the perpetrator, condemning them all to perform proper penance for their conduct. Subsequent chapters show how each suffers the effects of what amounts to a mother's curse. One marries a frightening control freak, another becomes a disciplinarian teacher whose obsession with the early tragedy destroys her career, a third is confronted by her own brother's mistreatment of a young child, and the fourth seeks vengeance against her sister through a seduction of her brother-in-law. All are visited, as their lives collapse around them, by Asako and the ghost of their deceased friend. *Penance* is a subtly unnerving, thoroughly engrossing series that veers off in odd directions, consistently undercutting expectations. DVD extras include interviews with Kurosawa and cast members. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during March and April, including: *Boardwalk Empire: The Complete Fifth Season*, *Enlisted: The Complete First Season*, *A Horseman Riding By*, *The Nativity*, *Save Our Skins*, *Stingray: The Complete Series*, *The Strain: The Complete First Season*, *Under the Dome: Season 2*, 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

Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons: Complete Series ★★★

(2013) 4 discs. 832 min. DVD: \$29.95. Timeless Media Group (avail. from most distributors).

After the worldwide success of the kid-oriented action series *Thunderbirds* (1965-66)—a show created entirely with marionette puppets and lavishly-designed miniatures—Gerry and Sylvia Anderson crafted new gadgets, gear-ific fantasy vehicles, and "Supermarionation" puppets for the first (and still the greatest) paranoid conspiracy adventure series made for kids. *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons* begins with the first men to visit Mars panicking and opening fire on the Martian welcoming committee, after which the alien civilization naturally retracts the hand of friendship and instead declares war on all mankind. The Martians' insidious method of attack is to possess the bodies of the agents of the elite Spectrum defense team (all named after colors) and turn them into puppets (so to speak) controlled by the Mars race known as Mysterons. The blandly good-looking Captain Scarlet (the Cary Grant of the marionettes) is Spectrum's secret weapon, an early victim of the Mysterons who survived the attack and gained a super power. He is not technically indestructible, since he does come back to life after dying in the line of duty, but he's killed in practically every episode (which prompts the narrator to remind viewers that "Captain Scarlet is indestructible. You are not.

Remember this. Do not try to imitate him."). A cult show with limited mainstream awareness, this is a unique, inventive, and decidedly surreal kids' series that adults can also appreciate. Compiling all 32 episodes from 1967-68, extras include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and an interview with Gerry Anderson. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. *Axmaker*)

It's a Dog's Life ★★1/2

(2012) 8 min. DVD: \$129. DRA. National Film Board of Canada. PPR. Closed captioned.

Nicolas Bianco-Levrin and Julie Rembauville's line-art-animated short from the National Film Board of Canada is thematically reminiscent of Tim Burton's mini-classic *Family Dog*. In a bustling suburban household, it seems that everyone takes the resident pet bulldog for granted (or blames him). But the canine has a rich inner life and intellect, and while the family squabbles over money or engages in mundane drama at the dinner table, the dog is literally underfoot with the day's newspaper, attempting—unsuccessfully—to read a science article that has caught his eye. A bit of a one-joke affair, *It's a Dog's Life* is presented in both English and French versions on the disc. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (C. *Cassady*)

Julius Jr.: Snow Monkey Adventures ★★★

(2013) 66 min. DVD: \$16.98. Lionsgate Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

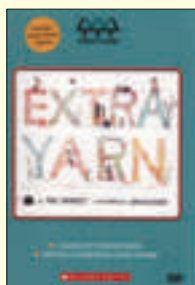
Based on characters created by cartoonist and fashion designer Paul Frank, this compilation from the Nick Jr.-aired animated series features six stories starring monkey Julius Jr. and friends. "Worry Bear's Collection" finds the gang (including giraffe, raccoon, and

panda pals) using MacGyver-like inventor Julius's sticker finder to help Worry Bear with his collection, although the obsessed WB winds up missing out on fun activities with the rest of the group (such as snowboarding with Icelaska-based yeti dude Shaka Brah). Including "Rocket Roller Skates," "No Snow Mo," and "Make a Flake," this *Snow Monkey Adventures* collection also features a Backwards Day celebration in "Gravity Games" (which finds Worry Bear again putting a damper on things), and "The Sneaky Snackers," in which the animal friends join forces with an insect pal to uncover the mystery of who took their picnic basket—and ultimately learn to ask first instead of making assumptions. A fun and often whimsical series that serves up simple lessons, this is recommended. [Note: *Julius Jr.: Pirates and Superheroes* is also newly available.] Aud: P. (J. *Williams-Wood*)

Lots & Lots of Train Songs for Kids ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$14.95 (\$19.95 w/PPR). Marshall Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-936134-34-2.

Many are already familiar with the work of James Coffey—the singer-songwriter behind several video programs from Marshall Publishing featuring small- and large-scale vehicles—whose talent for writing catchy kids' tunes (all with an upbeat folk feel) is well represented in the company's popular series' on trains. In a way, this release could be called *James Coffey's Greatest Train Song Hits*. Among the selections are Coffey's "Lots and Lots of Toy Trains," "I'm An Engineer," "Counting Those Railroad Cars," and more, as well as covers of traditional favorites such as "Rock Island Line," "Comin' Round the Mountain," and "I've Been Working on the Railroad." All of these are set to some fine train eye candy, with the spotlight on amazing model layouts (with multiple location and scenery themes)



Extra Yarn ★★1/2

(2014) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0545-69507-7.

This animated adaptation of writer Mac Barnett and illustrator Jon Klassen's 2012 Caldecott Honor Book features narration by British voiceover artist Nicola Barber, and a winning score from Ernest Troost. The minimal background (mostly white with neat touches such as fluttery snow) heightens the visual impact when young Annabelle discovers a box of yarn full of bright rainbow colors. Annabelle's first thought is to knit herself a sweater...and since there's plenty of yarn left, she makes one for her dog too. When a bully ridicules her, she knits sweaters for him and his dog—who quickly become fans—and ultimately for her other classmates (and teacher). Thanks to the whimsical looking fibers that never seem to cease, Annabelle helps to transform her drab town into a multi-hued tourist attraction, although trouble arrives after she turns down a greedy archduke's \$1 million offer for the yarn and he sends robbers to her house. Featuring a read-along option, this imaginative fantasy tale effectively illustrates how even small acts can mushroom and help to make the world a better place. An ALSC Notable Video selection, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. *Williams-Wood*)

Lawn to Lawn ★★½

(2014) 7 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-626-1.

Narrated by Kirby Heyborne, this iconographic-animated adaptation of author and illustrator Dan Yaccarino's 2010 picture book sports bright colors as it depicts the incredible journey of several lawn ornaments who try to follow their human pal Pearl after her family forgets to bring them along on their move to "Ritzy Estates." Left behind because "only Pearl knew they were real," the gang—including a requisite tacky pink flamingo, red-hatted gnome, deer, and jockey—make their hazardous way towards the new digs, getting lost at times on a trek that takes them through swamps, past city buildings, and across mountains...all while keeping clear of constant menace in the form of the trash truck. Featuring a read-along option, this sweet and imaginative tale is highly recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



that emphasize incredible detail, all shot from various camera angles. Featuring nearly two dozen tunes, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

The Man With the Violin ★★★

(2014) 6 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-959-0.

Narrated by George Newbern, this iconographic-animated adaptation of author Kathy Stinson and illustrator Dušan Petricic's 2013 picture book introduces a bright boy named Dylan, who is rushing with his hurried mother through the bustle of the subway when he hears the strains of violin playing that "makes the hairs on the back of (his) neck tickle," lovely sounds that he sees as visible swirls of color. Although the mother and other busy passersby barely notice the man with the violin, Dylan is transported by the transcendent music. Based on the true story of a 2007 experiment conducted by Grammy-winning violinist Joshua Bell, in which he played a Stradivarius in a D.C. metro station where out of 1,000-plus people, only seven stopped to listen, this engaging short also includes a read-along option. A sweet tale about music appreciation, this is definitely recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Milo's Hat Trick ★★★

(2014) 7 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-63379-208-1.

Author and illustrator Jon Agee's 2001 picture book is nicely adapted in this iconographic-animated short featuring a ragtime-ish soundtrack and narration by Kirby Heyborne. Magician Milo the Magnificent's act leaves much to be desired; in fact, the crowd always boos, so theatre manager Mr. Popovitch gives Milo one last chance to prove himself. Milo puts his thinking cap on: maybe he can catch a rabbit to use in his routine! Instead, Milo snags something much larger: a smart and friendly bear who offers to help Milo work his magic—a plan that turns into havoc after a mistake separates Milo

and the bear, scaring the public. Featuring a read-along option, this fun story about an underdog who suddenly becomes the hottest ticket in town is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Mr. Wuffles! ★★½

(2014) 7 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-9777098-6-1.

Based on the 2013 picture book by author and illustrator David Wiesner, this nearly wordless iconographic-animated adaptation of the Caldecott Honor Book follows the titular housecat as he plays with a mini-UFO filled with small green aliens. The feline lazily knocks the spacecraft around, causing equipment damage inside, which leads the agitated extraterrestrials to join forces with ants and ladybugs in order to repair their craft and escape the enemy. Since there is little dialogue (except for occasional instances of the cat's owner—voiced by Susie Berneis—cooing observations such as "What's so interesting, Mr. Wuffles?"), the bulk of the soundtrack is filled with the unintelligible electronic bleeps and bleeps of the aliens. A clever idea that nevertheless feels somewhat stretched here (although it may be more appreciated by diehard cat lovers), this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

My Little Pony: The Movie—30th Anniversary ★★

(1986) 86 min. DVD: \$14.95. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Following two earlier primetime specials, this 1986 feature film continues the strange and nonsensical—well, even more nonsensical than one would expect in a storyline featuring colorful talking ponies—adventures of the horses living in Dream Castle. The chipper equine gang is excited about preparations for the Spring Festival, but mean witch Hydria (voiced by Cloris Leachman) and her disgusting daughters Reeka and Draggie (Rhea Perlman, Madeline Kahn) are glowering in their Volcano of Doom home, thinking about ways to make things dark,

dank, and dreary in order to cancel out all of the brightness and cheer that the ponies spread. The witches create a purple goo called "Smooze," which turns everyone into meanies on contact. In addition, pushy baby pony Lickity Split has run away after ruining a dance routine, so the ponies have to stop Smooze and look for the wayward pony and her dragon pal Spike, tasks in which they are assisted by various woodland creatures, human friends, and other helpers (Danny DeVito and Tony Randall are also part of the voice cast). Featuring lame songs, dated animation, and a lackluster story, this 30th anniversary of the curio boasts little beyond nostalgic value. An optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Phineas and Ferb: Star Wars ★★★

(2014) 164 min. DVD: \$19.99. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

"None of this is canon, so just relax." The Force is definitely with this exceedingly clever spoof in which two universes collide: *Star Wars* and *Phineas and Ferb*. The cartoon duo are recast here as moisture farmers who unwittingly become involved in the plot of the *Star Wars* film that launched the franchise, *Episode IV: A New Hope*. Other P&F characters also receive Lucasian makeovers. Perry the Platypus sets things in motion by stealing the plans for the Death Star (originally invented, we learn, by P&F series villain Dr. Doofenshmirtz to be a nutcracker...until the Empire stole his plans). Phineas's sister Candace is a Stormtrooper who complains that her potential is being wasted in her role as Darth Vader's sock-finder. There are very catchy songs and some sly in-jokes (a funny *Lion King* reference and a goof on the "Who shot first" debate; *Star Wars* fans know what I'm talkin' about). Not as insider as the *Family Guy* homages, but certainly a more family-friendly and age-appropriate lampoon, this is fun for fans of both franchises. Extras includes bonus episodes. Recommended. Aud: P. (D. Liebenson)

Super Why: Jack and the Beanstalk and Other Fairytale Adventures ★★★

(2009) 100 min. DVD: \$9.99. PBS Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-169-1.

Young reading aficionado Whyatt and friends—including Little Red Riding Hood, Princess Pea, and Pig—go on adventures centered around words and spelling in this lesson-filled compilation from the PBS Kids series. Interactively asking viewers to help out, the Super Readers team here tackle various problems, going from Storybook Village to their Book Club, where they become super versions of themselves and each have different powers relating to the alphabet, rhyming, spelling, and changing words in a

(cont. on pg. 55)

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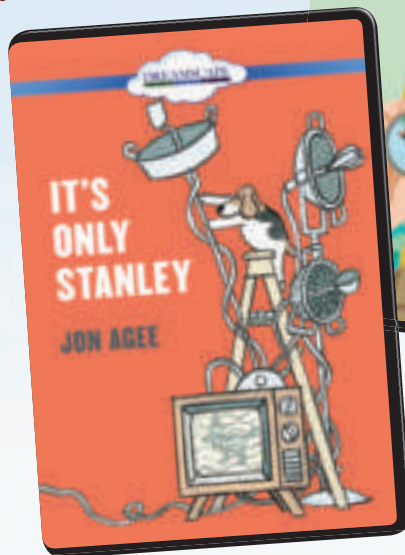
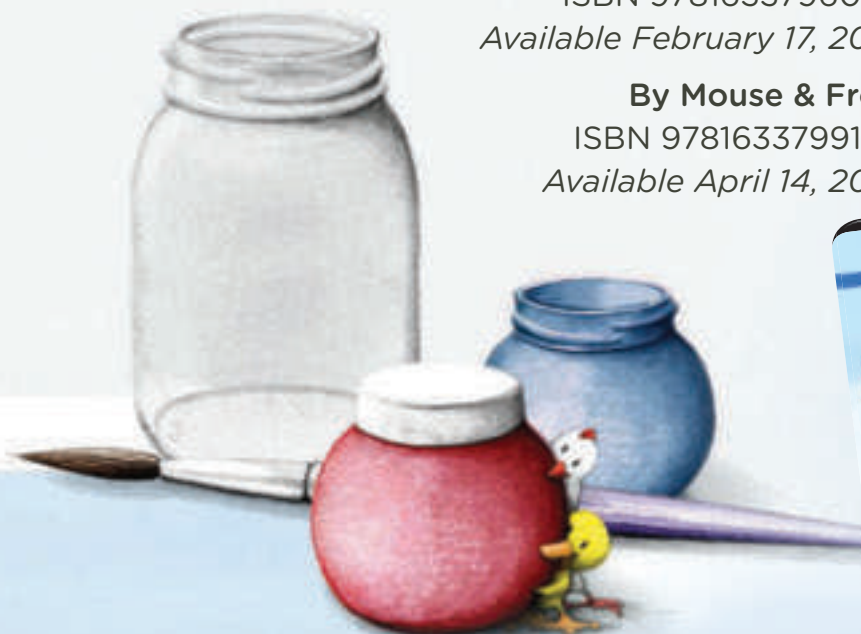
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ALA-ALSC Notable Videos 2015

ALA's Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) has selected its 2015 list of Notable Children's Videos, which includes DVDs for children 14 years of age and younger. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors or the companies are listed in the "Distributor Addresses" on page 86.

Brave Girl (Dreamscape, 9 min., DVD: \$38.99). This iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2013 picture book by author Michelle Markel and illustrator Melissa Sweet tells the story of Clara Lemlich, a Ukrainian-born young woman who emigrated to America and led the 1909 "Uprising of the 20,000" strike by women working in garment sweatshops. (VL-1/15)

The Duckling Gets a Cookie!? (Weston Woods, 7 min., DVD: \$59.95). Prolific children's author Mo Willems is back with this animated adaptation of his 2012 picture book that reunites the mischievous Pigeon with his Duckling friend, who has a delicious cookie. (VL-11/14)

Each Kindness (Weston Woods, 9 min., DVD: \$59.95). This iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2012 Coretta Scott King Honor Book by author Jacqueline Woodson and illustrator E.B. Lewis takes the point of view of 'tween Chloe, who learns a lesson after being unkind to a new girl dressed in threadbare clothes and shoes. (VL-9/14)

Exclamation Mark (Weston Woods, 6 min., DVD: \$59.95). A simple slice-of-life tale starring various forms of punctuation, this animated adaptation of author Amy Krouse Rosenthal and illustrator Tom Lichtenheld's 2013 Kirkus-honored children's book follows an Exclamation Mark who "stood out from the very beginning." (VL-9/14)

Extra Yarn (Weston Woods, 9 min., DVD: \$59.95). Written by Mac Barnett and illustrated by Jon Klassen, this animated adaptation of the 2012 Caldecott Honor

Book showcases young Annabelle, who finds a box of yarn in bright rainbow colors and transforms her drab town into a multi-hued tourist attraction. (See review on page 51)

Getting Through It: Kids Talk About Divorce (Human Relations Media, 19 min., DVD: \$139.95). Addressing common divorce issues including living arrangements, family conflict, and new relationships, this compelling guidance program features real kids who share personal experiences and coping strategies. (See upcoming review in VL-5/15)

Honey Badgers: Masters of Mayhem (PBS, 60 min., DVD: \$19.99 [\$42.99 w/PPR]). Narrated by Daniel Stern, this educational and entertaining addition to PBS's popular *Nature* series explores the behaviors of the small but notoriously aggressive honey badger.

Locomotive (Dreamscape, 23 min., DVD: \$38.99). This iconographic-animated adaptation of author-illustrator Brian Floca's 2013 Caldecott Medal winning book takes viewers on a train journey aboard the First Transcontinental Railroad—circa 1869—from the Omaha depot to Sacramento. (VL-11/14)

Me and My Moulton (National Film Board of Canada, 13 min., DVD: \$129). Nominated for an Academy Award, this animated short by Torill Kove tells a quirky story set during the summer in 1960s Norway, featuring a 7-year-old girl who asks her out-of-touch parents for a bicycle. (See upcoming review in VL-5/15)

Me...Jane (Weston Woods, 9 min., DVD: \$59.95). This animated adaptation of author and illustrator Patrick McDonnell's 2011 Caldecott Honor picture book about conservationist Jane Goodall's inspirational experiences when

she was young won the Andrew Carnegie Medal for excellence in children's video. (See review on page 55)

A Nation's Hope: The Story of Boxing Legend Joe Lewis (Dreamscape, 7 min., DVD: \$38.99). Illustrator Kadir Nelson's strikingly realistic oil artwork takes center stage in this iconographic-animated adaptation of the 2011 picture book written by Matt de la Peña, which chronicles the life of iconic boxer Joe Louis. (VL-11/14)

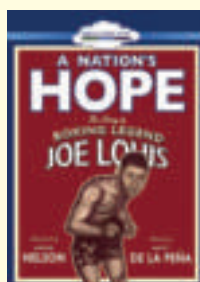
No Fish Where to Go (National Film Board of Canada, 13 min., DVD: \$129). Based on Marie-Francine Hébert's 2003 book, Janice Nadeau and Nicola Lemay's animated adaptation chronicles the friendship between two little girls from opposing clans in a modern tale that compassionately addresses the consequences of war. (See upcoming review in VL-5/15)

One Cool Friend (Weston Woods, 13 min., DVD: \$59.95). Adapted from the 2012 Caldecott Honor and *New York Times* best-selling picture book by author Toni Buzzeo and illustrator David Small, this animated short centers on young Elliot, who sneaks a penguin out of the aquarium in his backpack. (See upcoming review in VL-5/15)

This is Not My Hat (Weston Woods, 5 min., DVD: \$59.95). A companion to author and illustrator Jon Klassen's *I Want My Hat Back*, this wildly different animated adaptation of his 2012 Caldecott Medal Book is a black comedy in which the protagonist is a thief: a little fish wearing a derby that he admits he stole. (VL-11/14)

You Are in Charge of Your Body (Human Relations Media, 31 min., DVD: \$125, web: hrvideo.com). Designed for grades 3-5, this guidance program takes an age-appropriate approach to the subject of sexual abuse, featuring adult and kid actors in re-enactments. (VL-1/14)

As of press time, this year's committee members were not listed on the ALA website (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/ncv>).



(cont. from pg. 52)

story in order to solve issues, often gathering letters that provide answers to the situation du jour. In "Jack and the Beanstalk," the gang uses alphabet stairs to meet the giant and stop his tantrum. "The Princess and the Pea" finds the titular heroine worried about passing a princess test, which takes the team back into the original story. "The Three Little Pigs" and "Little Red Riding Hood" both feature Pig dealing with bullies, as the crew turns the Big Bad Wolf into the Small Good Wolf and changes another lupine villain into who should really be in Grandma's bed...Grandma! Colorfully produced with minimal songs and lots of excitement over reading ("When we have a question, we look in a book!"), extras here include interactive games, music videos, printable activities, and resources for parents. Recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors?

★★★

(2014) 11 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-545-79036-9.

This iconographic-animated adaptation of writer Tanya Lee Stone and illustrator Marjorie's Priceman's 2013 picture book centers on the life of Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910), the first woman in the U.S. to earn a medical degree. Featuring buoyant narration by Jorjeana Marie and a solid score by Jon Carroll, the story sketches the U.K.-born Blackwell's childhood, with quips about her being tough, manhandling her little brother, and standing up to challenges—even as she was squeamish about blood and had no patience for sickness. But influenced by ill friend Mary Donaldson (who herself wanted to be a lady doctor), Blackwell applied to many medical

schools—and was denied due to flawed Victorian-era thinking: women were thought to be too weak, not smart enough to complete this kind of education, and more suited to professions such as teacher or seamstress. But given a chance at upstate New York's Geneva Medical College, Blackwell proved herself to be more than competent and she graduated with honors in 1849. Featuring a read-along option, this profile of a proud and determined woman who paved the way for generations to come is recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

Bipolarized: Rethinking Mental Illness

★★★

(2013) 76 min. DVD: \$89: public libraries & high schools; \$250: colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Rita Kotzia's documentary asks whether psychotropic medication does more harm than good. The central focus here is on Ross McKenzie, a Canadian diagnosed as bipolar in his early 20s and prescribed lithium by his psychiatrist. McKenzie did not respond positively to the medication either physically or emotionally, and he eventually balked after years of suffering. Following several unsuccessful attempts to quit his prescriptions, McKenzie successfully underwent detox treatment at a Costa Rican facility and later used the services of a Toronto naturopath and a Colombian shaman as part of his pill-free healing process. *Bipolarized* also follows McKenzie to a Philadelphia rally, where individuals in similar situations protest outside of an American Psychiatric Association conference about the medical community's connections to the pharmaceutical industry. Ultimately,

Me...Jane ★★★½

(2014) 9 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-545-69686-9.

Winner of the 2015 Andrew Carnegie Medal for excellence in children's video, this animated adaptation of author and illustrator Patrick McDonnell's 2011 Caldecott Honor picture book centers on conservationist Jane Goodall's early life as she began down her career path. Narrated by Katherine Kellgren, the sweetly named *Me...Jane* depicts a young Goodall dragging around her cherished stuffed chimpanzee Jubilee—set against watercolor backgrounds that also incorporate engravings and real photos—as she enjoys outdoor activities, makes observations, and documents her findings. Jane's natural curiosity about the animal and plant worlds lead her to Grandma's chicken coop, where she's amazed at the process of creating eggs, and she later enjoys fantasies about the *Tarzan* books and being in the jungle world someday. Featuring a whimsical soundtrack by Shay E. Lynch that includes flute, xylophone, and violin, this wonderful tale about a little girl completely at peace in nature who would grow up to become a world-renowned conservation activist also includes an interview with Goodall and McDonnell, and a read-along option. This year's winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video and an ALSC Notable Video selection, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



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the film opens a much-needed dialogue on whether overreliance on expensive medicines has become a too-convenient remedy for illnesses that can be treated through more holistic means. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

E-motion ★★1/2

(2014) 84 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$199 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River.

Filmmaker Frazer Bailey's *E-motion* is a self-help documentary pitched at the New Age demographic, carrying a message—when all is said (and much is said)—that boils down to the old saw that you cannot change the world, so you have to change yourself to find inner peace. Against a running fictional storyline depicting the stressed-out, parallel lives of two attractive, contemporary big-city yuppie types (Lauren Jackson, Ty Hungerford), a variety of experts talk about how to get beyond the negative influences and emotional baggage of daily life. Much of the material here is drawn from Bradley Nelson's book *The Emotion Code*, and the author is joined onscreen here by fellow neo-shamans and writers such as nutritionist Don Tolman, vibration healer Sonia Choquette, theologian Neale Donald Walsch, and dowser (?) Raymon Grace, who variously discuss the importance of the human subconscious, yoga/meditation, eating foods of different colors, cleansing chakras, and having an attitude of gratitude. Some of the comments are, of course, highly debatable (i.e., "anger comes from the liver"). Extras include extended interviews with the principals, who describe their experiences with matters such as time warps and reincarnation. Possibly soothing to some, and out-where-the-buses-don't-run for others, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

Generation A: Portraits of Autism and the Arts ★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$199 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River.

Near the end of this illuminating documentary from filmmaker Barry Shils, actor Edward Asner turns up to say that he has both an autistic son and autistic grandson, and underscores the central message here of how important the arts are for building "a bridge" between people on the autism spectrum and the rest of the world. If that bridge is successfully created, Asner says, there's no need to try to force autistic kids to become "normal" (a word he pronounces with dismissive irony). *Generation A: Portraits of Autism and the Arts* explores how an emphasis on creativity and other experiences of discovery can help autistic children develop skills that are applicable to other areas of life. Singing, painting, creating animation, dancing, drawing, and writing stories—if encouraged and taught as a series of manageable challenges that add up to something

complete—could open doors of opportunity, independence, and expression for kids who might not otherwise find them. *Generation A* looks at several young people who have not only benefited from mentorship in one or another art forum, but also developed larger ambitions as a result. Animation, especially, seems to be a draw for autistic kids, although there are remarkable examples here from other disciplines as well. Several adult experts in the field of autism—on the spectrum themselves—are among the interviewees, including noted author Dr. Temple Grandin. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Come Follow Me ★★★★★

(2014) 34 min. DVD: \$14.99. Vision Video.

This dramatization of Bible stories centers on the relationship between Jesus and the Apostle Peter, as well as the individual decisions, struggles, and triumphs of Peter and the other apostles as a result of their choice to follow Jesus. The narrative opens on the night before the arrest of Jesus, who is seen here as a servant in actions such as washing the feet of his disciples and joining together in the ceremony of the last supper. Directed by Steven J. Boettcher, the actors here—Bruce Marchiano as Jesus, and Emilio Doorgasingh as Peter—bring a winning dynamic to the portrayal of the two men, sometimes interacting as student and teacher, other times as brothers. Especially poignant is Peter's regret over denying Jesus when the soldiers come for the latter, and his struggles after the Resurrection when Jesus wants to see Peter but Peter can't bear the thought of facing

him. Of course, reconciliation eventually comes full circle for the pair. Forgiveness and inclusion are two of the strongest messages of Christianity, and both are clearly present in this beautifully-filmed production. Highly recommended. Editor's Choice. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Towards Belief ★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 280 min. DVD: \$49.99. Olive Tree Media (dist. by Vision Video).

Australian pastor Karl Faase interviews churchmen and scholars in Britain, the U.S., and his homeland in this 10-part series, addressing what he calls "belief blockers": issues that deter many from embracing the Christian faith. For each of these topics—the problem of suffering, the composite character of the Bible, the acceptance of supernatural phenomena, religious-based violence, the exclusivity of belief systems, clerical abuse, discordance with modern science, condemnation of homosexuality, and the presumed obsolescence of the church—Faase first poses questions to men and women on the street about their attitudes, before turning to the experts, who respond to the doubts raised. The quality of the discourse is quite high, representing serious, thoughtful consideration that will also serve as a useful exercise in apologetics for Christians. Whether this will convince nonbelievers is debatable: the episode on clerical abuse, which includes testimony from victims, is basically a heartfelt apology, while the one on homosexuality is mostly a straightforward restatement of the orthodox position that many find a stumbling block. In the final segment, interviewees describe how they overcame doubts to embrace belief. Extras include a PDF discussion guide. Serving up a thought-provoking,



In the Footsteps of St. Peter ★★1/2

(2014) 135 min. DVD: \$19.99. CTVC (dist. by Vision Video).

A fascinating, two-part program about the leader of Jesus's apostles and founder of the early Christian church, *In the Footsteps of St. Peter* clarifies historical accounts of Peter's life and work, along the way making him more human and understandable. Actor David Suchet (*Poirot*) is the charming, wide-eyed host, bringing touches of warmth and humor to a subject that could easily turn scholarly and esoteric. In the first segment, Suchet visits Peter's birthplace, the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee, and also his home as an adult and family man in Capernaum. Between archaeological evidence, biblical accounts of Peter's life as a fisherman, and cultural clues from the region, a chain of hypotheses are assembled to create a viable narrative of Peter's life as a husband and father, working man, and eventual follower of Jesus. The most interesting aspect of Peter's story here is the lengthy exploration of his role as Jesus's right-hand man, a trusted disciple who also struggled to understand Jesus's reasons for unpredictable acts such as raising a ruckus against the moneylenders in a holy temple. Several historians here also suggest that Peter was somewhat impulsive, a man who would cut off the earlobe of an enemy or deny his association with Jesus when the going got tough. Part two focuses on Peter's first small steps at organizing the foundation of the church. Sure to appeal to both Christian audiences and history buffs, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

even-tempered, and occasionally moving exploration of the obstacles to faith, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

Adelante ★★★

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

Filmmaker Noam Osband's gentle look at an unexpected transformation within a greater Philadelphia parish church serves up an affirmation of America's melting-pot, making it a particularly well-timed documentary for a social and political climate in which southern-border immigration is a focus of much anxiety and outright dread. Founded in 1835, St. Patrick's in Norristown, PA, was languishing from a dwindling Irish-Catholic population until an influx of migrant workers from Mexico brought a fresh generation of worshippers and church-community members (it helps that resident Father William Murphy, the kind of priest who gives priests a good name, speaks fluent Spanish). Soon the church is resounding with the music of mariachi bands, with masses held in celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Mexicans bringing their cooking to a meeting of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Viewers are told that Irish-Americans and Mexican-Americans both maintain a fervent passion for their respective homelands (and families and faith), strongly suggesting that the Mexican newcomers are no more of a threat to the USA than were the generations of assimilated Irish who formed the bedrock of this church and town. A solid documentary on ethnic

bridge-building, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Bastards: Outcast in Morocco ★★★

(2014) 83 min. DVD: \$398. Icarus Films. PPR.

Single mothers have it hard in America, but the situation is worse in Morocco where 6,500 illegitimate children annually face abandonment. BBC journalist Deborah Perkin focuses her attentions on quiet, open-faced Rabha El Haimer, a farmer's daughter who married her cousin, Abdel, when she was 14. The wedding, it turns out, was ceremonial rather than legal. Furthermore, her uncle Mohammed neglected to inform Rabha that his son couldn't talk because of a facial injury. But Rabha didn't understand sign language, and Abdel beat her to keep her in line. Two years later, when she became pregnant, his family kicked her out, and she had a daughter, Salma. In the eight years since, Morocco has outlawed child marriage, which gives Rabha options for trying to prove her daughter's legitimacy, so she meets with social worker Soumia Idman and attorney Lamia Farida. Seeking trial, Rabha hopes to compel Abdel—who has since remarried—to register Salma's paternity. Perkin spends ample time with Idman and Farida, who work hard to instill confidence in their female clients, as well as a sense of responsibility in their neglectful partners. In this case, it's a bumpy road, which includes attempts to track down Abdel, and an unpleasant reunion between Rabha and the verbally abusive Mohammed. Fortunately, Farida finds witnesses to testify on Rabha's behalf. Perkin contrasts Rabha's story with that of an outspoken middle-aged woman trying to obtain child support from her married lover. By film's end, one woman will have more success than the other, but



Every Three Seconds ★★★

(2014) 100 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

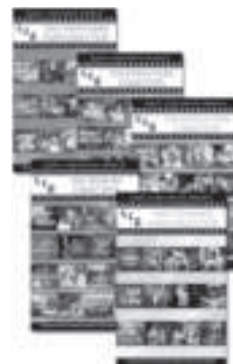
Although the title references how often a human being somewhere on planet Earth dies of malnutrition, filmmaker Daniel Karslake's *Every Three Seconds* passionately addresses a number of international-relief crises—famine among them—while also looking at how ordinary citizens have gotten involved. We see a 7-year-old English boy whose bike-riding fundraiser effort for Haitian earthquake victims made him a viral sensation and “the most famous boy in the world” (in the judgment of fan

Simon Cowell). A would-be stock-photo mogul in California was stirred by an *Oprah* segment and put her career aside to campaign for the plight of raped women in war-ravaged Congo. Secondhand cell phones with texting ability and donated old laptops are used to create a vital medical infrastructure in Malawi. Along the way, venerable charity organizations such as UNICEF and The Hunger Project are revisited, joined by new ones such as Jamii Bora, an African “microfinance” program of loans to assist grassroots businesses. The point being made is that while the idealist goal of “ending world hunger” is a do-gooder cliché and punch-line of comedy routines, the issue of starvation (and other problems) is very real. And everyday folks in more advantaged countries should not feel cynical or powerless about helping. Featuring interviews with authors including Paul Loeb and Dacher Keltner, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

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visionvideo.com

Morocco still has quite a way to go before any woman will enjoy the same rights as men. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Broken Heart Land ★★★

(2014) 81 min. DVD: \$250. Incite Pictures. PPR.

Sibling filmmakers Jeremy and Randy Stulberg take a look at the modern American culture wars in the relatively liberal college town of Norman, OK. In 2010, the mayor proposed that October be declared LGBT History Month, a move that brought an unexpected groundswell of outrage from local Bible Belt traditionalists and their supporters. Armed with (questionable) statistics about homosexual suicide, AIDS, and death rates, local pastors-turned-activists not only forced the withdrawal of the motion but also announced intentions to run for city council. A week later, Zack Harrington, an openly gay youth who attended the tumultuous town meeting, killed himself. His loving family subsequently learned from his journals that Zack had been HIV positive. Cameras follow the bereaved Harringtons as they join MOM (Mothers of Many), a support organization for parents of homosexuals, and set out to back a lesbian candidate for council against one of the upstart Christians. Even with the film's obvious sympathies, a decent amount of time goes to the conservatives, who speak of their opponents in hate-the-sin-love-the-sinner terms and say they mainly seek equality—no conferring of special privileges or government honors on homosexual lifestyles or agendas. Building to a bittersweet election outcome, *Broken Heart Land* is a timely documentary on a hot-button issue. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Claiming Our Voice ★★★

(2013) 21 min. In English, Bangla & Hindi w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$59.95; public libraries & high schools; \$200: colleges & universities. DRA. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

Filmmaker Jennifer Prithvee Samuel's documentary short follows Andolan, an NYC-based group of South Asian women, as they create, rehearse, and present a theatrical production, *Stories of Joy and Sorrow*, centering on the exploitation and violence suffered by immigrant domestic workers. Led by Sri Lankan-American performance artist Yalini Dream, the women assemble an evening of storytelling, singing, and dance designed to raise awareness and ultimately improve working and living conditions for domestics, whose employment in private homes is unregulated. This lack of legal protections enables employers to easily blur the distinction between work and private life, requiring domestics to be on the job constantly—in some cases with no time off—and accept low wages (other exploitative conditions include a lack of privacy and restrictions on movements outside the home). The members of Andolan decide to



Hunger in America ★★★1/2

(2014) 52 min. DVD: \$129; public libraries & high schools; \$250: colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Narrated by James Denton, filmmaker Zac Adams's documentary looks at the shocking statistic that perhaps one in six Americans—50 million, who include working men and women, suburban families, and children—regularly experience “food insecurity,” not knowing where their next meal is coming from. The past decade has seen a steady rise in the number seeking help, with food pantry volunteers often themselves needing aid as the economy sags and jobs evaporate. *Hunger in America* features interviews with individuals throughout the country, from Los Angeles, where the high cost of living causes stress for many residents, to middle-class areas in Tennessee, to the stark poverty of West Virginia. In Albany, NY, teachers worry about how kids will eat over the weekend, when there's no free breakfast or lunch. Elsewhere, experts are concerned about the quality of nutrition available, especially in poor neighborhoods. Equally disturbing is the estimate that some 40 percent of the food produced in the nation is eventually wasted (think about what isn't sold from that full deli case or bakery at your local supermarket). Suggesting that people acknowledge the problem and volunteer to help solve it, this film issues a powerful wake-up call about a growing crisis. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

focus their presentation on life in Bangladesh (their home country), emigration to the United States, and experiences in personally overcoming poverty and abuse. Two members are interviewed about Andolan's impact on their lives, noting that they no longer feel merely like victims telling their stories to journalists or attorneys, but rather have learned that speaking out can result in change. Presented without narration, *Claiming Our Voice* brings their message to a much wider audience. DVD extras include a full performance of *Stories of Joy and Sorrow* (excerpted in the documentary), as well as a companion curriculum on the power of narrative. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Drill Baby Drill ★★★

(2015) 84 min. DVD: \$199.95. PPR. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

One of the most contentious debates about energy resources centers on hydraulic fracturing—better known as “fracking”—which involves drilling and injecting fluid at high pressure into the ground to fracture shale rocks and release the natural gas stored within. While this procedure has indeed opened up new economic opportunities in countries that were previously over-reliant on foreign sources for fuel, it has also sparked criticism about the attendant ecological damage. Documentary filmmaker Lech Kowalski focuses on two communities that have responded negatively to fracking. One is a group of Polish farmers in a village near the Ukrainian border—an area known as “the lungs of Poland” due to its unpolluted air—who react in horror when they learn that Chevron intends to build a shale gas well. The second involves unhappy rural Pennsylvanians living in an area ripped apart by excessive fracking. Kowalski's film

certainly suggests that fracking inevitably leads to catastrophic environmental impacts, but its story is more about the admirable and unforgettable passion of the Polish and Pennsylvanian residents who try to stop what they see as destructive and dangerous. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

A Fragile Trust ★★★

(2014) 75 min. DVD: \$295. Bullfrog Films. PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-94154-515-7.

Jayson Blair was a promising reporter—“clearly a climber”—who realized his dream of becoming a journalist for the *New York Times* in 1999. The product of an African-American middle class family, Blair had both ambition and a good education. So, how did it all unravel? Filmmaker Samantha Grant's documentary presents a cautionary tale of the young reporter whose work seemed too good to be true. Blair was quick to volunteer and submit stories, including a poignant tale of a missing soldier in Iraq and the mother who waited for news on the home front. Eventually, other writers noticed striking similarities between Blair's prose and a story in a Texas newspaper (one of the figures allegedly interviewed claimed she never met Blair). Known as an “office character” with a need to be liked, Blair developed a “toe touch” technique (with minimal legwork) that eventually became “no touch,” as the reporter simply submitted bylines from his apartment. Blair also developed a drinking and drug problem, which worsened his bipolar personality. Executives at the paper tried to get Blair help, but before the dust from the 2003 plagiarism scandal settled, two top executives lost their jobs, and Blair left journalism to write a book and become a “life coach.” Time and money was wasted and prestige tarnished in correcting the bogus stories by Blair, who speaks frankly but with a curious detachment in an interview here. In-

evitably, issues of race and affirmative action surface, as well as a look at the negative effects of the escalating need for “speed and impact” in a changing newsroom. Presented in both its full-length and an abridged 57-minute version, this compelling documentary about one of the biggest contemporary scandals in American journalism is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Hue: A Matter of Colour ★★★

(2013) 85 min. DVD: \$295. DRA. National Film Board of Canada. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Vic Sarin investigates the prevalence of a curious cousin to racism—discrimination based on skin tone within one’s own ethnic group, or what he calls colourism—in this documentary, a highly personal project with larger dimensions. Sarin, who lives in Canada, begins with a recollection of his childhood in India, where his mother urged him to bundle up even in very hot weather to prevent the darkening effects of the sun. That experience left a continuing impression—Sarin is even reluctant to join his family on beachfront excursions—which has led him to travel widely (to Brazil, South Africa, the Philippines, and Tanzania, as well as India) to interview people about their attitudes. The results are anecdotal but telling: a Filipino woman who suffered childhood bullying because of her dark skin went on to establish a skin-whitening cosmetics company; a dark-toned Brazilian street-sweeper, who began dancing while doing his job during Carnival, became a national celebrity; and Tanzanian albinos are being targeted for their light-colored bodies. The media (particularly advertising’s role in shaping standards of beauty) is identified as a major culprit in perpetuating stereotypes underlying colourist attitudes, but Sarin also hopefully notes that at least among younger people, including his own children, such views appear to be on the decline. A heartfelt study of a widespread and hurtful phenomenon, *Hue* is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

In Bed with the Arab Spring ★★★

(2012) 54 min. In Arabic, English & French w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$300. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from www.filmplatform.net). PPR.

The teasing title of filmmaker Paul Moreira’s documentary belies the actual horror of its subject: the shocking surge in sexual harassment and violence unleashed on women during and after the chaotic days of Egypt’s “Arab Spring.” Combining archival footage with more recent interviews and guerrilla filmmaking on the streets in Egypt, this confrontational work suggests that the headline-making movement’s rejection of government oppression carried over into a collapse of culture-based sexual repression. But the result was not so much

liberation for women, as it was perversion by a patriarchal society. Despite the crucial role of women in bringing about the Arab Spring—taking the same risks as men during demonstrations and subjected to the same brutality by the military—gangs of Egyptian men preyed upon women and continue to do so, largely with impunity. The camera repeatedly captures moments of men following and circling women in broad daylight and open spaces, and then rationalizing their behavior by blaming their victims. The film suggests that concomitant with the national crisis are unmistakable signs of a war on women, including a rise in genital mutilation, loss of freedoms, and a crackdown on clothing and appearance. A disturbing and thought-provoking look at an ugly byproduct of the fight for freedom in Egypt, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Not Working: The Pulse of the Great Recession ★★★

(2013) 98 min. DVD: \$169.95. DRA. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-81608-851-5.

The aftermath of the 2008 financial crash witnessed the abrupt termination of thousands of jobs, and for many the so-called “recovery” remains elusive. *Not Working*—which takes its inspiration from Studs Terkel’s 1974 classic *Working*—serves up an oral history of the experiences of diverse individuals who found their livelihoods wrecked. The 2008 crash was an equal opportunity destroyer: men and women of different social and economic experiences, based in urban and rural settings, all struggle here to come to terms with their situation. Some cases are extreme—most notably, the Nevada factory town of Empire, which saw its population move away

following the closure of a manufacturing plant that employed a majority of the local residents. A few try to plot an entrepreneurial course that would enable them to become their own employers. While this documentary doesn’t have the eloquence or raw emotional power of Terkel’s book, it deserves kudos for giving a voice to those forgotten during the recent years of economic hardship. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

One Child ★★★

(2014) 40 min. DVD: \$250. DRA. Filmmakers Library (dist. by Alexander Street Press). PPR.

Many are aware of China’s official population-control policy, which limits the number of babies born to one child per couple. Zijian Mu’s documentary explores some unintended consequences of that legislation, following a shattering natural disaster—the 2008 Sichuan earthquake—that killed 90,000 people. Many families hewing to the single-infant rule were suddenly left childless in a society where it is expected that the offspring will care for their parents. In addition to completely rebuilding the destroyed city of Beichuan (a story in itself), Chinese authorities allowed bereaved mothers (those still physically capable) to conceive replacement children, even though parents would likely be in their dotage when the children were still in their teens. Other decimated households were left struggling trying to navigate China’s haphazard adoption program. A cautionary exposé of nanny-state government regulations suddenly coming up short in an emergency situation, *One Child* offers an intriguing window into modern Chinese domestic life and cultural values under grievous duress. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



Mentor ★★★

(2014) 80 min. DVD: \$24.95. Garden Thieves Pictures (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Mentor is the name of an affluent Ohio community outside Cleveland, where five high school teens committed suicide between 2005-2010, most as a result of peer-group bullying. Filmmaker Alix Lambert’s *Mentor* investigates the two most recent deaths. Sladjana was a member of a Croatian family fleeing war-torn Bosnia who landed in Greater Cleveland’s Eastern European community. Taunted for her accent and appearance, Sladjana’s emotional complaints were ignored, despite repeated visits (Lambert shows the log-in documents) to the school clinic. She later hung herself, and local school mean girls continued to joke online about what she wore at her funeral. Eric was accused by classmates of being gay and advised to kill himself, which he did with a gun six weeks before classes let out. Area adults subsequently ostracized his family. Granted, *Mentor* presents these tragedies almost entirely from the point-of-view of agonized parents, siblings, and lawyers, since school representatives refused interview requests. Even so, Lambert’s inquest paints a damning picture of wholesale administrative failure in the face of chronic wrongdoing, bureaucratic indifference, and official insensitivity by an image-conscious suburb. A powerful documentary about bullying, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Positive Force: More Than a Witness ★★★

(2014) 69 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Back in the mid-1980s, a bunch of young musicians from the punk rock scene in Washington, D.C., decided to channel their frustrations about society and government—typically aired in loud, brash songs and raucous performances—into concrete action on behalf of the disenfranchised and vulnerable in America. Thus was born Positive Force, a social action coalition of regional bands who wanted to make a difference. This interesting documentary tells their story, now 30 years old and still going strong. While its graying founders remain committed to original principles, the organization's energy is constantly replenished by newcomers to the D.C. music scene. The most interesting parts of director Robin Bell's film look back on the founding of Positive Force in 1985, followed by the extraordinary decision of its loose-knit membership to buy a house and convert it into a headquarters (which still exists). The originators recall idealistic meetings with free agendas in which musicians hammered out priorities and rallied around plans for fundraisers and street demonstrations addressing the issues of homelessness, hunger, income inequality, Reagan-era politics, and much else. Combining archival concert footage featuring bands including Bikini Kill, Fugazi, and Anti-Flag, with interviews of Dave Grohl and others who discuss their history with the collective, this should appeal to punk fans and socially conscious viewers. Extras include bonus live performances and archival documentary shorts. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



Surviving Earth ★★★

(2014) 95 min. DVD: \$39: public libraries; \$195: colleges & universities. DRA. Green Planet Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

In an interesting meta-note, Australian filmmaker Peter Charles Downey here goes on a Yarra Valley radio show during Suicide Prevention Month to discuss this eco-alert documentary, which he positions as a call to the human race to not commit mass self-destruction. Along the way, Downey serves up a litany of woes: human population is ballooning out of control; growth-at-any-cost capitalism is creating wealth inequity, stress, and mental illness; fossil fuels are running out (here, a radio caller scolds Downey for driving a car; he pleads guilty); and species are going extinct while rainforests are being eradicated at a rate never before seen. And, of course, there's global warming. While all of these issues have been widely addressed before, Downey offers a solid comprehensive overview in a film that combines imaginative graphics and visuals with invigorating interviews of, among others, author Paul Ehrlich and Bindi (daughter of Steve) Irwin. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Take Back Your Power: Investigating the Smart Grid ★★

(2014) 88 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$199 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River.

Director Josh del Sol clearly thinks that "smart" power company meters are a really dumb idea—causing, he says, home fires and radiation overdoses, not to mention a massive violation of homeowner privacy, since it allows for two-way transmission of data into a larger smart grid. This documentary claims

that a "corporatocracy" is behind a "soft tyranny" surveillance, using tactics pushed by both big government and business. At first, *Take Back Your Power* seems to be on solid ground, noting that consumers are unable to opt out, while also showing allegedly untrained power company employees engaging in break and enter operations to install home power meters. In addition, the film makes persuasive claims that the meters are inaccurate, violate the constitutional protections of the Fourth Amendment against unlawful search and seizure, and are subject to cyber attacks. Unfortunately, as the documentary progresses, credibility is undermined by references to a "controlling elite," "controlled freakery," and the Nuremberg trials, as well as overheated remarks ("I feel I've been raped"), the usual unsubstantiated supporting claims of "vast amounts of published science," and the *de rigueur* ominous music. Extras include bonus footage, as well as instructions on how to disable and dismantle a smart meter (note: doing it wrong could result in electrocution). Treating a potentially important subject with overkill and bombast, this is not recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

Ukraine Is Not a Brothel ★★★

(2013) 78 min. In Ukrainian & Russian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$300. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from www.filmplatform.net). PPR.

Ukraine's feminist movement is the subject of Kitty Green's critical, yet sympathetic documentary about Femen, an organization formed in the wake of Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union that aims to shed light on the hardships faced by Ukrainian women. Over the ensuing

years, many women left the country to work as prostitutes in the West, while today many foreigners also visit the Ukraine to frequent its brothels. Femen focuses on sex workers who have been the victims of human trafficking, but their methodology is questionable at best (Femen member Yana, for instance, is an exotic dancer, but doesn't feel that she has other options). They also take orders from a man named Victor, who proclaims, "These girls are weak." Femen's signature act of civil disobedience is the topless protest, which naturally attracts attention, although not necessarily for the intended reasons. At these events, male photographers take pictures, male observers hurl insults ("Whores! Prostitutes!"), and male police officers haul the women away. But it's hard to tell if the women they seek to liberate actually appreciate their actions. According to Femen member Inna, "Nobody in this country wants to listen to women, but everyone wants to see beautiful, sexy women." They also sell t-shirts, mugs, and bags, and receive charitable donations—mostly from men, such as a Turkish lingerie manufacturer, who welcomes the publicity. Inna even refers to their followers as fans rather than supporters. A woman named Irina agrees with Femen's aims, but she left the group because she doesn't believe nudity is necessary. Femen's next goal is to take over the leadership from Victor. Once they do that, it may be easier to take them more seriously. An interesting profile of an unconventional feminist group, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

TEEN ISSUES

Moment to Moment: Teens Growing Up with FASDs ★★★^{1/2}

(2015) 56 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$200 w/PPR). NTI Upstream. ISBN: 978-09707762-4-2.

Filmmaker Gabe Chasnoff's illuminating documentary aims to update public awareness about the consequences of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. While many have long known about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, a wider Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) exists with a broad range of impacts on unborn children from drinking. *Moment to Moment* defines these different problems, some of which are less extreme, but also capable of presenting issues as a child grows older. Underlying all of the points on the spectrum are cognitive challenges resulting from underdevelopment of the brain. An inability to process information so as to make reasonable and safe judgments is a common symptom, but degrees vary. One child might commit an assault while another will send nude photos of herself via cell phone because someone asked her to do so. One

teen might experience anxiety and tears over a minor problem while another will get arrested. Kids, adoptive parents, medical specialists, and legal professionals all weigh in on both life with FASD and the relative ignorance of FASD in society—especially in education and the courts. While some of these behaviors are common to adolescents—regardless of the degree of parental drinking—this is an enlightening film that successfully broadens viewer awareness of a devastating health issue. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

Real Life Teens: Guns at School ★★★

(2013) 20 min. DVD: \$64.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR.

Designed to encourage soul-searching and dialogue about the terrifying phenomenon of gun violence in American schools, this short documentary features several adult and student interviewees who offer opinions and insights about the epidemic. Teachers, counselors, and kids weigh in, suggesting that the easy availability of guns is a primary factor in school shootings, along with the more obvious social contributors, such as bullying. But there is also a helpful overview about the psychology of adolescence, how the “job” of teens is to develop some autonomy from parents and join a community of peers in preparation for adulthood. If this developmental stage is thwarted, then a sense of isolation can result; bringing a gun to school may create a feeling of compensatory empowerment. Related issues—should teachers carry guns on campus?—are also addressed, but most of the kids here are skeptical that a straightforward solution to the crisis will be found. School shootings have been around at least since 1920, but the rate has dramatically accelerated in recent years. A solid entry in the fine *Real Life Teens* youth guidance series, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (T. Keogh)

Texting and Driving: The Deadliest Distraction ★★★★★

(2015) 17 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62706-048-6.

Recalling the (often grisly) high school driver education films of the 1950s, this production looks at a very modern cause of accidents involving distracted drivers—namely, texting and driving. Although some states have outlawed the use of cell phones while driving, the annual teen death toll for distracted driving is a tragic 3,000 (in addition to 330,000 injuries). This guidance program combines interviews of high school students and parents with a sensitively portrayed re-enactment of a fatality in which the victim was driving alone on a country lane near her home when she lost control of her vehicle and it overturned.

Nearly dead from her injuries by the time she was discovered, the young woman ultimately perished. The story reminds us that even in the most unlikely of circumstances, inattentiveness behind the wheel can lead to deadly consequences. Particularly enlightening here is the use of a virtual reality simulator in which teenagers, using their own phones, are instructed to text while normal (and unpredictable) driving conditions are presented, and each is scored (“penalized” might be a better term). Some are issued “tickets” or “arrested,” while others simply don’t survive the simulation. DVD extras include a teacher’s resource PDF guide with activities, fact sheets, and learning objectives. A powerful, timely,

well-produced cautionary program, this is highly recommended. Editor’s Choice. Aud: H, P. (C. Block)

EDUCATION

Living Thinkers: An Autobiography of Black Women in the Ivory Tower

★★★1/2

(2013) 76 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$395; colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

For this examination of successful black women in higher education, Roxana Walker-Canton interviewed administrators and



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Web ★★★

(2014) 84 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$200 w/PPR). Sundial Pictures.

Filmmaker Michael Kleiman's documentary is about a project to introduce laptop computers and Internet connectivity to children in remote Peruvian locales, centering on a single geographical area targeted by the One Laptop per Child program—founded in 2006 by MIT professor Nicholas Negroponte—that has helped to develop an inexpensive, rugged little computer for distribution to schools in the developing world. Kleiman traveled upriver into the Amazon rainforest to the tiny villages of Antuyo and Palestina, which lack electricity or running water (and, in the case of Palestina, even a road to the outside world), spending months living there with local residents, watching their reactions to the devices. The scenes featuring children discovering the joys of surfing the Internet—not just Wikipedia, but also educational and entertainment sites, as well as e-mail—are charming, of course, but *Web* also chronicles teachers' efforts to keep up with their charges, as well as the constant problems with generators and modems that all too often frustratingly cut off service. Interviews with locals and Internet theorists also lead one to wonder about the impact that "connectivity"—including the "friendship" found in social networking—might eventually have on these small, close-knit communities. *Web* raises serious and intriguing questions about the benefits—and drawbacks—that technologically-based interconnectivity will bring to heretofore comparatively isolated tribal cultures. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



professors in the fields of history, sociology, African-American studies, religious studies, performance, and dance. Although most of their parents had little formal education, all describe how their childhoods were shaped by a strong emphasis on education as the key to success. The women talk about how they changed socially and became politically aware as undergraduates and grad students, noting that some of their colleagues have looked askance at their pursuit of a career in the humanities, harboring a racist assumption that African-Americans lack intellectual rigor. Dr. Allison Dorsey (Swarthmore) talks about gender expectations—to "kowtow to the boys" and act as students' mother/counselor—while Dr. Farah Griffin (Columbia) finds that the study of black women is itself undervalued in this supposedly "post-racial, post-feminist" era. The interviewees express a sense of feeling overly obligated due to cultural expectations that they leave the institution better for the next person of color, and say that academia takes its toll on their health; they also speak of the power they have to address inequalities and provide educational opportunities for black students. Ultimately, despite the stress, the message is clear: these professionals love their work. Walker-Canton intersperses her interviews with video clips from classrooms (particularly from African dance sessions), as well as archival footage and stills evoking childhood and family life or highlighting social attitudes. Offering a frank and thoughtful look into a relatively isolated world, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

LANGUAGE ARTS

Dante ★★

(2014) 72 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$25 (\$45 w/PPR). 130 Elektra Films (avail. from www.dantethefilm.com).

Dante's 14th-century epic poem *The Divine Comedy* is one of the supreme masterpieces of Western literature, but it has proven stubbornly resistant to screen adaptation. Unlike most previous attempts—which tended to emphasize the places of posthumous punishment that Dante describes—this earnest but turgid effort from filmmaker Luca Lusoso covers all three volumes of the work: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. But the episodes are highly selective and set in modern times, with Dante bemoaning the death of his childhood love Beatrice, who persuades a white-robed Virgil to lead Dante out of the darkness toward the light, where her spirit will introduce him to beatitude. The actors (including Matteo Militeri/Palmerio Sortino and Arianna Saggese/Eleonora Pizzoccheri as the young/adult Dante and Beatrice, and Francesco Cevaro as Virgil) are clumsily situated against computer-generated backdrops and they recite their Italian dialogue rapidly (presented in tiny English subtitles that pass by swiftly). Periodically, Dante is shown scribbling recollections into a notebook, presumably writing the poem itself—a trope that quickly grows tiresome. While one has to laud Lusoso's effort to encourage students to study Dante, it's doubtful that this dreary, funereally-paced film will have that effect. Not a necessary

purchase. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

Shakespeare's Poetry ★★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$29.99 (teacher's guide included). Ambrose Video Publishing. PPR. Closed captioned.

Offering a rich and insightful review of William Shakespeare's forays into poetry, this documentary begins with a short biography of the writer, touching on what is known about Shakespeare's youth, marriage and family life, and move from Stratford to London to work as an actor and playwright (gaps in our knowledge of what Shakespeare did in the so-called "missing years" of the 1580s remain a mystery). *Shakespeare's Poetry* focuses on the Bard's writing of two epic poems, "Venus and Adonis" and the darker "The Rape of Lucrece," both underwritten by a sponsor who might also have been the subject of many of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets. Various English literature professors weigh in on the debate over that person's identity, although the most intriguing argument is that Shakespeare was writing about a fictional person who was inspired by a friend. Attention then turns toward the "Dark Lady" who figures in a number of the later sonnets, and whether or not she was based on someone real or was Shakespeare's rejection of a clichéd construct of women in poetry. While some time is spent on Shakespeare's metaphysical poems, the sonnets consume the lion's share here, several of which receive thorough analysis. Also featuring an educator's guide, this will be a boon to students and Shakespeare lovers. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

Water: A Unique Chemical ★★★

(2013) 23 min. DVD: \$129.95. DRA. VEA (dist. by Films Media Group). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-81609-679-4.

Looking at the scientific qualities and abilities of H₂O, this brief overview reminds students that water is necessary for life as we know it, existing naturally on Earth in all three of its states (liquid, solid, gas). Water is very close to a universal solvent, and is an ingredient in such vital chemical reactions as photosynthesis and exchanges of ions, especially in the first column of the periodic table of elements. Offering a solid introduction aimed at junior-high chemistry classrooms and up, this is recommended. Aud: J, H, P. (C. Cassidy)

Working with Data ★★★

(2014) 10 min. DVD: \$69.95 (teacher's guide included). DRA. Visual Learning Systems. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-59234-909-8.

Designed for young students, this short primer on working with data begins by noting the human factor: data starts with

our senses, which make observations. The point of data is to record our observations via measurements of various kinds (length, weight, temperature, etc.) and then represent those measurements in the form of graphs, charts, and so on. Those tools make it possible to draw conclusions about all kinds of phenomena ranging from the lengths of objects to the changing temperature of the oceans. A simple orientation program aimed at early primary students, *Working with Data* also features a helpful summary and a quiz. Recommended. Aud: K, E, P. (T. Keogh)

HEALTH & FITNESS

The Allergy Fix ★★★

(2014) 43 min. DVD: \$250. Dreamfilm Productions (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-94154-515-7.

Canadian filmmaker Bruce Mohun explores a question that has baffled parents and scientists in recent years: why are so many of today's children allergic to foods that barely caused any health concerns a generation ago? More than three times as many children have allergies and intolerances to certain foods today than 20 years ago, with peanuts, shellfish, and dairy goods being the chief culprits. *The Allergy Fix* doesn't offer a comprehensive answer; some research

is presented concerning the low percentage of food allergies in rural areas involved in organic farming, but no solid conclusions. Nor is there any focus on why certain foods spark health issues while others do not. What the film does do, however, is document a variety of treatments currently employed to mitigate allergy risks. Some of these are a little extreme, most notably the voluntary absorption of parasitic worms through the skin. Others require much patience, including an extended therapy in which young food allergy patients are slowly provided incremental increases of problematic foods until their immunity levels strengthen. This latter strategy is shown to work—although the fact that one former peanut allergy patient now loathes the peanuts he was required to eat on a daily basis suggests some downsides. An interesting look at a hot-button topic, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Carb-Loaded: A Culture Dying to Eat

★★★1/2

(2014) 74 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$249 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River. Closed captioned.

Filmmakers Lathe Poland and Eric Carlsen employ a light touch to address a heavy topic—diabetes, obesity, and other disorders that affect untold millions worldwide—suggesting that a carbohydrate-laden diet may be (cont. on pg. 65)

Vaccines: Calling the Shots ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-127-1.

In today's era of global travel, viruses can spread quickly (e.g., Ebola). At the same time, some parents—perhaps lulled by a false sense of security—wind up delaying or skipping shots for their children, while one percent of the population simply chooses not to have their kids vaccinated at all. Filmmaker Sonya Pemberton's PBS-aired NOVA documentary looks at the "invisible threat" of infection, as well as the clamor of conflicting voices in the Internet age that create doubt and confusion about the necessity and effectiveness of vaccination shots. Required shots vary from state to state, and also allow for exemptions due to personal or religious reasons. Viewers here are warned that whooping cough, measles, and polio, once feared and deadly but now almost extinct, can make a swift return if "herd immunity" (the number of people in a community protected by vaccination) drops by even a few percentage points. *Vaccines: Calling the Shots* chronicles the story of the incredible breakthrough discovery that led to vaccines: namely, that the introduction of a small dose of a disease like smallpox into the human body would actually help fight off the more deadly effects. We now know that our bodies can make "memory cells" that are able to identify invaders and activate when needed to create immunity. In recent years, emotional stories suggesting a link between childhood immunizations and autism (based on a 1998 report that is now widely discredited) have gone viral on the Internet. Another reason for avoidance is sparked by the sexually transmitted HPV virus—known to be a factor in cervical cancer—as some parents fear that inoculating their children will encourage sexual activity. Most doctors and health officials interviewed here strongly advocate vaccination, while admitting that some vaccines can be a "trigger event" for things like seizures. One doctor notes that it's always a balancing act of risk vs. benefits, but the general agreement is that vaccinations are critical to making people safe from major diseases. With the recent resurgence of measles making headline news and renewing the vaccine debate, this timely documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)



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THIN ICE: the inside story of climate science WITH PPRS



40 scientists in the field and lab talk about their work, their hopes and fears with a rare candor and directness, resulting in an intimate portrait of the global community of

researchers racing to understand our planet's changing climate and provide a compelling case for rising CO2 as the main cause. To be broadcast in 2015 on Public Television. 2013 | 74MINS

TRASHED WITH PPRS

Jeremy Irons sets out to discover the extent and effects of the global waste problem, as he travels around the world to beautiful destinations tainted by pollution. Irons showcases the individuals, activists, corporate and advocacy groups around the world who are working to affect change and reform the current model.



2013 | 93 MINS

SAND WARS WITH PPRS



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Spotlight on Fitness

Be Fit In 30 Extreme

★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$14.98. Lionsgate Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Fitness trainers Scott Herman and Susan Becraft lead brisk, sweaty sessions of cardio workouts in this energized program, which gives viewers a choice of exercise routines: "Legs, Thighs and Butt," "Total-Body Weight Loss" and "Fat-Burning and Abs." Each routine runs 20 minutes, and viewers can opt to exercise to music or while listening either to Herman or Becraft giving verbal directions. All routines begin with warm-up moves (jumping jacks, etc.) before shifting to such tailored maneuvers as "front squats with weights," "curtsy lunges," "burpees" and "Heismans." Some of Herman and Becraft's confederates in these workouts—fit-looking young adults—have a little more trouble than others keeping up with the challenges, which is at least a little bit encouraging for the rest of us. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Element: Belly Dance

★★★

(2014) 63 min. DVD: \$14.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Belly dance instructor Jacqui Lalita hosts this three-part program for achieving fitness through sensual dance moves. The program kicks off with the informative "Belly Dance Foundations," in which Lalita demonstrates torso circle isolations, umi hip circles, figure-eight undulations, hip drops, twists, the Egyptian traveling step, and turns, all broken down with attention to movement, breathing, and musical beats. The main workouts here are "Slow & Sensual Belly Dance Toning," which is set to a high-energy soundtrack and features sunset, sunrise, and snake arms moves; and "Belly Dance Burn," combining the moves into a more routine-like dance. Some may find Lalita's encouraging self-talk about "feeling how lovable you are" a bit annoying, but overall this is a solid belly-dance workout. Recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Element: Daily Yoga

★★★

(2014) 88 min. DVD: \$14.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

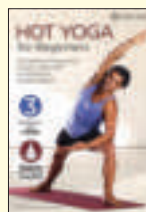


This latest exercise program in the long-running *Element* series follows certified yoga instructor Mia Togo, who presents morning and evening practices. Set against a beach backdrop, *Daily Yoga* features Togo performing moves silently with overlaid narration. Preaching awareness, "Morning" focuses on "victorious breath" and turning in towards your "deep well of wisdom" for moves that include cat-cow pose, downward/upward facing dog, three-legged dog, forward fold, crescent moon, sun salutations, backbends, hip stretch, and resting pigeon. "Evening," which is less about strength and energy-building than overall relaxation and the release of tension built up throughout the day, includes side stretches, as well as crescent, mountain, and locust poses. Best suited for intermediate-level yoga practitioners, this is recommended. [Note: *Element: 5 Day Yoga* is also newly available.] Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Hot Yoga for Beginners

★★★1/2

(2014) 70 min. DVD: \$14.98. Gaiam (avail. from most distributors).



Matt Giordano is featured in this rather plain yoga program filmed in a gym-style setting. Featuring three workouts set to nondescript music, *Hot Yoga for Beginners* serves up overlaid narration focusing on breathing practice while presenting poses that include child's, downward dog, plank, cobra, mountain, chair, warrior (and reverse warrior), and other squats, twists, and stretches. The limber Giordano seems comfortable with the movements in this straightforward exercise program (incidentally, "hot" means performed in humid conditions). A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Leslie Sansone Just Walk: Walk Off Fat Fast

★★★★1/2

(2014) 95 min. DVD: \$14.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



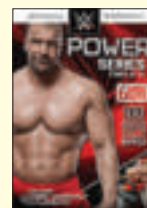
According to the cheerful, energetic, and charismatic

Leslie Sansone, burning off excess body fat only requires moderate movement—such as walking in place. Sounds easy, but a sustained session can turn into a real workout. For that reason, she starts with a basic 20-minute routine, leading a smiling group of walkers, including an 80-year-old woman, who all step smartly to music, moving in unison as Sansone adds variations including side-steps, kicks, knee lifts, and arm movements. By the end of the sequence, as the rhythm ratchets up before Sansone glides into cool-down mode, everyone is glowing. For more ambitious viewers, the DVD also includes 30- and 40-minute sessions. "Exercise doesn't have to be so hard," Sansone says reassuringly, and the benefits of her approach extend beyond simply shedding calories, helping—according to the cover text—to "flatten your belly, firm your behind, slim your arms, and supercharge your energy!" Delivering an appealing, fun, and relatively low-impact method for getting in shape, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

Power Series Triple H

★★★★1/2

(2014) 96 min. DVD: \$14.98. Lionsgate Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Champion wrestler Triple H leads six workout routines designed not just for strength-building, but also for working around old injuries that might make other forms of conventional exercise too painful. Focusing on upper and lower body strength, as well as muscle-building cardio and mobility/flexibility, Triple H's rigorous rituals can sometimes be tough-going. But as the host—who retired from the ring after 20 years with a seriously damaged body—says, the benefits of these customized workouts are better than the sedentary alternative. Everything begins with a warm-up that includes "side-to-side pec stretches" and "squat to stand" moves. Upper body exercises involve dumbbells as well as movement and attention to form, plus challenging high-tension planks and back crunches. Lower body workouts include the "single leg Romanian dead lift" for improved function and balance, and mobility exercises to reduce soreness and cut down on recovery time. Offering custom workout and music-only options, this is highly recommended. [Note: *Fit Series: Stephanie*

McMahon is also newly available.] Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Weight Watchers: 10-Minute Belly, Butt & Thigh Tone Ups ★★½

(2014) 66 min. DVD: \$14.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Instructor Lisa Wheeler presents intermediate moves alongside helpers who offer beginner and advanced variations in this no-nonsense program that features mix-and-match bite-sized 10-minute segments. "Belly" includes roll ups, starfish, and other slow, controlled contractions; "Butt" serves ups lunges, arm swings, and curtsies; "Thighs" incorporates heel dig, hamstring curls, and a "lunge matrix" squat and lift combo; and "Core" applies moves to make you "tight like a corset." Also including "Upper Body" and "Lower Body" combos, the program employs weights at times and features lots of matwork. The motivational Wheeler advises viewers to "keep it up, and you'll get the results you're looking for" in this high-energy, well-focused, and easy-to-follow program. Highly recommended. [Note: *Weight Watchers: 7 Day Tone & Burn* is also newly available.] Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

More New Releases

Jane Fonda's Original Workout (Light-year, DVD: \$14.98). Actress and fitness star Jane Fonda's 1982 landmark first workout video is newly available on DVD. Also newly available are **Jane Fonda's Complete Workout**, **Jane Fonda's Easy Going Workout**, **Jane Fonda's Low Impact Workout**, and **Jane Fonda's New Workout**.



Susan Tuttle's In-Home Fitness Series: Arthritis Chair Exercises for Seniors (Bay-View, DVD: \$19.99). American Senior Fitness Personal Trainer Susan Tuttle guides viewers through this exercise program featuring two seated workout routines for strength and flexibility.



(cont. from pg. 63)

to blame. Poland tells his own compelling story, beginning with the shock of receiving a diagnosis of diabetes despite being a slender, outwardly healthy thirtysomething who had avoided sodas, junk food, and the other usual culprits. A segment on NPR about the skyrocketing number of diabetics—including young children—spurred him to learn more and make this engaging and informative documentary. Interspersed with Poland's jaunty narration are interviews with nutritionists, doctors, scientists, food bloggers, and others, as well as amusing animations (the role of the pancreas is explained by "Mr. Panky"), all backed by a quirky musical score. The film explores a number of relevant issues, including the role of the food industry and its shareholders, government policy that supports carb-heavy crops such as corn, and consumer demand for low-fat foods, which often translates into the addition of more salt and sugar to boost taste. But certainly one of the most memorable messages comes from Poland's personal experience: he literally ate himself back to good health by switching to a high-protein/low-carb diet, which led to a dramatic decrease in his blood-sugar levels. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

The Fix ★★★

(2014) 72 min. DVD: \$19.95. *The By Productions* (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 0-978-1-56839-501-5.

Shedding light on hepatitis C through the experiences of one man, Laura Naylor's documentary centers on Junior, a 34-year-old recovering drug addict who lives in the Bronx and longs to be a good father. Junior's mother, Aida, describes him as a "sweetheart person." During the 15 years he spent using heroin and crack, Junior developed hepatitis C, and his addiction cost him his relationship with his first daughter, a teenager now living in Portugal. Junior currently resides in a shelter with his wife and their daughter and Naylor spends a year with him as he undergoes treatment at a methadone clinic. Dr. Roose, a clinic worker, explains that hepatitis C is common among drug users, while Roose's colleague, Dr. Litwin, says that the chronic, progressive illness is "poorly understood" (since 2007, it has killed more people than AIDS). In addition to Junior, Naylor profiles two other trial participants: Ivan, who spent 35 years as an addict, and Collette, who suffers from hepatitis C and AIDS. "I didn't even look at the future back then," she says about her days on drugs, "I lived totally in the moment." During filming, Ivan, Collette, and Junior also train to become peer counselors, and participate in a storytelling workshop. "I finally feel needed" says Junior. At a reading in Soho, natural-born storyteller Junior recounts the harrowing journey he took from New York to Houston and back on his road toward sobriety. An inspiring

documentary, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Who Killed Alex Spourdalakis? ★★★½

(2014) 66 min. DVD: \$19.98. *The Disinformation Company/TDC* (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-34-0.

Filmmaker Andy Wakefield's investigative documentary focuses on a severely autistic teenage boy named Alex Spourdalakis, whose challenging life was made all the more difficult by a series of successive failures by doctors and hospitals in his native Chicago to treat him for extreme, chronic gastrointestinal pain. A handicapped boy raised by a single mother and godmother, Alex's relatively happy young life was changed at the age of 14 when he developed intestinal agony that he could not explain and which was ignored by physicians who considered Alex's problems to be psychiatric. Kept restrained for a total of 76 days and given scores of inappropriate drugs for psychosis, seizures, anxiety, and a host of other conditions he did not actually have, Alex was not only misdiagnosed time after time but also essentially tortured by medical communities entrenched in rigid bureaucracies. The film goes into great detail about these developments—much of it was shot during the worst part of the extended crisis—and then takes a shocking, dramatic turn. *Who Killed Alex Spourdalakis?* serves up a powerful cautionary tale about systemic failure within the healthcare system to meet the needs of those with autism and their caregivers. Extras include bonus interviews and featurettes. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

Active Parenting—Video 3: Responsibility & Discipline ★★★½

(2014) 39 min. DVD: \$79.95. *Active Parenting* (dist. by The AV Cafe). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-59723-309-5.

Dr. Michael Popkin demonstrates how moms and dads can address the complicated issues of responsibility and discipline with young children, making positive approaches to conflict almost seem like fun. Of course, that's saying a lot (and many adults will consider it a stretch), but having come through those years with my own youngsters, I can report that this program helped me recognize the good steps I took—and times when I could have done better. Hosted by Gerardo Davila and featuring well-acted vignettes of true-to-life interactions between parents and kids, the video shows active (authoritarian) approaches to discipline, contrasting those with the traditional concept of reward and punishment. According to Popkin, "In the long run, a stronger person inflicting pain on a smaller, weaker person may cause

more harm than good to the child and the relationship." Far from offering a Pollyanna view, the dramatizations show adults and kids behaving badly before going over the same situation with different strategies (such as using effective "I" messages) that will lead to much better outcomes. A helpful guide to dealing with some of the most challenging aspects of parenting, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Vulva 3.0 ★★★

(2014) 78 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR.

German filmmakers Claudia Richarz and Ulrike Zimmermann explore attitudes about female genitalia in their provocatively titled film. Helga Seyler, a Hamburg gynecologist, says that her clinic discouraged her from using photographs of women's privates in her sex education classes (young women, in particular, found them "icky"). Instead, she employs a velvet model to explain the parts and their functions. Publisher Claudia Gehrke worries that this distaste may prevent today's generation from acquiring knowledge and experiencing pleasure, and she oversees a series of books (*The Secret Eye*) designed to celebrate the female form. Mithu Melanie Sanyal, a journalist and author, talks about Sara Baartman, the South African woman who fascinated England and France in the early 1800s with her prominent sexual features. Her handlers displayed her more like a biological anomaly than a human being (filmmaker Abdellatif Kechiche's *Black Venus* was inspired by her). Female discomfort with the labia continues and contemporary women can now undergo labiaplasty to achieve a smoother, more symmetrical appearance. Dr. Uta Schlossberger discusses the merits and complications of the procedure, which allows insecure women to feel more confident. As

Gehrke puts it, "We're back to invisibility being an ideal of beauty." Ulrich Grolla, a photographer and picture editor, reduces the size of labia in pictures to conform to that ideal (he also aims to deflect attention from the Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors, which finds some forms of nudity more objectionable than others). An intriguing documentary that also covers ancient myths and female circumcision, *Vulva 3.0* is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

FOOD & SPIRITS

Dal Puri Diaspora ★★★

(2012) 80 min. In English & Bhojpuri w/English subtitles. DVD (digital copy included): \$500. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

Filmmaker Richard Fung, a Trinidadian now living in Toronto, here traces the history of dal puri, also called roti—a flatbread made with split peas and often wrapped around curried meat or vegetables—which for him evokes memories of home and hot weather. Canadians think that dal puri comes from the southern Caribbean; in the Caribbean, however, it is believed to be Guyanese, Surinami, or Trinidadian; and those countries in turn call it an Indian dish. Fung begins in central Trinidad and travels to India's Bhojpuri region, before finally heading back home to Toronto, along the way visiting villages and cities, spice factories, and home kitchens, where he finds many varieties of roti and disparate ways of preparing and serving it. Jung interviews cooks, shop owners, authors, scholars, and historians, assembling a timeline beginning in the mid-19th up through the early-20th centuries when indentured workers brought roti from India to the Caribbean colonies, while also touching on the history of sugar cane production and slavery in the Caribbean. Interwoven are present-day human interest stories, as well

as culinary details of preparing roti. Animations and archival photographs add visual interest in between interviews and shots of flatbread being rolled out, fried, and folded. An unusually meticulous if also occasionally meandering tribute to the complex history of a single dish, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

Eat: The Story of Food ★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 270 min. DVD: \$29.95. National Geographic (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-4263-4635-4.

According to this six-part National Geographic series, food is not only the staff of life, but also a major sensual experience, while its preparation can approach performance art, involving all five human senses. Enhanced by commentaries from food writers such as Michael Pollan (*The Omnivore's Dilemma*), and noted personalities like Padma Lakshmi, Rachael Ray, and Nigella Lawson, *Eat* looks at food in all its variety, as well as its role in creating community and establishing memories. Food also has played a part in revolution and war, whether it be the Boston Tea Party, or the fight between the Dutch and British over the supply of nutmeg. And food also contributed to one of the darkest episodes in human history, when Europeans and Americans imported slaves in order to harvest a steady supply of sugar. The documentary describes the role of a number of "food revolutionaries," ranging from Christopher Columbus and the master chef Escoffier, to more modern figures such as Milton Hershey, Clarence Birdseye, and Chef Boyardee. Necessity led to inventions such as flash freezing, TV dinners, and the burgeoning fast food industry. For modern humans, it's a "quest for the crave," too often resulting in the consumption of unhealthy food fare. Other topics include the humble hot dog, the act of grilling as a male throwback to the hunter-gatherer role in olden days, and our eternal desire for poultry and fish. *Eat* notes that the future may require a "cultural shift," including eating more insects as a way to stretch the food supply for an exploding world population. Foodies here also confess to their various guilty pleasures in cuisine, while all agree that food is an expression of caring. While some of this material has been covered in other recent documentaries, and the series too often strains at humor, on balance it does offer a solid overview of a big topic. Extras include bonus interviews with celebrity chefs, and healthy food tips. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Dick ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$19.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors).

Director Brian Fender's documentary is built around a simple premise: the filmmaker used Craigslist to attract more than 60 male volunteers of various ages (21 to 80) and professions (monk, ex-marine, designer) to show and talk about their penises on camera at his home. Filming the men anonymously (viewers only witness a few brief glimpses of anything above the neck, or hear names), Fender intercuts photos from textbooks and art as he asks some hard questions that lead to revealing comments. Topics covered include naming their penises, circumcision, initial awareness, first sexual experiences, masturbation, exhibitionism, piercing, the question of whether size matters, relationships, medical issues, and disappointment. Not surprisingly, plenty of rationalizing is served up throughout the interviews, but also some laughter, tearful stories, and examples of those who are simply comfortable in their own skin ("Wouldn't it be nice if it were not such a huge deal?"). For more adventurous collections (although after about the 30th participant, the visual shock value pretty much wears off), this unique documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



Edible City ★★★

(2014) 55 min. DVD: \$39.99 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$250 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye.

Hard on the heels of *Slow Food Story* (VL-1/15)—Stefano Sardo's spirited documentary about the international movement to encourage local food production and regional

cuisine both to improve diet and protect the environment—comes this engaging film by Andrew W. Hasse, which offers a microcosmic view, focusing on the Good Food Movement that has sprung up in the San Francisco Bay region. We hear comments from theorists who talk about how the industrialization of agriculture began during World War II (with one suggesting that many of us are now effectively “eating oil”), witness scenes of individuals who begin small gardens on public land, and meet dedicated believers who work in co-ops that aim to produce nutritious canned goods (often made from scraps that might normally be thrown away), to be provided at reasonable cost to locals. The claims that some make for the project—one insists it’s a cutting-edge endeavor that will eventually become popular, while another describes it as the recovery of a lost art designed to “reintegrate human beings into the natural world”—sometimes sound extravagant, but overall this is an affectionate portrait of individuals (some eccentric) who are deeply committed to what they believe is a worthwhile, indeed necessary, enterprise. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Food Patriots ★★½

(2014) 70 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River. Closed captioned.

This eye-opening documentary by filmmaker Jeff Spitz centers on the modern-day equivalent of WWII-era Victory Gardeners: organic farmers and urban food growers/distributors, who are all working—in this age of big agri-business and food additives—to connect consumers with local food sources. *Food Patriots* begins very much at home with Spitz and his wife Jennifer and their two sons. Following their older boy’s battle with a food-borne illness, Jeff and Jennifer decided to gain more control over their food sources, becoming chicken farmers in a Chicago neighborhood and shopping more deliberately from community farmers. From here, the film branches out to look at: a variety of urban farms; creative means of bringing organic produce to neighborhoods where one can’t easily buy those products; large and small farms in rural Illinois; and dealing with superbugs in the food supply chain. A warm and enlightening documentary about the growing local food movement in America, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

Get Wise to Portion Size ★★½

(2014) 18 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher’s guide available). Learning ZoneXpress. PPR. Closed captioned.

Serving up a heaping helping of common sense advice about portions, this brief but info-packed primer features two adult hosts who cover topics such as portion distortion (noting how portions have become as much

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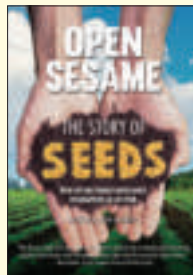
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Open Sesame: The Story of Seeds ★★½

(2015) 82 min. DVD: \$24.98. True Mind/TDC (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-939517-33-3.

This disturbing documentary from filmmaker M. Sean Kaminisky examines the crisis surrounding the corporate patenting of seeds—our most crucial source of food, fuel, and fabric. Despite millennia of dependence on seeds without any proprietary claims on the thousands of extant varieties of plants, vegetables, grains, and fruits (most now vanished), the last century has seen a rise in legal claims by corporate agriculture that a growing number of seeds are covered by patents. *Open Sesame* details how businesses such as Monsanto tweak the genetic structure of seeds and then insist that their entire DNA—no matter how long those seeds have existed or that they were originally developed by gardeners or small farmers—is company property. The film visits many farmers adversely affected by patent law, whose lawsuits are almost predictably dismissed by courts. On the plus side, representatives of organizations such as SaveSeed.org, Seed Savers Exchange, and Hudson Valley Seed Library talk about efforts to both preserve heirloom seeds that are free of genetic modification and distribute them. But there is still much reason to feel discouraged by the deep pockets of agribusiness and the voracious appetite of corporations in their bid to control our food. Extras include bonus interviews and deleted scenes. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)



as four times larger now than in the 1950s), how eating at restaurants changes our habits, and the American obsession with doing things big. Along the way, the program offers insights into the ways that size, age, and gender can affect one's dietary needs, and provides several helpful tips to avoid negative effects such as obesity. Viewers are advised to opt for drinking water (even enhanced with fruits or veggies, or green tea) instead of sugary stuff; avoid supersizing while also considering splitting meals when eating out; use MyPlate.gov guidelines and hand/plate size to gauge good portions for eating at home; and adopt other ideas to curb unhealthy eating. Providing solid guidance in a clear and compelling presentation that features zippy music and pertinent visuals, this is highly recommended. Aud: E, I, J, H, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

The Great Chicken Wing Hunt ★★½

(2013) 72 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

There may be more noble causes in the world than identifying the best chicken wing in upstate New York, but there's no denying the fervor with which a busload of "judges" set about that quest in the documentary *The Great Chicken Wing Hunt*. Led by an eccentric former Reuters journalist named Matt Reynolds (who also directed the film), the volunteer tasters are determined to find the ultimate wing in the U.S. region where it was born: Buffalo, and surrounding environs. Reynolds's mission begins, curiously, in Slovakia, where he introduces friends and a future fiancée to his own wings recipe, as well as his passion for the dish. Reynolds looks at the origins of Buffalo wings, including the Sicilian restaurateurs who, in 1964, found a way to make use of chicken parts that were ordinarily tossed away as useless. Going from

eatory to tavern to specialty wings joints, Reynolds and his team taste hundreds of recipes, rating and hotly debating everything they try. While this feels like a fun novelty for a while, it soon grows a little tedious: for most of us, there's only so much interest we can muster about chicken wings. A strong optional purchase. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Master of the Universe ★★★

(2013) 88 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99. KimStim (avail. from most distributors).

Taking a low-key, quietly moody approach, German filmmaker Marc Bauder employs a vast, empty Frankfurt bank building (made obsolete, we ultimately learn, in a colossal merger) for a one-man interview/soliloquy with former investment banker Rainer Voss (after Voss clears things with his lawyers). The rumpled, middle-aged businessman (laid off, we later discover) recalls the staid, regimented world of European high finance before the dizzying Reagan/Thatcher era of deregulation and globalization. The advent of computer spreadsheets and digital trading would usher in a new generation of young traders such as Voss (more cautious seasoned older guys simply weren't able to handle the new technology), and enormous wealth transfers in tiny spans of time quickly became commonplace. But so did high-risk ventures, bad debts, and junk-finance peddling that brought down entire nations. Archival clips cover the Goldman/Sachs, Lehman Brothers, and Jérôme Kerviel scandals, as traders faced inhuman pressures to create "growth" (real or not). The economic lessons and warnings that Voss attempts to impart here are not as simple

as those found in polemical agit-prop pieces from the left, but the documentary does convey a strong sense of looming financial *gotterdammerung*, as incomprehensibly huge corporate entities fail to take up reform. Following a predicted upcoming collapse of France, says Bauder, it will be "game over." A disturbing overview of the continuing recipe for global economic doom, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

Rise of the Hackers ★★½

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-126-4.

This episode from PBS's award-winning NOVA series explores the rise of computer hacking while also profiling the scientists and mathematicians on the frontlines in the effort to keep data safe. The opening establishes a sober tone as it recounts the experience of a writer for *Wired* magazine who lost most of his digital life when a group of teenage hackers broke into his Amazon account and then followed up with a chain of other invasions, moving from Amazon to Apple to Google to Twitter. Of course, the specific holes exploited in this case have been closed—a benefit of hacking is that the safety of computer systems tends to increase—but the ongoing battle is a game of digital whack-a-mole. As personally devastating as such intrusions can be, it's even worse when nations get into the game (this documentary was made before the Sony debacle and the high-profile brouhaha surrounding North Korea's protest over the movie *The Interview*), where there is a potential for compromising computer-controlled machines that run such things as a country's nuclear program. In addition to sounding the alarms, director Kate Dart covers the "good guys"—those who are working in the field called "ultra-paranoid computing" to develop unbreakable codes and other defenses against cybercriminals. Viewers learn about key elements of online security (such as how prime numbers are used for the encryption techniques we take for granted every time we shop online) and developments that promise big changes, not just through advanced data technology, but also using physics and photons. Eye-opening and scary, but also ultimately somewhat reassuring, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Block)

The Singularity ★★★

(2012) 75 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$295. Doug Wolens Films. PPR.

Subtitled "Will We Survive Our Technology," filmmaker Doug Wolens's *The Singularity* is a four-part talking-heads presentation that is punctuated briefly with CGI and stock-footage inserts. The "singularity," proposed

by author/inventor Ray Kurzweil refers to an inevitable point sometime in the next few decades when exponentially advancing microchip computing, nanotech, artificial intelligence, and robotics/prosthetics will lead to the creation of machines that are equal to or surpass human neurobiology. At this point, humankind will become “trans-human,” as wet-wired, superior cyborgs mark the next step up in evolution. Not everyone agrees or is as enthusiastic about the prospect, as evidenced here in the responses from a luminous array of scientists, philosophers, and consultants (ranging from Leon Panetta to engineering editor Glenn Zorpette to authors David Chalmers, Marshall Brain, and Cynthia Breazeal), who declare that Kurzweil’s projections ignore the often messy and unpredictable course of science and society (which today can barely develop a robot as sentient and self-guided as a small insect or worm). The true anti-Kurzweil here is Bill McKibben, who finds the “transhumanists” to be an immature bunch of futurists, seemingly driven by an obsessive fear of death and a near-superstitious faith that technology will grant software-based immortality. McKibben prefers less tech, and he lauds sci-fi writers for having explored the consequences of singularity-type concepts better than anyone else. Presented in both the full-length version and a 56-minute abridgement, extras include extended interviews. A thought-provoking documentary that makes a solid complement to the excellent Kurzweil profile doc *Transcendent Man* (VL-7/11), this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

World Series Champions 2014 ★★
(2014) 86 min. DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$34.99. Lionsgate Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Diehard San Francisco Giants fans will have a field day with this punchy, pumped up overview of MLB 2014 postseason play and dramatic moments from all seven World Series games. Dramatic is the key word. No opportunity to highlight emotion-filled scenes is left unhyped in the aggrandized saga of the Giants’ third championship win in five years. Colin Hanks narrates this documentary, which divides early chapters into effective clip reels of the Giants’ wild card, division, and league series play. The Kansas City Royals are given shorter shrift in their Cinderella journey to the ball, but it’s really not their show anyway. Once the World Series games get underway, the storytelling becomes even more fraught with nail-biting action, underscoring the Giants’ early handicap and the tense back-and-forth that made for seven great games. While the exciting series was excellent TV in itself, MLB’s production



Ice Warriors: USA Sled Hockey ★★1/2

(2014) 86 min. DVD: \$24.99. PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-086-2.

Ice sled hockey puts players on a narrow sled, with each athlete holding two sticks for propulsion around the rink, often hurtling at speeds of 30-35 miles per hour. Dubbed “anger management for men,” the sport is particularly challenging because the players suffer a wide range of disabilities: birth defects, spina bifida, war injuries, and amputations. Filmmaker Brian Knappenberger’s PBS-aired documentary follows the U.S. Paralympic sled hockey team as they come together, bond, and train, all with the goal of winning back to back gold medals at the Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia in early 2014. The men hail from different backgrounds, and are of various ages, but several are military veterans who lost limbs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Players describe their struggle to overcome depression and self-pity, referring to the “light switch moment” that led them to submit and commit to a rigorous training schedule. For many of the men here, there is the additional concern of being seriously injured on the ice and adding to their wounds. Paralympic competition is a serious business (sled hockey has only been a recognized event since 1994): as the team prepares for Sochi, the roster must be cut to 15 men, honed down while meeting the archrival Canadian team on home ice. *Ice Warriors* also allows time for the athletes to talk about their backstories, disappointments, hopes, and what the game means to them. One athlete calls the sport “the best 45 minutes of my life,” a time when he can forget about his troubles and pain. An inspiring film that should appeal to sports fans, this is recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)

team have condensed it into a tightly-paced, stylish package enhanced with unseen footage from the games, and eavesdropped moments from batting practice, the dugout, and the clubhouse, along with polished studio one-on-ones with the players. Extras include bonus featurettes (even more highlights of the highlights). Recommended for larger sports collections. Aud: P. (T. Fry)

CRAFTS, ARTS & HOBBIES

Threads: Quick-to-Sew Pants ★★1/2
(2014) 104 min. DVD: \$24.95. The Taunton Press (dist. by The AV Cafe). PPR. ISBN: 978-1-62710-973-4.

Seamstress and pattern designer Louise Cutting, a contributing editor for *Threads* magazine, wants to make pants fit properly, and she shares numerous helpful tips to achieve that goal in this informative how-to video. Working with two patterns of her own design (one with side leg seams, one without), Cutting demonstrates the techniques that will ensure good results. The finished products displayed here are not tailored trousers—with pockets or without, straight-legged or tapered, all feature elastic waistbands—but many are shown in expensive fabrics that drape beautifully and look quite attractive. In her pleasant voice, Cutting describes how to measure one’s body, adjust the pattern (“Alter first, then sew!” is her wise advice), cut out the material, and assemble the garment, along the way including tips on appropriate tools and equipment (so that’s what a French curve is used for!). With the increasing popularity of

sewing and other DIY projects, this will be a welcome addition to library collections. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (F. Gardner)

THE ARTS

1000 Masterworks: 300 Minutes of Art

★★★
(2014) 300 min. Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).

Made by the German company WDR between 1980 and 1994 under the rubric *1000 Meisterwerke aus den grossen Museen der Welt*, this ambitious series comprised of 10-minute shorts—offering scholarly analyses of individual artworks and profiles of artists—has witnessed numerous permutations on disc. Many compilations have been devoted to particular historical periods or styles, while the recent *1000 Masterworks: Renaissance to Postmodernism* (VL Online-9/14) was arranged by museums where the profiled pieces are currently held. *300 Minutes of Art*—the first Blu-ray release—is a sampler surveying 30 works (some famous, others more obscure), ranging from the 15th century (Andrea Mantegna’s “Crucifixion of Christ” of 1456–59 and Leonardo da Vinci’s “Portrait of Ginevra de’ Benci” of 1474–78) to the late 20th (Andy Warhol’s “The Texan” of 1963 and Willem de Kooning’s “Morning: The Springs,” from 1983), although the emphasis is on the 19th and especially the 20th centuries (oddly, no works hail from the 18th). While one might quarrel with the choices, all of the segments are characterized by excellent camerawork that spotlights important details, while the



The Kingdom of Dreams and Madness ★★★

(2013) 118 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.95. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Despite the title, the emotional fireworks are decidedly muted in filmmaker Mami Sunada's fly-on-the-wall portrait of Japan's venerated Studio Ghibli animation powerhouse and its founder/leading filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki. The low-key approach here is far from a slick Tinseltown PR piece, with barely any clips from Miyazaki classics such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Castle in the Sky*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, etc. (the studio maintains an onsite museum, mostly unseen here, devoted to the works). And forget gossip about box-office earnings, awards, or red-carpet premieres. Instead, the leisurely narrative focuses on the inner circle of Miyazaki's creative team in a quiet, homey office building, as they embark on what he decides will be his last production before retiring, the historical aviation anime *The Wind Rises* (about a pacifist young engineer who would help develop the Zero warplane). Miyazaki, a nature-loving gentle curmudgeon at 72, finds disfavor with the 21st century (citing the Fukushima nuclear disaster), wonders if movies are really worth all the fuss, and speaks both cuttingly and respectfully of fellow animator Isao Takahata, under whom he apprenticed in his youth (Takahata's Oscar-nominated *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* is also being produced at the same time under Ghibli's aegis alongside *The Wind Rises*). Viewers without prior interest or exposure to Miyazaki and his sublime art may not be attracted, but many anime fans will be eager to see this behind-the-scenes profile of the beloved studio. Extras include the short film "Digest" and a featurette. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

analyses (presented in German, English, and French) offer intelligent interpretations, fine thumbnail biographies of the artists, and insightful comparisons with an individual's other works, as well as those of predecessors and contemporaries. As a taste of a fine series that may whet viewers' appetite for more, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Angel Azul ★★★

(2014) 72 min. DVD: \$39.99 (\$125 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. DRA. Collective Eye.

Peter Coyote provides narration for Marcelina Cravat's beautifully shot documentary on art in the service of science. English-born sculptor Jason deCaires Taylor lives in the West Indies with his wife and child. After Hurricane Ivan devastates Grenada, Taylor decides to build a series of underwater sculptures to double as an artificial reef. Over time, coral, algae, and other biological entities begin to cover the cement figures, transforming them into creatures that simultaneously appear both elegant and eerie. Eventually, they will no longer be recognizable as human. Taylor's pieces also carry messages about global warming and water pollution, such as the heads-in-the-ground-figures of "The Politicians," and "The Last Supper," which depicts a repast of fish and hand grenades. "The Listener," a body covered in ears, actually records the sounds of the reef. As word of his work spreads, Taylor receives invitations from other territories concerned with reef protection (grants and sponsorships pay for his work). In Mexico, the artist creates "The Silent Evolution," a congregation of 400 figures that look quite realistic because Taylor used people in Cancún as models.

In *Angel Azul*, Taylor and his team cover a woman from head to toe (only her nostrils remain visible) in goopy white silicone, a scene sure to incite claustrophobia in many viewers. Cravat follows the making of this piece, called "The Angel," from start to finish. After the installation, Taylor leaves Mexico with his family for the Canary Islands, where he plans to create more underwater communities. An interesting portrait of a nontraditional artist, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Beatz: Divergences and Contradictions of Electronic Music ★★★

(2014) 72 min. DVD: \$19.95 (\$295 w/PPR). DRA. Analog Solutions (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-504-3.

This passion project by DJ Eduardo De La Calle—who also owns two well-regarded, vinyl-only record labels—serves up a mosaic of insights and opinions concerning the state of electronic music, expressed by various members in the music industry. Artists, managers, label owners, club owners, etc., all weigh in on issues relevant to electronic music: analog vs. digital recording, equipment, and the blurry line between electronic music and instrumental music that incorporates electronic elements. Featuring Laurent Garnier, Carl Cox, Kent Larkin, Ben Klock, and scores of others, the infectious *Beatz* will certainly appeal to fans of electronic music. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Becoming Made ★★★1/2

(2014) 35 min. DVD: \$18. Mary Brodbeck Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-0-692-31394-7.

Michigan-based artist and filmmaker Mary Brodbeck turns the camera here on

her own work in creating woodblock prints. Inspired by the great masters Hiroshige and Hokusai, Brodbeck moves in a community of like-minded Western and Japanese creative artists who are eager to keep this ancient practice alive and relevant. *Becoming Made* looks at the complex, time-consuming effort needed for this visually vibrant art form. Brodbeck is a charming onscreen presence and patient instructor, demonstrating the intensive preparation necessary for creating a woodblock print. Brodbeck's very careful consideration of materials being used—especially in regard to the watercolor inks that give the prints their sharp hues—brings a Zen-worthy appreciation to the creative process. Along the way, poet-philosopher Mark Nepo provides a gentle running commentary, and viewers meet other contemporary woodblock print creators, while also being introduced to the classic Japanese works that still inspire and intrigue art lovers. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Heather McDonald: I Don't Mean to Brag

★★★

(2014) 58 min. DVD: \$14.98. Inception Media Group (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Comedienne Heather McDonald performs a winning standup act before a Hollywood audience loudly appreciative of her material on marriage, kids, Catholicism, suburbs, and the tricky business of gauging suitable jokes for different crowds. Dressed in painted-on denims and a sleeveless top, McDonald makes a point of undercutting the standard image of a soccer mom with three children, emphasizing with disarming humor that she's still a sexy gal who engages in fantasy games with her husband (but only after she's sure the Benadryl has kicked in with their kids). McDonald also discusses being a lapsed Catholic and points out evidence of Jesus's bad attitude during his teen years (he called his mother "woman"). McDonald also serves up an extended bit about the disgusting realities of married swingers, which becomes part of some very funny further observations about playing to a faux-hip audience versus, say, a state fair. Great energy, good gags, and smart delivery make this show a winner. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Impossible Light ★★★

(2014) 70 min. DVD: \$14.99. Mission Rock Pictures (avail. from www.impossiblelightfilm.com).

The San Francisco-Oakland Bay bridge stands in the shadow of the more celebrated Golden Gate bridge. It's a stripped-down structure meant to be useful, not a work of art. A few years ago, Ben Davis, an official on the city's "Illuminate the Arts" committee, came up with the idea for the "Bay Lights" project, which proposed bathing the bridge in a moving light show. This PBS-aired documentary

from filmmaker Jeremy Ambers charts the course of the project from original idea and official proposal, through the installation and troubleshooting, and up to the final dedication in 2013. The scale of the project was huge, and so were the challenges, which

involved working at great heights while also contending with the cold and wind. Artist Leo Villareal submitted the plan, and helped guide the process, although—as always—funding was a problem, involving a mix of public and private sponsorship (at one point,

Davis even offered to put up the equity in his house to meet the goal). But the project's supposed "impossibility" would inspire people to make it possible, and San Francisco's famed atmospheric changes—played out in sky, fog, and water—turned the illuminated bridge into a dazzling beacon. The lights were initially slated to remain in place until 2015, but recent additional funding has extended its lifespan (incredibly, the electrical costs only amount to a few dollars a day). Although occasionally becoming bogged down in technical detail, *Impossible Light* should appeal to anyone interested in monumental public art. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

The Making of a Cult Classic: The Unauthorized Story of The Goonies ★★★

(2014) 90 min. DVD: \$9.95. Oxygen Productions (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-497-8.

Filmmaker Ron Fugelseth's documentary serves up a fun trip down memory lane featuring many of the principals involved with making the 1985 adventure-comedy classic *The Goonies*. Director Richard Donner recalls driving up the U.S. West Coast while scouting locations for the story's small-town-on-the-ocean setting, and being knocked out by Astoria, OR, as a perfect match for the hidden-treasure tale's requirements. Corey Feldman remembers a visit to the set by Michael Jackson, and how his excitement over the King of Pop's presence carried over into his performance. Sean Astin takes a broad view of the movie's enduring appeal as a rare example of many elements all coming together nicely. Joe Pantoliano and Robert Davi, who played the film's villainous Fratelli brothers, reminisce about how their offscreen antipathy towards one another was channeled by Donner into their characters' relationship. Fascinating details emerge: Steven Spielberg, who produced *The Goonies*, personally directed second unit scenes to speed up the production, and Harrison Ford caused some buzz by dropping by one day. Not interviewed here are Spielberg, costar Josh Brolin, and screenwriter Chris Columbus. But what is here will be a special treat for *Goonies* fans. Extras include bonus interview footage. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)



Triptych: 3 Women Making Art ★★★1/2

(2014) 34 min. DVD: \$65; public libraries; \$99; high schools; \$175; colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR.

Pam Walton's *Triptych* profiles ceramist Lana Wilson, painter Nan Golub, and author Jeanne DuPrau, all of whom are in their 70s. Each woman shows examples of her work and talks about the creative process. Wilson, who makes dishware and folk-art totems with religious motifs, molds clay on camera as she explains her methods. Golub displays several of her paintings, characterizing her approach as casual—"slap 'em on there"—and describes how she works with materials, images, and

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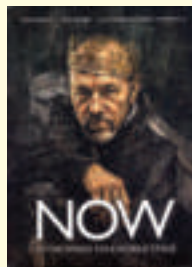
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Now: In the Wings on a World Stage ★★★

(2014) 93 min. DVD: \$24.99. Bond/360 (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Filmmaker Jeremy Whelehan's engaging documentary follows a world tour of Shakespeare's *Richard III* that originated as a joint venture between London's Old Vic and the Brooklyn Academy of Music for the Bridge Project—a collaborative effort designed to bring British and American actors of very different backgrounds together. The most notable star here is Kevin Spacey, who assumed directorship of the venerable English theatre as well as the title role in the play; he's featured not only in rehearsal and performance clips but also in backstage shots, interview excerpts, and quasi-travelogue footage as the scrappy troupe makes its way from England to the ancient Greek amphitheater at Epidaurus, and on to Istanbul, Beijing, Doha, Sydney, Naples, and San Francisco before reaching New York. While Spacey is the central focus, much time is also spent on his collaborators, including director Sam Mendes, who recalls working with Spacey on *American Beauty*. Some viewers may be disappointed that *Now* offers relatively few snippets from the actual performances of *Richard III*, but the real subject here is the creative process and the camaraderie that builds up amongst the cast and crew as the production takes shape and hits the road. The intense bonds formed—as well as the transitory, ephemeral nature of the result—are well caught here. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



"delicious" unmixed pure color. The subjects also discuss what inspires them: for DuPrau, her 1950s childhood in the shadow of nuclear catastrophe informs the *City of Ember* series, "probably an expression of [her] own personal darkness as well as the darkness of the nuclear world"; Golub is excited by the visual life of "moving, dancing" New York City, and is obviously emotional as she shows Walton sketches of her longtime partner, who urges her to use more heart than technique in her work. Each artist also recalls early responses to her art: Wilson spent years entering shows and being rejected before achieving success; Golub's initial reviews said she painted like an old man; DuPrau shows the "perfect" opening page of her first manuscript and the same page marked up with her editor's critique. A well-produced, colorful visit to the work spaces and into the minds of older women artists, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

Ben Franklin's Balloons ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-132-5.

Over 200 years ago, humanity freed itself from Earth's bounds when the first hot air balloon was launched in France. The title of this PBS-aided NOVA documentary from filmmaker Stéphane Bégoin is somewhat misleading: Benjamin Franklin played no part in the balloon launches, but he was fortunate enough to witness the amazing sight while on a diplomatic mission in France and he thoroughly chronicled his observations in journals and correspondence. Two brothers, Joseph-Michel and Jacques-Étienne Montgolfier

created the hot air balloon, apparently from paper and cotton, after one of the men observed his wife's blouse floating up while drying over a fire. Heat caused the air to expand and rise, but the brothers believed there was an added element, which they dubbed "Montgolfier gas," and they would later fuel their launches with decidedly exotic items such as wool, rotten meat, and old shoes. Naturally, the sight of unmanned balloons floating over the countryside caused a bit of a stir; some believed that the balloons represented witchcraft, and when one returned to earth, peasants attacked it with scythes and flails. At first, King Louis XVI was hesitant to approve a manned launch, fearing that passengers would die. People were even unsure whether the air above was breathable, or how high or far the balloon would travel. A balloon launch in Paris brought out half the city's population, setting off a "balloon mania" in cities across Europe. The documentary also looks at modern day efforts to recreate early voyages, which employ authentic details in highly decorated balloons and gondolas honoring the glories of King Louis's reign. By 1785, a balloon crossed the English Channel (eventually blown off course to Belgium) and a new era of progress was born. Combining engaging details with scientific research, this slice of early tech history—which nicely ties in with Richard Holmes's 2013 critically-acclaimed book *Falling Upwards: How We Took to the Air*—is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

The Heiress and Her Chateau: Carolands of California ★★★1/2

(2014) 56 min. DVD: \$99.99. Luna Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-63443-435-5.

Filmmakers Catherine Ryan and Gary Weimberg's fascinating PBS-aided documen-

tary chronicles the history of Carolands, a seemingly doomed project that spanned the entire 20th century and only found its permanent purpose in the 21st. The story begins with Harriett Pullman, daughter of George Pullman and heiress to the latter's vast railroad fortune, who acquired her money while relatively young, married American Frank Carolan, and settled in the San Francisco area at a time when wealthy industrialists were building mansions. The San Francisco earthquake of 1906 sent those rich families farther away, to Hillsborough, a community designed to keep common folk out (e.g., no sidewalks were allowed). Here, Harriett decided to build the grandest mansion of all, a 98-room chateau called Carolands, designed by Beaux Arts architect Ernest Sanson. With its completion delayed by World War I and various other obstacles, Carolands cost Harriett nearly her entire fortune yet never came close to realizing her dream that it would become a destination for America's aristocracy. After changing hands several times and sliding into ruin during lengthy periods of neglect, Carolands finally came into the possession of its current owners, a foundation that hosts fundraisers there. Rich in historical detail, *The Heiress and Her Chateau* is the story of an elusive dream, not only for Harriett but also others who fell in love with both Sanson's artistry and the heiress's obsession. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

No Fire Zone ★★★1/2

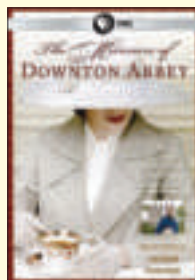
(2012) 93 min. In English & Tamil w/English subtitles. DVD: \$300. DRA. Film Platform (avail. from www.filmplatform.net). PPR.

A searing documentary, filmmaker Callum Macrae's *No Fire Zone* focuses on the final months of the long civil war in Sri Lanka that pitted the secessionist Tamils against the government. The opening serves as prologue, briefly sketching Sri Lanka's history from 1948, when the country gained independence from Britain, through 2008, putting special emphasis on the quarter-century struggle that the revolutionary Tamil Tigers fought against a regime they considered repressive. Macrae doesn't whitewash the brutality perpetrated by both sides, but he centers on the period from January through May of 2009, when Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, having inflicted major defeats on the Tigers, determined to end the hostilities once and for all. As the film shows—drawing on evidence from U.N. observers on the ground and Tamil survivors, as well as footage actually taken by military soldiers engaged in the operation—the government established supposedly safe "no fire zones" in the north of the country, where operations against the rebels were underway. And then—after the arrival of thousands of civilian refugees—the government bombed these locales while refusing to send shipments of food and medicine. The

The Manners of Downton Abbey ★★★

(2015) 52 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$49.99 w/PPR), Blu-ray: \$29.99 (\$49.99 w/PPR). PBS Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-197-4 (dvd), 978-1-62789-198-1 (blu-ray).

Given the popularity of PBS's *Downton Abbey*, filmmaker Louise Wardle's companion documentary—part behind-the-scenes, part behind-the-behavior—is likely to be quite popular. Historian Alastair "The Oracle" Bruce, the hit U.K. show's advisor on anthropological detail in the Edwardian era, here explains the etiquette that accompanies the dramatics—everything from how servants employed precise measurements for dinner-table place settings, to the intriguing notion that the aristocracy's seemingly carefree lives of luxury and opulence were actually for many a "duty" they were required to fulfill. Some scenes—such as a polite, low-key exchange between butler John Bates (Brendan Coyle) and Earl of Grantham Robert Crawley (Hugh Bonneville), in which much of utmost importance is said in absolute silence—owe as much to the superb acting as to the formal style in which the different classes communicated. Other *Downton* stars interviewed, mostly out of costume, include Laura Carmichael, Ed Speleers, Elizabeth McGovern, Tom Cullen, Joanne Froggatt, Sophie McShera, and Michelle Dockery. DVD extras include a featurette on the creation of a period-proper party dress. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)



troops also tortured and summarily executed rebel fighters, among them the young son of one of the Tiger leaders. Filled with images of shocking immediacy—including explicit scenes of killings—*No Fire Zone* is a very difficult film to watch, but one with great significance, enhanced by a last segment showing that the government officials in charge of the massacres are still in power, untouched by international censure and actively working to prevent Macrae's film from distribution. Presented with both the full-length version and a 54-minute abridgement, this deeply unsettling film is essential viewing for anyone interested in the cause of human rights. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Discoveries... America National Parks: Dry Tortugas ★★★1/2

(2012) 50 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-160-3 (dvd), 978-1-60490-183-2 (blu-ray).

This latest entry in Jim and Kelly Watt's beautiful, high-def filmed *Discoveries...* *America National Parks* series explores the marine park Dry Tortugas, located in the Florida Keys. A wildlife sanctuary for marine ecosystem study, Dry Tortugas also boasts a fascinating history as part of America's development. During the centuries of Spanish conquest—with its attendant gold and silver mining in the New World—the waters of the Keys witnessed a great deal of Spanish ship traffic. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the new nation turned its attention to the Keys area, although it would take another two decades for Spain to cede it. Shortly thereafter, Fort Jefferson was built on

a tiny island in the Tortugas to fend off any potential threats from Spain or Britain that could choke off American commerce, which was so highly dependent on the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. The fort was later reinforced by the Union Army during the Civil War, and it also held prisoners, including the surgeon who treated John Wilkes Booth's leg, which was broken during the assassination of President Lincoln. Featuring an entertaining and enlightening presentation by a park guide, the program also visits the Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center, which has a replica of a coral reef. Sure to appeal to armchair travelers, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

Last Stop, Flamingo ★★★

(2013) 56 min. DVD: \$15: individuals; \$40 w/PPR: institutions. Substream Films.

This final installment in a trilogy about Florida by Georg Koszulinski, who teaches film studies at Seattle University, blends various strands—travelogue, animation, historical analysis, found footage, memoir—into an evocative, even somewhat hallucinatory reverie on the ways in which the state has been transformed by the diverse desires of human beings. Koszulinski begins with visionary schemes, from the weird cosmological ramblings of Cyrus Teed, who in the late 19th century planned a "New Jerusalem" in the swamp, to the unrealized dream of entrepreneurial developers and their hopeful investors to build a huge community called Golden Gates Estates. Koszulinski then proceeds to explore landscapes such as the Everglades and the manmade white-sand beaches frequented by tourists, while also addressing mythical creatures like mermaids and the so-called skunk ape that Floridians impersonate in amusement parks or try to track down. Juxtaposing gated communities

against the natural world represented by his aged grandfather's garden, and comparing his childhood recollections with modern realities, Koszulinski concludes with a visit to remote Flamingo in the far south, where the muddy coast still resembles the landscape that European explorers encountered some five hundred years ago—before reminding us that the flamingo, a longstanding symbol of the state, isn't really native either. Koszulinski's impressionistic take on Florida is definitely idiosyncratic, but it's also an engaging journey that is well worth taking. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

World War I: The Western Front

★★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95. Globe Trekker (avail. from most distributors). PPR. ISBN: 1-937103-26-2.

One hundred years later, the landscape still carries painful reminders of World War I, the "war to end all wars," which engulfed Europe from 1914-1918. This *Globe Trekker* special returns to the scenes of carnage, now the sites of unusual cemeteries and peaceful countryside. As in many wars, soldiers on all sides had little idea of what they were in for, wrongly assuming that the conflict would be over quickly. Colorful uniforms made soldiers easy targets for snipers, and as industrialized warfare began to swiftly pile up casualties, men were often buried where they fell, many times mixed together with the bones from opposing army infantrymen. After early bloody battles, campaigns quickly hardened into stalemates, as armies sought advantage through trench warfare and tunnels, as well as the use of tanks, poison gas, and eventually airplanes. Furious fights would often net only a few yards of ground. Local guides and experts here point out landmarks from Verdun and the battle of the Somme, as well as poignant spots such as a simple chapel located within a quarry cave—a temporary shelter to pray in before soldiers went on to face almost certain death. The program also looks at the origin of John McCrae's famous poem "In Flanders Fields," and examines artifacts that are still being unearthed from battlefields. In a tragic irony, one of the war's most bloody battles was fought on the last day, continuing even after the armistice was signed—an appalling capstone to a futile war that cost 10 million lives. Combining incisive commentary with outstanding views, this historical travelogue is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

BIOGRAPHY

All About Ann: Governor Richards of the Lone Star State ★★★

(2014) 82 min. DVD: \$99.95: public libraries & high schools; \$350: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1501-7.

In the summer of 1988, a bold new political

force emerged on the national scene when Texas State Treasurer Ann Richards gave a brashly amusing keynote speech during the Democratic National Convention. Richards, who had served as state treasurer since 1983, reeled off caustic putdowns of Republican nominee Vice-President George Bush, creating a happy shockwave throughout the convention and stamping her as a larger-than-life personality ready to shake up the political scene. Richards was elected governor of Texas in 1990, but despite an achievement-rich term she was soundly defeated during her 1994 re-election bid by George W. Bush. Filmmaker Keith Patterson's documentary traces the unlikely rise of Richards from a poverty-stricken childhood to the dizzying heights of the rough-and-tumble world of Texas politics, where she brought diversity and technology to the Lone Star State's long-stagnant government. Many admirers here speak warmly of Richards's wit and skills, including former President Bill Clinton, TV anchors Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather, and Michael Dukakis, the presidential nominee at the convention where Richards stole the show with her speech (notably absent here are Bush senior and junior). Richards's political star may not have burned for long (she died in 2006 from esophageal cancer), but her impact was considerable. A fine biographical portrait, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Bing Crosby Rediscovered ★★☆☆1/2

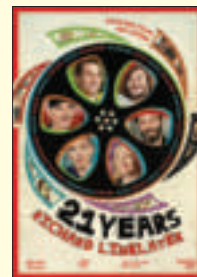
(2014) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-160-8.

This PBS-aided *American Masters* documentary from filmmaker Robert Trachtenberg looks at the life of one of the most successful and oft-recorded vocalists in history, Bing Crosby (1903-1977). Viewers who thought they knew Crosby from his holiday chestnut *White Christmas* and his paternal laid-back demeanor may be surprised to learn that the entertainer was considered a ladies' man and carouser in his early Hollywood days, chronically late to engagements and even denounced from the pulpit since his romantic singing was blamed for a number of divorces (Crosby's lead role as a Catholic priest in the hit *Going My Way* was actually a career risk). Crosby had the distinction of being able to hold his liquor; the same was not true of his first wife, and some of his notoriously troubled children may have been the victims of fetal alcohol syndrome. The posthumous image of Crosby as a cold, abusive father, according to family members interviewed here (actress-daughter Mary, widow Kathryn), was largely due to late son Gary Crosby being convinced to spice up his tell-all memoir for hype purposes. Crosby's famous *Road* comedies with Bob Hope were the most successful film franchise prior to James Bond, but while the duo seemed inseparable to the public, Bing and Bob actually saw little of each other when not performing (a good way to

21 Years: Richard Linklater ★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 79 min. DVD: \$19.99. Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors).

This wonderfully entertaining and thoughtful overview of the career of Richard Linklater—a leading light in America's independent film movement—is a must-see for fans of the Austin-based director's many movies, which include *Slacker*, *Bernie*, *Before Sunrise*, *School of Rock*, *Dazed and Confused*, and the multi-Oscar-nominated *Boyhood*. Michael Dunaway and Tara Wood's documentary does not feature Linklater in current or archival interviews (Linklater appears in a few still photographs and in his character role in *Slacker*). Instead, all of the commentary in *21 Years* comes from past collaborators, well-known actors who have much experience with Linklater's often-oblique sensibilities and Buddhist-like aphorisms. Jack Black talks about the director's enormous confidence and trust in his actors; Ethan Hawke (perhaps Linklater's most frequent star) speaks extensively about the courage it took to make "the least-profitable trilogy in movie history" (*Before Sunrise*, *Before Sunset*, *Before Midnight*), a very honest portrait of a relationship and marriage. Billy Bob Thornton (who starred in the hilarious remake of *Bad News Bears*) touches on how Linklater doesn't show his complete hand to a cast while filming, and Matthew McConaughey proves both hilarious and brilliant going down long, long roads to make a series of points about Linklater as an inspirational artist. A fun portrait of an influential filmmaker currently at the top of his game, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



stay friends in showbiz, evidently). The artist whom Crosby did idolize, in fact, was Louis Armstrong. Although it has a smattering of harsh language (rather peculiar in the genteel Crosby atmosphere), *Bing Crosby Rediscovered* is a fine biographical portrait, featuring interviewees including Crosby biographer Gary Giddins and crooners Tony Bennett and Michael Feinstein. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

Cristiano Ronaldo: The World at His Feet ★★☆☆

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$19.95. Vision Films (avail. from most distributors).

Oscar nominee Benedict Cumberbatch narrates this brisk and exciting documentary profile of the soccer player regarded by many as the best in the world, Cristiano Ronaldo of the Spanish club Real Madrid, who is also captain of the Portugal national team. Director Tara Pirnia traces Ronaldo's humble beginnings as a child in a slum in Madeira, Portugal, sleeping on a dirt floor and eating little. A loner, Ronaldo found a companion of sorts in an old soccer ball and eventually began playing for a youth league. At 12, he was noticed by professional scouts and his training for the big leagues began. Signed to United Manchester in England while still very young, Ronaldo became a superstar, which meant a hero to some and an arrogant villain to others. Combining extensive interview clips, archival and recent footage, and some dramatic re-enactments, *The World at His Feet* details Ronaldo's ups and downs, numerous awards and accomplishments, and gradual maturity from self-centered playboy to major philanthropist and role model. Still active with Real Madrid, Ronaldo's story is far from finished. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

The Decent One ★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 96 min. In German w/English subtitles, DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors, Mar. 31), \$349 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber.

Vanessa Lapa's fascinating biographical documentary, which looks at the private life of Heinrich Himmler, chief of Hitler's black-uniformed SS elite corps and a major architect of the Final Solution in which Jews were exterminated in concentration camps, draws on journals and correspondence recovered after the war. Actors read sometimes-astrounding passages against a backdrop of vintage/archival footage (Leni Riefenstahl's being the most recognizable). The young Himmler, who harbored a loathing of Jews, Slavs, and homosexuals, aspired to fight for the Fatherland in the Great War but was disappointed. He would trade treacle-laced love letters with his bride (which did not stop him from taking a mistress during WWII), exhort German scientists to perfect a method of easy mass-sterilization for Jewish women, and commend himself and the SS for remaining fundamentally "decent" throughout the arduous and psychologically draining work of operating death factories and overseeing executions. Aside from a few title cards, all statements here come from Himmler, a despicable villain who is blitzkrieged through his own words. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning ★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 108 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-078-6.

Aired on PBS's *American Masters* series, this biographical portrait of 20th-century

photographer Dorothea Lange was directed by an insider, filmmaker Dyanna Taylor—Lange's own granddaughter. Taylor also taps into precious archival material shot by Phil Greene in the early 1960s, interviewing the aged Lange not long before her death from esophageal cancer, as the artist gathered her negatives and prints for a career-retrospective exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art. The documentary looks at Lange's early life among the Bohemian crowds of New York and San Francisco, and her first marriage to a California painter, who had no objection to his new wife opening her own photo studio/salon. The relationship ended (more or less amicably) when Lange met Paul Schuster Taylor, an economist assigned to cover the displaced farmers and struggling migrant workers of the Great Depression. Lange's developing social conscience and established skills at composition resulted in powerful and classic images, most notably "Migrant Mother." Later, Lange took pictures of the internment camps used to imprison Japanese-Americans during WWII (the U.S. military hired her but then suppressed the work) and, despite chronic health problems, created photo montages of the changing California landscape (making her somewhat of a pioneering environmentalist). Authors interviewed here include Richard Steven Street, Jan Goggans, Anne Whiston Spirn, and Lange biographer Elizabeth Partridge. A fine biography of a famed shutterbug, this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Duane Michals: The Man Who Invented Himself ★★★

(2013) 89 min. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$349 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorberedu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber.

Camille Guchard's documentary serves up a playful portrait of octogenarian photographer Duane Michals, who is not only known for his commercial work during the 1960s and '70s but is also credited with two particular innovations. One is the practice of arranging stills in a series, so that taken together a story emerges that goes beyond any of the individual shots. The other is adding text to photos as a means of exploring emotional content and conveying the image's broader implications. While this semi-autobiographical film touches on both sides of Michals's career (as a commercial photographer and as an artist), it mostly gives its subject the opportunity to present an overview of his work—including some photos from Michals's own collection, but more often pieces found in museums, held by other collectors, or reproduced in books devoted to his work. Viewers also get a taste of Michals's elfin personality in what amount to comic sketches, such as a conversation with a stuffed duck that he punctuates with quacks, or an outdoor scene in which he plays a Don

Quixote character who assaults an abandoned steel refinery to "free the serfs." Michals also discusses his sexuality, and the film touches on the gay subtext in his photos. An engaging appreciation of an influential American photographer, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Edith Wharton: The Sense of Harmony

★★★★1/2

(2014) 57 min. DVD: \$14.95. IndiePix (avail. from most distributors).

An illuminating portrait of American author Edith Wharton (1862-1937), filmmaker Elizabeth Lennard's documentary skillfully integrates the many facets and passions of Wharton's life—as a writer, designer, philanthropist, traveler, and keen observer of social order and class. Featuring interviews with those who knew her, as well as scholars offering interesting insights about her life and career, *The Sense of Harmony* begins with a look at Wharton's first published book, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), a seminal work about architecture and interior design that established Wharton as a major voice in the field of custom living. From there, the documentary explores her career in fiction, including the publication of such classics as *The House of Mirth* (1905), *Ethan Frome* (1911), and *The Age of Innocence* (1920). Wharton's life in New York City and extensive years living as an expatriate in Europe are also examined, as is her troubled marriage (ending in divorce) to Edward Wharton and subsequent relationships with other men. The film also discusses Wharton's friendships with Henry James, Theodore Roosevelt, Jean Cocteau, and other bright lights of the era, as well as her energetic charity efforts during World War I and her journalistic coverage of the war from the frontlines in France. A fascinating portrait of a gifted and—at times—even heroic writer who was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction (for *The Age of Innocence*), this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P (T. Keogh)

Enemy of the Reich: The Noor Inayat Khan Story ★★★

(2014) 55 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-135-6.

During World War II, Noor Inayat Khan was one of the Allies' most unlikely agents. Pretty and sensitive, Khan was born to a Muslim father from India and an American mother. Raised in France during her early years, she absorbed her father's Sufi message of divine unity, service, and sacrifice. When her father died, Noor (which means "light among women") was left devastated, trying to make sense of her new world—one that was rapidly sliding into war. Filmmaker Robert H. Gardner's PBS-aired documentary explores the noble life and untimely death of Khan, who found her purpose in fighting the fascist threat in Europe. Khan got a job in



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Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE), sending and receiving coded messages to underground fighters in occupied Europe. As defined by Winston Churchill, SOE's mission was to "set Europe ablaze," sowing confusion and resistance to the Nazi terror. Sent to occupied Paris, Khan assumed a new identity—moving frequently from one location to another while trying to stay one step ahead of the Nazis, who had mobile trackers and scanners prowling the street searching for the source of SOE messages. Khan used her image as an attractive and innocent young woman to deflect suspicion, but when double agents betrayed SOE activities, things grew dangerous, and Khan was urged to return to London. Instead, she continued her work, refusing all offers of safety, but in 1943 was arrested. Refusing to reveal information, Khan was kept bound and shackled and was tortured at regular intervals, eventually disappearing into the "night and fog" of the concentration camps, and ultimately executed in 1944 at Dachau. Combining interviews, archival materials, and dramatic re-creations, this inspiring biographical portrait is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

First Man on the Moon ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-115-8.

After being fueled by the efforts of many scientists, government officials, and astronauts, the space program reached its zenith when Neil Armstrong stepped from the lunar landing module in July 1969, becoming the first man to walk on the Moon. As this PBS-aided NOVA episode illustrates, Armstrong was the perfect candidate for the assignment. A product of middle America, Armstrong discovered a love for flying as a young man, acquiring his pilot's license before he learned how to drive. Armstrong had the ability to remain cool and calm under pressure, both as an ace fighter pilot during the Korean War, and later as a test pilot exploring the limits of new jets. Tapped by NASA, Armstrong displayed his mettle on the perilous 1966 Gemini 8 mission, improvising solutions when a problem developed during a space docking attempt. Along with Mike Collins and Buzz Aldrin, Armstrong was a member of the historic Apollo 11 crew to the Moon. Filmmakers Christopher Riley and Duncan Copp's *First Man on the Moon* details the intense public speculation on what Armstrong's first words would be after touching down on the Moon's "magnificent desolation" (now famous, the quote was "that's one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind"). Back on Earth, Armstrong felt less well equipped to handle the scrutiny and demands of instant celebrity. Constant travel led to the end of his marriage, and in later years (according to some) he became a recluse. However, before his 2012 death, Armstrong spoke out against what he perceived to be

the diminished role and wrong direction that America's space program was taking. Featuring remembrances and tributes from his first wife, fellow astronauts, and taped recollections from Armstrong himself, this biographical profile of a '60s icon is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

Kumu Hina ★★★

(2015) 77 min. DVD: \$49.95 (Mar. 17, avail. now for \$295 w/PPR from edu.passionriver.com). Passion River. Closed captioned.

Co-directors Dean Hamer and Joe Wilson's documentary accomplishes two purposes. First, it depicts the work of preserving and teaching Native Hawaiian culture—long suppressed by the outsiders who effectively conquered the islands—being done at Halau Lokahi, a public charter school in Honolulu. Secondly, it serves up a profile of the school's hula teacher, Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, also known as Kumu Hina, a transgender woman or, in the Hawaiian language, "māh." The film briefly recounts her history, but mainly concentrates on Hina as she trains the hula troupe for its end-of-year public performance, in particular focusing on the support she lends to Ho'onami, a girl who joins the otherwise all-male group and by semester's end has not only become its leader but also been accepted by the boys as having surpassed all of them in "ku" (masculine energy). Emphasis is also given to Hina's relationship with Haemacelo Kalu, her Tongan husband, who emigrates to Oahu, takes a job as a security guard and has to learn to navigate the different culture of "the States." Hina, Haemacelo,

and the students and staff at Halau Lokahi allowed the directors a large degree of intimacy, which makes for a revealing portrait of those who are attempting to rescue native cultural practices that are in danger of being forgotten in an age of globalization. At the same time, this is a touching tribute to a courageous woman who is determined, despite social difficulties, to live to the fullest a role that while condemned by outsiders is accepted (indeed respected) in her native culture, and by doing so underscore the real meaning of aloha—namely, peace and compassion. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Lenny Cooke ★★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$300. *Lenny Cooke Movie* (avail. from www.lennycookemovie.com). PPR.

New Jersey-born Lenny Cooke was a high-school basketball phenom in the early years of the 21st century, a heady period that saw the NBA and basketball-driven colleges combining through largely inexperienced urban kids for the next potential Kobe or Shaq. Sibling filmmakers Josh and Benny Safdie follow Cooke's participation in corporate-sponsored basketball camps, Vegas trips, and scouting events—a dizzying milieu of potential big money and fame (sports broadcaster Mike Fratello states that a player spends \$300,000 or more just taking care of his entourage, family, and baby-mama drama). Cooke is even seen at one point as a rival to the rising LeBron James. But after making some poor professional choices, Cooke winds up being passed over entirely for the 2002 NBA draft. Six years later, Cooke, approaching 30, is out



The Mystery of Agatha Christie ★★★1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-009-0.

The author of a massive body of work—well-stocked in libraries, and frequently adapted for movies and television—Agatha Christie was the bestselling novelist of all time. In this PBS-aided documentary, David Suchet, who portrayed Christie detective Hercule Poirot in the long-running series *Poirot*, sets out to unravel the "mystery" of Christie's career. Hugely imaginative, shy, and solitary, Christie loved the sea and the area surrounding her home in Devonshire, England. Service during wartime widened her horizons, introducing Christie to topics and concepts ranging from pharmaceuticals (and poisonings) to country house settings and a closed circle of suspects, all of which would become a staple of her mysteries. Christie's booming popularity made her feel that she was "like a fox, hunted," which—along with the breakup of her first marriage—would lead to her famous 1926 disappearance. Intense concern and speculation erupted, ending only after Christie was discovered living under a false identity in a hotel (she never totally explained the incident). Afterwards, Christie fled to Turkey, where she became fascinated with Eastern culture, and embraced a love of adventure and archaeology that—together with a second, happy marriage—ushered in her most productive period of mystery writing, in which she often employed exotic locales for her settings. Filmmaker Clare Lewins's documentary also talks about Christie's "concealed art"—marked by surefire formulas and storytelling simplicity that endeared her to readers. At her Devon home, Suchet talks with family members and examines Christie's archives, old home movies, and newly discovered "lost" notebooks. Sure to appeal to mystery buffs, this biographical study of the famous author is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

Robin Williams Remembered ★★★

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$19.99 (\$47.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-184-4.

Fans of Robin Williams were shocked and saddened by his suicide in August 2014. In sitcoms, standup comedy routines, and films, Williams's work was defined by imagination and almost manic improvisation, but also featured elements of sensitivity and emotional depth, not to mention impeccable comedy craftsmanship. This PBS-aired tribute from the *Pioneers of Television* series remembers the best of Williams, here described as a "tornado in person." Originally determined to be an actor, Williams attended Juilliard, where he was mentored by the great actor and producer John Houseman. Williams found major success in 1978 as an alien in *Mork & Mindy* (playing a character introduced on the comedy *Happy Days*). *Mork* allowed Williams to work with his idol, legendary comic Jonathan Winters. After the show ended in 1982, Williams hit his comic stride in a string of hit feature films that included *Mrs. Doubtfire*, the animated *Aladdin*, and *Good Morning, Vietnam*, with more serious turns in *Dead Poets Society*, *The Fisher King*, *The World According to Garp* and *Good Will Hunting* (winning an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor). During his early Hollywood days, Williams ran with a fast, drug-taking crowd, until the death of friend John Belushi led him into a long period of sobriety. The documentary notes his work with "Comic Relief" on behalf of the homeless, and his untiring efforts visiting the frontlines to entertain troops. Friends and colleagues including Whoopi Goldberg and Pam Dawber recall his comic genius and generosity, while archival interviews with Williams himself find the multit talented entertainer looking back on his career. Although the ending feels truncated—skipping over Williams's lapse from sobriety, increasing depression and health problems, and sad last days—this is a fine memorial to a comic genius. Recommended. Aud: P. (S. Rees)



of the game. With no money saved, he works as a short-order chef in Virginia, putting on a brave face for a reporter doing a where-are-they-now piece. Privately, Cooke rues his treatment by the pro-sports machine, saying he was packaged as a commodity called "Lenny Cooke" (he actually prefers "Leonard") and offered the world, but was then abandoned by cohorts and sponsors. In an interview, former college coach Mike Jarvis compares the scouting system to the economics of slavery, characterized by the buying and exploiting of human beings (by implication, mostly black) for the most profitable deal. Even though NBA reforms in 2006 curtailed the practice of catapulting high schoolers straight into the pros without completing their secondary education, Cooke is still telling basketball-minded young people his personal story—a cautionary tale of Hoop Dreams gone sour. Aired on Showtime, this sobering documentary is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Lucky ★★★

(2014) 75 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries & high schools; \$350; colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1503-3.

Lucky Torres is the charismatic Puerto Rican woman at the heart of former journalist Laura Checkoway's powerful documentary, which spends six years tracking Lucky's ups and downs. As the film begins, Lucky lives in a New York shelter with her sister, Fantasy. Although a couple briefly adopted Fantasy, Lucky spent her entire youth in the foster care system. Like her idol, rapper Lil Wayne,

tattoos cover her entire body, including her pierced face (she attracts looks wherever she goes, but doesn't seem to mind). Lucky, who is gay, visits her son often, but is in no position to look after Joziah on a full-time basis. At the age of 14, she was raped and gave birth to a daughter whom she wasn't able to keep (and hasn't seen since). Lucky has plenty of friends, but she also has trouble finding work, due to a combination of inexperience, mental issues, and the body modification, which disqualifies her from many positions (when she goes on interviews, she covers her mohawk with a wig). None of this stops Lucky from getting more tattoos, like the words "God" and "Fear" above her eyelids. Due to a bit of ingenuity on her part, she manages to secure her own apartment, which she shares with her girlfriend. She also signs on with an agency that specializes in offbeat models, but nothing comes from it. Towards the end, she and Fantasy connect with members of their family, but only time will tell if they stay in touch or if she'll find a way to end the cycle of poverty that began long before she was born. An engaging profile of a colorful character, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Nas: Time Is Illmatic ★★★

(2014) 74 min. DVD: \$24.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$349 w/PPR (avail. from www.kinolorededu.com). DRA. Kino Lorber.

Co-directed by One9 and Erik Parker, this documentary explores the life and career of rapper Nasir Jones (known as Nas) in celebration of the 20th anniversary of his

1994 debut album *Illmatic*. Featuring talking heads interviews with celebrity peers including Pharrell Williams, power couple Swizz Beats and Alicia Keys, Busta Rhymes, and Q-Tip, *Time Is Illmatic* also serves up footage of Nas himself (during concerts, in rehearsal, in the streets, and at home). "It's in my blood," says the artist, who describes his family life with a musician father and postal worker mother, discusses how his parents' breakup affected him and his brother, and recalls the challenges of growing up in the concrete jungle of New York's Queensbridge housing project amongst crack, crime, and underfunded schools (dad Olu Dara here remembers his advice to his boys to "quit school if you wanna save your own life," which disappointed other family members but seemed to work out well for Nas). Tracking Nas's musical career, the documentary looks at the creation of *Illmatic*, including comments from principals such as producer Large Professor, manager MC Serch, and A&R exec Faith Newman. Bonus features include retrospective featurettes and deleted scenes. A nicely-filmed profile of a Grammy-nominated superstar, this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

Rosa Parks: First Lady of the Civil Rights Movement ★★★1/2

(2014) 22 min. DVD: \$64.95. DRA. TMW Media Group. PPR.

This capsule biography of Rosa Parks (1913-2005)—the Montgomery, AL, seamstress whose act of defiance on a city bus galvanized the Civil Rights movement—does a fine job of explaining how Parks's challenge of Jim Crow segregation laws helped to ultimately topple them. The documentary features contextual history about the state of racial oppression in America's Deep South between the end of slavery and hard-won desegregation, a time when African-Americans lived in fear of the Ku Klux Klan and every effort was made to limit the amount of exposure that black and white people had to one another. Basic services, such as school bus transportation, weren't available to African-Americans, and official obstacles to voting—such as prohibitive poll taxes—intentionally disenfranchised the black vote. Against this backdrop, Parks's early life was spent in part at the progressive Industrial School for Girls in Montgomery, where she gained greater self-respect. While riding a bus home from her department store job one day, Parks was ordered to relinquish her seat to a white passenger. She refused to do so, resulting in her arrest. Parks's case would inspire the Montgomery black community and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to launch a bus boycott, which lasted more than a year. Along with the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision desegregating schools, the

(cont. on pg. 79)

ALA-VRT Notable Videos 2015

The American Library Association (ALA) Video Round Table Notable Videos for Adults Committee has compiled its 2015 list of Notable Videos for Adults, a list of 15 outstanding films released on video within the past two years. Unless otherwise noted, titles are available from most distributors or the companies are listed in the "Distributor Addresses" on page 86.

5 Broken Cameras (Kino Lorber, 90 min., in Hebrew & Arabic w/English subtitles, DVD: \$29.95 [\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorber.edu]). Co-directors Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi's documentary incorporates home video footage shot by Burnat—a native of the occupied West Bank village of Bil'in—offering a personal perspective on Israeli-Palestinian relations. (VL-1/13)

The Act of Killing (Cinedigm, 122 min., in Indonesian w/English subtitles, DVD: \$27.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95). Joshua Oppenheimer's Oscar-nominated documentary centers on Indonesia's long-running violent campaign against Communists and other "undesirables," focusing on a group of vicious perpetrators who are given the opportunity to make a movie dramatizing their actions. (VL-3/14)

After Tiller (Oscilloscope, 88 min., DVD: \$34.99 [\$295 w/PPR from Bullfrog Films, www.bullfrogfilms.com]). Co-directors Martha Shane and Lana Wilson's documentary presents a portrait of the last four doctors in America who are publicly willing to terminate pregnancy in the third trimester. (VL-7/14)

Anita: Speaking Truth to Power (First Run, 77 min., DVD: \$24.95). Directed by Freida Mock, this documentary chronicles the life and career of Anita Hill, whose 1991 accusations of sexual harassment against Supreme Court Justice nominee Clarence Thomas rocked the nation. (VL-9/14)

Dirty Wars (MPI, 86 min., DVD: \$24.98). Director Richard Rowley's Oscar-nominated documentary follows investigative reporter Jeremy Scahill's examination of the questionable dealings of the secret U.S. force Joint Special Operations Command in the War on Terror.

Gideon's Army (Third World Newsreel [www.twn.org], 95 min., DVD: \$80: public libraries; \$400: colleges & universities). Filmmaker Dawn Porter's documentary focuses on the work of Georgia public defenders Travis Williams and Brandy Alexander, who try to mount the best possible defense for their clients despite huge caseloads and meager resources. (VL-7/14)

Harvest of Empire (Third World Newsreel [www.twn.org], 93 min., DVD: \$80: public libraries; \$300: colleges & universities). Based on the titular book by Juan González, Peter Getzels and Eduardo López's documentary offers an insightful look into the wide-ranging impact on immigration of interventionist U.S. policies in Latin America. (VL-5/13)

Inequality for All (Anchor Bay, 90 min., DVD: \$9.98, Blu-ray: \$14.99). Director Jacob Kornbluth's profile of former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich explores the negative effects of the growing income disparity between the wealthiest Americans and everyone else. (VL Online-12/13)

The Internet's Own Boy (Kino Lorber, 105 min., DVD: \$24.95 [\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorber.edu]). Computer prodigy and activist Aaron Swartz (1986-2013) is profiled in filmmaker Brian Knappenberger's provocative documentary about freedom of speech and information issues in the Internet age. (See review on page 26)

Let the Fire Burn (Zeitgeist, 95 min., DVD: \$29.95). Filmmaker Jason Osder's searing documentary uses news footage to recreate a horrific episode in American race-relations history in 1985, when Philadelphia

authorities bombed the stronghold of a radical Afro-centric group called MOVE. (VL-5/14)

Los Angeles Plays Itself (Cinema Guild, 170 min., DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95). Director Thom Andersen's documentary looks at differences between the actual and cinematic history of the City of Angels. (See upcoming review in VL-5/15)

Mea Maxima Culpa: Silence in the House of God (Cinedigm, 107 min., DVD: \$29.95). Oscar-winning filmmaker Alex Gibney's documentary centers on the outcry that arose following the sexual abuse of deaf students by a Milwaukee priest.

Particle Fever (Ro*co Films [www.rocoeducational.com], 99 min., DVD: \$95: high schools & public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities). Filmmaker Mark Levinson's documentary takes a behind-the-scenes tour of the biggest machine ever built: the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva. (VL-1/15)

Through a Lens Darkly (First Run, 92 min., DVD: \$27.99). Director Thomas Allen Harris's documentary looks at the history of the American family photo album from the perspective of black photographers. (See upcoming review in VL-5/15)

Who Is Dayani Cristal? (Kino Lorber, 85 min., in Spanish & English w/English subtitles, DVD: \$29.95 [\$349 w/PPR from www.kinolorber.edu]). Marc Silver's award-winning documentary draws on one haunting case to illustrate the tragedy of migrants from Latin America found dead on the U.S. side of the border with Mexico. (VL-7/14)

The Notable Videos for Adults Committee members are: Chair, Michele McKenzie, Berkeley Public Library, CA; Brian Boling, Samuel L. Paley Library, PA; Linda Frederiksen, Washington State University; Wendy Highby, James A. Michener Library, CO; Sandra Macke, Multnomah County Library, OR; Jeffrey Pearson, Askwith Media Library, MI; Junior Tidal, Ursula C. Schwerin Library, NY; Lorraine Wochna, Alden Library, OH.



(cont. from pg. 77)

boycott helped create momentum for the Civil Rights movement. Parks's education in activism and her involvement with the NAACP prior to and long after the boycott is touched upon, as is her work in later years for African-American Congressman John Conyers, and her various honors near the end of her life. Highly recommended. Aud: I, J, H, P. (T. Keogh)

Shining Light: A Portrait of Composer Morten Lauridsen ★★1/2

(2012) 74 min. DVD: \$24.95: individuals; \$69: high schools & public libraries; \$195: colleges & universities. Songs Without Borders. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-47681-287-8.

Morten Lauridsen has been a professor of composition at the USC Thornton School of Music for four decades, but is primarily known as a composer, particularly of richly harmonic choral pieces set to sacred Latin texts. Michael Stillwater's biographical profile features extended excerpts from conversations with Lauridsen, many conducted at his retreat on Waldron Island off the Washington state coast, where the solitude provides an atmosphere that Lauridsen finds most conducive to his work. Also included are snippets from such compositions as *Lux Aeterna* and *O Magnum Mysterium*, both in rehearsal and in final performance by the San Francisco Choral Society and the University of Aberdeen Choral Society, as well as enthusiastic assessments of Lauridsen's music from friends and colleagues—poet Dana Gioia, composer Alex Shapiro, conductor Robert Geary, and composer-conductor Paul Mealer. *Shining Light* carries a decidedly reverential air, which reflects both Lauridsen's habit of speaking in gently meditative tones and the lushly ecstatic character of his compositions, with their echoes of Gregorian chant and the choral works of English composers such as Elgar. Presented in both the full-length version and a 56-minute abridged edition, extras include the featurette "Universality of Song," and comments from singers. Recommended for larger music collections, this is a strong optional purchase elsewhere. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

VideoLibrarianOnline

Visit Video Librarian Online (www.videolibrarian.com) for more reviews during March and April, including: *An Apartment in Berlin*, *Death Makes Life Possible*, *Fall and Winter: A Survival Guide for the 21st Century*, *Food for Change*, *Kehinde Wiley: An Economy of Grace*, *Las Marthas*, *Rise of the Black Pharaohs*, *The Value of Your Personal Data*, *Walking the Camino: Six Ways to Santiago*, 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.

Newly available from Cinedigm Home Entertainment is **MythBusters: 10th Anniversary Collection** (2,205 min., DVD: 10 discs, \$99.99), celebrating the (so far) decade-long run of the Discovery-aired series, and featuring 50 of the top episodes from the scientific experiment show, testing a total of 125 myths. See review of *MythBusters: Collection 1* in VL-9/07.



PBS Home Video has released the latest title in one of its popular PBS Kids-aided series, **Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood: Big Brother Daniel** (120 min., DVD: \$12.99), featuring the titular 4-year-old in a *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* spin-off, and including "The Tiger Family Grows," "Daniel Learns About Being a Big Brother," "The Baby Is Here," and "The Playground Is Different with Baby." See review of *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood: Life's Little Lessons* in VL-5/14.

Featuring the voice of Ashley Tisdale, **Sabrina—Secrets of a Teenage Witch: Magic of the Red Rose** (88 min., DVD: \$14.98) is the most recent addition to the Emmy-winning computer-animated series based on the *Archie* comic strip character, featuring high school sorceress Sabrina Spellman in four magical episodes. See review of *Sabrina—Secrets of a Teenage Witch: A Witch and the Werewolf* in VL-11/14.

Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: Season 2 (600 min., DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99) marks PBS Home Video's sophomore season of the genealogical series hosted by Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., which explores the family trees of celebrities including Anderson Cooper, Ken Burns, Angela Bassett, Deepak Chopra, and Tina Fey. See review of *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* in VL Online-11/12.



A new addition to Paramount Home Entertainment's series based on the books by Rosemary Wells, **Max & Ruby: Sweet Siblings!** (96 min., DVD: \$14.99) follows

the bunny siblings on escapades including "Ruby's Spa Day," "Max and Ruby's Train Trip" and "Go to Sleep, Max." See review of *Max & Ruby: Everybunny Loves Winter* in VL Online-12/10.

Also newly available from Paramount is **SpongeBob SquarePants: The Pilot, A Mini-Movie, and the Square Shorts** (98 min., DVD: \$9.99), a compilation from the popular long-running Nickelodeon series that features the titular character in a two-part mini-movie, along with 42 shorts, and the 1999 pilot episode. See review of *It's a SpongeBob Christmas!* in VL-11/13.



Also released by Nickelodeon and Paramount is **PAW Patrol: Marshall and Chase on the Case!** (92 min., DVD: \$14.98), the latest addition to the CGI-animated preschool-themed adventure series that follows a crew of puppies and their human pal Alex as they keep Adventure Bay safe. See review of *PAW Patrol* in VL-7/14.

Lionsgate and LeapFrog Enterprises are back with the latest program in the problem-solving educational series: **LeapFrog Letter Factory Adventures: Amazing Word Explorers** (37 min., DVD: \$14.98), which follows friends Tad, Lily, and Leap as they go on a camping adventure. See review of *LeapFrog—Scout & Friends: The Magnificent Museum of Opposite Words* in VL-3/13.

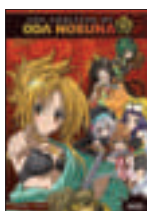
Newly available from Shout! Factory Kids and Hasbro Studios is **My Little Pony—Friendship is Magic: Adventures of the Cutie Mark Crusaders** (110 min., DVD: \$14.98), featuring young ponies Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle, and Scootaloo, who are anticipating their coming-of-age "cutie marks." See review of *My Little Pony—Friendship is Magic: Royal Pony Wedding* in VL-11/12.

Warner Home Video is releasing the seventh volume in the Emmy-winning Cartoon Network-aided series, **Regular Show: Mordecai Pack** (176 min., DVD: \$19.98), showcasing cool blue jay character Mordecai in 16 episodes, including "Every Meat Burrito," "Laundry Woes," and "Maxin' and Relaxin'." See review of *Regular Show: The Complete Third Season* in VL-9/14.



The Ambition of Oda Nobuna: Complete Collection ★★½

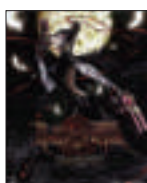
(2012) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



A cheesecake-filled fantasy-adventure, *The Ambition of Oda Nobuna* takes its cues from the real-life long-running video game franchise *Nobunaga's Ambition*, centering on historic contests for power in feudal Japan. Yoshiharu Sagara, your average horny teen male game player, mysteriously falls into the game's Sengoku-era universe, with one crucial difference: the formidable, formerly male protagonists in the rising Oda clan entourage are now super-cute female warriors. With his insider game moxie—as well as his enthusiasm for serving a bunch of nubile, if ferocious, hotties—the lad is brought along as the women's lackey, advisor, diplomat, and willing pawn in the quest to make calculated personal and political alliances while subduing rival warlords en route to conquering the shogunate in Kyoto. Along the way, Yoshiharu occasionally gets to grope a breast. While this saga sometimes feels like a rambunctious mélange of mock-Japanese history, sword-and-sorcery intrigue, battlefield spectacle, bushido drama, and competitive cookery (!), at other times it's all blades and cleavage. YA-oriented collections should be aware of scattered profanity and coy sensuality. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2012 in separate dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Bayonetta: Bloody Fate ★★★

(2014) 90 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2951-0.

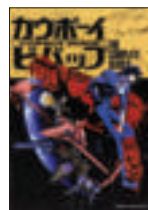


Based on a popular video game franchise, *Bayonetta: Bloody Fate* looks very much like a 1990s anime with its highly detailed and absurdly kinetic action. The story centers on a half-demon, half-angel woman named Bayonetta who awoke at the bottom of a lake, with no memory of her identity or origins. What she does know is that she is a fighting machine who can take down angels (a malevolent force here) and she is supported in her adventures by a mentor who also happens to be a bartender. *Bloody Fate* follows Bayonetta's adventures, tied to the imminent resurrection of a god, which coincide with several mysterious developments: the arrival of a young man who believes that Bayonetta killed his father; a series of attacks by a blonde goddess who is Bayonetta's equal; and the cries of a little girl who keeps calling Bayonetta "Mummy." Directed by Fuminori Kizaki (*Afro Samurai*), this 2013 feature film is presented in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD

Combo edition, rated TV-MA (Bayonetta has a penchant for fighting in the nude), with extras including an audio commentary track featuring Hellena Taylor, English voice actress for Bayonetta. Sure to appeal to fans of the video game (*Bayonetta 2* recently hit the Wii U to glowing reviews), this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Cowboy Bebop: The Complete Series ★★½

(2014) 650 min. DVD: 5 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$59.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2812-3 (dvd), 1-4210-2813-1 (Blu-ray).



A hit in the USA on the Cartoon Network and an anime trendsetter in its native Japan, director Shinichiro Watanabe's 1997-98 series (also spun off into a Bandai video game) is set in 2071, a time when space-going humanity has spread throughout the solar system (Earth, a semi-anarchic disaster area after mankind accidentally destroyed the Moon, is marginal). The Bebop is a ship full of "cowboys," aka bounty hunters—bionic ex-cop Jet Black, young gangster-in-exile Spike Spiegel, larcenous Faye Valentine, and hyperactive little-girl hacker Ed—who earn a living by capturing at-large interplanetary criminals. Even so, the quartet's luck (and ethics) run hard, and they rarely manage to make money. Roguish characters, way-cool visuals, stylish storylines (although sometimes so convoluted as to defy comprehension), and the slowly-unfolding backstories of the protagonists over 26 episodes have made this a genre favorite, full of fun music and pop-culture references (one episode finds these 21st-century heroes stuck in an old VHS-vs.-Betamax conundrum). Presented in separately-available dual-language sets on DVD and Blu-ray, rated TV-14, extras include episode commentaries, cast and crew interviews, and music clips. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Meganebu! Complete Collection ★★★

(2013) 300 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: 2 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



In this pleasantly silly sitcom, five teens at Himaraya High—an all-male Japanese technical school—have formed the Meganebu (or "Glasses Club") to uplift and glorify the art of wearing eyeglasses. "No glasses, no life!" goes the show's refrain. When the "Glassians" aren't occupied in explosive experiments in a quest to perfect X-ray glasses (the stated aim is to see through women's clothing, but the risqué element is mild), they are busy tangling with their nemesis, the Student Council, who consider the existence of a Glasses Club to be basically

ridiculous. Attenuated as the monomaniacal one-joke/two-lens gimmick becomes, this is a lively series that consistently amuses, with one episode parodying the film *Jumanji* (with some *Men in Black* and Harry Potter references tossed in), while in another the perpetually off-kilter X-ray experiment results in the creation of glasses that are able to see the ghost of a former student, who cannot rest because of a pair of broken glasses (naturally). Compiling all 12 episodes from 2013 in separate DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, presented in Japanese with English subtitles, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Patema Inverted ★★★½

(2013) 98 min. DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



In writer-director Yasuhiro Yoshiura's 2013 sci-fi anime tale, an experiment to tap a new energy source goes badly awry, causing gravity to reverse itself for much of mankind, who straightaway fall skyward into oblivion. Years later, the "inverted" survivors dwell beneath the Earth's surface, literally walking on the ceilings of their subterranean colony-environment, terrified of the outside world. Meanwhile, a society of unaffected humans also perseveres topside, separately, although each side regards the other with fear and suspicion. When Patema, a girl from the underground, accidentally "falls" to the surface stronghold, she is rescued and hidden from hostile authorities by Age, a dreamy young student who mistrusts his society's propaganda against inverts. It helps that this star-crossed couple are about the same weight; by clinging to each other, they are able to cancel out each other's gravity and practically float across the landscape. Of course, their relationship has its ups and downs, so to speak. The central conceit here is a hallmark of great fantasy-fiction in that it forces the viewer to completely rethink everyday life. Presented in separately available dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, suitable for ages 12-up, extras include an audio commentary, interviews with the director and voice cast, and a featurette on the film's premiere. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Porco Rosso ★★★

(1992) 93 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$36.99. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.

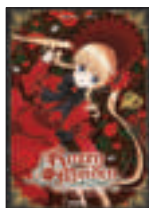


Japanese animation legend Hayao Miyazaki is best known for his contemporary fairy tales, including the Oscar-winning *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke*. *Porco Rosso* is one of the director's oddities, an aviation adventure about a World War I ace who patrols the skies,

battling high-flying pirates in an imaginary post-WWI Italy. Porco is human but has the face of a pig—the result of a magical spell—which marks this chivalrous romantic as a tortured hero who is cursed to be alone (even though two women are in love with him). *Porco Rosso* boasts gorgeous hand-drawn animation featuring beautifully-executed aerial dogfights set against the blue Mediterranean skies, and a lovingly-detailed romantic vision of Italy between the wars. The title of this hugely popular (in Japan) 1992 hit is Italian for “red pig,” perhaps Miyazaki’s fanciful answer to the Red Baron (Miyazaki’s love of aviation and Italy can also be seen in his final film, 2014’s *The Wind Rises*). Michael Keaton voices Porco for the English language version, while Cary Elwes is his nemesis, an American hired by the pirates to shoot Porco down. Making its Blu-ray debut in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated PG, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and an interview with producer Toshio Suzuki. A lighthearted comic swashbuckler with a wistful sense of loss for the chivalry and honor of the past, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

Rozen Maiden— Zurückspulen: Complete Collection ★★1/2

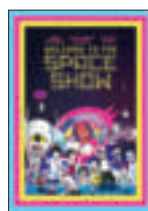
(2013) 3 discs. 325 min. DVD: \$49.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



What begins like a setup for a typical “harem” anime plot (mild-mannered lad suddenly surrounded by a bevy of super-powered girls) takes a wild turn in this reboot of the cult-y *Rozen Maiden* anime spin-off from a comic book/video game franchise. Internet-addicted loner boy Jun finds an antique doll, which comes to life when he winds it up, and tells him that she is one of the seven “Rozen Maidens”—automatons created by an inventor—who each carry a “Roza Mystica,” i.e., a soul-like fragment of an ideal girl. The dolls must perpetually fight each other over ownership of the fragments. But the second episode introduces an older, completely different Jun, a dispirited young adult clerking at a bookstore. A “what if?” has happened, as this Jun learns that he is actually an alternate version of Jun, in which his younger self (from the initial series) did not wind the doll after all. Nevertheless, the Rozen Maidens still infiltrate his life, revealing that time for this particular pocket universe is running out. The mix of quantum physics, philosophy, Jun’s first love (a human girl), doll-vs.-doll cosmic battles, and scattered Lewis Carroll references do not make the material all that much clearer, but it is certainly offbeat. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2013 in a dual-language DVD edition, rated TV-14, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Welcome to the Space Show ★★1/2

(2010) 136 min. DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$29.95. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



In director Koji Masunari’s impressive 2010 theatrical debut, five children on summer vacation in the countryside discover a genuine crop circle and, among the foliage, an injured alien who looks like a dog (but talks, walks, and can fight in cool self-generated battle armor). The creature, Pochi, is a space biologist protecting an ancient, rare Earth plant from smugglers, and he rewards the children by taking them aboard a UFO/taxi to the incredible alien megapolis that thrives unseen on the far side of the Moon. But a sudden Earth quarantine—and the machinations of the persistent smugglers—wind up pushing Pochi and the kids even deeper into space, ultimately sending them to a gigantic pirate-broadcast circus/performance festival called “The Space Show.” Along with pseudonymous illustration-designer Okama, Masunari created a huge menagerie of distinct and whimsical alien species, doodle-like but with echoes of Gahan Wilson and Ralph Bakshi at their most uninhibited (and, occasionally, rather Freudian). Masunari also cast young voiceover actors for the child characters (which is uncommon in anime). Presented in separately available dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, suitable for ages 10-up, extras include a Japanese TV talk-show episode featuring Masunari, Okama, and other participants. Highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

Yu-Gi-Oh! 5D’s: Season 1

★★★1/2

(2008) 8 discs. 1,430 min. DVD: \$44.99. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



This anime spin-off from the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* manga franchise takes place in the futuristic New Domino City, where the legacy of great duelist Yugi Muto has been passed down to a new generation of speed demons engaged in races involving hypercycles called Duel Runners. While the idea of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* card-duel games played on souped-up motorcycles may sound rather dumb, the results are visually striking, as the duelists bring the notions of gaming and multi-tasking to new extremes. Set at an academy where the bold young cyclists learn their skills, along with the usual life-enhancing lessons that are part of the coming-of-age process, this series was originally broadcast in an English-dubbed version on The CW4Kids and later on Cartoon Network. It’s a shame that the original Japanese version is not included here, but the English dub is solid. Compiling

all 64 episodes from the 2008 first season, rated TV-Y7, this sure to be popular series is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

Yu-Sibu: I Couldn’t Become a Hero So I Reluctantly Decided to Get a Job, Complete Collection ★★1/2

(2013) 325 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors).



In what seems to be a trending anime premise, this is another series revolving around figures of myth and fantasy who settle for humdrum jobs in the mundane world. Youthful Raul Chaser once aspired to be a warrior in the mighty battle that finally destroyed the dreaded Demon King. But that was two years ago, and during the ensuing peace his realm of Royal City has become a bland-looking modern suburb, with no need for sword-wielding heroes. Raul clerks at the only business that accepted his resume, a store that stocks magic-powered home appliances and luxury electronics (the outlet suffers severe competition from a rival chain that makes cheaper goods using a labor force of tame monsters). To Raul’s shock, a new applicant, Fino Bloodstone, turns out to be the daughter of the late Demon King. Fino sincerely wants to succeed in sales, and Raul mentors the big-breasted nymph (who has a habit of casually threatening customers’ lives) while trying to conceal her origins from former demon-slayers who have also devolved into service-industry drones (mostly nubile females). A potentially one-joke sitcom with ample nudity gets a bit more interesting when disgruntled ex-heroes try to use Fino to re-ignite the demon wars so that they can regain their old glory. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2013 in separate DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, in Japanese with English subtitles, this is a strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

Studio Ghibli

Studio Ghibli, the famed Japanese anime studio that has made films such as *Porco Rosso* (see review on page 80), the Oscar-winning *Spirited Away*, and this year’s Oscar-nominated *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* (see review on page 36), is the subject of filmmaker Mami Sunada’s fly-on-the-wall documentary portrait *The Kingdom of Dreams and Madness* (see review on page 70).



Austin City Limits Celebrates 40 Years

★★★

(2014) 110 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-137-0.



Jeff Bridges, Sheryl Crow, and Matthew McConaughey host this tribute to *Austin City Limits*, which for 40 years has been presenting live music performances aired on PBS stations across the country. According to Crow, it's "the longest-running music show on television." Two house bands accompany the performers (the program stitches together separate performances from KLRU's Studio 6A and the Moody Theater), who include notable blues and roots musicians like Buddy Guy, Lyle Lovett, and Joe Ely. Things get off to a rousing start with Bonnie Raitt, Brittany Howard, Gary Clark Jr., and Jimmie Vaughan playing "Wrap It Up," while other highlights include Alabama Shakes' "Gimme All Your Love" and Emmylou Harris's rendition of Patsy Cline's "Crazy." Not everything works: Willie Nelson, who appeared on the 1974 pilot, sounds a little shaky on "Whiskey River" and "On the Road Again," although his guitar playing is fine. With her bright voice, Crow also proves an awkward fit for "Me and Bobby McGee," which calls for a less refined approach. She duets with Kris Kristofferson, who wrote the song, but someone forgot to turn up the volume on his microphone (Crow does better with her own "Can't Cry Anymore"). Even with all the veteran artists in the house, the audience cheers loudest for Austin blues man Clark Jr., who plays his hit single "Bright Lights," and is met with a standing ovation. The program also includes an all-star jam on Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away," and a prerecorded segment in which the Foo Fighters add metal shadings to Roky Erickson's "Two-Headed Dog." Presented in 5.1 surround sound, extras include bonus performances. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Bob Marley: Uprising Live! ★★★

(1980) 115 min. DVD: \$14.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Bob Marley's superstar status owes something to his trademark fiery performances. *Uprising Live!*, a former bootleg finally making its home video debut, hails from Marley's final tour—a 1980 concert recorded at Dortmund's Westfalenhalle for the German music series *Rockpalast*. The *Uprising* tour would continue that fall, but ended when Marley fell ill. In cooperation with the Marley estate, Eagle Vision presents a restored version of the recording which still looks somewhat soft and dark, possibly because of an under-lit stage, although the colors are vibrant, and there are ample close-ups.

Marley's singing sounds strained at times, which is why this concert, despite a generous selection of hits (including "No Woman, No Cry," "Get Up, Stand Up," and "Jamming") and two encores, still feels like a cut below his usual high-quality performances. The 23-song set begins with four tunes from Marley's backing singers, the I Threes (Judy Mowatt, Marcia Griffiths, and Marley's wife, Rita). Afterwards, he enters to the hypnotic "Marley Chant," joining band members Al Anderson and Junior Marvin (guitars), Aston Barrett (bass), Tyrone Downie (keyboards), Earl Lindo (electric piano), Carlton Barrett (drums), and Alvin Patterson (congas). It's a strong ensemble, and he works well with them (when he isn't dancing, Marley adds a third guitar to the mix). Highlights include "Coming in From the Cold" and an especially impassioned "I Shot the Sheriff." All told, this is a solid show, but Marley newcomers might want to familiarize themselves with his 1970s material first, or watch Kevin Macdonald's documentary *Marley*, which provides a fuller context for this tour. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Der Ring des Nibelungen

★★★1/2

(2014) 4 discs. 901 min. Blu-ray: \$99.99. EuroArts (dist. by Naxos of America).



Complete versions of Richard Wagner's monumental four-opera *Ring*—*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*—were once rarities on discs, but the 2013 centenary celebrating the composer's birth brought a flood of releases, including reissues of the outstanding 1991-92 cycle at Bayreuth (VL-1/12) and the equally fine 2006 Netherlands Opera production (VL-9/13). This Blu-ray set compiling the 2002-2003 Stuttgart cycle that was originally issued on DVD (see review of *Das Rheingold* in VL-7/04) is hardly in the same league, although it's not without points of interest. Musically, this *Ring* is marked by briskly febrile conducting from Lothar Zagrosek and virile, sensitive playing on the part of the Staatsorchester Stuttgart, as well as singing that is initially variable but shows improvement as the series progresses. None of the parts are taken by the same singer from opera to opera (although a few appear in multiple roles), and the continuity is further undermined by the fact that each opera was staged by a different director, without an overarching vision for the whole. All four productions, however, are physically threadbare affairs, with minimal sets, mostly thrift-store quality costumes, and some wildly outlandish visual touches but absolutely no special effects. If the 2007 Valencia *Ring* (see review of *Das Rheingold* in VL-5/10) with all its visual razzmatazz serves as the epitome of high-tech versions, this is definitely the antithesis. At

the spectacular end of *Götterdämmerung*, for instance, no effort is made to dramatize the action; instead, director Peter Konwitschny simply presents Wagner's elaborate stage directions in a written crawl to be read by viewers (as they were by the Stuttgart audience). Presented in DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo, this *Ring* can be weirdly interesting at times, but is ultimately too quirky and uneven to recommend over the competition. An optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Divine Madness

★★★1/2

(1980) 86 min. DVD: \$17.99. Warner Archive Collection (avail. from most distributors).



Director Michael Ritchie's 1980 concert film—capturing Bette Midler coming off her hit 1979 film *The Rose*—finds the Divine Miss M in stellar form, leading with a big smile and considerable bosom (film tagline: "A National Treasure Chest") at the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena, CA, where she regales an appreciative crowd with her jill-of-all-trades repertoire of songs, sketches, and jokes. While the band remains offstage, Midler is joined onstage by a trio of "Harlettes," backup singers who she calls her Greek chorus ("these girls don't know shit about Euripedes, but they know plenty about Trojans." Ba-dum-bump.). Although she warns that "eggs will be laid tonight," the show itself is top-notch, with Midler riffing about a recent European tour (recalling Germany, she says "my little Jewish heart was leaping in my breast, shrieking 'get me the fuck outta here'"), donning a mermaid costume to channel Delores DeLago (the toast of Chicago), telling a stream of raunchy jokes as Sophie Tucker, and even doing a (brief) impersonation of Shelley Winters in *The Poseidon Adventure*. But the real draw here, of course, is the music, and Midler serves up a number of hits and covers, including "The Rose," "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," "My Way," "Leader of the Pack," "The Fire Down Below," "I Shall Be Released," and "Do You Wanna Dance?" Long out-of-print but newly re-released as part of the manufactured-on-demand Warner Archive Collection, *Divine Madness* is presented here in Dolby Digital stereo (hopefully, this will someday be restored and remastered with high-definition sound). Highly recommended. (R. Pitman)

Evgeny Kissin: The Gift of Music Plus the Albert Hall Encores ★★★

(2014) 104 min. DVD: \$29.99. Allegro Films (dist. by Naxos of America).



Christopher Nupen, a filmmaker who specializes in biographical films about classical musicians, turns his focus on the titular Russian pianist, who has earned a reputation as one

of the great modern virtuosos. A predictably laudatory portrait that sometimes verges on fawning, this documentary certainly succeeds in displaying Kissin's considerable talent and his disciplined, yet also agreeable, personality. Excerpts from interviews with Kissin, including amusing anecdotes about his earliest years as a prodigy and his extremely structured lifestyle, are accompanied by footage of him studying with his first and only teacher, Anna Kantor, as well as rehearsing, performing in chamber recitals at various festivals, and traveling on tour. All of this leads up to an extended treatment of Kissin's 1997 recital at the BBC Proms—the first solo performance in the celebrated series' history and the best-attended in over a hundred years, drawing an audience of nearly 6,000 to London's Royal Albert Hall. Although the program only offers snippets from the major works he performed there, it delivers all seven encores in full. The portrait that ultimately emerges here is of a young man possessed of incredible technical facility but still growing as an artist, one whose fans expect that he play the most demanding showpieces (sometimes in even more flamboyant arrangements than the originals) while he continues to move toward more serious fare. Presented in stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Falstaff ★★★

(2013) 125 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. EuroArts/Unitel Classica (dist. by Naxos of America).



Damiano Michieletto deserves kudos for daring to take a different approach in this 2013 Salzburg Festival staging of Verdi's operatic adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Here, the setting is an extended dream by a resident of Casa Verdi—a home founded by Verdi for elderly singers and musicians—who imagines that he is Sir John Falstaff. Casa Verdi is turned into the ribald world of Shakespearean comedy, complete with ample servings of wine, and many comely lasses in tight-fitting gowns. Although an interesting concept, the action onstage often seems at odds with the specific setting of Shakespeare's romp. But even if the modern-day realignment doesn't totally click, the full-throttle fury of the Vienna Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta's leadership brings the rich playfulness of Verdi's music to vibrant life. And it is impossible not to fall under the charismatic sway of Ambrogio Maestri's oversized exuberance as the hedonistic Falstaff, who grabs at every drink, every female waist, and every syllable of Arrigo Boito's libretto with a zest for life that is truly intoxicating. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (P. Hall)

Feast of Friends ★★★

(1968) 144 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



In comparison with Tom DiCillo's lucid 2009 Doors documentary *When You're Strange*, 1968's *Feast of Friends* plays more like a smeared Polaroid—which may have been director Paul Ferrara's intent—offering a glimpse of what it was like to live in the band's rarefied world. Although restored for home video release, the narrative (such as it is) is incomplete, since filming ended after frontman Jim Morrison's arrest in Florida on public indecency charges. Ferrara captures the Los Angeles quartet on the road, in concert, and on stage, where the leather-clad Morrison sometimes comes across as bright and focused, and other times appears to be lost in a narcotic haze. Guitarist Robby Krieger also seems exceptionally relaxed in a sequence in which he impersonates a folk singer to the amusement of a female friend, although that may owe more to his laidback personality than chemical enhancement. *Feast of Friends* serves up an impressionistic portrait of the Doors—also including keyboardist Ray Manzarek and drummer John Densmore—that showcases the band's eccentricities (even for the '60s), such as a performance of "The End" in which Morrison's propensity for improvisation comes to the fore as he sings the original lyrics, goes off on a tangent, and then comes back to pick up where he left off. The copious extras include "Feast of Friends: Encore," with outtakes from the documentary (including a trip to Seattle, where band members ride the Monorail and visit the Space Needle); "The Doors Are Open," a 1968 British documentary featuring a black-and-white filmed concert intercut with comic book panels, still photographs, and newsreel footage; and a performance of "The End" for the CBC. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Genesis: Sum of the Parts ★★★

(2014) 118 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Filmmaker John Edginton's informative documentary may seem familiar since it's an extended version of the 2014 BBC-aired profile *Genesis: Together and Apart*, serving up a history of the band and their solo projects (*Sum of the Parts* features 30 minutes of additional material). The story begins in Surrey, England, where bass player Mike Rutherford and keyboard player Tony Banks joined forces with guitarist Anthony Phillips and

singer Peter Dinklage in 1967. In 1970, they added former actor Phil Collins on drums. Throughout the decade, change was the name of the game, with Phillips leaving and Steve Hackett joining the fold. With each album, Genesis's fame grew, but after a tour in support of the Gabriel-penned *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*, the singer left to pursue a solo career. To their surprise, the band only found greater fame when Collins, who didn't share Gabriel's love of big theatrics, took over as lead. All six men appear here, along with touring players Chester Thompson and Daryl Stuermer, while live footage and video clips illustrate the transformation of the group's sound from prog-rock to pop-rock. Although this is an official portrait, the members acknowledge tensions, including Banks's discomfort with Collins's spectacular solo success. Although Rutherford also had a number of hits with Mike + the Mechanics, he wasn't nearly as visible in the 1980s as the outgoing Collins. Most fans will appreciate the breadth and depth of this engaging profile. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include bonus interviews. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Giselle ★★★1/2

(2014) 113 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



This is the same Peter Wright production of Adolphe Adam's 1841 classic from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, featured in an earlier Opus Arte release (VL-3/09). The traditional sets and costumes, as well as the staging, are identical; the orchestra is again conducted by the reliable Boris Gruzin; and Wright follows the standard Petipa choreography. But the cast is different in this 2014 staging: Natalia Osipova stars as the titular peasant girl wooed by a count in disguise; Carlos Acosta is the duplicitous Albrecht, who induces Giselle to commit suicide; and Hikaru Kobayashi is Myrtha, the Queen of the Wili (the spirits of virgins who died before their weddings), who orders Giselle to literally dance Albrecht to death—although the maiden uses her wits to save him (despite his infidelity). Aside from inevitable differences, both performances are excellent, with fine solo work and a first-class contribution from the musicians. This release joins not only the previous Covent Garden version, but other outstanding options—from Milan (VL-11/06), Amsterdam (VL-7/10), and Moscow (VL-9/12)—as prime choices for this tuneful fantasy ballet. Presented in superb Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Hänsel und Gretel

★★★1/2

(1999) 105 min. Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Engelbert Humperdinck's fairy tale opera has become a Christmas staple. This 1999 Zurich Opera production—making its Blu-ray debut—benefits from the scenic and costume designs of Maurice Sendak, likely to delight children as much as his book illustrations (kids will especially enjoy the two black cats—dancers in full-body costumes—featured prominently throughout). On the musical side, Franz Welser-Möst conducts an affectionate reading of the charming score, while Liliana Nikiteanu and Malin Hartelius sing and act delightfully as the brother and sister who encounter danger in the woods. The secondary roles, however, are less impressive, with Alfred Muff's voice sounding especially worn as the siblings' father. And some elements in Frank Corsaro's staging—the overuse of the children's chorus in various tableaux and a peculiar juxtaposition between the witch and Hansel and Gretel's mother—are missteps. The weakest aspect here, however, is the questionable decision of assigning the witch's part to a tenor, Volker Vogel, who simply can't handle the role's low notes and tries to compensate by hamming it up beyond belief. So, despite the attractions of Sendak's visual scheme, this can't be preferred to the fine 2008 version from Covent Garden under Colin Davis (VL-1/10). Presented in PCM stereo, this is still a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Il Trovatore ★★★

(2012) 143 min. In Italian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



From a purely musical perspective, this 2012 production of Giuseppe Verdi's popular 1853 opera, filmed at La Monnaie De Munt in Brussels, is excellent. Marc Minkowski leads the company orchestra in a rich, vivid performance of the romantic score, while the cast—Misha Didyk, Marina Poplavskaya, Scott Hendricks, Sylvie Brunet-Grupposo, and Giovanni Furlanetto—is uniformly fine. As is often the case, however, the idiosyncratic staging is problematic. Dmitri Tcherniakov presents the admittedly complicated story involving brothers separated as infants—one a nobleman, the other a warrior troubadour, both in love with the same woman—as a later reunion among the principals (the romantic trio, the gypsy who kidnapped one child and raised him as her own, and the man who narrates the tale) with a re-enactment of the eventual tragedy. All of the action takes place in a single drawing room, and in

order to make this concept work Tcherniakov omits a couple of characters (reassigning their music to the five remaining singers), while relegating the chorus to offstage status (thus the famous "Anvil Chorus" is heard while the principal vocalists simply wander about the set). Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an interview with Tcherniakov. Although this can't be considered a first choice over more conventional versions such as the 2010 production from the Teatro Regio de Parma (VL-9/13), the outstanding musical performance makes it an acceptable complement. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Jeff Beck: Live in Tokyo

★★★★

(2014) 112 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



For this 2014 engagement at Tokyo's Dome City Hall, Jeff Beck and his versatile band—featuring guitarist Nicolas Meier, bassist Rhonda Smith, and drummer Jonathan Joseph—serve up a 21-song, fusion-heavy set that combines covers with original material, including a contribution from Meier ("Yemin"), who is a solo recording artist from Switzerland. Also notable here are a sensitive reading of the Irish standard "Danny Boy" and a dreamy version of the Beatles' "A Day in the Life." At their most dynamic, the band works up a metallic head of steam (opening track "Loaded"), but the mid-tempo pieces aren't a world away from the generic instrumental rock that fueled the action-oriented cop shows of the 1980s. All of the players carry their weight, but Smith, a former Prince associate, makes the biggest impression by fluidly switching between acoustic, electric, and fretless bass. She also adds vocals to "Rollin' and Tumblin'" and "Why Give It Away," the only non-instrumentals. If many songs bleed into one another, the enthusiastic audience doesn't seem to mind, although one fan's callout request for "Beck's Boogie" goes unanswered. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include bonus interviews with Beck and band members. Sure to appeal to fans, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

The Last Play at Shea

★★★★

(2014) 78 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$19.99. Virgil Films (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.



Alec Baldwin narrates this information-packed music documentary that revolves around a 2008 Billy Joel concert—the last to take place at New York's

Shea Stadium. To commemorate the event, Joel invited famous friends such as Paul McCartney ("I Saw Her Standing There") and Roger Daltrey ("My Generation") to share the stage. In between performances, director Paul Crowder incorporates interviews and footage of games and concerts. The remembrances here can be less than flattering. As announcer Gary Cohen puts it, "There are 50,000 seats in this ballpark, and probably about three or four thousand good ones. It's a dump." Baldwin backs him up, noting that the city built the stadium on a dump, while also describing the New York Mets as "the worst team in major league history" (although they did finally win the pennant in 1969 for the first time). Joel's crowd-pleasing setlist includes originals ("Movin' Out"), covers (the Beatles' "She Loves You"), and, naturally—given the venue—"The Star-Spangled Banner." In interview clips, Joel talks about growing up in nearby Hicksville, NY, while also touching on work with early bands, his solo career, bad business deals, and divorce. Other speakers include Mets players Mike Piazza and Darryl Strawberry; Sting, who quit the Police shortly after playing Shea; and McCartney, who reminisces about the Beatles' landmark 1965 appearance at the stadium. As he recalls, "We couldn't really hear ourselves, because the audience was much louder than us." Also on hand to fill in the blanks are various authors, historians, and Ireland-born groundskeeper Pete Flynn. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and stereo on Blu-ray, extras include bonus performances and an extended interview with Joel. An entertaining historical journey sure to appeal to music and sports fans alike, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Lulu ★★★1/2

(2012) 2 discs. 194 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



For many years Alban Berg's unfinished 1937 opera—the tale of an amoral seductress who disposes of several husbands and suitors before being killed (along with her lesbian lover) by Jack the Ripper—carried the reputation of being a forbidding exercise in 12-tone serial composition, making performances rare. But once the third act was completed by Friedrich Cerha in 1979, *Lulu* gained recognition as a modern masterpiece, combining serial method with lush late romanticism, and productions proliferated, including mountings from Zurich in 2002 (VL-9/04), Covent Garden in 2009 (VL-11/10), and the Salzburg Festival in 2010 (VL-5/12). This 2012 production from Brussels' La Monnaie De Munt possesses two great virtues musically—an exact reading of the score by the company orchestra under Paul Daniel, and a spectacular performance

in the title role by Barbara Hannigan. But the staging by Krzysztof Warlikowski is odd. Warlikowski emphasizes Lulu's dream of becoming a ballerina, including scenes of her younger self practicing, and adds a number of prolonged dance solos—one at the end of the second act after the music has ceased—often while having Hannigan stand en pointe while singing. She manages, but it's a trick that ultimately doesn't justify the effort. Nor are the set (a hall with escalators, and a backstage screen for projections of Lulu in various states of undress), costumes, or makeup—representing extraordinarily clashing styles—especially convincing. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Marco Spada ★★½
(2014) 126 min. DVD: \$24.99,
Blu-ray: \$29.99. Bel Air
Classiques (dist. by Naxos of
America).



No one would argue that Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's 1857 ballet makes much sense. Even in the 19th century, the story—about the titular bandit who indiscriminately robs the apparently dense people of Rome while living among them unrecognized, and even dabbles at arranging weddings with the local nobility—was considered absurd. And the denouement, in which a mortally wounded Spada persuades the crowd that his daughter is not actually his, so that her lover, a count, will marry her, does not exactly constitute a happy ending. Yet Auber's music is so genial and sprightly that the plot inanities hardly matter, and it is beautifully played here by the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra under Alexey Bogorad in this 2014 performance from Moscow. In addition, Pierre Lacotte's sets and costumes are colorful and attractive, while his choreography—always energetic (even, rather incongruously, during Spada's death scene) is superbly realized by the company, especially David Hallberg—the first American to become a principal dancer at the Bolshoi—as Marco and Evgenia Obraztsova as his daughter. Even with its ridiculous libretto, this sumptuous production is still great fun. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Roméo & Juliettes

★★½
(2008) 79 min. DVD: \$29.99,
Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik
(dist. by Naxos of America).



Shakespeare's tale of doomed young love has inspired innumerable adaptations, including Prokofiev's popular ballet (VL-5/01, VL-9/13). But like Mats Ek's recent version for the Royal Swedish Ballet (VL-7/14),

figure-skater-turned-choreographer Sébastien Lefrançois's *Roméo & Juliettes*—created for the Suresnes Cities Festival of Contemporary Dance in 2008—doesn't employ the Russian composer's famous music. Instead, Lefrançois has set his piece to a busy and propulsive new score by Laurent Couson—one that may not be particularly memorable, but well suits the choreography, which employs many hip-hop moves while fairly closely following Shakespeare. The nine dancers here perform on a rather bare stage, periodically shifting platforms around. All are fine, but Jann Gallois and Giovanni Léocadie obviously take pride of place as Juliette and Roméo, while Mario Faundez's costumes provide not only some vibrant color but also a hint of Renaissance style. Presented in PCM stereo, this intermittently interesting contemporary balletic twist on the classic story is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Rye Coalition: The Story of the Hard Luck 5

★★★
(2014) 78 min. DVD: \$16.95.
Music Video Distributors (avail.
from most distributors).



Jersey City natives Rye Coalition take center stage in Jenni Matz's documentary about the relentless drive of an indie band. The quintet came together in the 1990s as music-obsessed teenagers who couldn't play, so at first the kids traded tapes, and then began bashing on their instruments until songs started to take shape, eventually releasing cassettes and touring the dives of America. Some call it emo, but their early material plays more like hardcore filtered through a math rock sensibility (they would move in more of a classic rock direction in the 2000s). To judge from the archival concert footage that dominates the film, the band consistently cut loose on stage: cracking jokes, setting things on fire, and running around like lunatics. To make ends meet, they worked in liquor stores and drove taxis while living at home. As the grind took its toll, the band decided to make Rye Coalition a full-time gig—touring with Queens of the Stone Age, and signing to a major label, although the deal would fall apart. Many bands would've given up, but Rye Coalition forged a compromise between staying together and breaking up. Not a unique story, but one that young musicians should watch; not for instruction, but rather as a how-not-to guide. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Swan Lake ★★½

(2014) 132 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C
Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

Those seeking a reasonably traditional version of Tchaikovsky's popular ballet will enjoy this 2014 production from the Vienna Staatsballett celebrating the silver anniversary of Rudolf Nureyev's rework-

ing of the Petipa-Ivanov choreography. Nureyev's version makes some adjustments to the score and even more to the story, casting a tragic light on the tale of the nobleman enchanted by the swan queen Odette, and—thanks to the machinations of the evil sorcerer Rothbart—torn between her and her dark counterpart, Odile. Many productions will opt for a happy or equivocal ending, but here Rothbart triumphs, Odette remains in his power, and the prince perishes. Regardless, this is an effective denouement both musically and dramatically, with Olga Esina radiant in the dual role of Odette and Odile. Vladimir Shishov makes a solid partner for her as Prince Siegfried, while Eno Peci cuts a magisterial figure as his rival, Rothbart. The work of the student corps isn't always ideally synchronized, and a few of Alexander Ingram's tempos initially lag a bit, but the performance quickly improves, and the opulent sets and costumes are visually attractive. While the Nureyev *Swan Lake* is already available in a fine 2006 Paris Opera production (VL-9/07), this mounting is just as good. Presented in DTS 5.0 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Trace Adkins: Live Country ★★★

(2014) 116 min. DVD: \$14.98.
Eagle Rock Entertainment
(avail. from most distributors).



Veteran baritone country performer Trace Adkins serves up a career-spanning concert in this easygoing 2014 engagement filmed at the Paramount Theater in Huntington, NY. The 20 songs range from Adkins's first single, "There's a Girl in Texas," to newer material. Adkins, a former football player and oil rig worker, receives solid accompaniment from the Sarepta Gentleman's Club, along with Jill and Kate, two backup singers who also perform as a duo. From his muscular performance style to his casual apparel—jeans and t-shirt—it's clear that Adkins served as a model for Luke Wheeler on ABC's *Nashville*. Adkins, who also acts, notes during a bonus interview that his career was launched in Nashville, where success came early. Unlike some country singers whose songs are built around patriotism and family values, Adkins concentrates on women and relationships. Naturally, that also includes numbers about sex, such as "Maintenance Man," which he describes as his "nastiest song" (by gangster rap standards, it isn't nasty at all, of course). As a band leader, he plays it safe, with the exception of "Chrome," which adds funk and boogie to his traditionalist approach. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

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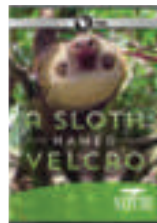
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The Joy of Lists

The first quarter of each year is one of my favorite times in the magazine's annual cycle. In the January-February issue we publish our Best Docs list, while in the March-April issue we carry the lists of ALSC Notable Videos and VRT Notable Videos (see pgs. 54 and 78, respectively).

The ALA lists often overlap with VL picks and coverage. This year, we reviewed (or have slated for review) 14 of the 15 ALSC selections, and have reviewed (or are reviewing) 13 of the 15 VRT choices.

Three of the VRT picks also made the VL list: *After Tiller*, *Gideon's Army* and *Let the Fire Burn*. Four of the others will be up for consideration for our 2015 list: *The Internet's Own Boy*, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, *Particle Fever*, and *Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People*.

I enjoy reading all kinds of media "best of" lists, which often highlight artists I'm unfamiliar with—various writers, musicians, filmmakers, and video game creators—whose work I may end up following.

Music-wise, Stephen Malkmus & the Jicks's *Wig Out at Jagbags* was not remotely on my event horizon, but after seeing the CD appear on a few lists, I picked it up and immediately

responded to the band's psychedelic-blues-funky-country-rock (now I can't get the ode to Portland titled "Cinnamon and Lesbians" out of my head). I was happy to see Lana del Rey's *Ultraviolence* and Beck's *Morning Phase* recognized, but rather disappointed that TV on the Radio's wonderful *Seeds* was MIA from most lists.

And that's another thing about lists: we love to argue with them. Case in point: am I the only reader in America who was not completely blown away by Anthony Doerr's historical novel *All the Light We Cannot See*? I thought it couldn't decide whether it wanted to be literary fiction (some nice heightened language and turns of phrase) or a thriller (short chapters, one-dimensional secondary characters). I also had a blind spot for Kate Atkinson's *Life After Life*—a list-topper at the end of 2013—which was built around a central gimmick that for me grew old after the first few hundred pages (but I'm a longstanding huge fan of Atkinson's Jackson Brodie novels—so go figure). Last year I really enjoyed Michel Faber's sci-fi/social commentary novel *The Book of Strange New Things*—easily his best since *The Crimson Petal and the White*—which received solid critical recognition but was largely absent from high-profile lists. And, along with many other middle-aged males, I was delighted by Roddy Doyle's *The Guts*

and Richard Ford's *Let Me Be Frank With You*.

I also spent some wonderful hours playing video games this past year: sailing the high seas of the Atlantic in *Assassin's Creed: Rogue*, walking with my heart in my throat through the menacing land of Drangleic in the extremely challenging *Dark Souls II*, embarking on my first massively-multiplayer-online-role-playing-game in *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, abusing the King's English during some of the harder platforming sequences in *Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze*, and being shocked at the pushing-the-envelope laugh-out-loud raunchiness of *South Park: The Stick of Truth*.

Despite my day job, I actually watch far fewer movies than most people do. When Oscar time rolls around I try to catch as many nominees as I can (although the fact that half of this year's crop of Best Picture nominees were bio-pics says something about the current level of creativity in Hollywood).

And TV? *Archer*, *Game of Thrones*, *Orange Is the New Black*, and football; that's about it.

Of course, there are only so many media hours available in the day, so you really do have to pick and choose.

Which is why I love lists.

Randy Pitman



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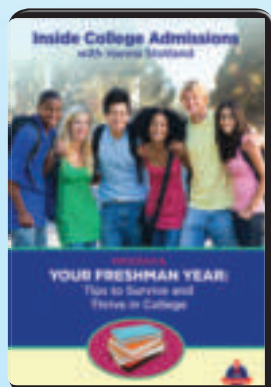
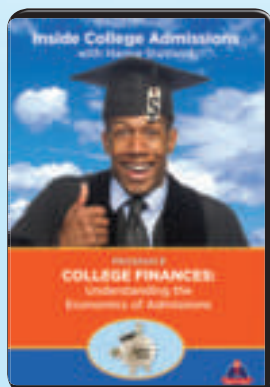
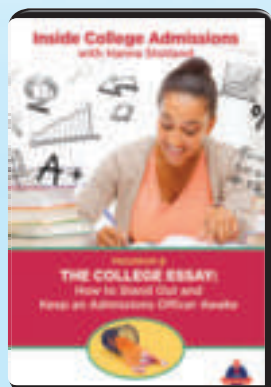
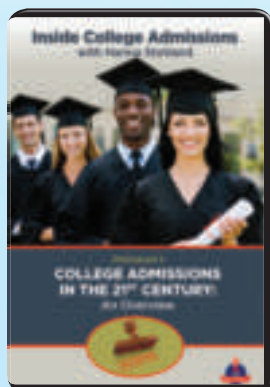
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