

July-August 2014

# Video Librarian

VOL. 29 ■ THE VIDEO REVIEW MAGAZINE FOR LIBRARIES ■ NO. 4



## IN THIS ISSUE

God Loves Uganda | The Hooping Life | Tim's Vermeer | The Address | Life According to Sam | The Story of the Jews

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### God Loves Uganda

★★★★1/2

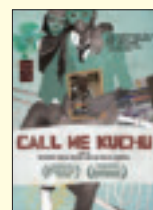
(2013) 83 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run  
*Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.*



Stunning in its revelations about the ways in which the African nation of Uganda became a hotbed for hatred aimed at gays and lesbians in the last decade, Oscar-winning director Roger Ross Williams's powerful documentary begins with a look at American evangelical churches, and ends with the funeral of a murdered Ugandan LGBT activist. In between, *God Loves Uganda* explores how Bush-era policies meant to help Uganda combat the AIDS epidemic were quickly tied to a mandatory "abstinence-only" theme adopted by the government. This development would create an opening for American extremist evangelical Christians—a marginal group stateside—to go to Uganda and demonize gays and lesbians, whom they called organized agents of humanity's destruction. Williams captures the startling hysteria on Uganda's streets, in churches, and in the nation's parliament as laws are passed that make homosexuality a crime, one that could result in a life sentence or even death. The filmmaker also documents the growing mob mentality, which led to people being attacked on the

streets, LGBT activists identified in newspapers, and finally to a killing. Williams seems to be everywhere with his camera (although he also makes assiduous use of archival and other material); on buses with young American ministers in Uganda, in parliamentary session, and at town hall-like meetings where gay pornography is shown (even to children) with the intent of fomenting intolerance. He also spends time with much more inspiring subjects: the Ugandan activists who are putting their lives on the line to continue their work for human rights. DVD extras include bonus shorts and deleted scenes. A provocative and disturbing film, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

A harrowing complementary title, Katherine Fairfax Wright and Malika Zouhali-Worrall's *Call Me Kuchu* (VL-11/13 ★★★★★1/2) focuses on veteran activist David Kato, the first openly gay man in Uganda, whose murder is also covered in *God Loves Uganda*.



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

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Video Newsbriefs</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Relationships &amp; Sexuality</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Books Into Movies</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Food &amp; Spirits</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Mixed Media</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>House &amp; Garden</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Video Movies</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Business &amp; Economics</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>TV on Video</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Computers &amp; Technology</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Key to Star Ratings</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Sports, Games &amp; Recreation</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Video Reviews</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>The Arts</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Children's</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>History &amp; Current Events</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Psychology &amp; Self-Help</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Travel &amp; Geography</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Religion &amp; Philosophy</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>Biography</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Social &amp; Political Issues</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Series Update</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>Japanese Anime</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Law &amp; Crime</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>Music/Dance</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Nature, Math &amp; Science</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>Distributor Addresses</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Health &amp; Fitness</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Title Index</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Childbirth &amp; Parenting</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>Advertiser Directory</b>	<b>76</b>

# BLOW THE LID OFF BOREDOM



**“An Absolute Must See!”**

– Claude Chamberlan, Director, Festival du Nouveau Cinema

**“Hugely Entertaining”**

– Montreal Gazette

**“Anything but boring”**

– Le Devoir

Believe it or not this is the first serious documentary on boredom. Director Albert Nerenberg (*Laughology*, *Stupidity*) asks why the subject of boredom has been so religiously avoided and shows that boredom isn't what you think it is.

The film's breakthrough research suggests boredom is likely a state of stress. It may also be killing you. Perhaps the powers that be would rather you not know that, especially if you're inside some kind of educational institution or dead end job.

In this entertaining romp Nerenberg blows the lid off the boredom conspiracy and reveals a culture that not only tolerates boredom but actually promotes it.

## BONUS FEATURES

Revolutionary Accelerated Unboring Version  
(48 mins.) for the easily bored. *Really.*

Stages of Boredom (3 mins.)

The Mountain that Boredom Built (4 mins.)

## Visit The Boring Institute

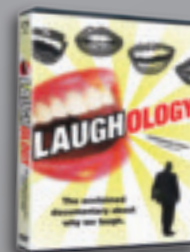
Meet a woman who can never be bored  
Find out which common everyday substance  
that you probably use masks boredom  
More!

## ALSO AVAILABLE FROM DIRECTOR ALBERT NERENBERG:



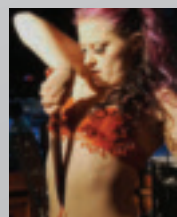
**Stupidity**

UPC: 826262002596  
\$19.98 SRP



**Laughology**

UPC: 826262006495  
\$14.98 SRP



BOREDOM  
(2013)  
DIS-DV-114  
\$19.98 SRP

STREET DATE: AUGUST 12, 2014  
UPC: 826262011499  
ISBN: 978-1-939517-23-4  
File Under: Documentary (Other)

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# WARNING: THE INFORMATION YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE WILL RESULT IN HIVES

A GROUNDBREAKING FILM ABOUT BEES AND THE PEOPLE WHO KEEP THEM.



"An entertaining and informative glimpse into the life of a unique subculture of humanity." – Film Threat

"From the hives to the removal, to the whys and hows of dealing with bees, this is a doc that everyone who's worried about our planet should see!" – Rogue Cinema

"Ninety-nine percent of documentaries present the viewer with a global crisis. Almost none of them offer a solution. "BEE PEOPLE" is among the one percent that show people a simple way to make the world a better place." – Dusty on Movies

For 100 million years, bees have provided sustainability on earth... yet these glorious pollinators are facing challenges and fading from our planet. Did you know the honeybee is responsible for one third of the items on your dinner plate?

"Bee People" raises the bar and provides an in-depth look at the people who are facing the challenge on behalf of the bees, making a difference, and urging everyone to join them on a planet-saving mission! Who are these bee people? What compels them to do what they do? And most importantly, what is the solution they propose?

Featuring Gregg McMahan aka "The Bee Guru": One part rock-star, one part bee evangelist, Gregg is the most passionate member of the Bee People community you're ever likely to meet. His dissertations on all-things-bees are mesmerizing, entertaining and highly educational.

## BONUS FEATURE: Extracting Honey (16 mins.)



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(2013)  
TMR-DV-118  
\$19.98 SRP

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STREET DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2014  
UPC: 826262011895  
ISBN: 978-1-939517-27-2  
File Under: Documentary (Other)

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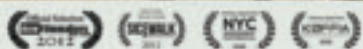
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## Anita Hill Doc "Speaking Truth to Power" Available Now from First Run Features

Directed by Academy Award-winning filmmaker Freida Mock, *Anita: Speaking Truth to Power* (DVD: \$24.99) is now available from First Run Features. Set against a backdrop of sex, politics, and race, the documentary tells the story of a woman who has empowered millions to stand up for equality and justice. An entire country watched as a poised African American woman sat before a Senate committee of 14 white men and with a clear, unwavering voice recounted the repeated acts of sexual harassment she endured while working with U.S. Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. Anita Hill's graphic testimony was a turning point for gender equality in the U.S., igniting a political firestorm about sexual harassment and power in the workplace that still resonates today. Offering a rare glimpse into Hill's private life and career, the documentary features DVD extras that include a "Finding Home" speech delivered by Hill at the University of South Carolina, and a "Speaking Truth to Power" spoken-word performance curated by Eve Ensler.

## "The Big Chill," Jacques Demy Boxed Set on Criterion July Slate

In July, the Criterion Collection will present major films from some of the world's greatest directors. Slated for July 8 is the remastered DVD edition of Peter Weir's 1975 Australian drama *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95), in which a small group of students from an all-female college vanish while on a St. Valentine's Day outing. Also coming July 8 is a remastered DVD version of Howard Hawks' 1948 Western *Red River* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95), starring John Wayne as an embittered, tyrannical Texas rancher whose tensions with his independent-minded adopted son (Montgomery Clift) reach epic proportions during a cattle drive to Missouri (see Blu-ray/DVD Combo review on page 37). Arriving July 15 is Robert Bresson's quintessential 1959 tale of crime and punishment *Pickpocket* (DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), a story of redemption about a young pickpocket who fears his luck is about to run out. Also slated for July 15 is David Cronenberg's 1981 cult classic *Scanners* (DVD: 2 discs, \$29.95; Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), a gruesome portrait of a man with frighteningly destructive telepathic abilities. Coming

July 22 is *The Essential Jacques Demy* (DVD: 7 discs, \$124.95; Blu-ray: 6 discs, \$124.95), which features six films by the adored French New Wave master, including the candy-colored



musical dazzlers *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964) and *The Young Girls of Rochefort* (1967)—both starring a young Catherine Deneuve—as well as *Lola* (1961) with Anouk Aimee, Jeanne Moreau in the romantic drama *Bay of Angels* (1963), the quirky fairytale *Donkey Skin* (1970) with Deneuve, and the late-career César Award-nominated melodrama *Une Chambre En Ville* (1982). Also arriving on July 22 is Erik Skjoldbjærg's 1997 Scandinavian chiller *Insomnia* (DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95), starring Stellan Skarsgård as an enigmatic Swedish detective with a checkered past. Finally, on July 29 look for Lawrence Kasdan's 1983 Best Picture nominee *The Big Chill* (Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95)—following a group of thirtysomethings reuniting for a friend's funeral—which stars Tom Berenger, Glenn Close, Jeff Goldblum, William Hurt, Kevin Kline, and Meg Tilly.

## "Sleeping Beauty" Diamond Edition Coming October 7 from Walt Disney

Finally releasing from the Disney vault, 1959's *Sleeping Beauty: Diamond Edition* (DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$36.99) will bow on October 7. The 16th animated Disney feature, *Sleeping Beauty* tells the tale of a princess cursed by an evil fairy, protected by three loving fairies and, ultimately, saved by "true love's kiss." Featuring the voice talents of opera singer Mary Costa as Sleeping Beauty and Eleanor Audley as the evil fairy, Maleficent, the film's vibrant visuals were created by a team that included Milt Kahl and Ollie Johnston, two of Disney's legendary Nine Old Men, and it features an Academy Award-nominated score adapted from the music of Tchaikovsky. Bonus features include a "Once Upon a Parade" segment with actress Sarah Hyland describing Disney's Festival of Fantasy Parade, an "Art of Evil: Generations of Disney Villains" legacy piece on animator Marc Davis, and an "@DisneyAnimation: Artists in Motion" segment with visual development artist Brittney Lee. Additional bonus features include never-before-seen deleted scenes.





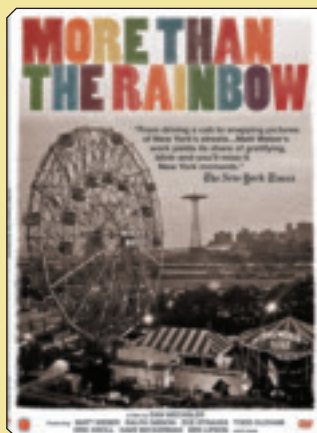
## ANITA SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

77 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916172D  
**AVAILABLE NOW!**

An entire country watched as Anita Hill sat before a Senate committee of 14 white men and with an unwavering voice recounted the repeated acts of sexual harassment she had endured while working with Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas.

Against a backdrop of sex, politics, and race, *Anita* reveals the story of a woman who has empowered millions to stand up for equality and justice.

*"Political theater that still has the power to make your blood boil."* -Los Angeles Times



## MORE THAN THE RAINBOW

83 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916097D  
**STREET DATE: AUGUST 5**

After three decades turning his lens on New York City, taxi driver turned street photographer Matt Weber has seen it all. The film not only chronicles Weber's life and art, but is a vibrant conversation about the photographic medium, artistic expression, and New York City. This evocative doc also features Ralph Gibson, Zoe Strauss and Eric Kroll.

*"From driving a cab to snapping pictures of New York's streets...Matt Weber's work yields its share of gratifying, blink-and-you'll-miss-it New York moments."*

-The New York Times



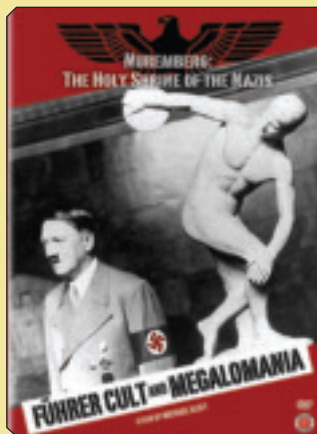
## DREAM DECEIVERS

58 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916066D  
**STREET DATE: AUGUST 5**

Two young men shoot themselves in a churchyard. Ray Belknap dies; James Vance, severely disfigured, survives. Their parents take heavy-metal icons Judas Priest to court, claiming the band "mesmerized" their sons. The unprecedented trial is the framework for this one-of-a-kind, Emmy-nominated film.

*"Riveting."* -The New York Times

*"Destined to cause a stir. Not just the band, but the parents, the kids, and maybe even the judicial system are all on trial before the camera."* -The Hollywood Reporter



## FÜHRER CULT AND MEGALOMANIA

52 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916103D  
**STREET DATE: AUGUST 26**

*"Even the pyramids," Hitler told architect Albert Speer, "will be dwarfed by the stone and concrete masses I plan to erect."*

By the early twentieth century Nuremberg was regarded as the most anti-Semitic city in Europe. In 1929 Hitler made Nuremberg home to the Nazi rallies-propaganda all brilliantly captured by Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. Rare color footage and witness accounts bring light to the atmosphere during party rallies, illustrating the fanatical anti-Semitism and the unprecedented "Führer" cult.



## MAIDENTRIP

82 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916035D  
**STREET DATE: JULY 8**

14-year-old Laura Dekker sets out, camera in hand, on a two-year voyage in pursuit of her dream to be the youngest person ever to sail around the world alone. In the wake of a year-long battle with Dutch authorities that sparked a global media storm, Laura now finds herself far from land, family and unwanted attention, exploring the world in search of freedom and adventure.

*"It's easy to imagine this compelling chronicle, and its defiantly strong heroine, inspiring countless teens and parents alike."* -New York Daily News



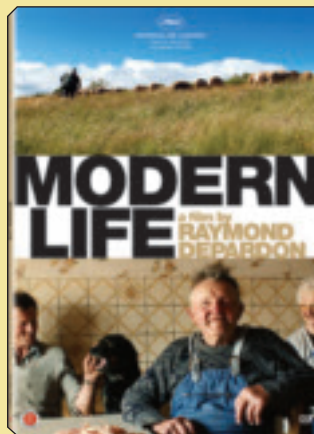
## HALF THE ROAD

106 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916042D  
**STREET DATE: JULY 8**

Directed by pro cyclist Kathryn Bertine, *Half The Road* explores the world of women's pro cycling, focusing on both the love of sport and the pressing issues of inequality that modern-day female athletes face in male-dominated sports. The film offers unique insight into the drive, dedication, and passion it takes for a female athlete to thrive.

*"A rock-solid argument."*  
-The New York Times

*"Impassioned...convincing."*  
-The Hollywood Reporter

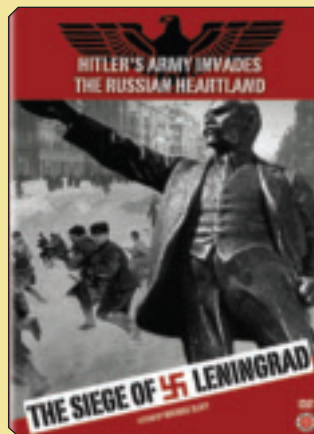


## MODERN LIFE

83 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916059D  
**STREET DATE: AUGUST 5**

Raymond Depardon casts an affectionate and irreverent eye on a small community of farmers in southern France as they confront the problems and challenges the modern world brings. As they try to sustain a way of life that celebrates the traditions and methods of old, the film becomes a witness to farmers' lives, values, and stories: all that binds them to the land, and its legacy.

*"A sensational achievement, sublime and timeless. Like Michael Apted in his 'UP' films, Depardon keeps returning to the same people, using his films as a record of the passing of the years."* -The Telegraph



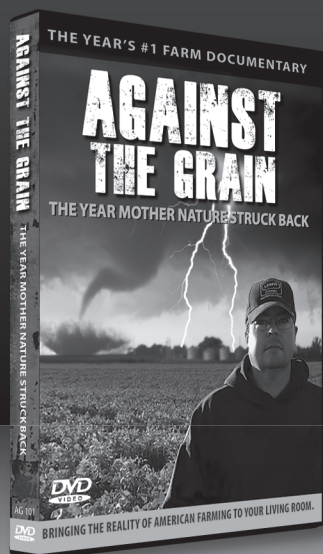
## THE SIEGE OF LENINGRAD

50 minutes, color, \$24.95, FRF 916110D  
**STREET DATE: AUGUST 26**

In 1941, Hitler ordered the German Army to invade Russia. The Nazis raced across Russia's heartland until they reached Leningrad - the cradle of the Bolshevik Revolution. But the city did not fall quickly to Hitler's troops. Instead it resisted.

In this astonishing new documentary, British historian Anna Reid uses eyewitness accounts and files of the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) to help bring to light what actually happened in Leningrad during the siege. Rarely seen film and photographic material, original diaries and documents from the time illustrate the tragedy.

# AGAINST THE GRAIN



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The remarkable saga of farming families who are managing their harvest through the most challenging growing seasons in modern history.

A real story, with real farmers.

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Jim Thomas,  
VP, Marketing and Programming  
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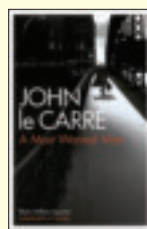
The following films based on books are slated to open during July and August. Movie release dates are subject to change.

### Coming in July

**Dawn of the Planet of the Apes** (July 11) is inspired by Pierre Boulle's original 1963 sci-fi fantasy novel *Planet of the Apes*. Directed by Matt Reeves, the film stars Gary Oldman, Andy Serkis, Keri Russell, Judy Greer, and Kodi Smit-McPhee.

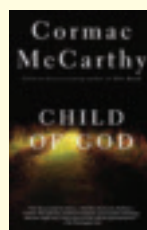


**A Most Wanted Man** (July 25, in limited release) is adapted from John le Carré's 2008 post-Cold War espionage thriller. Directed by Anton Corbijn, the film stars Philip Seymour Hoffman, Rachel McAdams, Willem Dafoe, and Robin Wright.



### Coming in August

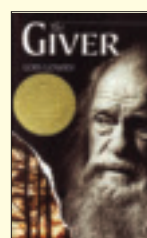
**Child of God** (Aug. 1, in limited release) is based on Cormac McCarthy's 1973 gothic novel about a violent young man. Directed by James Franco, the film stars Franco, Tim Blake Nelson, Fallon Goodson, and Scott Haze as depraved protagonist Lester Ballard.



**The Hundred-Foot Journey** (Aug. 8) is based on Richard C. Morais's 2010 novel centering on rival restaurants in France. Directed by Lasse Hallström and co-produced by Oprah Winfrey and Steven Spielberg, the dramedy stars Helen Mirren, Manish Dayal, and Om Puri.



**The Giver** (Aug. 15) is an adaptation of Lois Lowry's 1993 Newbery Medal-winning dystopian YA novel, the first book in a loosely connected tetralogy. Directed by Phillip Noyce, the film stars Brenton



Thwaites, Meryl Streep, Alexander Skarsgård, Katie Holmes, Jeff Bridges, and Taylor Swift.

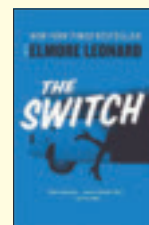
**If I Stay** (Aug. 22) is based on Gayle Forman's 2009 YA novel about a teen in a car accident who has an out-of-body experience. Directed by R.J. Cutler, the adaptation stars Chloë Grace Moretz, Mireille Enos, Liana Liberato, and Stacy Keach.



**When the Game Stands Tall** (Aug. 22) is based on Neil Hayes's 2003 nonfiction book about California high school football champs the De La Salle Spartans. Directed by Thomas Carter, the film stars Jim Caviezel, Michael Chiklis, Laura Dern, Clancy Brown, and Alexander Ludwig.

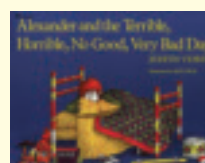


**Life of Crime** (Aug. 29) is based on Elmore Leonard's 1978 novel *The Switch*. Directed by Daniel Schechter, the crime comedy stars Jennifer Aniston, Tim Robbins, Isla Fisher, Will Forte, and Mos Def.



### Looking Ahead

Slated for October is **Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day**, Miguel Arteta's live-action adaptation of author Judith Viorst and illustrator Ray Cruz's 1972 ALA Notable Children's Book, starring Steve Carell, Jennifer Garner, and Ed Oxenbould as Alexander.



Also coming in October is **Gone Girl**, filmmaker David Fincher's adaptation of Gillian Flynn's 2012 *New York Times* best-selling thriller, starring Ben Affleck, Rosamund Pike, Neil Patrick Harris, Missi Pyle, and Tyler Perry.







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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

**GRID Autosport** (Bandai Namco, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: E). This latest entry in the *GRID* racing simulation franchise has been shaped with consultation from the online community, professional racing drivers, and experts from *Autosport* magazine to deliver a realistic career mode on a variety of exciting tracks.

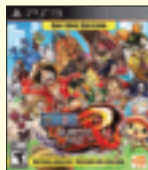


### June 29—July 5

**Sniper Elite III** (505 Games, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$39.99-\$49.99, Rated: M). Set in the exotic yet deadly terrain of North Africa during WWII, this third-person tactical shooter puts players in the role of American OSS agent Karl Fairburne, who is deep behind Nazi lines providing crucial sharpshooter skills for the Allies.

### July 6—July 12

**One Piece: Unlimited World Red** (Bandai Namco, PS3: \$49.99, Rated: T). Embarking on a wayfarer journey to engage in fun-filled escapades and battles, this third-person action-fighting game lets players step into the roles of members of the Straw Hat Crew as they progress through an episodic storyline that features encounters against famous bosses such as Rob Lucci and Caesar Clown.



### July 20—July 26

**Wii Sports Club** (Nintendo, WiiU: \$39.99, Rated: E10+). In this HD remake of the bestselling Wii game *Wii Sports*, players compete in activities including baseball,

boxing, tennis, bowling, and golf.

### July 27—August 2

**The Last of Us Remastered** (Sony, PS4: \$59.99, Rated: M). Set 20 years after a pandemic has ravaged civilization, this remastered-for-next-gen, award-winning, third-person action-adventure-horror game casts players in the role of a survivor named Joel, who is accompanied by 14-year-old Ellie on a brutal journey across the U.S.



### August 3—August 9

**Akiba's Trip: Undead & Undressed** (XSEED, PS3: \$39.99, Rated: RP). In this open-world action-RPG, players undertake numerous missions to identify vampires called "Synthesizers" with the help of an in-game smartphone app, and then engage them in battle to, uh, strip their clothes off so their bodies will be fully exposed to sunlight.

**Sacred 3** (Deep Silver, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: M). Featuring classic hack-and-slash gameplay, this third-person action-RPG will include cooperative multiplayer for up to four players who will help each other fight through enemy hordes in the war for Ancaria.

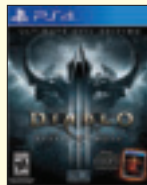
**Ultra Street Fighter IV** (Capcom, PS3/X360: \$39.99, Rated: T). This latest iteration of *Street Fighter IV*—arguably the ultimate fighting game to date—will include five new characters and six new stages.

### August 10—August 16

**Risen 3: Titan Lords** (Square Enix, PS3/X360: \$49.99, Rated: M). This third installment in the popular third-person action-RPG series returns to its medieval roots, with players stepping into the role of a young warrior who sets off to reclaim his soul, lost amidst the darkness that is spreading throughout the world.

### August 17—August 23

**Diablo III: Ultimate Evil Edition** (Blizzard, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$39.99-\$59.99, Rated: M). This re-release of the highly-acclaimed, best-selling, third-person action-RPG game set in the perilous world of Sanctuary includes the



original *Diablo III*, along with the expansion pack "Reaper of Souls."

**Tales of Xillia 2** (Bandai Namco, PS3: \$59.99, Rated: T). Set one year after the climatic events of the popular third-person role-playing game *Tales of Xillia*, this sequel puts players in the role of Ludger Kresnik, a skilled chef who accompanies a young girl named Elle Marta on an epic journey.



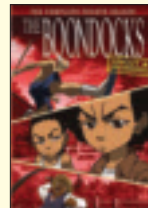
### August 24—August 30

**Madden NFL 15** (EA, PS3/PS4/X360/XOne: \$59.99, Rated: RP). The latest edition of the long-running popular football franchise series introduces a crowd-sourced play-calling system with three distinct ways to run offense and defense: coach suggestions, Madden community picks, and concept plays that provide a strategic edge in a game that features new pass rush tools and open-field tackling mechanics.

## TV on DVD/Blu-ray

### Available Now

**The Boondocks: The Complete Fourth Season** (Sony, DVD: 2 discs, \$40.99). Based on the comic by Aaron McGruder, this 2014 fourth and final season of the Peabody Award-winning Adult Swim series features the voices of Regina King and John Witherspoon.



**Brain Games: Season 3** (Warner, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Host Jason Silva and sleight-of-hand specialist Apollo Robbins are back in this 2014 third season of the National Geographic Channel-produced series that looks at the brain's complex processes, using a variety of interactive experiments designed with the cooperation of notable neuroscientists.

**The Bridge: The Complete First Season** (Fox, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.99). Detectives from both sides of the border between El Paso, TX, and Juarez, Mexico, join together to stop a serial killer in this 2013 debut season of the FX-aired series starring Diane Kruger and Demian Bichir.

**The Dating Guy: The Complete First Season** (Entertainment One, DVD: 3



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**"BRAVE AND REMARKABLE." - POV Docs, PBS**  
**"INSPIRING." - The Hollywood Reporter**  
**"A LIKABLE, INTIMATE DOCUMENTARY." - Variety**

WHEN I WALK captures a 25-year-old's diagnosis and struggle with multiple sclerosis. An emotional journey over several years, viewers witness the impact of this devastating neurological disorder that impacts over 2 million people worldwide, and learn how disability affects mind, body and everyday life.

85 min. | 2013 | CC | UPC: 091037723994 | SRP: \$29.95 | PPR: \$299  
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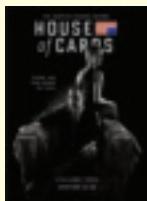
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discs, \$29.98). This 2009 first season of the Canadian animated series follows four twentysomething friends as they navigate the ups and downs of the dating world in Downtown Toronto.

**House of Cards, Volume Two** (Sony, DVD: 4 discs, \$55.99; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$65.99). Democrat Francis Underwood (Kevin Spacey) readies for his promotion to Vice President in this 2014 volume of sophomore season episodes from the Netflix-produced political drama based on the novel by Michael Dobbs and subsequent BBC miniseries.



**Lost Girl: Season Four** (Funimation, DVD: 5 discs, \$44.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98). This 2013-14 fourth season of the Gemini Award-winning Syfy-aired supernatural horror series continues the escapades of bisexual Succubus Bo (Anna Silk).

**Wallander 3** (MHZ, DVD: 4 discs, \$69.95). Based on the books by Henning Mankell, this Swedish language adaptation stars Krister Henriksson as the titular detective in six episodes from the 2013 third season of the crime series.

**Witches of East End: The Complete First Season** (Fox, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98). Julia Ormond, Jenna Dewan-Tatum, and Mädchen Amick star in this 2013 debut season of the Lifetime-aired supernatural drama based on the book by Melissa de la Cruz.



## July 1

**Anna Karenina** (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$59.99). This 10-episode 1977 BBC miniseries adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's classic novel stars Nicola Pagett, Eric Porter, and Stuart Wilson.

**Helix: Season 1** (Sony, DVD: 3 discs, \$55.99; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$65.99). Aired on Syfy, this 2014 debut season of the Arctic-set scientific thriller series stars Billy Campbell, Hiroyuki Sanada, and Kyra Zagorsky.

**Hinterland: Series 1** (Acorn, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.99). Starring Richard Harrington as a loner detective in an isolated Welsh coastal town, this four-part 2014 first series—filmed in both English and

Welsh—includes “Devil’s Bridge,” “Night Music,” “Penwyllt,” and “The Girl in the Water.”

**A Young Doctor’s Notebook** (BBC, DVD: \$19.98). Set on the eve of the Russian Revolution, this 2012 dark comedy series based on the autobiographical works of the author and playwright Mikhail Bulgakov features Daniel Radcliffe as a green young physician who gets advice from his older self (Jon Hamm).



## July 8

**The Big Valley: Season Three** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 6 discs, \$34.95). This 1967-68 penultimate third season of the classic California ranch series starring Barbara Stanwyck and Lee Majors includes guest appearances by Bruce Dern, Dennis Hopper, and Yaphet Kotto.

**Endeavour: Series 2** (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$44.99). Newbie Constable Endeavour Morse (Shaun Evans) racks up more experience in this 2014 second season of the *Masterpiece Mystery!* series—conceived as a prequel to *Inspector Morse*—which includes “Trove,” “Nocturne,” “Sway,” and “Neverland.”

**Prisoners of War: Season One** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95). Featuring episodes from the 2010 first season, this Israeli drama—which was adapted into Showtime’s U.S. drama *Homeland*—follows the release of three captured soldiers, and stars Yoram Toledano and Ishai Golan.

**The Soul Man: The Complete First Season** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). Vegas R&B star turned St. Louis preacher Boyce “The Voice” Ballentine (Cedric the Entertainer) adjusts to normal life in this debut season of the TV Land sitcom that also features Niecy Nash and Wesley Jonathan.



**Vicious: Season One** (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Aired on ITV, this 2013 first season of the comedy series revolving around the quibbles and quirks of a gay couple who’ve been together for five decades stars Ian McKellen and Derek Jacobi.

## July 15

**Clue** (Shout! Factory, DVD: \$12.99). Six

teens (including Sterling Beaumon, Ana Golja, and Stephan James) work together to solve a mystery after witnessing a crime in this five-part Hub Network mystery series based on the popular board game.

**Hell on Wheels: The Complete Third Season** (Entertainment One, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$49.98). A former Confederate soldier continues his quest to take vengeance for his murdered family in this 2013 third season of the AMC Western railroad series starring Anson Mount, Colm Meaney, and Common.

**How the West Was Won: The Complete Second Season** (Warner, DVD: 6 discs, \$39.99). Starring James Arness, Eva Marie Saint, and Bruce Boxleitner, this 1979 sophomore season of the family Western saga features guest stars Lloyd Bridges, Ricardo Montalban, and William Shatner.

**Labyrinth** (Lionsgate, DVD: \$19.98). Based on the *New York Times* best-selling 2005 novel by Kate Mosse, this two-part 2012 miniseries follows the linked stories of a 13th-century teen (Jessica Brown Findlay), who is given a mysterious book by her father (Danny Keogh), and a 21st-century woman (Vanessa Kirby) who disturbs something that was meant to remain hidden.



**Orphan Black: Season Two** (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$34.98). This 2014 second season of the BBC-produced sci-fi action series continues the dramatic search for answers regarding a series of genetically engineered clones (all played by star Tatiana Maslany).

## July 22

**Dalziel & Pascoe: Season 10** (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.98). Adapted from the novels by Reginald Hill, this 2006 10th season of the mystery series includes “Houdini’s Ghost,” “Glory Days,” “Wrong Time, Wrong Place,” “Guardian Angel,” and “A Death in the Family.”

**Wahlburgers: The Complete First Season** (Lionsgate, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.98). Famous brothers Mark and Donnie Wahlberg join forces with their chef sibling Paul and their mother Alma in this 2014 first season of the A&E-aired reality series set at the titular family restaurant.





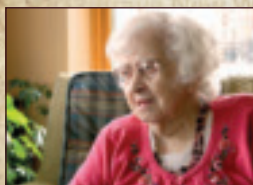
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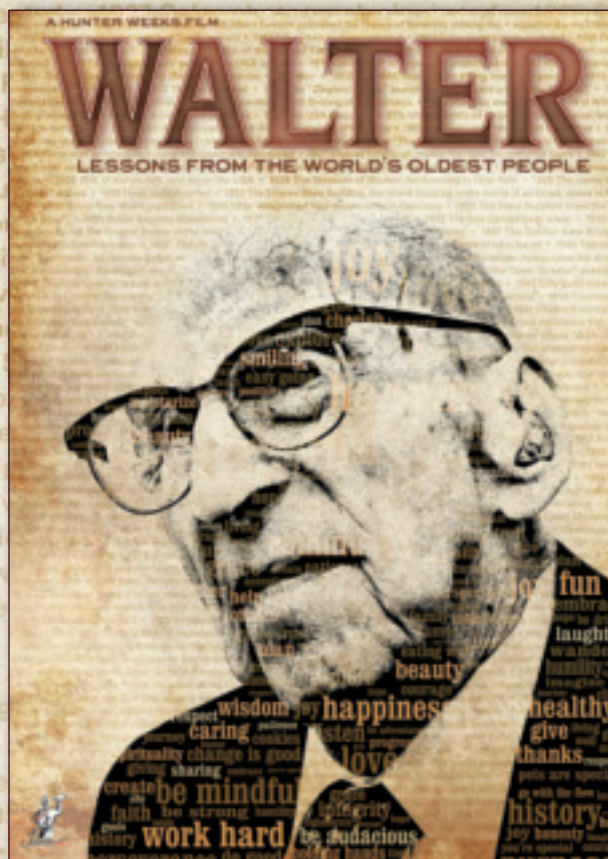


Mary Tankursley 110

WALTER is a feel good documentary film following a young couple, Hunter and Sarah, as they travel the world learning life lessons from the world's oldest people. The film was shot on location in Montana, Minnesota, Texas, Georgia, Washington, Cuba, and Italy between 2010 and 2012. Delivering advice, anecdotes, and inspiration from the world's oldest people, WALTER is the 5th feature film from director, Hunter Weeks.

Hunter Weeks met Walter Breuning in 2010 when Walter was 113 years old. It was a meeting that Hunter couldn't stop thinking about. A year later, Hunter sat down again with Walter Breuning in Great Falls, Montana to talk about his life in the early 1900s and his takeaways from an extraordinarily long life. Walter could talk at length about his earliest memories, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the Great Depression, and both World Wars.

At 114, the Guinness World Records oldest person, Besse Cooper, was several months older than Walter. She lived in a nursing home in a small town in Georgia with family nearby, and would usually only speak when she needed something. While Walter lived nearly independently at a retirement home, Besse spent much of her time in bed. Though so close in age, their lifestyles varied greatly. Fascinated with the differences between Besse and Walter, Hunter and Sarah also sought out supercentenarians; Juana Bautista, Ruth Anderson, Mary Tankursley, and Sister Cecilia Gaudette.



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WALTER is less about science and longevity and more about the lessons and values for living a happy life with the time you have.



LENGTH: 3 Hours 33 Minutes • MRSP: \$29.95  
CATALOG# 20546 • UPC# 6-4603205469-9  
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In this series of pilates workouts focused entirely on pregnancy and hosted by Australian fitness guru, Tasha Lawton, guides you safely and humorously through all three trimesters to keep your body in shape, strengthen your abs, and hopefully make labor a little less arduous. These workouts will help you maintain control both physically and mentally throughout your pregnancy. Say goodbye to lower back pain, water retention, swollen ankles, weak pelvic floor muscles, and bad posture caused by your growing belly. Bounce back to your pre-baby weight faster! Pilates is recommended by midwives around the world as the exercise regime of choice during pregnancy.

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1. Trimester - Impact: medium  
Focus: emphasis pelvic floor, some abs, waist, legs, bum and back
2. Trimester - Impact: low/medium  
Focus: emphasis pelvic floor, some abs, waist, legs, bum and back
3. Trimester - Impact: low/medium  
Focus: emphasis pelvic floor, some abs, legs, waist, bum and back
4. Post Natal - Impact: medium  
Focus: emphasis on abs, legs, waist, bum and back

"Since this is an Australian production, viewers will find alternate spellings and terms, including "labour," "bum," "loo," and "foetal," but Lawton's encouragement ("I hope everything's going really well at home for you!") is definitely cross-cultural. Recommended." ★★★★★  
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## July 29

**Midsomer Murders, Set 24** (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.99; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99). Things don't seem to be getting any better in crime-ridden Midsomer County during the 2012-13 15th season of the crime-drama, with episodes here including "Written in the Stars," "The Sicilian Defense," and "Schooled in Murder."



**Mystery Science Theater 3000: XXX** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98). The MST3K crew lambasts four cheesy sci-fi films—*The Black Scorpion*, *Outlaw (Of Gor)*, *The Projected Man*, and *It Lives By Night*—in this most recent volume from the snarky series.

**Secret State** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Starring Gabriel Byrne as a Deputy Prime Minister who uncovers a deadly conspiracy, this 2012 four-part political thriller miniseries also features Charles Dance, Stephen Dillane, and Ruth Negga.

## August 5

**Awkward. Season 3** (Paramount, DVD: 4 discs, \$26.99). This 2013 third season of MTV's comedy series continues the misadventures of a teen California student (Ashley Rickards).

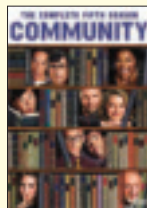
**The Birthday Boys: The Complete First Season** (Anchor Bay, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.98). Executive produced by Ben Stiller and costar Bob Odenkirk, this is the 2013 first season of the sketch comedy series aired on IFC.



**The Broker's Man, Series 2** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Starring Kevin Whately as an ex-cop turned insurance company detective, this 1998 second season of the British drama features the final episodes of the series.

**Californication: The Final Season** (Showtime, DVD: 2 discs, \$45.98). This 2013 seventh and final season of the Showtime drama revolving around the life of a scandalous writer (David Duchovny) features guest appearances by Heather Graham and Rob Lowe.

**Community: The Complete Fifth Season** (Sony, DVD: 2 discs, \$35.99). Marking the return of creator Dan Harmon, this 2014 fifth and final season of the community college-set comedy series features guest appearances by LeVar Burton, Gina Gershon, and Questlove.



**Ja'Mie: Private School Girl** (HBO, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Creator Chris Lilley stars (in drag) as a private school diva in this 2013 Australian comedy series.

**Last Tango in Halifax: Series 2** (BBC, DVD: 2 discs, \$34.99). Aired stateside on PBS, this 2013 second season of the late-life-marriage romantic drama series stars Derek Jacobi and Anne Reid.

**The Saint: Set 1** (Acorn, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.99). Based on the Simon Templar book series by Leslie Charteris, this action-packed compilation includes three 1989 movies.



**Top Gear 21: The Complete Season 21** (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$19.98). This 2014 21st season of the car aficionado series includes a two-part journey across Burma in lorries.

## August 12

**Gunsmoke: The Tenth Season, Volume 1** (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99). Dodge City lawman Matt Dillon (James Arness) continues to protect the townspeople in this first volume from the 1964-65 10th season of the Western action series—the penultimate season before the series changed from black-and-white to color. Also newly available is **Gunsmoke: The Tenth Season, Volume 2** (DVD: 5 discs, \$49.99).

**Low Winter Sun** (Anchor Bay, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.99). Based on the two-part British miniseries, this short-lived, Detroit-set, 2013 AMC-aired dirty cop drama stars Mark Strong and Lennie James.

**The Marx Brothers TV Collection** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Groucho, Chico, and Harpo are spotlighted in this compilation of the comedy troupe's

TV appearances on shows including *GE Theater*, *The Jack Benny Program*, *The Jackie Gleason Show*, *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, *The Dick Cavett Show*, and *All Star Revue*.

## August 19

**Boardwalk Empire: The Complete Fourth Season** (HBO, DVD: 5 discs, \$59.99; Blu-ray: 7 discs, \$79.98). Based on Nelson Johnson's *Boardwalk Empire: The Birth, High Times and Corruption of Atlantic City*, this 2013 fourth season of the acclaimed Prohibition-era drama stars Steve Buscemi and Michael Shannon.

**The Good Wife: The Fifth Season** (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$55.98). The titular central character (Julianne Margulies in a Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild award-winning role) heads up a law firm in this 2013-14 fifth season, which features a dramatic goodbye to a main character.



**The Millers: The First Season** (Paramount, DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98). A newly divorced reporter (Will Arnett) inspires his parents (Beau Bridges, Margo Martindale) to split up in this 2013-14 debut season of the comedy series.

**The Mindy Project: Season Two** (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.99). Mindy Kaling stars as a sassy NYC OBGYN in this 2013-14 sophomore season of the hit comedy series.



**NCIS: Los Angeles—The Fifth Season** (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$55.98). LL Cool J and Chris O'Donnell are partners in undercover action in this 2013-14 fifth season of the military drama series. Also newly available is **NCIS: The Eleventh Season** (DVD: 6 discs, \$55.98).

**Newhart: The Complete Fourth Season** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 3 discs, \$29.95).

This 1985-86 fourth season continues the small-town B&B escapades of former New Yorker and author Dick Loudon (Bob Newhart).

**Parenthood: Season 5** (Universal, DVD: 5 discs, \$44.98). Showcasing the ups and downs of three generations of the Braverman family, this 2013-14 fifth



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season of the family dramedy series stars Erika Christensen, Dax Shepard, Lauren Graham, and Peter Krause.

**Parks and Recreation: Season Six** (Universal, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98). Starring Amy Poehler as an Indiana government worker, this 2013-14 sixth season of the comedy series features guest appearances by Heidi Klum, Kristen Bell, and Dan Castellaneta.

## August 26

**The Blandings: Series 2** (Acorn, DVD: 2 discs, \$39.99). Adapted from P.G. Wodehouse's wacky "Blandings Castle and Elsewhere" stories, this 2014 second season of the comedy series stars Timothy Spall, Jennifer Saunders, and Mark Williams.



**Criminal Minds: Season 9** (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$55.98). Members of the Behavioral Analysis Unit track down bad guys in this 2013-14 ninth season of the FBI profiler series starring Joe Mantegna, Thomas Gibson, and Shemar Moore.

**Elementary: The Second Season** (Paramount, DVD: 6 discs, \$55.98). Starring Jonny Lee Miller as a modern interpretation of Arthur Conan Doyle's famed sleuth Sherlock Holmes, this 2013-14 sophomore season also features Lucy Liu as consultant companion Dr. Joan Watson.



**The Equalizer: The Complete Season 2** (VEI, DVD: 6 discs, \$29.99). Edward Woodward stars as a British Army and CIA vet who uses his skills to help others in this 1986-87 second season of the action crime series.

**Haven: The Complete Fourth Season** (Entertainment One, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$49.98). A pair of paranormal investigators with their own reality show arrive on the scene of the mysterious titular town in this 2013 fourth season of the supernatural series based on Stephen King's *The Colorado Kid*.

**The Men from Shiloh** (Timeless, DVD: 9 discs, \$49.98). Renamed and redesigned, this 1970-71 ninth season of *The Virginian*

features guest appearances by Desi Arnaz, Janet Leigh, Tom Skerritt, and Peter Lawford.

**The Musketeers: Season 1** (BBC, DVD: 3 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.98). This 2014 BBC adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' historical action classic stars Luke Pasqualino, Tom Burke, Santiago Cabrera, Howard Charles, and Peter Capaldi.

**Now and Again: The DVD Edition** (Paramount, DVD: 5 discs, \$39.99). An insurance worker killed in a subway accident is re-born when the government puts his brain in a bio-engineered body in this 1999-2000 sci-fi dramedy series starring Eric Close, Dennis Haysbert, and Heather Matarazzo.

**Portlandia: Season Four** (VSC, DVD: 2 discs, \$19.95). Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein are back in this 2014 fourth season of the IFC sketch comedy series, featuring cameos by Kirsten Dunst, Jeff Goldblum, Dan Savage, and k.d. lang.



**The Walking Dead: The Complete Fourth Season** (Anchor Bay, DVD: 5 discs, \$69.98; Blu-ray: 5 discs, \$79.99). This 2013-14 fourth season of the popular AMC zombie drama stars Andrew Lincoln, Norman Reedus, and Lauren Cohan.

**Welcome Back, Kotter: The Complete Series** (Shout! Factory, DVD: 16 discs, \$129.99). Featuring John Travolta in his breakout role, this 1975-79 sitcom starring Gabe Kaplan as a Brooklyn teacher also features Ron Palillo, Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs, and Marcia Strassman.

## Looking Ahead

Slated for September is the first season of *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, the second season of *Zane Grey Theatre*, the fourth season of *China Beach*, and *Ken Burns's The Roosevelts*.

## Re-priced or New to DVD/Blu-ray

**The Beatles—Parting Ways: The Unauthorized Story** (Janson, DVD: \$19.95). This 2009 documentary chronicles the solo careers of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr after the Beatles broke up.



**Disco & Atomic War** (Icarus, DVD:

\$29.98). Shown at Telluride and Hot Docs, Jaak Kilmi's 2009 documentary explores how the people of Estonia—under Soviet propaganda rule—hijacked TV broadcasts from Finland and began to absorb Western pop culture. Bonus features include the documentary "Lotman's World," on cultural critic Yuri Lotman.

**The Kennedys: Triumph and Tragedy** (PBS, DVD: 2 discs, \$29.99). Released to coincide with the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination, this two-part PBS-aided *American Experience* documentary series from 2003



looks at the history of one of America's most famous political families. Extras include the bonus 2008 documentary "Oswald's Ghost" (VL-3/08), as well as a booklet and various reproductions of memorabilia, including Oswald's fingerprints and mug shots, witness statements, and a transcript of Oswald assassin Jack Ruby's interrogation.

**Pandora's Promise** (Alive Mind, DVD: \$29.95). Interviewing nuclear engineers, authors, and converted environmentalists who are now in favor of atomic energy, filmmaker Robert Stone's provocative 2013 documentary (VL-1/14 ★★★★★) is now available in a home-video-priced edition. Bonus features include audio commentary by Stone and an interview with Stone and Michael Moore. Also newly re-priced are **The Anonymous People** (VL-3/14 ★★) and **Big Joy: The Adventures of James Broughton** (VL-5/14 ★★★).



**Top Hat & Tales: Harold Ross and the Making of The New Yorker** (First Run Features, DVD: \$24.95). Narrated by Stanley Tucci, Adam Van Doren's 2001 documentary (VL-1/02 ★★★) features wonderful interview clips with past/present staff, contributors, and admirers, who paint an engaging portrait of *New Yorker* founder Harold Ross. Also newly available is **James Thurber: The Life and Hard Times**.

**Unsolved Mysteries of the Second World War** (Eagle Rock, DVD: 3 discs, \$16.98). This three-disc set compiling all 14 episodes from the 1993 documentary series combines historic footage and graphics to explore WWII mysteries, including what happened to Adolf Hitler.



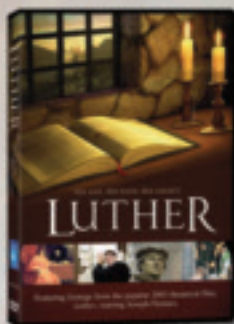
# COMPELLING NEW DVDS FROM VISION VIDEO



## Jock Troup and the Fishermen's Revival

Known as the "Revival Man," Jock Troup was a working-class Scot who experienced a dramatic conversion and calling as a young man. In a time of great economic hardship, he dedicated himself to reaching the lost in the towns and villages dotting the coast of northern Great Britain. In this documentary, noted scholars, authors, and eyewitnesses give their insights into Jock's life and detail the remarkable events that led to the Fishermen's Revival of 1921. Documentary, 48 minutes.

DVD - #501492D, \$19.99, UPC 7 27985 01492 0



## Luther: His Life, His Path, His Legacy

Very few historical figures have affected modern society and humanity as enduringly as Martin Luther, and on such a global scale. This comprehensive documentary traces the footsteps of the great Reformer and reflects upon the places which have become inseparably connected with his name. The program features stunning dramatic footage from the 2003 theatrical film *Luther*, starring Joseph Fiennes, along with interviews with experts discussing his life and work. Docu-drama, 90 minutes.

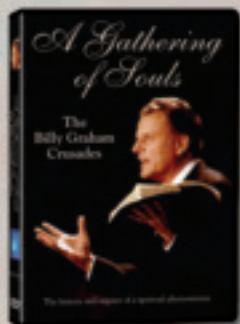
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## David Brainerd: Missionary to the American Indians

Filmed at historical locations throughout the northeastern U.S., *David Brainerd: Missionary to the American Indians* tells the story of the visionary eighteenth-century missionary whose efforts led to revival amongst native tribes and inspired generations of leaders to follow in his footsteps. The documentary features stunning photography and evocative reenactment scenes as well as insightful commentary by experts including John A. Grigg, University of Nebraska - Omaha; Richard Pointer, Westmont College; and Linford Fisher, Brown University. Documentary, 59 minutes.

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## A Gathering of Souls: The Billy Graham Crusades

During his long and distinguished ministry, Billy Graham has preached to over 200 million people worldwide. The massive evangelistic gatherings that took place in sports arenas, concert halls, and outdoor venues became known as the Billy Graham Crusades. With expert commentary from pastors, academics, Graham associates, and fellow evangelists such as Luis Palau, this documentary gives the history of the crusades from the first event in Los Angeles in 1949 to the remarkable gatherings behind the Iron Curtain and in the Far East. Documentary, 51 minutes.

DVD - #501582D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01582 8



## Jesus: The Desire of Ages

*Jesus: The Desire of Ages* is an artistic portrayal of Christ's passion set against the backdrop of the many lives He touched during his earthly ministry. The film opens with the warmth and hope of the nativity and then quickly transitions to the fearful terror of the crucifixion. Within the framework of the journey to Calvary are interwoven numerous flashback sequences portraying the stories of ten individuals whose lives were forever changed by the love of Jesus. The production combines an inspiring and triumphant music score with imaginative visual artistry. Drama, 61 minutes.

DVD - #501503D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01503 3



## The Desperate: A Ray of Light in the Face of Tyranny

On a rainy night in a concentration camp, a ruthless Nazi general is forced to plead with a condemned Jewish doctor to save his dying son. With nothing left to lose, the doctor refuses to aid his hated enemies. But when he is offered his freedom in exchange, he is faced with an unthinkable moral dilemma. *The Desperate* offers a provocative reflection on the relationship between justice and mercy. Winner of multiple awards including Best Short Film by the Hollywood Film Festival. Drama, 32 minutes.

DVD - #501583D, \$14.99, UPC 7 27985 01583 5



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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

### 3 Days to Kill ★★

Fox, 117 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99

Filmmaker Luc Besson is obsessed with various permutations of the father-daughter relationship, serving here as co-writer for vanity-plate-named director McG's *3 Days to Kill*, a contrived action thriller that can't decide whether it's telling a story of explosive espionage or madcap parental mayhem. Punctuated by careening car chases and senseless shoot-outs, the convoluted drama commences with ruffled, world-weary, veteran CIA agent Ethan Renner (Kevin Costner) resigning after a terminal cancer diagnosis and attempting to reconnect with his long-estranged, Paris-based wife (Connie Nielsen), and teenage daughter, Zoey (Hailee Steinfeld). But a vampy new control agent (Amber Heard) is determined to recruit Renner for one last assignment (the target is a nuclear arms dealer with an albino accountant), offering him an experimental drug that could extend his life. All of this takes place during the three-day period when Renner is supposed to be home with his rebellious daughter whom his wife has left in his care (a running gag has calls from Zoey's cell-phone interrupting each of Renner's interrogations and/or assassinations). And there's an overtly sentimental subplot involving an immigrant African family squatting in Renner's decrepit apartment. Still-charismatic Costner is a believably bewildered hero, using his deadpan demeanor to farcical advantage, but this is a mishmash of a film. Optional. (S. Granger)

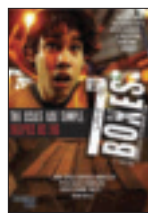


### 7 Boxes ★★★

Breaking Glass, 100 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$21.99

A grim original thriller, *7 Boxes* is set entirely in a busy urban market in Asun-

ción, Paraguay, where adolescent hero Victor (Celso Franco) serves as a freelance porter, carrying customer purchases in his makeshift wheelbarrow for a small fee. An older, coldblooded rival named Nelson (Victor Sosa) becomes a lethal enemy when Victor is hired—instead of Nelson—to transport seven boxes packed with something unknown. The fact that the boxes came from criminals who are connected to a butcher shop offers a clue that Victor and his wheelbarrow might draw a lot of unwanted attention. And that's exactly what happens, as both police and Nelson (with his ruthless gang) follow in pursuit, forcing Victor to spend a night hiding and darting around the maze-like street market. Filmmakers Juan Carlos Maneglia and Tana Schémbori keep the chase going at a fever pitch while managing to interweave a subplot about Victor's sister, as well as a romantic interest for Victor. Violent and unsettling, this powerful and unusual action film is recommended. (T. Keogh)



### 12 O'Clock Boys

★★★★1/2

Oscilloscope, 76 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99, Aug. 5

The opening sequence of filmmaker Lofty Nathan's documentary *12 O'Clock Boys* is flat-out bizarre: the sight of perhaps 20 or 25 dirt bikes and other small but muscular off-road vehicles tearing through the streets of Baltimore—shutting down traffic, aggressively overtaking passenger cars, and eluding police in a surreal and terrifying burst of antisocial anarchy. But this is no stunt; it's a real phenomenon and longtime problem for Baltimore since the first outlaw riders—the eponymous 12 O'Clock Boys, named for their ability to point their bikes straight up, like the hands of a clock—appeared years ago, becoming legends to younger kids in some of the city's toughest neighborhoods. Nathan follows the path of one wide-eyed admirer, Pug, from age 13 to 16 as he aspires to become one of the Boys. Along the way, Pug turns from a sweetheart to a lout, embittered by a world of violence, loss, and police brutality, in which he feels trapped. Along the way, Pug's mother struggles, suffering the death of one child while trying to keep her four remaining kids out of trouble. Nathan also offers profiles of some of the Boys—who take pride in their dirt-bike mastery on urban terrain—capturing mesmerizing images of riders keeping one step ahead of the police and popping wheelies as if riding wild horses. A strange, exhilarating, and disturbing documentary, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



### After Tiller ★★★1/2

Oscilloscope, 88 min., PG-13, DVD: \$34.99

Co-directed by Martha Shane and Lana Wilson, *After Tiller* presents a sympathetic, non-sensationalized portrait of Drs. LeRoy Carhart, Susan Robinson, Warren Hern, and Shelley Sella—the last four doctors in America who are publicly willing to terminate pregnancy in the third trimester. A fifth, Dr. George Tiller, of Physicians for Reproductive Health, was murdered in 2009 by an anti-abortion fanatic (cheered on by religious zealots online), which had a chilling effect on American abortion providers. Carhart and Tiller, both ex-military, saw themselves on a literal battlefield and they knew how high the stakes were. Carhart is here demonized by Nebraska Republicans (the GOP lives up to the worst aspects of its reputation here) and ultimately relocates his practice to Maryland. For his part, Colorado-based Hern says he was radicalized in the Peace Corps by witnessing the hideous suffering of Brazil's back-alley abortion victims. The filmmakers also give significant time to on-staff counselors at the abortion clinics, who—along with the doctors—try to assess the reason for a late termination (such as a rape, or heartbreaking evidence of severe birth defects in utero). Pro-lifers are not interviewed in much detail here, but right-leaning viewers may take heart in knowing that some abortion applicants (one all the way from France) are refused or steered toward putting babies up for adoption, if their cases are not “compelling.” A powerful and provocative documentary about the abortion wars, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)



### The Amazing Catfish

★★★

Strand, 95 min., in Spanish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99, July 29

An interesting drama from Mexico that redefines the notion of family, *The Amazing Catfish* tells the story of a chance meeting between strangers that evolves into much more. Claudia (Ximena Ayala) is an isolated young woman living in a remote, unsafe neighborhood who works a marginal job in a department store. Forced to stay in a hospital for several days following a bout with appendicitis, Claudia befriends the older Martha (Lisa Owen), a terminally-ill single mother. Without needing to share much, the two easily bond and soon Claudia is taken into Martha's home as a special guest. While Martha's kids don't seem particularly surprised at such largesse, they regard Claudia with mixed feelings, as a kind of instant sister who is also a stranger. In writer-director Claudia Sainte-Luce's unforced narrative,





relationships evolve and deepen without any self-conscious conversations, and Claudia becomes an important confidante to Martha while also basking in a newfound sense of belonging with others. Of course, with this opening of hearts and lives, there will be a price to pay in terms of change and loss. *Sainte-Luce* maintains a gritty, unvarnished view of these troubled characters while still underscoring small grace notes of trust and bonding, aided by a fine cast that deftly captures the daily ups and downs of Martha's slow fade. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

## As High as the Sky

★★★1/2

Cinema Libre, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95

First-time writer-director Nikki Braendlin explores raw emotional territory in this intriguing but uneven independent production. Margaret (Caroline Fogarty), who has just broken up with her fiancé, retreats into an obsessive-compulsive disorder mania that revolves around maintaining her home. A new disruption arrives when her older sister, Josephine (Bonnie McNeil), unexpectedly shows up with her 10-year-old daughter, Hannah (Laurel Porter), for what seems to be an indefinite visit.



Margaret does not easily adapt to Josephine and Hannah's personalities, and there is also the lingering issue of the sisters' difficult estrangement following their parents' death when Margaret was four and Josephine was 17 (Margaret was left in the care of her aunts; Josephine disappeared into a hippie lifestyle). Most peculiar here is the late-story inclusion of an exuberant pop star (Lainee Gram) who bonds with the petulant Hannah, creating a plot turn that frankly feels artificial. Still, the film is partially saved by Fogarty and McNeil, who deliver sincere performances that resonate with anguish and imagination. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

## Bastards ★★★1/2

MPI, 100 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98

French filmmaker Claire Denis has directed some tough dramas about broken families and cruel relationships in the past (including *Beau Travail* and *The Intruder*), but *Bastards* may be her bleakest portrait yet. Vincent Lindon stars as cargo ship captain Marco, who returns home after decades to see his estranged family for reasons that do not become clear until much later. His sister is a mess and her daughter is



in the hospital, the victim of terrible sexual abuse. Marco moves into a building above the apartment of a divorced mother (Chiara Mastroianni) who has a young son; her ex is a powerful businessman with some shady business dealings. The fractured flashback structure makes it hard to piece together how everyone is connected, especially since the story unfolds slowly. But what eventually becomes clear is the rot in Marco's family line and the reason he left it all behind. In some ways, *Bastards* plays like a warped version of *Chinatown*, only with an even more black-hearted backstory and an insidious ending. This is a challenging film revolving around a mystery that involves a conspiracy related to sexual abuse and pornography, told in a narrative style that forces the viewer to work. Although a tough film to watch, this may still appeal to fans of dark stories and challenging material. A strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

## Bayou Blue ★★★

Breaking Glass, 79 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99

An unrelentingly grim documentary, *Bayou Blue* focuses on the crimes of serial killer Ronald Dominique, who raped and murdered 23



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men across Southern Louisiana from 1997 to 2006. Filmmakers Alix Lambert and David McMahon explore the trail of horror and loss left by Dominique, interviewing family members of four victims, and the arresting officers in the case. We learn something about those dead men through the recollections of their survivors, many of whom still suffer from unresolved anguish and grief (one woman, Octavia Jones, lost five male relatives to Dominique). Lambert and McMahon use the official recordings of Dominique's confessions to communicate nightmarish details about the killings, and they take their camera down roads and into fields, visiting the awful places where the murders happened and the bodies were dumped. The directors also attempt to find some resonance between the impact of these crimes and the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina, which ended a way of life in some small communities and continues (via spilled oil in the gulf) to erode the shoreline. While that connection is a bit of a reach, it still comes across here as haunting. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Being Ginger ★★★

*Breaking Glass*, 69 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

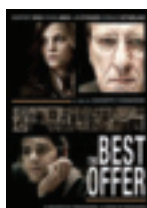
What begins as a cheerful act of self-indulgence by filmmaker Scott P. Harris eventually grows into something more profound and genuinely moving in the documentary *Being Ginger*. An American film student living in Edinburgh, Harris decides to take a personal issue public: namely that he has red hair and, apparently, this is a turn-off for a lot of women he has met. Harris goes to a park where he asks strangers what they don't (or do) like about red hair. Eventually, Harris—who seems to be covering up a lot of pain—reveals that as a child he was bullied and despised because of his hair, and that his self-esteem took a big hit. The film is loaded with hilarious ironies: among them, the fact that Scotland is a land of Celtic people and half the population seems to have red hair. Harris's considerable self-preoccupation vanishes, much to his surprise, when he's talking with a pretty girl who agrees to go on a date with him. In the end, Harris realizes that his silly idea for a film project has served as a therapeutic avenue for confronting an old, stultifying sadness lodged deep in his heart. Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### The Best Offer ★★1/2

*MPI*, 131 min., R, DVD: \$24.98

Giuseppe Tornatore (*Cinema Paradiso*) wrote and directed this English-language Italian production that won Best Film and Best Director honors in the David di Donatello Awards (Italy's version of the Oscars).



Art appraiser and auctioneer Virgil Oldman (Geoffrey Rush) is the most respected figure in his profession; in fact, his cred is so strong that he can run clever scams—intentionally undervaluing priceless works that an artist accomplice (Donald Sutherland) bids for on his behalf. Oldman's world is disrupted when he is asked to appraise the contents of a villa recently inherited by a mysterious woman named Claire (Sylvia Hoeks). Oldman is astonished at the contents of the villa, but also perplexed since Claire will only communicate with him through a closed door. Oldman's bad habits surface as he spirits away bits of antique mechanical gears that he finds in the villa, which he gives to a repairman associate (Jim Sturgess) to assemble—and in turn, the repairman offers Oldman a few pointers on how to woo the elusive Claire. *The Best Offer* doesn't quite reach a satisfactory conclusion (and suffers from a convoluted and overlong story), but the rich production design and Ennio Morricone's score help to hold the viewer's interest. And while Rush delivers a fine controlled performance, the real joy here is watching the white-haired Sutherland, who steals the show with his larger-than-life presence. A strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

### Bicycling With Molière ★★★

*Strand*, 104 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$27.99, Aug. 5

In Philippe Le Guay's bittersweet comedy, Gauthier (Lambert Wilson)—star of a popular but silly TV series about a heroic brain surgeon—tries to persuade erstwhile colleague Serge (Fabrice Luchini), who has been living as a recluse in the French countryside after a bout with depression, to come out of retirement and appear with him in a Paris revival of Molière's *The Misanthrope*. Serge agrees to consider the offer only if Gauthier rehearses with him for a week, and much of the film is devoted to watching the men performing scenes from the play, a process that reveals very different personalities (mirroring those of the play's characters), as well as contrasting acting styles. But, of course, there are interruptions—from a cab driver who expects Gauthier to help his injured mother, a realtor who wants to sell him a house, and a barmaid looking for advice on becoming a porn star—as well as an interlude in which Serge dithers over the possibility of undergoing a vasectomy. Still, despite some slapstick accidents during their bike rides around the area, the plans to collaborate appear to be going smoothly—until they meet an Italian woman to whom the usually standoffish Serge is attracted. Luchini and Wilson are a perfect Gallic odd couple, while Maya Sansa brings a likable sassiness to the divorcee who threatens their budding



friendship in this winning blend of comedy and drama. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Breaking Through

★★★1/2

*Breaking Glass*, 84 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99

How many LGBT people hold public office in the U.S.? More than one might think. *Breaking Through* is a powerful, moving documentary about the openly LGBT men and women who are pioneers in the world of public service and elected office—at all levels of government. Although largely comprised of a succession of interviews with numerous politicians who are openly LGBT, the sheer number of individuals speaking openly on camera is heartening. Some faces are familiar, such as Barney Frank, the recently retired Massachusetts congressman, who talks about the years he spent failing to cover his sexual identity in Washington, D.C. We also hear from Tammy Baldwin, the Wisconsin senator (currently serving) and former congresswoman. Lesser-known (at least on a national scale) openly LGBT interviewees include Lupe Valdez, sheriff of Dallas County, TX; Kathy Webb, an Arkansas state representative; and the delightful Alex Wan, an Atlanta city councilman. Each speaks freely about the anxiety, vulnerability, and even danger of serving in public office in a society with so much hostility toward LGBT people. But they take comfort in knowing that they have broken through barriers that also put them in a place where they can help make equality a reality for all. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Brownian Movement

★★★

*First Run*, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95

A married doctor leads a secret life in this Belgian psychodrama from writer-director Nanouk Leopold that is divided into three chapters. In the first, Charlotte (Sandra Hüller) begins her second career by leasing an apartment, where she sleeps with various men. Unlike Catherine Deneuve's call girl in Luis Buñuel's *Belle de Jour*, Charlotte is not a bored or neglected housewife, so it's harder to understand her motivations. Leopold keeps the dialogue to a minimum as Charlotte goes from treating patients, to assignments with strangers, and then home to her husband, Max (Dragan Bakema), and their young son. The lack of a music score during the apartment scenes further de-romanticizes her sexually explicit encounters with men who cover the anatomical spectrum, from a heavyset gentleman to a slow-moving senior citizen. Charlotte doesn't appear to judge, making her more like a sexual surrogate than a prostitute (and no money





changes hands). Her illicit activities come to an end after she runs into a former patient and winds up in couples therapy with her perplexed husband. A third chapter picks up the story after the pair have overhauled their lives—including a change in scenery—but Max's discomfort with Charlotte remains, since she never clearly articulated the reasons for her unusual behavior. A mysterious, atmospheric, and ultimately enigmatic character study with a strong central performance by Hüller, this is recommended for more adventurous collections. (K. Fennessy)

### Bushido Man: Seven Deadly Battles ★★1/2

Shout! Factory, 88 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles and English-dubbed, not rated, DVD: \$16.99, Blu-ray: \$19.98

Japanese filmmaker Takanori Tsujimoto's brisk, deadpan, low-budget spoof of Asian action potboilers centers on what appears to be an archetypal stoic feudal warrior named Toramaru (Mitsuki Koga), who arrives to inform his master, Gensai (Yoshiyuki Yamaguchi), of his latest challenges. The setting turns out to be modern (or post-modern) Japan, where Toramaru, a follower of the "Cosmic Way," seeks to gain mastery of every possible fighting technique as he takes on reigning Japanese martial arts champs in battles ranging from formal kung fu, to sticks, to anything-goes Yakuza knife-dueling. Toramaru travels in a cheaply visualized Japan (including Yokohama re-imagined as a lawless criminal wasteland, after an apocalyptic earthquake) to honorably vanquish other fighters, along the way gathering top-secret scrolls as a reward, before a big "surprise" ending that features a Zen-like moral (there's also a running bit about eating thematically correct food before a showdown). Anchored more in drive-in/grindhouse chopsocky than the grandeur that the genre achieved in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, this Tarantino-esque outing should appeal to cultists who appreciate shoestring action-gore f/x achieved with a minimum of wire-stunt and CGI (or plot, for that matter). A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

### Call Me Crazy: A Five Film ★★1/2

Sony, 88 min., not rated, DVD: \$22.99

Five women directed the loosely-interconnected short films in this Jennifer Aniston-executive produced anthology about life with mental illness that aired on Lifetime. Octavia Spencer is particularly effective as a therapist in Bryce Dallas Howard's "Lucy," in which the titular law student (Brittany Snow) stops taking her medication and ends up in a mental institute,



where she meets Bruce (Jason Ritter). Laura Dern's "Grace," which also encourages talk therapy and prescription meds, centers on high school student Grace (Sarah Hyland), whose mother Robin (Melissa Leo) suffers from bipolar disorder. Grace's friends consider Robin "the coolest mom in history" until they spend a day with her during a manic episode, which leads to non-stop talking and erratic driving. Lucy returns in Sharon Maguire's "Allison" and Ashley Judd's "Maggie." In the former, she makes peace with her sister (Sofia Vassilieva), and in the latter—which takes place after she has passed the bar—Lucy represents an ex-army officer (Jennifer Hudson) with post-traumatic stress disorder. Lastly, Bonnie Hunt's "Eddie" concerns a standup comedian (Mitch Rouse) whose depression has been getting the best of him (Lea Thompson costars as his wife). While the desire to de-stigmatize mental illness is an honorable aim, *Call Me Crazy* ultimately has a soft-focus, movie-of-the-week feel. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

### Calloused Hands

★★★1/2

Kino Lorber, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95

Although ultimately a bit tainted by sentiment-baiting mainstream contrivances, *Calloused Hands* proves to be a refreshingly powerful quasi-kitchen-sink drama with serious social relevance. Director Jesse Quinones's hard-bitten inner-city tale is centered on adolescent Miami-area baseball prodigy Josh (Luca Oriol) and his conflicted identity, brought on by his mother Debbie's (Daisy Haggard) overbearing street-thug-turned-aspiring-sales-professional boyfriend Byrd (Andre Royo). Byrd is a truly tragic character: a chronically underemployed African American surrogate father attempting to reclaim his own broken dreams in the form of his Jewish girlfriend's son's talent for baseball. But once Byrd realizes he's not going to get what he wants from Josh, or from his own frustrated attempts at selling water filters door to door, he begins reverting back to his Miami backstreet behavior, lashing out violently at anyone in his way and eventually dabbling in hard drugs again. The real turning point in this intense family drama comes when Debbie's real estate mogul father agrees to give her \$10,000 to pay off her debts—if she has her son bat mitzvahed. Once Byrd realizes that Josh's interest in baseball is waning in favor of Judaism, all hell breaks loose. A powerful debut feature, this is highly recommended. (M. Sandlin)

### Child's Pose ★★1/2

Zeitgeist, 112 min., in Romanian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Legendary Romanian actress Luminita

Gheorghiu is enthralling as well-to-do, manipulative mother Cornelia, whose grown son, Barbu (Bogdan Dumitrache), feels so smothered by her needy attentions that he has come to treat her with monstrous disdain. The dynamics between the pair intensify when Barbu accidentally runs over a child while driving too fast, and Cornelia swoops in to manage the situation and keep him from going to prison. Not only fearless in dealing with the police, Cornelia also goes toe-to-toe with a witness who expects a bribe to change his statement; brokers a truce with Barbu's girlfriend so they can work together for his freedom; and even ultimately attempts to sway the dead child's parents to get on board. Writer-director Calin Peter Netzer keeps surprising viewers with Cornelia's sense of entitlement mixed with her self-pity over Barbu's refusal to love her, despite everything. A rich, textured film that has long scenes but is shot like an edge-of-your-seat psychological thriller, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Confession of Murder

★★★

Well Go USA, 121 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

This flashy debut feature from Korean director Jung Byung-gil focuses on a cat-and-mouse game between a serial killer who murdered at least 10 women between 1986-1990, and Choi (Jong Jae-Young), a police detective who nearly caught the man and almost died in the attempt. In 2007, two years after the 15-year statute of limitations on the crimes has expired, tormented Choi is shocked to learn that a guy named Lee (Park Si-Hoo) is hawking a book in which he claims to be the remorseful perpetrator. Lee's tell-all wins the author enormous fame, but also the hatred of the victims' relatives, who band together with the intent of assassinating him. And Choi himself is drawn deeper into the mess when a mysterious caller to a TV talk show claims to be the actual killer. *Confession of Murder* cleverly juxtaposes a character study about the brooding detective with a twisty tale centering on the identity of the real murderer. Although the plot convolutions strain credulity (and a final chase sequence is almost laughably over-the-top), Jung skillfully builds up the tension, and exhibits serious talent in choreographing the action sequences. Despite an admittedly farfetched premise, this stylish thriller—which also features some telling jabs at the media and celebrity culture—is recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Cuban Fury ★★1/2

Entertainment One, 98 min., R, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98, July 29



Filmmaker James Griffiths' *Cuban Fury* stars Nick Frost as Bruce, a chubby corporate milquetoast who revisits his childhood interest in salsa dancing with the aim of attracting the interest of his pretty boss, Julia (Rashida Jones). But Julia has also caught the eye of leering office lothario Drew (Chris O'Dowd), which leads Bruce to seek out his erstwhile dancing coach, Ron (Ian McShane), for some emergency help in getting back into shape. *Cuban Fury* suffers in comparison to outstanding dance comedies such as the Japanese charmer *Shall We Dance?* and Australian *Strictly Ballroom*, partially because of the bland lead characterizations, which don't give Frost and Jones much to work with. And while McShane is delightfully irascible, O'Dowd's Drew is more creepy than amusing—and the culminating face-off between Bruce and Drew (meant to be the movie's comic highlight) is merely peculiar, since Frost is never convincing as a master dancer. The music shines—with lots of Tito Puente numbers—but it's not enough to rescue a film that is in every sense simply routine. Optional. (F. Swietek)

### Devil's Knot ★★1/2

Image, 114 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98



The notorious case of the West Memphis Three—Arkansas teenagers charged with killing three young boys in 1993, supposedly as part of satanic rituals—has been the subject of multiple documentaries, most notably the HBO-aided *Paradise Lost* trilogy. Filmmaker Atom Egoyan's docu-drama *Devil's Knot* focuses on the initial trials that resulted in the youths' convictions (and only sketches later events—including the men's eventual release from prison—in a text coda). Although the film does evoke a sense of loss—especially during a haunting sequence in which the dead boys' bodies are lifted from a creek and tenderly placed on the bank—the focus here is on defense investigator Ronald Lax (Colin Firth) and victim's mother Pam Hobbs (Reese Witherspoon), which effectively shunts the three accused teens into the background. While the major dramatic message—that the police and prosecutors created a case virtually out of whole cloth—is certainly convincing, this stately, somber, earnest film doesn't differ much from a good cable-TV movie, despite the starry cast. Coming from such a talented filmmaker, this feels disappointingly prosaic, and it lacks the power of the documentaries. Optional. (F. Swietek)

### Divergent ★★

Lionsgate, 139 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Aug. 5



In a futuristic, dystopian world, 16-year-olds are divided into five factions, based on tests that determine their dominant personality trait. There's Dauntless for the brave, Abnegation for the selfless, Amity for the peaceful, Candor for the honest, and Erudite for the intelligent. Those who are not born into or choose any of these groups are abandoned to survive on their own. In post-war Chicago, Beatrice "Tris" Prior (Shailene Woodley), daughter of Abnegation parents (Tony Goldwyn, Ashley Judd), doesn't fit into just one category: she's a Divergent, a fact she must keep secret since the government is determined to eliminate Divergents, who are perceived as threats to the organized social order. Although Tris's twin brother (Ansel Elgort) joins the Erudites, Tris opts for Dauntless. Befriended by Christina (Zoë Kravitz) and mercilessly taunted by Peter (Miles Teller), Tris works with initiate instructor Four (Theo James), who admires her grit. That trait will come in handy as Tris faces her most formidable adversary, Jeanine Matthews (Kate Winslet), the ambitious, power-hungry Erudites leader. Based on the first novel in Veronica Roth's YA trilogy and directed by Neil Burger, *Divergent* is so burdened down by the necessary exposition to set up a franchise that, despite some betrayals and surprises, a sense of excitement and urgency just doesn't kick in until it's too late. Optional. (S. Granger)

### Dom Hemingway ★★

Fox, 94 min., R, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$27.99, July 22



In this insufferable British black comedy/drama, Jude Law stars as the titular hot-tempered, self-destructive London safecracker who gets into trouble as soon as he's released from a 12-year stint in prison. Because he refused to rat on his Russian boss, Dom expects a generous reward. After relishing three days of debauchery with his meditative mate (Richard E. Grant), the pair take the train to the south of France to pay a visit to the countryside villa belonging to Mr. Fontaine (Demián Bichir), who gives Dom 750,000 pounds in cash. Predictably, disaster strikes—in the form of a nighttime Rolls Royce car accident and an exotic femme fatale (Romanian model Madalina Diana Ghenea)—launching this crime-caper tale that is interwoven with scenes chronicling Dom's attempts to establish a relationship with his estranged, struggling singer daughter (Emilia Clarke, unrecognizable from her role as Daenerys Targaryen in *Game of Thrones*). Writer-director Richard Shepard is clearly aiming for a redemption saga, but

this is certainly not as compelling as other gangland dramas, such as *Sexy Beast* or *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. Still, normally handsome Law does gain weight, grease and comb back his hair, sport a mutton chop beard, and spew crude, vulgar profanities in a Cockney accent—and obviously enjoys impersonating this abrasively loquacious, lowlife lout. Optional. (S. Granger)

### Don't Ask Me Questions: The Unsung Life of Graham Parker and the Rumour ★★1/2

Virgil, 95 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.99



Long a cult favorite, Graham Parker has enjoyed a career resurgence with a new record and a role in Judd Apatow's *This Is 40*. A reunion here with his former band, The Rumour, provides opportunities for reflection. Parker grew up in Surrey, which he recalls fondly, although educators steered him towards factory work, which put him off. He credits pirate radio for turning him on to rock 'n' roll. Parker's manager, Dave Robinson, remembers that label offers rolled in quickly once the musician started to get airplay. Parker predicted that his first album would be a hit, but sales never kept pace with critical acclaim. Parker attracted high-profile fans like Bruce Springsteen, who praises his songwriting, and Nick Lowe, who cites Parker's genuine "soul" in an era filled with phonies. Unfortunately, the pub rock crowd found him too aggressive and the punk crowd thought he was too traditional. In 1980, Parker fired The Rumour, but continued to record and tour, both solo and with other outfits, such as The Figgs. His former band mates continued to play music, except for bass player Andrew Bodnar, who became a librarian, but he returned for the recording of 2012's *Three Chords Good* (drummer Steve Goulding and keyboard player Bob Andrews also flew in from the U.S.). Aside from a few words from Parker's daughter, however, there is little here about the man's personal life, which may be by design, but still leaves the film feeling incomplete. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

### Dragon City ★★

MVD, 75 min., not rated, DVD: \$12.95

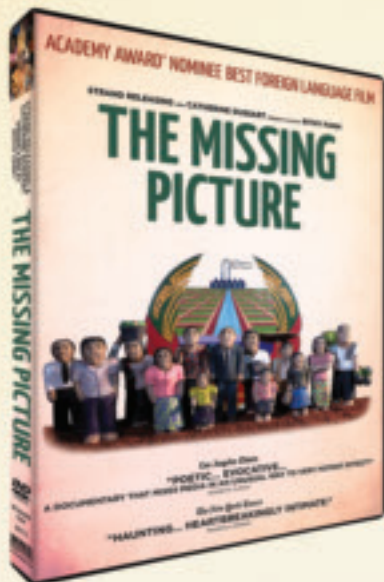


One would not expect the so-called "first Chinese punk rock movie" to be a technically superior product with polished acting and a professional script, but the overall primitivism of *Dragon City* is so extreme that it conjures up bad videotaped late-night cable access shows and embarrassing high school film class productions. Ostensibly, this is a post-apocalyptic, dystopian punk-rock tale



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Product #: 3401-2 | UPC: 7 12267 34012 5 | SRP: \$27.99  
90 Minutes | In French with English subtitles | Not Rated

A 2014 Theatrical Release

about the not-so-adventurous adventures of a Chinese punk band called No Name (sounding like some sort of infernal morphing of Motorhead and Green Day), who must save themselves from cannibals stalking the Earth. The band just happens to befriend an annoying American hippie—a '60s-throwback whose character is obviously modeled on Dennis Hopper in *Apocalypse Now*—who owns a recording studio/performance space, and he invites No Name to perform for the last few remaining non-cannibals in the land. The bulk of this throwaway movie consists of No Name showcasing their merely competent Western-punk rip-off songs in a live setting. Although it's heartening to see this sort of feisty DIY spirit coming out of China, *Dragon City's* only true redeeming quality is its merciful brevity. Not a necessary purchase. (M. Sandlin)

### Everyday ★★

MPI, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98

British director Michael Winterbottom opted to shoot *Everyday*—centered on a Scottish family coping with the absence of an incarcerated father—during two-week periods over a five-year stretch. Unfortunately, the experimental back story is the only genuinely interesting aspect of this otherwise mundane drama. Ian (John Simm) is serving time for a drug charge (the specifics are unclear), leaving his wife, Karen (Shirley Henderson), with the tough task of raising their four children (all played by real-life siblings). In order to keep the family intact, Karen is forced to work a series of menial jobs. Occasional prison visits illustrate how Ian's relationship changes with his wife and children, and when Ian is allowed to make a trip home (late in his sentence), he witnesses the permanent disruption created by his absence. The film's slow pacing and low-key approach lend it a sense of documentary-style realism, but the heavy Scottish accents are often indecipherable and the acting is too restrained to make any genuine emotional impact. While *Everyday's* heart may be in the right place, many viewers will need to muster a lot of patience before reaching the mild payoff. Optional. (P. Hall)



### Frankie & Alice ★★

Lionsgate, 101 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Aug. 12

Academy Award-winner Halle Berry stars in this all-too-familiar melodrama about a troubled woman with multiple personalities. What makes this tale unique is that one of her personas is a bigoted, white, Southern female. In 1973, bright, articulate Frankie Murdoch (Berry) works as a go-go dancer in a seedy Los Angeles strip club, explaining to

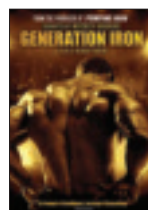


a newbie that she survives by "distancing" herself from what she does. Frankie's erratic behavior baffles not only her devoted mother (Phylicia Rashad) and resentful sister (Chandra Wilson) but also her boss, who sums Frankie up saying: "Good moves, great tits, but pure psycho." On more than one occasion, Frankie cannot remember where she is or how she got there. Winding up in an ER, she meets Dr. Joseph Oswald (Stellan Skarsgård), a researcher/teacher who is able to perceive her different personas: confused, defensive Frankie; the brilliant but terrified youngster, dubbed "Genius," who protects Frankie; and "Alice," an imperious Southern belle who believes she's white and is openly disdainful of Frankie, whom she considers to be a promiscuous tramp. Despite skeptical derision from his cohorts, Dr. Oswald is determined to help Frankie cope with her dissociative identity disorder by tapping into repressed memories. The cliché-riddled script is apparently assembled from a true case history, but director Geoffrey Sax's formulaic, unevenly paced *Frankie & Alice* suffers when compared to better, similarly-themed films such as *Sybil* and *The Three Faces of Eve*. Optional. (S. Granger)

### Generation Iron ★★

Anchor Bay, 107 min., PG-13, DVD: \$24.98

From the producer of the classic 1977 documentary *Pumping Iron* comes this muscular follow-up centered on a handful of determined bodybuilders hoping to win the 2012 Mr. Olympia competition. Director Vlad Yudin gets to know these athletes and their disparate backgrounds, training regimens, allies, and aspirations, as well as unique obstacles they've had to face in their lives and careers. We meet Phil Heath, a former champion whose belief in good genes and natural talent borders on arrogance, while his opposite—the hard-luck loner Kai Greene—maintains that hard work trumps so-called natural ability. Family man and fast talker Branch Warren overcomes a leg injury that could have ended his career, while Ben Pakulski takes a scientific approach to training that involves state-of-the-art technology. Along the way, there are also some real non-competing characters, including an elderly Dutch woman named "Grandma," who is known as the trainer from hell, and various other colorful mentors. All of this leads to the big contest, where the drama builds. Narrated by Mickey Rourke, and featuring brief appearances by Arnold Schwarzenegger and Lou Ferrigno, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)



### God's Not Dead ★1/2

Pure Flix, 115 min., PG, DVD: \$24.99, Aug. 5

In this forgettable but also unlikely maud-

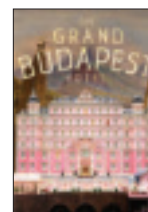
lin melodrama, Shane Harper stars as Josh Wheaton, who is enrolled in a philosophy class taught by arrogant Professor Radisson (Kevin Sorbo). As Radisson outlines the atheistic philosophers they will be studying, he insists that each student sign a pledge asserting that "God is dead." (Reality check: no teacher at a legitimate academic institution would ever make that demand, or tie it to a threat of failing the course.) As a devout Christian, Josh naturally cannot comply, despite protests from his girlfriend (Cassidy Gifford, daughter of Kathie Lee and Frank). When Professor Radisson demeans religion as "primitive superstition," Josh decides to defend his principles in a mock trial with fellow students as the jury. While Josh's support of God's existence is intelligent and thought-provoking, little time is spent on actual theology since the film is hell-bent on portraying the non-Christians as loathsome and self-centered, including a corporate exec (Dean Cain) who ditches his cancer-stricken girlfriend (Trisha LaFache) and refuses to visit his mother who is suffering from dementia; and a Muslim father who banishes his daughter (Hadeel Sittu) for her beliefs. Directed by Harold Cronk, this contrived and amateurish melodrama—featuring a cameo by *Duck Dynasty's* Willie Robertson—is not recommended. (S. Granger)



### The Grand Budapest Hotel ★★

Fox, 100 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.99

Set in 1932 in an opulent Alpine spa in the fictional Republic of Zubrowka, Wes Anderson's imaginative, impressionistic caper revolves around the eloquent, esteemed concierge, M. Gustave (Ralph Fiennes), and his protégé lobby boy, Zero Moustafa (Tony Revolori). Apparently, elderly Countess Céline Villeneuve Desgoffe-und-Taxis—aka Madame D. (Tilda Swinton)—left an invaluable treasure to M. Gustave instead of her own villainous offspring, and this tale-within-a-tale is told through flashbacks. *The Grand Budapest Hotel* begins with a contemporary prologue as an aging author (Tom Wilkinson) recalls an evening in 1968, when his younger self (Jude Law) dined with elderly Mr. Moustafa (F. Murray Abraham) in the once-majestic hotel, and learned about a life-changing incident that took place 50 years earlier. When Madame D. dies, legendary lothario M. Gustave becomes the prime suspect in her murder—according to Madame's devious son (Adrien Brody), his henchman (Willem Dafoe), and a policeman (Edward Norton)—launching a whimsical, madcap romp to discover whodunit, which only intensifies after Madame's executor





(Jeff Goldblum) is found dead, and M. Gustave escapes from prison using tiny tools smuggled inside frosted pastries. Inspired by the works of Viennese novelist/playwright Stefan Zweig, Anderson has concocted a delightfully original, bittersweet, and slyly campy saga of murder, theft, and conspiracy, featuring farcical cameos from Anderson regulars including Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, Jason Schwartzman, and Bob Balaban. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### Grand Piano ★★1/2

Magnolia, 90 min., R, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

A classical piano star literally plays for his life in Spanish director Eugenio Mira's entertaining (if also implausible) thriller. After a five-year hiatus, Tom Selznick (Elijah Wood) returns to Chicago for a concert, during which he will play his late mentor's piano. Tom's last performance didn't go well, so he's worried about choking, but the conductor (Don McManus) points out that the program is so complicated most audience members won't notice a mistake or two (even so, it seems unrealistic that Tom would perform without rehearsing with the orchestra beforehand). While he prepares, Tom's actress wife, Emma (Kerry Bishé), and her friends (Tamsin Egerton and Allen Leech) arrive to see the show. When he begins to perform, Tom notices messages on the sheet music threatening him with death if he plays one wrong note, so he leaves the stage during the breaks, which arouses the audience's attention, although not their alarm. In his dressing room, Tom receives a cell phone message to put on an earpiece which enables instructions from Clem (voiced by John Cusack), who also threatens to kill Emma. In its reliance on the architecture of a performance hall, *Grand Piano* recalls Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and while the script grows increasingly more ludicrous, deft cross-cutting and smart pacing keeps it humming along. A strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)



### Great Expectations

★★★

Fox, 128 min., PG-13, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$29.99

Filmmaker Mike Newell's stylish new adaptation of Charles Dickens's classic novel is reasonably faithful to the source material, telling the tale of orphan Pip, who as a boy assists an escaped convict named Magwitch and is invited by wealthy but reclusive neighbor Miss Havisham to be a companion for her adopted daughter Estella, to whom Pip quickly becomes devoted despite her pursuit of social position and wealth. Later, Pip unexpectedly



receives a large gift from an anonymous benefactor that allows him to become a profligate gentleman in the city, and it's only the revelation of his benefactor's identity and an ensuing tragedy (along with some help from his true friends) that lead him to abandon his self-destructive ways and return to his origins—and Estella, who has learned a similar life lesson. Of course, this only scratches the surface of a story that is typically Dickensian in its richness of character and detail, but while Newell can't shoe-horn everything into a two-hour movie, he does incorporate a surprisingly large number of narrative twists and colorful secondary figures from the book. The cast—which includes Ralph Fiennes as Magwitch and Helena Bonham Carter as Havisham, as well as Jeremy Irvine as Pip, and Holliday Grainger as Estella—is very good. David Lean's 1946 film remains in a class by itself, but Newell's take is a solid modern alternative. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Harold's Going Stiff

★★★

Level 33, 77 min., not rated, DVD: \$14.95

Like George Romero's 1968 classic *Night of the Living Dead*, writer-director Keith Wright's *Harold's Going Stiff* is an original (albeit much more sardonic) zombie flick, focusing on human behavior in an apocalyptic crisis. Set in Yorkshire, England, the story centers on an outbreak of a mysterious disease that affects only men—stiffening their limbs and causing them, over time, to lose mental faculties before becoming outright zombies. Aging widower Harold (Stan Rowe) has contracted the illness, but his comparative slowness in transforming has caught the attention of doctors looking for a cure. A nurse named Penny (Sarah Spencer) visits Harold at his home and soon grows attached to him as a father figure, providing a nice emotional counterpoint to the actions of a vigilante crew roaming about and killing any man who exhibits signs of the disorder. Wright presents all of this in faux-documentary format, with loads of fake interviews underscoring the contrasting perspectives that people would have about a zombie epidemic: coldly rational, bereaved, altruistic, fascist. In the end, however, the film is unexpectedly moving in its story of a kind and lonely man (who feels himself slipping away) and a caring woman (who doesn't want to let him go). Recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Harry Dean Stanton: Partly Fiction

★★★

Adopt, 77 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Don't expect a traditional portrait here of veteran character actor Harry Dean Stanton, who has appeared in over 200 feature films

during his 50-year-plus acting career. Filmmaker Sophie Huber offers more of an impression of the artist during a series of sketches and a couple of conversations with old friends and colleagues: coffee and cigarettes with David Lynch, reminiscing with Kris Kristofferson, and hanging out at his favorite L.A. bar, Dan Tana's, where he's known the bartender for more than 40 years. Unfortunately, viewers will only see a handful of film clips from less than a dozen films, including *Paris, Texas* (his first leading role after decades of supporting parts), *The Missouri Breaks*, *Repo Man*, and *Cool Hand Luke* (in which he sings a spiritual), and Stanton doesn't like to talk about his personal life, or really pretty much of anything other than music (and he is completely modest and unassuming about his work). "Do nothing" and "play yourself" are his familiar pieces of advice, but his assistant has more to say about Stanton's deep commitment to his craft, and Huber does finally get Stanton to open up a bit. A fair portion of the film is given over to driving through Los Angeles with Stanton, the camera watching the landscape go by at night with little comment, as the actor sings his favorite songs (all in all, he probably sings more words than he speaks). Ultimately, however, this feels like an oddly fitting portrait of an actor who makes everything look so natural, a documentary that is concerned more with finding the character and personality of Stanton than in chronicling his life. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Heaven Is for Real

★★★

Sony, 99 min., PG-13, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99, July 22

Adapted from Todd Burpo's nonfiction bestseller, this sensitive, spiritual story focuses on the bond between an affable Midwestern minister and his precocious four-year-old son, who insists that he went to Heaven. In the farming community of Imperial, NE, popular Crossroads Wesleyan Church pastor Todd Burpo (Greg Kinnear) works as a repairman, high school wrestling coach, and volunteer fireman. He and his wife Sonja (Kelly Reilly) have two children, Cassie (Lane Styles) and Colton (Connor Corum), and are constantly coping with the challenge of paying their bills. They wind up deeper in debt after Todd breaks his leg and suffers painful kidney stones, followed by Colton's ruptured appendix. Todd's belief is tested when young Colton describes going to Heaven during surgery—supplying details that cannot be explained rationally. Researching near-death experiences and consulting with a psychologist, Todd's quest



for answers ultimately begins to influence his sermons, upsetting skeptical parishioners (Margo Martindale, Thomas Haden Church), especially after the press becomes involved. Adapted with subtly wry humor by director Randall Wallace, *Heaven Is for Real* remains non-denominational/non-sectarian—for the most part—raising provocative questions about the fundamental nature of faith and the almost universal desire for an afterlife. Kinnear's appealing Everyman is believable, while cherubic Corum seems guileless and natural. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### Hide and Seek ★★1/2

Film Movement, 107 min., in Korean w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.99



From a purely technical perspective, this South Korean thriller from first-time director Huh Jung impresses, using genre tropes to generate considerable suspense and numerous shocks. But in terms of narrative, it offers little coherence or plausibility. *Hide and Seek* begins with a rumor that squatters are invading people's homes, living there undetected along with the owners. Aside from a prologue in which a woman is attacked while returning to her rundown flat, however, that promising premise is pretty much shunted to the side as the film centers on well-to-do restaurant owner Sung-soo (Son Hyun-joo)—living in a spiffy condo with his wife and kids—who learns that his ex-con brother has disappeared. Sung-soo goes to his sibling's tenement, where he meets a resident who throws him out violently after Sung-soo mentions his brother's name. Returning home, Sung-soo finds that he and his family are being stalked by an ominous figure who infiltrates even their apartment. From that point on, the plot grows increasingly absurd, with twists and turns that often depend on chases and fistfights (along with periodic flashbacks to the husband's childhood), concluding with a final confrontation that is ridiculously illogical and over-the-top. Still, *Hide and Seek* is an expertly crafted film that delivers some genuine shivers, and for genre aficionados that may be enough. A strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Hot Guys with Guns

★★★  
Wolfe, 105 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99



In his slick, semi-come-dic, L.A.-based, bi-racial, gay film-noir, writer-director Doug Spearman has a lot of balls (metaphorical and literal) to keep in the air. Table-waiting actor Danny (Marc Anthony Samuel), doggedly researching a potential breakthrough role in a popular TV cop-show franchise, takes adult-ed courses in private-investigator tactics from an old-time

gumshoe (Darryl Stephens). His "homework" in DIY crime-busting leads him back to an on-again/off-again boyfriend—promiscuous rich kid Patrick (Brian McCordle)—whose social circle of elite Hollywood gays has been recently victimized by bizarre burglaries in which all of the participants at sex parties are narcotized and robbed while unconscious and nude. Catty banter and observations about La-La Land lifestyles are actually more entertaining than the detective stuff. The sex scenes aren't graphic, but there are bare male butts, torsos, and revealing leather outfits—about as commonplace as cleavage was for Pam Anderson vehicles of yesteryear. Perhaps the most noteworthy achievement is that the material seldom capitulates to camp—the stereotypical touchstone of gay humor—and an undeniable high point is the cool CGI-animated opening credits presented in mock 007-fashion. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### In the Name Of ★★1/2

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



Actor Andrzej Chyra is the best reason to see the Polish drama *In the Name Of*, an absorbing if also sometimes alienating film about a priest suppressing his gay identity and desire while running a church-sponsored camp for troubled teens. Chyra stars as Father Adam, a recent transfer to a rural Catholic parish with a reformatory for juvenile delinquent boys. Father Adam does well by the boys, treating them with respect and coaching them in soccer, while also leading Sunday services for local parishioners. Behind the scenes, however, Adam is an alcoholic wreck, isolated in his sexuality and unable to talk to anyone about it (his attempts to share his pain with his sister via Skype are rebuffed). Inevitably, overblown rumors begin to circulate, suggesting—inaccurately—that Father Adam is a pedophile. Co-written and directed by Matgoska Szumowska, *In the Name Of* boasts some remarkable moments, including a conversation between a suspicious teacher and a tight-lipped bishop (who has clearly had to deal with Adam's "problem" before). Less successful are some curious scenes featuring loud anthem rock on the soundtrack, as if the filmmaker doesn't trust that the viewer will know how to feel. A strong optional purchase. (T. Keogh)

### The Jewish Cardinal

★★★1/2  
Film Movement, 100 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95



Filmmaker Ilan Duran Cohen's energetic and emotionally compelling *The Jew-*

*ish Cardinal* tells the true story of Aaron Jean-Marie Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris from 1981 to 2005. An intellectual maverick reluctantly caught up in geopolitical dynamics in the waning years of the Cold War, Lustiger was also driven by conflicts in his own identity as a Jew who converted to Catholicism in 1940. Favored by the new pope, Lustiger (Laurent Lucas) quickly ascends to the office of archbishop and becomes a special confidante to John Paul II (Aurélien Recoing), whose Polish nationality draws the men into a close bond (Lustiger's mother died at Auschwitz). Insistent that he is both Jewish and Catholic—reminding everyone that Jesus himself was a Jew—Lustiger nevertheless has trouble reconciling these religious forces in his life, both personally (his father, played by Henri Guybet, could never accept his son's conversion) and officially. The second half of the film largely concerns a brewing scandal concerning Carmelite nuns who take over a part of the Auschwitz camp to establish a convent and hospital for the poor. With Jews outraged that this lasting reminder of the Holocaust is being claimed by Catholics, enormous pressure falls on Lustiger to find a solution, especially with John Paul II dragging his feet for diplomatic reasons. A powerful film with a commanding performance by Lucas, this is highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Jodorowsky's Dune

★★★  
Sony, 90 min., PG-13, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99, July 8



Frank Pavich's documentary tells the story of cult director Alejandro Jodorowsky's (*El Topo*) ambitious plan to adapt Frank Herbert's sci-fi novel *Dune* during the 1970s. Since the project never actually made it past the planning stage, no footage is included and Pavich must make do with interviews of the director, his surviving collaborators, and a host of commentators, while also drawing from the voluminous preparatory materials created during pre-production. All of which provides a tantalizing taste of what might have been a truly remarkable film (as Jodorowsky and his admirers are inclined to claim). When producer Michel Seydoux offered to back whatever project the Chilean director might wish to undertake, Jodorowsky chose Herbert's novel, spending two years crafting a script—which he hired French comic artist Moebius to storyboard—and then assembling, largely on intuition and whim, an eclectic cast that included his son, Brontis, along with Orson Welles, and Mick Jagger, backed by a crew featuring key *Alien* contributors Dan O'Bannon and H.R. Giger. As Jodorowsky describes it, a sense of playfulness guided his search for the "spiritual warriors" who would help him realize his mind-bending vision, but the effort turned out to be for naught, since Seydoux was



unable to secure financing and he sold the rights to Dino De Laurentiis—who eventually produced David Lynch's disastrous 1984 version. Whether Jodorowsky's *Dune* would have been any better is open to question, but Jodorowsky's *Dune* is an engaging documentary centering on an ingratiating story-spinner who tried to follow an impossible dream. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

# Joe ★★½

Lionsgate, 117 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99

A boy with a brutal father finds an unlikely paternal surrogate in David Gordon Green's adaptation of Larry Brown's 1991 novel—a powerful slice of Southern gothic that offers Nicolas Cage his best role in years while providing another opportunity for young Tye Sheridan (*Mud*) to shine. Sheridan stars as Gary, a teen who applies to Joe Ransom (Cage) for work on a crew of illegal "tree poisoners" that Joe runs for a local lumber firm. Joe has a criminal past, but even though he drinks too much, visits the local bordello a bit too regularly, and has a hard time restraining himself when taunted by a town ruffian who is itching to avenge an old slight, he's basically a good guy trying to go straight. Joe is



also a generous sort, reluctantly stepping in to the role of protector to Gary, whose father (Gary Poulter) is a vicious drunk who takes out his frustrations on the boy, his mother, and his sister, while also appropriating any money that Gary happens to make. The narrative built around these characters is fairly schematic, lending the figures an archetypal feel in which they serve both as individuals and moral symbols. But while hardly subtle or understated, *Joe* works because of the palpably grungy atmosphere, the visceral intensity of its melodramatic plotting, and the almost operatic performances that Green draws from the cast. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

# Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons

★★½

Magnolia, 110 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles and English-dubbed, PG-13, DVD: \$26.98, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Many adaptations exist of the 16th-century Chinese epic *Journey to the West*, but it is safe to assume that none have been as frenetic as this loud and colorful martial arts romp from filmmakers Stephen Chow and Derek Kwok. Here, wild-haired Buddhist acolyte Xuan Zang (Wen Zhang) is armed with a book of nursery rhymes as part of



his strategy to hunt demons, aided by lovely hunter Miss Duan (Shu Qi), who is on hand to offer some well-placed kicks and chops. Some aspects of the original are retained, including the release of the rambunctious Monkey King (played by Huang Bo, wearing simian makeup)—imprisoned by the Buddha for irresponsible and reprehensible behavior. Despite centuries of incarceration, the Monkey King immediately reverts to his bad ways once he tastes freedom. But the film is mainly comprised of wacky, over-the-top, CGI-laced action sequences as Xuan and Miss Duan face a non-stop assault by zoomorphic entities and grotesquely exaggerated humans. While the chemistry works well between the leads, and the mayhem is stylishly presented, the action eventually begins to feel both tiresome and predictable. Still, fans of martial-arts mayhem are likely to appreciate, so consider this a strong optional purchase. (P. Hall)

# Le Week-End ★★★

Music Box, 93 min., R, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95, July 8

With their longtime marriage in danger, Birmingham college professor Nick (Jim Broadbent) and schoolteacher wife Meg (Lindsay Duncan) travel from London to Paris, where



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they honeymooned 30 years ago. Their anniversary celebration sours immediately when Meg discovers that Nick has booked them into a shabby, cheap hotel, so she switches to a luxurious suite overlooking the Eiffel Tower. As their holiday unfolds, amid visits to bookstores, bistros, museums, and Samuel Beckett's grave, we learn that Nick is facing early retirement and it's not clear whether restless Meg's future plans will include him. A chance encounter with Nick's slyly smug, highly successful Cambridge buddy, American ex-pat Morgan (Jeff Goldblum), followed by a dinner party at his Rue de Rivoli flat, serves as the catalyst for realizing the compromises that Nick and Meg have made over the years, as Nick wryly confides in Morgan's neglected son (Olly Alexander) and Meg turns to Morgan's pregnant, young French wife (Judith Davis). Recriminations flare, followed by hints of reconciliation in this tale featuring songs by Bob Dylan and Nick Drake. Director Roger Michell ably captures midlife melancholy and reflective regret, convincingly brought to life by seasoned British pros Broadbent and Duncan. An unsentimental, bittersweet story that should appeal to those who enjoyed *Quartet* and *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, this is recommended. (S. Granger)

## The LEGO Movie

★★★1/2

Warner, 101 min., PG, DVD: \$28.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$35.99



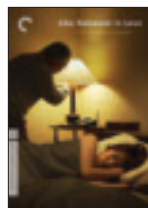
This energetic, eye-popping CGI comedy/adventure starring Denmark's LEGO interlocking plastic construction toys is set in the miniature city of Bricksburg, where benevolent wizard Vitruvius (voiced by Morgan Freeman) confronts power-hungry Corporate CEO President Business (Will Ferrell) with an ancient prophecy that a "Special" will someday arise to dismantle the rigid conformity that keeps its citizens confined to their respective realms. Several years later, Wyldstyle (Elizabeth Banks), an anti-corporate goth girl activist, enlightens lowly construction worker Emmet Brikowski (Chris Pratt), an obedient conformist who repeats instructions such as: always use a turn signal, park between the lines, root for the local sports teams, drink overpriced coffee, and don't forget to smile. When Emmet inadvertently stumbles upon the mysterious "Piece of Resistance," Wyldstyle misguidedly sees ordinary Emmet as the master-builder, even if he isn't "the most important, most talented, most interesting, and most extraordinary person in the universe." Meanwhile, Business plots total domination, utilizing a secret super-weapon, and his henchman—swivel-headed Bad Cop/Good Cop (Liam Neeson)—is determined to catch Emmet, who is aided by Batman (Will Arnett) and other cohorts, including Lando

Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams), Green Lantern (Jonah Hill) and Superman (Channing Tatum). Riffing off *The Truman Show*, *Toy Story* and *Star Wars*, among others, co-directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller have created a timely, cleverly satirical tale that is subversively filled with sight gags, amusing jokes, a potent message, and an unexpected plot twist at the conclusion. Highly recommended. (S. Granger)

## Like Someone in Love

★★★

Criterion, 109 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95



Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami follows up his acclaimed *Certified Copy* (which was shot in Italy with stars from France and England) with this odd, opaque little comic drama filmed in Japan with an entirely Japanese cast. Rin Takanashi plays college girl and part-time prostitute Akiko, who has to cancel on seeing her boyfriend due to last-minute client Takashi (Tadashi Okuno), a retired professor who hires Akiko, but can't decide if he wants to be a sugar daddy, sage, or grandfatherly guardian. Something tender and yearning blooms in Takashi's relationship with Akiko, which grows more complicated when he tries to pass on advice to her jealous, hotheaded boyfriend (Ryo Kase)—who really blows up when he discovers that Takashi is no doting family relative after all. Okuno is appropriately melancholic as the lonely old man who hires a hooker and ends up with a lost young woman who stirs paternal feelings, while Takanashi is both worldly and naive as the student call girl who is genuinely afraid of her boyfriend. A witty take on love, affection, sex, and desire in a particular cultural milieu, this sly, low-key film will appeal to fans of Asian cinema and sophisticated foreign filmmaking. Recommended. (S. Axmayer)

## Locke ★★1/2

Lionsgate, 85 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99, Aug. 12



An example of truly minimalist filmmaking, director Steven Knight's *Locke* never leaves the car that the title character (Tom Hardy) is driving from Birmingham to London. But even though the film is confined—even claustrophobic—it is not visually dull, featuring cunningly varying shots to show the character from different angles so that the eye is continuously engaged. And Hardy's cool but intense performance adds to the emotional tension. Unfortunately, however, as Knight gradually explains Locke's plight, the movie essentially becomes a glorified soap opera.

A contractor heading up a huge building project, Locke has abandoned the site just as concrete is about to be poured, leaving the job of supervising it to a hapless aide whom he instructs by phone even after he's been fired. Locke also converses with his wife and sons about why he's endangered his career—and marriage—by rushing to join a woman with whom he briefly worked some months back. It turns out that all of the current drama in Locke's life hinges on his determination to live up to his responsibilities as a man, a mindset driven by the fact that his father abandoned him as a child. It's a fairly thin revelation, so despite Hardy's impressive solo performance, *Locke* ends up being a talky trip to a sappy destination. Still, on the basis of Hardy's *tour de force* turn alone, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

## Lone Survivor ★★1/2

Universal, 122 min., R, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.98



Writer-director Peter Berg's unflinching, action-packed war film focuses on a June 2005 guerrilla skirmish in the war in Afghanistan, as recalled by Navy SEAL Marcus Luttrell (Mark Wahlberg). Following brutal Navy SEAL training, Team 10 is dispatched on a mission to take out an isolated, high-level target: senior Taliban leader Ahmad Shah (Yousuf Azami), a man responsible for the deaths of 20 Marines the previous week. The courageous four-man surveillance-and-reconnaissance team includes Hospital Corpsman Luttrell, Lt. Michael Murphy (Taylor Kitsch), Gunner's Mate Danny P. Dietz (Emile Hirsch), and Sonar Technician Matthew "Axe" Axelson (Ben Foster). After parachuting into Kunar's rugged mountains unobserved, the men are discovered by a trio of goatherds and immediately met with a dilemma: these Afghan civilians are unarmed, but if released (in accordance with the Geneva Convention) they will inform the Taliban. As commander, good-hearted Lt. Murphy frees the captives, after which their whereabouts are quickly revealed. Ferociously intense fighting ensues, with much going wrong, and the men's chances for survival are further lessened by their inability to contact their Commander (Eric Bana) at headquarters. Based on Luttrell's memoir, *Lone Survivor* benefits from realistic performances, but also suffers from relentlessly bloody and simplistic machismo. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

## Muppets Most Wanted ★★

Walt Disney, 108 min., PG, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, Aug. 12

A prophetic opening musical number—*We're Doing a Sequel* ("everyone knows the sequel's never quite as good")—kicks off this



globe-trotting crime caper featuring Jim Henson's fuzzy fellows, beginning with the Muppets on Hollywood Boulevard celebrating their reunion. Across the globe, however, nefarious forces are at work. An evil Kermit lookalike named Constantine (voiced by Matt Vogel) has concocted a diabolical scheme with Dominic Badguy (Ricky Gervais), a talent manager whose surname is pronounced "Bad-jee." Dominic convinces the Muppets to go on an international tour in which—coincidentally—every European theater they're booked into just happens to be near a bank or museum that can be robbed. When the Muppets arrive in Berlin, Kermit (Steve Whitmire) is kidnapped and shipped to Siberia, where his Gulag is commanded by musical comedy-obsessed Nadya (Tina Fey). Disguised as Kermit, Constantine woos Miss Piggy, fostering her fantasy of a lavish wedding at the Tower of London. On their trail are bumbling Interpol agent Jean-Pierre Napoleon (Ty Burrell) and Sam Eagle. Will the real Kermit be able to save the day? Co-scripted by Nicholas Stoller and director James Bobin, *Muppets Most Wanted* is reminiscent of 1981's *The Great Muppet Caper*, as the felt-covered friends frolic with numerous celebrities, including Lady Gaga, Celine Dion, Sean Combs, and Salma Hayek. Most memorably, Ray Liotta, Danny Trejo, and Jemaine Clement sing, while Christoph Waltz waltzes. While not "quite as good" as the last Muppets movie, this is a swift-paced, smart, and fun spoof. Recommended. (S. Granger)



### New World ★1/2

MVD, 93 min., in Japanese & Putonghua w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$17.95

A dramedy revolving around a Chinese subculture of students, business people, and gangsters operating in Japan, *New World* is a frivolous tale of a spoiled party girl from Beijing named Coco (Shi Ke), who wants to spend Christmas in Osaka but ends up at a crummy hostel in a crime-ridden area of the city. Unhappy about the arrangements, Coco pouts up a storm but then becomes embroiled in a tangled web of intrigue involving a missing mother, a young man begging for a loan from a dismissive gangster, a latchkey kid, several hapless barmaids, and a dangerous-looking fixer. Writer-director Lim Kah-Wai employs some imagination and humor here, but the script's many coincidences ultimately simply beggar belief. Not recommended. (T. Keogh)



### Noah ★★★

Paramount, 137 min., PG-13, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.99, July 29

The biblical story of the flood—the original

apocalypse tale—is creatively re-interpreted by filmmaker Darren Aronofsky in this timely, resonant film with an ecological doomsday message. Beginning with a revised line from Genesis: "In the beginning, there was nothing," the movie introduces Noah (Russell Crowe) as a righteous vegetarian, a man who is also the recipient of "visions" from the Creator. After conferring with his grandfather, Methuselah (Anthony Hopkins), Noah works with his wife (Jennifer Connelly), sons (Douglas Booth, Logan Lerman, Leo McHugh Carroll), and an orphaned girl (Emma Watson) to build an Ark—assisted



by the Watchers, or Fallen Angels (voiced by Nick Nolte, Frank Langella, and Mark Margolis). Noah's nemesis is pagan Tubal-cain (Ray Winstone), who murdered Noah's father. As the rains pour down for 40 days and 40 nights, drowning the rest of humanity, deeply-conflicted Noah wrestles with inner demons while trying to respect and obey the commands of the Creator (the word "God" is never mentioned). Aronofsky, co-scripting with Ari Handel, boldly breaks away from old-fashioned biblical epic storytelling to create this unconventional spectacle that is rich in character and subplots. Combining time-lapse photography with montage editing, the cinematography adroitly blends live-action with awesome computer-generated imagery,

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although it's unfortunate that the giant CGI Watchers kind of resemble prehistoric Transformers. Recommended. (S. Granger)

### Omar ★★★

Adopt, 98 min., in Arabic w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$34.95



Betrayal in myriad forms—from the personal to the national—lies at the core of Hany Abu-Assad's Oscar-nominated film. Adam Bakri stars as the title character, a young Palestinian who suffers constant humiliation under Israeli occupation. Omar and two friends—part of a resistance group—decide to kill a Jewish checkpoint soldier as an act of protest, after which the Israelis quickly retaliate, taking Omar into custody. The soft-spoken agent assigned to interrogate him under torture offers him a deal: Omar will be released in exchange for delivering the actual sniper. Omar agrees to this arrangement but doesn't intend to fulfill it, instead joining another resistance mission—one that goes terribly wrong, making it clear that their group has been betrayed, although it's not evident by whom, or why. Omar convinces his Israeli handler to give him a second chance to cooperate, but his real purpose is to ferret out the traitor, and his investigation reveals that even one's closest friends can make decisions that cause devastating harm. The Israeli agent attempting to manipulate Omar personifies the ruthlessness of a state acting against its humanistic principles in order to suppress what it perceives as a deadly threat. While the political perspective of *Omar* is undeniably one-sided, it's hard not to be moved by the story. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### An Oversimplification of Her Beauty ★★★★★

Cinema Guild, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.95



Terence Nance's disarming meta-narrative nonfiction film is a tough-to-classify mix of docu-confessional essay and animation, expanding upon (and commenting on) a 2006 cinematic project that Nance did for his production class. "How Would You Feel?" was a short in which the NYC filmmaker revealed his infatuation for a girl whom he knew would be watching in the audience. Although she was momentarily charmed (overwhelmed might be a better word), the relationship did not have the outcome Nance intended. Here, Nance states that he's been attracted all his life to gorgeous, cosmopolitan, upper-class, musical, lesbian, or otherwise unattainable females (when one seemingly presented no obstacles, Nance just lost interest). In bursts of humor and brilliant animated interludes (commissioned from a variety of artists),

Nance analyzes his motivations, frustrations, and fumbling pursuit of the romantic ideal. At times he does come across as mildly petulant, obsessed, or disingenuous, but he is never vengeful or misogynist while he ruminates on his exes and what-we-do-for-love (Nance built a bed using a Japanese carpentry manual, although he knew neither carpentry nor Japanese). Because the filmmaker is black, there may be a temptation to pigeonhole this as an Afro-American urban film; but Nance's style is actually much closer to that of Michel Gondry (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*). An offbeat documentary, this is highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (C. Cassidy)

### The Quiet Ones ★★

Lionsgate, 98 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99, Aug. 19



Supposedly based on real events, this sinister story—set in 1974—stars Jared Harris as Oxford University psychology professor Joseph Coupland, who recruits geeky cameraman Brian McNeil (Sam Claflin) to document his highly unorthodox experiments on Jane Harper (Olivia Cooke), a teenager apparently possessed by a malevolent entity named Evey. Coupland wants to prove that Jane is creating ghostly Evey through her own psychic powers, which would be a significant breakthrough in the treatment of mental illness. For inexplicable reasons, Coupland continually subjects the already traumatized Jane to loud rock music; after the neighbors complain and Oxford suspends his funding, Coupland relocates to a spooky country estate, bringing along shrieking Jane, skeptical Brian, and his romantically entwined assistants (Erin Richards, Rory Fleck-Byrne). Predictably, Jane's telekinetic energy grows, wreaking diabolical, supernatural havoc. Although director John Pogue draws very loosely on Dr. A.R.G. Owen's legendary "Philip Experiment" in Toronto in 1972—when academic researchers tried to prove that ghosts and poltergeists are constructs of the human mind—*The Quiet Ones* is an uneven film that suffers from a cliché-filled, derivative narrative. Optional. (S. Granger)

### The Raid 2 ★★1/2

Sony, 150 min., in Indonesian w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99, July 8



It's obvious from the get-go that this genre sequel to Gareth Evans' 2011 *The Raid: Redemption* is going to be an intense, über-violent action adventure. Set in Indonesia, the story revolves around a Jakarta cop who is infiltrating an underworld cartel in order to weed out the rampant corruption within the city's police force. When Rama (Iko Uwais) joins a covert undercover

team, he's given a new identity and sent to prison where he befriends Uco (Arifin Putra), the hot-tempered scion of a crime family. Two years later, when Rama is released, Uco's grateful father, Bangun (Tio Pakusadewo), gives Rama a job as an enforcer. Problem is: impatient Uco wants to take over the business and is tempted by seductive offers from leather-gloved Bejo (Alex Abbad), a rival boss who previously bumped off Rama's bad-seed brother in a sugarcane field. That places Rama right in the middle of a father/son turf war, fighting off psychopathic assassins such as Baseball Bat Man (Very Tri Yulisman) and Hammer Girl (Julie Estelle), while his long-suffering wife and infant son wait on the sidelines. Welsh-born writer-director Evans surrounds himself with martial arts specialists who pride themselves on inventive methods of annihilation (such as pushing a man's face onto a steaming griddle). The relentless mayhem is adroitly photographed and carefully choreographed with a bizarrely artistic flair (particularly the careening, multi-vehicle car chases) and punctuated by a primarily percussive soundtrack. The fact that the film is subtitled doesn't much matter since the bloody, brutal brawling transcends the language barrier. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

### The Rocket ★★★

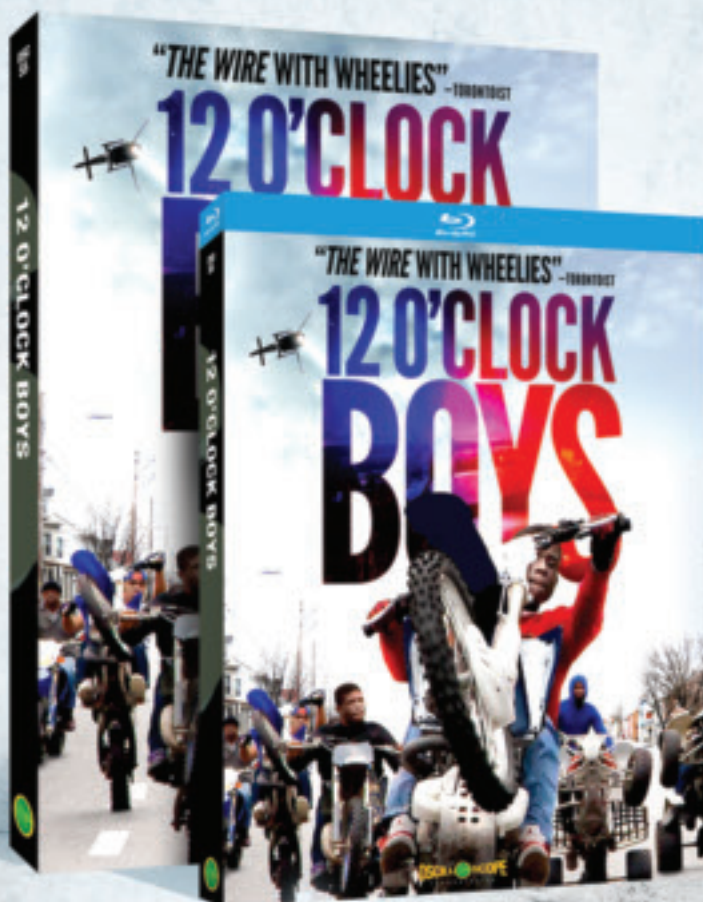
Kino Lorber, 96 min., in Lao w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95



This quirky Laotian drama about the clash between tradition and progress centers on the adventures of a young boy named Ahlo (Sitthiphon Disamoe), born the twin brother of a stillborn baby—which according to local superstition is supposed to bring bad luck. As it happens, Ahlo's mother, Mali, dies years later in a freak accident, after which Mali's own tradition-obsessed mother turns on Ahlo, blaming him for her daughter's death. Around the same time, Ahlo and his immediate family are forced to relocate, since a new dam is being built nearby and their valley will be completely flooded. As guilt sets in over his mother's death, Ahlo feels increasingly alienated from his real family and soon befriends an offbeat family of "outsiders," headed up by a demented, alcoholic, James Brown fanatic named Purple (Thep Phongam), a former Laotian soldier. The film's central concern with the struggle to break free from outmoded traditional ways and embrace the future culminates in a homemade rocket-building contest that could end up being a way for Ahlo to permanently transcend his difficult past. Director Kim Mordaunt shines an intriguing light on a fascinating area of Southeast Asia that is rarely glimpsed in contemporary feature films. Recommended. (M. Sandlin)



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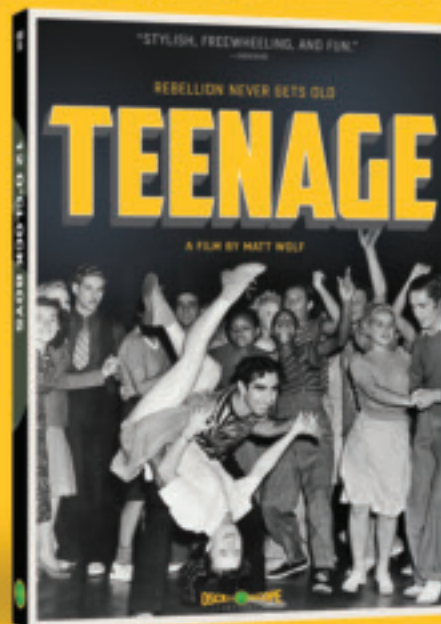
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## The Selfish Giant

★★★1/2

MPI, 91 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98



Writer-director Clio Barnard's BAFTA-nominated debut feature—loosely inspired by Oscar Wilde's identically titled short story—centers on a pair of adolescent best pals from impoverished and broken households in the lower depths of modern England. Arbor (Conner Chapman), undersized but often ferocious (especially when off his medication), is devoted to ungainly, slow-moving Swifty (Shaun Thomas), a harmless lad with a natural affinity for horses. When both are expelled from school, Arbor delightedly leads Swifty into an avocation as “scrappers,” collecting metal (usually illegally) for a moody junkman/recycler called Kitten (Sean Gilder). Kitten's gambling hobby is racing cart-horses in the street against Gypsy clans, and he finds in Swifty a possibly lucrative driver-trainer for his pony. Swifty's rising stock in this gritty subculture contrasts with Arbor going to ever more dangerous lengths in order to procure metal—especially unguarded electric-utility cable—to sell to help his struggling family. Looming forebodingly over the landscape are monstrous nuclear cooling-towers and hissing high-voltage power lines—collectively as much the eponymous “giant” as is unscrupulous Kitten. Reminiscent of Vittorio De Sica's classic *The Bicycle Thief*, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassady)

## Small Time ★★★1/2

Anchor Bay, 95 min., R, DVD: \$22.98, Blu-ray: \$26.99



“This is the story about my father and the summer we spent together many years ago. It was the summer that changed my life.” That's how Freddy Klein (Devon Bostick) introduces his dad, Al (Christopher Meloni), owner of Diamond Motors, a used car dealership in Covina in Southern California. Strategically working in tandem with his partner, perennial bachelor Ash Martini (Dean Norris), Al can sell cars to even the most unlikely of customers—including an unsuspecting thief who was trying to steal off the lot. Middle-aged Al is divorced from Barbara (Bridget Moynahan), who dumped him to marry Chick (Xander Berkeley), a wealthy venture capitalist. To everyone's surprise, high school graduate Freddy decides to forego college in order to sell cars with his easygoing dad. Al is thrilled to have his only son move back in, but when Freddy starts to emulate his dad and manipulate the customers, Al must make some difficult decisions. Making his big-screen debut, Emmy-winning writer-director Joel Surnow's (co-creator of Fox's 24) *Small Time* is a sentimental if also

often endearing father/son coming-of-age comedic drama. A strong optional purchase. (S. Granger)

## Stalingrad ★★★1/2

Sony, 131 min., in Russian & German w/English subtitles, R, DVD: \$30.99, Blu-ray: \$35.99



It's impossible to overestimate the battle of Stalingrad's importance to the European theater outcome during World War II; the Soviet defense of their city in late 1942 was a decisive factor in the defeat of the German army on the Eastern Front. Filmmaker Fedor Bondarchuk's epic paean to that legendary fight boasts remarkable battle sequences, but is also so bombastic and cliché-ridden that it closely resembles the super-patriotic hokum that Hollywood studios were turning out during the war. Based loosely on historical incidents at Pavlov's House—an apartment building where holed-up Russian soldiers held off German assaults for a full two months—*Stalingrad* juxtaposes scenes built around the troops defending the bombed-out building, with others focusing on a “good German” officer (Thomas Kretschmann) who despises his commander's cruelty. On both sides, unlikely romance also sprouts (with actresses Maria Smolnikova and Yarina Studilina). The dialogue throughout is unfortunately riddled with banalities, the music score is overwrought, and a framing device—in which a Russian aid worker narrates the story while helping to rescue some German students trapped in the debris from a 2012 tsunami in Japan—is simply ill-advised. Joseph Vilsmaier's identically-titled 1993 epic (VL-3/13), although told from the German perspective, is a much better choice here. Optional. (F. Swietek)

## Tanta Agua ★★★

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



Uruguayan filmmakers Ana Guevara and Leticia Jorge's *Tanta Agua* tells a coming of age story that centers on mending frayed family bonds. Divorced father Alberto (Nestor Guzzini) tries to make up for the time that he has been away from his children: 14-year-old Lucia (Malú Chouza) and 10-year-old Federico (Joaquin Castiglioni). Alberto takes the kids for a vacation at a hot springs resort, but heavy rains force closure, and despite Alberto's attempts to spend quality time with the kids, they're bored. Lucia, however, soon finds other children her age with whom she can hang out, and somehow even winds up in a fleeting relationship that she did not expect (and is unprepared to handle). Alfredo also finds a new friend in the resort's attractive

receptionist. As for little Federico, he suffers a bike accident that quickly snaps the dysfunctional family into a cohesive union. A gentle, charming film that benefits from fine performances and some unexpected moments of light comedy, this is recommended. (P. Hall)

## These Birds Walk ★★★

Oscilloscope, 71 min., in English & Pashto w/English subtitles, DVD: \$34.99



In Karachi, Pakistan, Abdul Sattar Edhi—a venerable humanitarian often compared to Mother Teresa of India—operates a home for the city's many runaway boys. In co-directors' Omar Mullick and Bassam Tariq's impressionistic *cinema vérité* portrait, taciturn Edhi is seldom onscreen (he does not seem to relish being filmed, and no biographical details are volunteered); instead, the camera rides along with the young men, who serve as drivers and errand-runners. Many of these runaways come from the most grievously impoverished districts, and sometimes claim to be fleeing abusive home environments (although it's clear that in some instances, at least, a sojourn in Edhi's shelter constitutes a kind of free vacation). At times, Edhi's drivers are the only ones available to pick up and give a proper Islamic burial to a dead youth. An interesting documentary charting how one inscrutable man “paying it forward” is able to make a difference while inspiring others (in a subculture seldom viewed by Westerners), this Hot Docs award-winner is recommended (C. Cassady)

## Tim's Vermeer ★★★★★

Sony, 80 min., PG-13, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$40.99



Fine art and technology combine in this fascinating documentary about how an obsessive amateur was able to recreate an astonishingly precise replica of one of Johannes Vermeer's most famous paintings. Magicians Penn and Teller introduce NewTek computer graphics inventor Tim Jenison—a self-made millionaire friend—who marvels over how 17th-century Dutch master Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) was able to paint with a luminous, photographic clarity that rivals photorealism, long before the modern-day camera was invented. With no previous training in painting, Jenison set out to reproduce Vermeer's *The Music Lesson*. After reading artist David Hockney's *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters* and studying the mathematical calculations in architect-professor Philip Steadman's *Vermeer's Camera: Uncovering the Truth Behind the Masterpieces*, Jenison conducted an experiment to prove that



Vermeer was able to achieve his exceptional effects through projected optical images, ingeniously utilizing mirrors and lenses. Directed by Teller, *Tim's Vermeer* finds Jenison chatting amiably with Penn Jillette while demonstrating how his relentless research unraveled the mystery that stumped scholars for decades. After learning to read Dutch, and visiting the artist's hometown of Delft, Jenison recreates Vermeer's studio in a Texas warehouse, complete with window décor, furniture, rugs, and costumed models. To insure accuracy, Jenison inveigles his way into Buckingham Palace to view the Queen's private collection; grinds his own pigments, using only ingredients that were available to Vermeer; and spends months hunched over a 29" x 25" canvas, squinting through a variety of lenses in the kind of camera obscura that Vermeer must have used—ultimately duplicating every detail with painstaking precision. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Granger)

### Under the Skin ★★

Lionsgate, 108 min., R, DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$24.99, July 15

This strange, surreal, sci-fi horror thriller looks at what it means to be human. Accompanied by a shadowy, silent motorcyclist, an expressionless, extraterrestrial stalker (Scarlett Johansson) is on a mission. Driving a white cargo van, this alien femme fatale roams the crowded city streets of Glasgow and the rural Scottish Highlands, prowling for her chosen prey: lonely, unattached men. When she randomly finds a compliant victim, she offers him a ride, seduces him, strips him, and then sinks him into an inky, inescapable void. Although somewhat murky, there is subtext here about harvested human fillets being sent back to the alien's home planet to become part of the food chain. Loosely based on Michel Faber's titular satirical, metaphorical 2000 novel, director Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin* carries some reminiscent tinges of Nicolas Roeg's 1976 classic *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. Apparently, most of the men in the film are non-actors who didn't realize they were being filmed by small digital cameras concealed in and around the van; only later were they asked to sign a *Candid Camera*-like release form (fortunately, there's little dialogue, as the Glaswegians' thick brogue is nigh indecipherable). While the atmospheric concept is mysterious and the imagery initially intriguing, repetitious tedium soon sets in. Credit Johansson for once again embodying an enigmatic entity that men desire—a role she's played in one form or another in *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, *Lost in Translation*, and *Her*. Optional. (S. Granger)



### What's In a Name?

★★★

First Run, 109 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95

Good comedies can be built on very slender premises, which is certainly the case with this Gallic farce written and directed by the team of Matthieu Delaporte and Alexandre de la Patellière. *What's In a Name?* centers on a dinner party hosted by married teachers: Vincent (Patrick Bruel), a famous, much-published fortysomething professor, and his younger spouse, Anna (Judith El Zein), who soldiers on in obscurity at a grim high school. The guests are Anna's wealthy brother, his pregnant spouse, and a close friend—an apparently unattached trombonist. A nasty argument erupts when the brother announces the name that he and his wife have chosen for the child they're expecting, and things go downhill from there as long-hidden secrets are revealed and simmering animosities burst into the open. Originally titled *Le Prénom*, the piece began as a play, and even though the filmmakers have opened it up slightly—with some external shots of the five major characters, brief appearances by a few others (a deliveryman, the siblings' mother, the children of the hosts), and some flashbacks—this basically remains a talky, stage-bound work. But the cast energetically delivers the dialogue (which includes a good many zingers), and the fluid camerawork minimizes the essentially static quality of the setting. Imagine a comic version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and you'll have some idea of what this fizzy French film is like. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



### Zero Charisma ★★★

New Video, 97 min., not rated, DVD: \$26.95

Character actor Sam Eidson stars as Scott, an obnoxious boy-man and fantasy game "grand master" who rules over a gaggle of fellow losers until an apparent winner arrives one day. Living in his grandmother's house and delivering fast food for a living, Scott's silver lining is his weekly meetings with fellow players in a *Dungeons & Dragons*-like game that has been going on for a full decade. Scott rules the roost, at least until new guy Miles (Garrett Graham) turns up and gradually reveals himself to be successful at everything in life—from running a hugely popular website to living with a beautiful girlfriend. Scott, defensive and threatened, soon tries to undermine Miles at every opportunity, but only succeeds in revealing himself to be a desperate nerd with nothing going on except his goth trappings. Filmmakers Katie Graham and Andrew Matthews sustain insightful comedy built around a



lead character who isn't especially likable, although they are helped by the terrific cast, which also includes Anne Gee Byrd as Scott's crusty grandma, and Brock England as his loyal friend. Recommended. (T. Keogh)

### Classic Films

#### The Agony and the Ecstasy ★★★

Fox, 138 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$24.99

The story of Michelangelo and the painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is presented in this lavish 1965 period piece based on the bestselling historical novel by Irving Stone. Charlton Heston—Hollywood's rugged favorite for big-screen epics—took a break from his war films and action dramas to play Michelangelo, the Renaissance sculptor commissioned by Pope Julius II (Rex Harrison) to paint frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. While the Pope oversees a war (Julius was called "the warrior Pope"), he's also busy fighting the perfectionist Michelangelo, who only reluctantly takes up the assignment and then flees to the marble quarries of the countryside for inspiration after discarding his first attempt. This battle of wills comprises the dramatic core of the film, which takes liberties both with history and Stone's book but does recreate the Sistine Chapel to scale at Cinecittà Studios in Rome. Much of the tale plays out on this impressive set, with Heston high up on the scaffolding doing delicate work on an epic scale. A financial disappointment upon its initial release, *The Agony and the Ecstasy* has aged fairly well, thanks to director Carol Reed's attention to physical detail coupled with Heston's commanding performance. Newly remastered for Blu-ray, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)



#### Alice ★★★

First Run, 84 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$24.95

Czech animation legend Jan Svankmajer mixes animation and live action to create a peculiar world for his 1988 adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, here re-imagined as a creepy dream. Young Alice (played by Kristýna Kohoutová, but spoken by English actress Camilla Power) watches a stuffed rabbit come to life in her playroom and then follows the bunny through a magical drawer into a strange world that resembles a 19th-century toy store (with a few specimens from a natural history museum thrown in). Svankmajer retains the familiar story elements but adds bizarre imagery, brought to herky-jerky life using his spasmodic style of stop-motion animation (the caterpillar



becomes a sock puppet with dentures, while other crazy creatures materialize as weird skull-headed beings that bleed sawdust). Throughout, Svankmajer returns to close-ups of Alice's lips telling the story, reminding us that this is a tale being told. In the best surrealist tradition Svankmajer employs familiar objects in unfamiliar ways, giving a fantasy quality to the banal (and the not so banal) while tipping the dream logic onto the edge of nightmare. While the imagery remains more unsettling than genuinely disturbing, this is not a film meant for little kids. However, older children, adults, and animation buffs will appreciate Svankmajer's sly visual wit and unusual animation style. Remastered for its Blu-ray debut, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Black Jack ★★½

Cohen, 109 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

An oddity from English writer-director Ken Loach's early career, this 1979 adaptation of a 1968 children's book by Leon Garfield is a period piece set in 1750. The title character is a huge Frenchman (Jean Franval) who survived the hangman's noose by a clever ruse, but the narrative focus is actually on young Tolly (Stephen Hirst), an apprentice forced to accompany the inarticulate giant. Together, the pair enjoy a series of adventures—even joining a traveling carnival—but the most notable part of their picaresque journey involves the rescue of a troubled young girl, Belle (Louise Cooper), whose family intends to lock her away in a mental hospital. Belle and Tolly fall in love, and after she is virtually imprisoned in the asylum, he attempts to extricate her. Meanwhile, a lad named Hatch (Andrew Bennett), who offers a stark contrast to Tolly's integrity, tries at every turn to use Belle's plight to his advantage. Loach draws extraordinarily natural performances from the non-professionals he prefers to cast, while cinematographer Chris Menges uses the Yorkshire locations to remarkable effect, not only the lush outdoors but also the interiors, which are lit authentically with candles or oil lamps, lending a shimmering glow to the image (when it's not menacingly dark). A casually structured story that meanders along episodically, *Black Jack* serves up an amazingly evocative portrait of 18th-century English society as well as a charming tale of young love. Making its Blu-ray debut, this 35th anniversary edition features extras including audio commentary by Loach, deleted scenes, and an essay by film critic and scholar Peter Tonguet. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

### The Color of Lies ★★½

Cohen, 103 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray: \$29.98

Throughout his half-century-plus film-

making career, writer-director Claude Chabrol displayed a special affinity for coolly detached psychological thrillers, including this excellent 1998 film. Technically, *The Color of Lies* is a whodunit, centering on a police investigation revolving around the rape and murder of a young girl. But the ultimate revelation of the perpetrator is secondary to Chabrol's almost clinical social dissection of the small Breton town in which the crime occurs. Here painter René Sterne (Jacques Gamblin)—who the victim studied with—falls under suspicion and ends up suffering some degree of ostracism as a result. But this is just one part of a cinematic mosaic in which numerous characters—the painter's wife (Sandrine Bonnaire), the debonair friend she's having an affair with, the police inspector and her second-in-command, a thug implicated in smuggling medieval artifacts, an art student, and a garrulous shopkeeper and her timorous husband—are all sharply and subtly sketched. The atmospheric cinematography in a well-chosen coastal location helps Chabrol create a vivid sense of place, while the musical score by the director's son, Matthieu Chabrol, adds some macabre touches. *The Color of Lies* may not be the best of Chabrol's 50-plus films, but it's a very, very good one, and is nicely remastered for this Blu-ray debut, which also features audio commentary by film critics Wade Major and Andy Klein. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

### The Freshman ★★½

Criterion, 76 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

Among silent cinema's comedy greats, Harold Lloyd was typically the collegiate kid, a young modern guy full of energy and urban attitude. In 1925's *The Freshman*, however, Lloyd's portrayal of Harold Lamb (aka Speedy) was that of a sweet, spunky, small-town boy trying to copy the hip college heroes portrayed in movies and dime novels. Oblivious to the fact that he's become the butt of jokes, Speedy is convinced that he's a contender in the "Most Popular" competition, but—in fact—the student body is laughing behind his back. What would be a humiliating ordeal for most becomes a challenge for Speedy, who is determined to win everyone over, and his mix of resilience and wide-eyed innocence makes him both admirable and pathetic—at least until the energetic naif proves himself in the big football game. Lloyd handed direction over to regular collaborators Sam Taylor and Fred C. Newmeyer but was intimately involved with every stage of production, and he makes sure that every gag is perfectly executed. The biggest hit of Lloyd's career, this comedy classic receives the red carpet Criterion treatment,



with a superb remastered image, snappy new musical score, and excellent collection of supplements, including three Lloyd shorts (1919's "The Marathon," and "An Eastern Western" and "High and Dizzy," both from 1920), audio commentary, interviews, a tribute to Lloyd, a 1953 appearance by Lloyd on *What's My Line?*, and a booklet. Presented in a handsome Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Godzilla: Tokyo S.O.S. / Godzilla: Final Wars

★★★

Sony, 2 discs, 216 min., in Japanese w/English subtitles and English-dubbed, PG/PG-13, Blu-ray: \$19.99



After making his debut in 1954 in an atomic-monster movie that was also a dark and solemn nuclear parable, Godzilla went on to headline 28 Japanese feature films over a 50-year period. This double-bill collects the final two Godzilla productions from Japan's Toho Studios. *Godzilla: Tokyo S.O.S.* (2003), directed by Masaaki Tezuka, opens with the Mechagodzilla (built over the bones of Godzilla, whom Mecha defeated in a previous film) under repair. Psychic fairies, dispatched by the giant monster-moth Mothra, warn the repairmen/scientists to stop their efforts, but to no avail. When Godzilla returns, he thus faces two foes: Mothra and the human-controlled Mechagodzilla. In an inspired bit of nostalgia, Hiroshi Koizumi reprises his 1961 role as the doctor who discovered the original Mothra. *Godzilla: Final Wars* (2004) celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Big G with a combination tribute, summation, and send-off that brings back all the old monsters for one last series of fights that extend worldwide. Knowingly and fondly campy, it's a good-natured love letter to the classic Godzilla flicks of the 1960s and '70s, directed by a fan of the old school: action stylist Ryuhei Kitamura, who delivers one giant battle after another. Unabashedly entertaining, *Final Wars* even delivers a hilarious parting shot at the 1998 American remake when the man-in-the-suit monster takes on a suspiciously familiar CGI lizard and tromps it in record time. This is the best of four Godzilla double-features from the '90s and the '00s newly released on Blu-ray (the others are *Godzilla vs. Destroyah* / *Godzilla vs. Megaguirus*, *Godzilla vs. King Ghidorah* / *Godzilla and Mothra: The Battle for Earth*, and *Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla II* / *Godzilla vs. SpaceGodzilla*). Extras include a vintage behind-the-scenes featurette. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Home of the Brave ★★

Olive, 86 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Writer-director Stanley Kramer remains famous for his painfully earnest dramas about big social issues, with 1967's *Guess Who's*



# Best Sellers and New Releases from KINO LORBER <sup>edu</sup>



## 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*).

*"...a searing look at Europe's painful involvement in participating, encouraging and backing regimes of oppression, but 'Concerning Violence' makes it clear that not much has changed in the fifty years since Fanon's powerful words were first printed."*

—Kevin Jagernauth, *Indiewire*

(Without PPR \$149)



## AI WEIWEI THE FAKE CASE

After 81 days of solitary detention world famous Chinese artist Ai Weiwei is put under house arrest. He suffers from sleeping disorder and memory loss, 18 cameras are monitoring his studio and home, police agents follow his every move, and heavy restrictions from the Kafkaesque Chinese authorities weigh him down. Ai Weiwei is shaken, but during the year on probation he steadily finds new ways to provoke and challenge the mighty powers of the Chinese authorities in his fight for human rights.

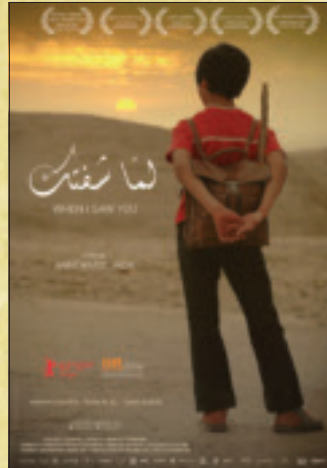
(Without PPR \$149)



## HORSES OF GOD

In an impoverished slum on the outskirts of Casablanca, 13-year-old Hamid works hard to sustain his family by any means, but eventually gets involved with criminals and becomes one of the local neighborhood bosses. Yet, he continues to fiercely protect his ten-year-old brother Yachine – until the day he is thrown into prison. After years in jail, Hamid returns, now an Islamic fundamentalist. He persuades Yachine and his pals to join the Imam Abou Zoubeir, and on May 16th, 2003, they commit the deadliest act of terrorism in Morocco's history. A fascinating fictionalized true story that allows us to examine what influences young lives to end in deadly obedience.

(Without PPR \$149)



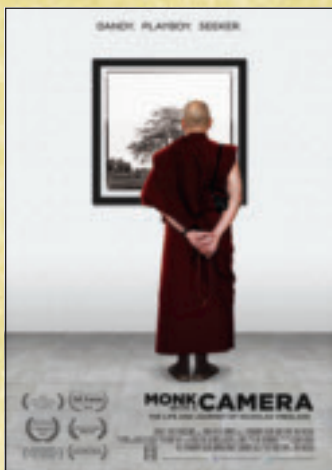
## WHEN I SAW YOU

Jordan, 1967: Tens of thousands of refugees pour across the border from Palestine. Having been separated from his father in the chaos of war, Tarek, 11, and his mother, Ghaydaa, are amongst this latest wave. Placed in temporary refugee camps made up of tents and prefab houses, they wait. With difficulties adjusting to life in Harir camp and a longing to be reunited with his father, Tarek searches for a way out, and becomes part of a group of people whose unique journey will change his life.

*"One of the most distinctive films from the Arab world in recent years."*

—The Toronto Star

(Without PPR \$149)



## MONK WITH A CAMERA

Nicholas "Nicky" Vreeland is the grandson of legendary Vogue editor Diana Vreeland. Although he grew up 'jet-setting' around the world as the son of diplomat parents, and had photography apprenticeships under icons like Irving Pen and Richard Avedon, Nicky walked away from his life as "a committed dandy" to become a Tibetan Buddhist monk. *Monk With A Camera* is a fascinating and moving journey of one man's unexpected odyssey towards enlightenment.

(Without PPR \$149)



## FAITH CONNECTIONS

Filmmaker Pan Nalin travels to the Kumbh Mela, one of the world's most extraordinary religious events, where he encounters remarkable men of mind and meditation who face an inextricable dilemma: to embrace the world or renounce it. Against a spectacular display of devotion, *Faith Connections* explores such diverse and deeply moving stories as that of a young runaway kid, a mother desperately looking for her lost son, a yogi who is raising an abandoned baby, and an ascetic who keeps his calm by smoking cannabis, all connected by one faith.

(Without PPR \$149)

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*Coming to Dinner* probably being the best known. But he actually began his career with another high-minded film dealing with racial bigotry—this 1949 effort that Mark Robson directed for Kramer's newly formed production company. Although based on a 1945 play by Arthur Laurents about a Jew who suffered discrimination from his fellow soldiers during World War II, Carl Foreman's script makes the victim a black man whose eventual paralysis is the psychosomatic result of the prejudice he felt from his comrades during a mission to a Japanese-occupied Pacific island. The film is bluntly didactic in the mode of much postwar liberal idealism, and the psychological resolution is absurdly cut-and-dried; but the film boasts a strong cast, with James Edwards a stalwart protagonist in the character of Pvt. Peter Moss, and Lloyd Bridges, Frank Lovejoy, and Steve Brodie excellent as fellow soldiers. A low-budget feature, Robson tried to make the most out of limited resources, although much of the island action (obviously shot on a soundstage) doesn't mesh terribly well with the incorporated archival footage. Many viewers will also surely be troubled by the stereotypical treatment of the Japanese in a movie that purportedly promotes racial tolerance. Even so, *Home of the Brave* still packs a substantial emotional punch. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



**Il Sorpasso ★★★1/2**  
Criterion, 105 min., in Italian w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95



Dino Risi's lively 1962 road movie is a largely forgotten Italian classic that is worthy of rediscovery. A charming Vittorio Gassman stars as Bruno, a 40-year-old convertible-driving free spirit, and Jean-Louis Trintignant is Roberto, a reserved law student coaxed away from his studies for a wild ride. Set over a couple of days during the summer vacation period (when Rome is all but shut down, but travelers are everywhere), this buddy movie is both a terrific character piece centered around an odd-couple friendship and a delightful portrait of Italian social life in the bistros, nightclubs, and beaches outside of the city, one that encompasses rich and poor alike. Bruno is a prankster, womanizer, gourmand, con man, and speed demon, while Roberto is tightly wound and unsettled as he finds himself being dragged into unfamiliar situations by his older, worldly companion. This episodic film is all about the rich pageant of Italians at rest and at play, with a core built upon the evolving relationship between two men with nothing in common who form a bond thanks to Bruno's affection for the

nervous Roberto and Roberto's growth in confidence under Bruno's tutelage. Mastered from a beautiful digital restoration this Blu-ray/DVD Combo set features extras including new and archival interviews, a 2006 documentary on director Risi, a booklet, and more. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Men in War ★★★**  
Olive, 102 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



"Tell me the story of the foot soldier and I will tell you the story of all wars." One of the best platoon movies from Hollywood's classic age, this 1957 Korean War drama stars Robert Ryan as a commander caught behind enemy lines, and Aldo Ray as a gruff, field-tested sergeant who is reluctantly commandeered into helping him bring his men to safety. The platoon is exhausted—the men reaching the breaking point or already broken—while the unseen enemy surrounds them, picking them off in the silence. Director Anthony Mann sets the action in an almost abstract landscape of dry woods and scrub hills, presenting the enemy as disembodied weapons poking out from the brush or camouflaged shapes crawling through the foliage. Ryan delivers one of his most understated portraits of strength and experience as the commanding officer, bringing warm but firm leadership and calm authority to a desperate situation, while Ray, a real-life World War II veteran who saw action on Okinawa, is completely convincing as the brutally effective soldier whose superior skills and soldiering instincts are essential to keeping the platoon alive. This is a portrait of war from the grunt's-eye view, eschewing patriotism and sentimentality to depict the harrowing, grueling experience of survival in the hostile landscape of an enemy battlefield. Previously available in substandard editions, this Olive release has been newly remastered in HD for DVD and its Blu-ray debut. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Mr. Magoo: The Theatrical Collection 1949-1959 ★★★1/2**  
Shout! Factory, 4 discs, 375 min., not rated, DVD: \$34.95



Some animation buffs have carped online that at least one of this set's 53 cartoons ("Spellbound Hound") is missing its original pan-out ending. But to dismiss this essential and impeccably mounted set out of hand would be short-sighted. Revelatory for those who have only experienced the vastly inferior made-for-TV Magoo cartoons, these theatrical shorts—stylized departures from their Disney, MGM, and Warner Bros. counterparts—were produced between 1949-1959 by iconoclastic animation studio

UPA, home to such talents as John Hubley, Stephen Bosustow, Philip Eastman (aka P.D. Eastman, author of *Go, Dog. Go!*), and Bill Scott (later the voice of Bullwinkle J. Moose). Mr. Magoo, indelibly voiced by Jim Backus, is a cantankerous, near-sighted old cuss who is oblivious to the perilous predicaments that he unwittingly walks into. Con men or other bad guys try to take advantage of him at their peril: the clueless Magoo always triumphs, although none the wiser. While this formula can get a bit repetitive, the illuminating audio commentaries here by an A-list roster of animation legends and historians (among them Emily Hubley, John Canemaker, and Jerry Beck) help to put these cartoons into historical and artistic perspective. Magoo is older than most animated characters, but beyond his distinctively funny voice, there is considerable kid appeal in watching him emerge unscathed from his escapades, and UPA's animation style is actually more often seen today than the full animation of Warner Bros. or Disney. Other extras include the UPA animated Mr. Magoo feature film, *1001 Arabian Nights* (and a "making-of" featurette on the film), interviews, and a photo gallery. Highly recommended. (D. Liebenson)

**Norma Rae ★★★1/2**  
Fox, 114 min., PG, Blu-ray: \$19.99



Sally Field won her first Oscar for this 1979 film, delivering an insightful and nuanced portrayal as Norma Rae Webster, a minimum-wage worker at a noisy textile factory in a small North Carolina town. A single mother of two living with her parents (both of whom work at the plant), Norma is in a cycle of low expectations and bad entanglements with the wrong kind of men. When union organizer Reuben (Ron Leibman) comes to town to rally employees to make demands for better working conditions, Norma is drawn to the cause and becomes an irritant to management but also a leader to some—not all—of her friends and neighbors. Director Martin Ritt brings a genuine grit to the story, capturing a sense of real lives affected by actual challenges, of people wavering on a cause due to the personal costs involved. Ritt also has a great feel for adult relationships, especially the unusual friendship that develops between Norma and Reuben. Conventional storytelling would have brought the two together romantically, but the more interesting choice here is a kind of hip intimacy that precludes becoming lovers yet is driven by complete honesty (a chaste, skinny-dipping scene involving Norma and Reuben underscores the pair's trust and frankness). Beau Bridges is appealing as Norma's impetuous but patient husband, and Pat Hingle is terrific as her concerned father. Making its

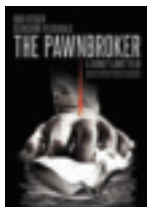


Blu-ray debut, extras include a "Hollywood Backstory" featurette. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

## The Pawnbroker

★★★1/2

Olive, 116 min., not rated,  
DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95



Rod Steiger was nominated for an Academy Award for his controlled, masterfully internalized performance as Sol Nazerman, a Nazi concentration camp survivor who runs a cluttered pawnshop in Harlem that serves as a front for a local mobster. Based on the novel by Edward Lewis Wallant, this 1964 film directed by Sidney Lumet follows a few days in Sol's life, who survived his wartime ordeal (and the death of his wife and child) by becoming hard and unemotional, but begins to crack as events rouse suppressed memories that cut through his consciousness. Jaime Sánchez costars as Sol's garrulous, ambitious assistant, Jesus Ortiz, and Geraldine Fitzgerald is Marilyn, an insistent social worker who gently tries to break through Sol's shell. The scenes in the shop, with its steady stream of addicts, hookers, thieves, and lonely souls more desperate for contact than cash, resemble an off-Broadway play wearing social commentary on its sleeve; but when Lumet takes to the streets, the noise and bustle of Harlem energize the screen, offering an early glimpse of the director who would become one of the great chroniclers of New York City life. The rest is a time capsule classic with a well-meaning but dated take on race and crime that is elevated by Steiger's superb performance. *The Pawnbroker* has some racial epithets and was also the first American film featuring female nudity to receive a Production Code seal of approval. Re-released on DVD and making its Blu-ray debut, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## The People vs. Paul Crump

Facets, 60 min., not rated,  
DVD: \$29.95



In 1962, a young aspiring filmmaker named William Friedkin made an hour-long film on the controversy surrounding Death Row inmate Paul Crump. Intended for a local TV channel (which never aired it), *The People vs. Paul Crump* had some festival screenings and was released on VHS, but has mostly remained unseen, making this restored DVD release welcome. Friedkin's film comes down heavily on the side of Crump, who said that he was framed for being part of a 1953 robbery that ended in murder. Despite a lack of physical evidence connecting him to the fatal crime, Crump was the only one of five charged to receive the death sentence. Crump's legal team

fought 15 execution dates over a nine-year period, and Crump's warden even came to his defense, noting that he was a fully rehabilitated inmate. Friedkin blurs the lines of nonfiction filmmaking by using dramatic re-enactments of the robbery and conducting staged interviews, and the film itself is framed in a somewhat artsy visual style that may seem at odds with its sobering subject (but is definitely illustrative of its time). Extras include a booklet that details Crump's tragic fate: his sentence was commuted from death to "199 years without parole" and he achieved some degree of notoriety for writing the novel *Burn, Killer, Burn* while incarcerated, but the brutal prison treatment broke his body and mind—ultimately paroled after 39 years in prison, Crump died in 2002 from lung cancer. An interesting curio that helped launch Friedkin's Oscar-winning career, this rare film is recommended. (P. Hall)

## Performance

Warner, 105 min., R, Blu-ray:  
\$21.99



Mick Jagger made his feature film acting debut in this mash-up of London gangster machismo and '60s sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll culture, playing Turner, a reclusive rock star living in a dilapidated manor home in a London slum. But it's James Fox who powers the movie as Chas, a vicious young killer hiding out from his own gang (after murdering another gunman) who rents a room in Turner's basement. Filmed in 1968 but released in 1970, *Performance* marks the directorial debut of both cinematographer Nicolas Roeg and artist-writer Donald Cammell (they co-direct), who spin a dense web of images and ideas as Turner and his lover, Pherber (Anita Pallenberg), draw Chas into their insular world. Jagger is oddly passive when reading lines from the script, but he dominates in the "Memo From Turner" number, a demonic solo tune backed by Ry Cooder's sultry slide guitar. *Performance* is perhaps the first major studio production to non-judgmentally embrace androgyny and bisexuality in its main characters, lending this portrait of London thuggery a homoerotic quality. The vivid imagery, dramatic and inventive editing, and upending of macho clichés—as well as the appearance by Jagger and fascinating performance by Fox—have deservedly made this a cult film. New to Blu-ray, extras include a 2007 retrospective featurette and a vintage promo short. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Persona

Criterion, 3 discs, 83 min., in Swedish w/English subtitles, not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95

Ingmar Bergman's 1966 drama about a revered stage actress (Liv Ullmann) who is suddenly stricken speechless and the adoring

young nurse (Bibi Andersson) who watches over her at a quiet seaside retreat was a comeback of sorts for the Swedish director, who had not enjoyed an international success in years. Bergman pares down his style to focus on the faces of the actresses, setting them against austere, neutral backgrounds in order to better capture the subtlety of their interactions as the young woman opens her soul to the older actress in intimate monologues and their relationship roles begin to shift. Bergman uses some experimental and avant-garde techniques, but it is the intimacy and the intensity of the camera's focus—shining in the silvery beauty of Sven Nykvist's cinematography—coupled with the increasingly naked confessions and accusations in the dialogue that combine to create one of the most intense character pieces ever put on film. Criterion's Blu-ray/DVD Combo release is mastered from a stunning digital restoration and features numerous extras, including the 2012 documentary *Liv & Ingmar*, a visual essay by film scholar Peter Cowie, new and archival interviews, on-set footage with audio commentary by Bergman historian Birgitta Steene, and a booklet. One of Bergman's masterpieces and a landmark film of the 1960s, this is essential for any world cinema collection. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (S. Axmaker)



## Red River

Criterion, 4 discs, 127 min.,  
not rated, Blu-ray/DVD  
Combo: \$39.95



After directing comedies and action films, Howard Hawks turned his attention to the Western, and crafted this 1948 classic that is regarded as one of the 10 best ever made. John Wayne delivers a sterling performance as Tom Dunson, a less than pure cattleman who begins by carving out a vast Texan cattle empire along the Red River. With his quiet foster son, Matthew Garth (Montgomery Clift), Dunson prospers—at least until a cash flow problem leads him to mount a huge cattle drive to Missouri. The exodus is beset by a myriad of problems, and the men begin to revolt, especially after Dunson assumes the role of a tyrant and begins meting out justice—often in the form of bullets—as he sees fit ("Bury 'em—and I'll read over 'em later" becomes his mantra). When Garth rises against his father—insisting that the cattle be taken on a shorter route to Kansas—Dunson vows that he will catch him and kill him. Eventually, even the faithful short-order cook, Groot Nadine (wonderfully played by Walter Brennan), refuses to side with Dunson. Hawks masterfully plays the final encounter between the two principals

right up to death's door, before pulling back and altering the ending of Borden Chase's *Saturday Evening Post*-serialized novel *Blazing Guns on the Chisholm Trail* (included as a bonus paperback here). Compiling both the original theatrical release and a longer pre-release version in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, extras include new and archival interviews, a 1949 Lux Radio Theatre adaptation (featuring Wayne and Brennan), and a booklet. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice.** (R. Pitman)

## Riot in Cell Block 11

★★★

Criterion, 80 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$39.95



This 1954 drama, inspired by the genuine poor conditions and upsurge in violent protests in prisons across the U.S. in the 1950s, opens with a newsreel-like prologue before settling into a fictional story of a carefully planned riot in the punishment block of an overcrowded penitentiary. Neville Brand, a real-life war hero who made a career out of playing Hollywood villains, stars as James Dunn, the ringleader and a convicted killer. Dunn is more restrained than his fellow inmates (the guards being held as hostages are in constant danger of retribution). The low-budget thriller turns out to be quite a powder keg of a picture, with director Don Siegel (most famous for his gritty Clint Eastwood collaborations) delivering both a hard-edged portrait of a desperate situation and an intelligent engagement with serious reform issues such as overcrowding, violence, and lack of education and training programs. Much of the film was shot on location at Folsom Prison, with guards and prisoners serving as extras and advisors, lending the production added authenticity. Siegel is clearly sympathetic to the convicts without whitewashing their crimes or their violent nature (although the technology has changed, 60 years later the topic still remains relevant). Presented in a Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, extras include an audio commentary, audio excerpts from two books on director Siegel, and audio clips from a 1953 radio documentary on prison conditions. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## The Rodgers & Hammerstein Collection

★★★★1/2

Fox, 8 discs, 841 min., not rated/G, Blu-ray: \$199.99



This eight-disc boxed set compiles six beloved musicals from composers Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II on Blu-ray. *Oklahoma!* (1955), directed by Fred Zinnemann and starring Shirley Jones as sweet farm girl Laurey and Gordon MacRae as love-struck cowboy

Curly, is this set's crown jewel: the original Broadway production essentially redefined the style of stage musicals (one of the innovations that made it to the silver screen here is the ballet dream sequence, choreographed by Agnes de Mille). *Oklahoma!* was filmed in both CinemaScope and high-definition Todd-AO versions, which were shot simultaneously but with different takes and separate cameras. This release features a new restoration of the 65mm Todd-AO version, bringing a clarity that goes far beyond traditional prints. The far more somber *Carousel* (1956), which reunites MacRae and Jones and was helmed by Henry King, was the favorite of composer Rodgers; here, MacRae plays rough-and-tumble carnival barker Billy Bigelow, who woos, marries, and fathers a child with innocent factory worker Julie (Jones), only to die—but then escape from purgatory and return to earth in order to make amends to Julie for all the wrongs he subjected her to over the years. In Walter Lang's *State Fair* (1945), homespun Americana serves as a backdrop for the love that blossoms between two young couples: Margy and Pat (Jeanne Crain and Dana Andrews), and Wayne and Emily (Dick Haymes and Vivian Blaine). Lang also directed the 1956 hit *The King and I*, with Deborah Kerr as the recently widowed Anna, who becomes a governess for the children of Yul Brynner's famously bald King of Siam. Director Joshua Logan brought *South Pacific* to the screen in 1958, pairing Mitzi Gaynor, as spunky Navy nurse Nellie Forbush, with Rossano Brazzi, playing enigmatic plantation owner Emile de Becque. Completing the collection is *The Sound of Music* (1965), from director Robert Wise, which features Julie Andrews as Maria, the young nun who becomes the nanny in the musical household of naval officer and widower Capt. Von Trapp (Christopher Plummer). Two of the films (*South Pacific* and *The Sound of Music*) have already appeared on Blu-ray; the other four are making their respective Blu-ray debuts in this collection, remastered from archival elements. Also included here are Fritz Lang's 1934 French version of *Liliom*, the antecedent of *Carousel*, starring Charles Boyer; and the extended "Road Show" version of *South Pacific* (in standard definition). The extensive extras spread across the set include audio commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, interviews, archival footage, and optional sing-along karaoke subtitles (the bonus disc from the earlier Blu-ray release of *The Sound of Music* is not included). A fine collection of some of the most enduring American movie musicals, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Sorcerer ★★★

Warner, 121 min., PG, DVD: \$12.95, Blu-ray: \$27.98

William Friedkin's 1977 remake of Henri-Georges Clouzot's classic French survival thriller *The Wages of Fear* was a critical and

commercial flop, but its reputation steadily grew—even as it became almost impossible to see due to complicated rights issues. Friedkin spent years trying to untangle the ownership and he supervised a restoration of the film (which also received a theatrical revival in 2013), here making its Blu-ray debut in a beautiful-looking edition. Roy Scheider stars as Jackie, a New Jersey mobster on the run following a botched heist—one of four men hiding out in a grimy South American village who agree to drive trucks carrying dynamite over 200 miles through the jungle. Friedkin shot largely on location, which lends the physical environment a visceral primal quality that makes their journey feel like a trip through an alien world that is waiting to swallow them up. The vehicles almost seem like characters themselves, although the drivers have little dimension, apart from Jackie, who is the driving force (so to speak) in this grinding odyssey, which features challenges that include an enormous fallen tree, a rotting suspension bridge, cliff-side roads that are almost washed away by torrential rains, and a terrorist band hiding in the dense vegetation. The justly famous score by German electronic outfit Tangerine Dream—their first soundtrack for an American movie—greatly contributes to the otherworldly tone. Now considered a minor classic of 1970s American cinema, *Sorcerer* on Blu-ray is presented in a 37-page digi-book package with no supplements. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



## The Strange Woman

★★★

Film Chest, 99 min., not rated, DVD: \$13.98



Actress Hedy Lamarr developed and produced this independently made 1946 drama about a fiery, impoverished girl named Jenny living in turn-of-the-century Bangor, ME, who draws on her looks and feminine wiles to marry into a fortune. Jenny destroys the men she uses during her climb, including aging lumber baron and merchant Isaiah (Gene Lockhart) and his son, Ephraim (Louis Hayward), before setting her sights on the soft-spoken but iron-willed John (George Sanders), her best friend's beau. Lamarr brought in legendary B-movie director Edgar Ulmer, who guides Lamarr in her best American performance as the passionate and contradictory Jenny, a ruthlessly ambitious yet also generously philanthropic woman, haunted by her own hardscrabble childhood. Ulmer keeps the canvas small and intimate, making the port boomtown of Bangor something of an absent character, discussed constantly but always just out of frame (most likely due to the film's

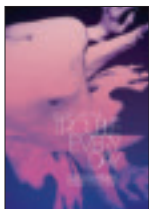


low budget). Although not quite a classic of American cinema, this is a solid film, handsomely designed and beautifully shot, that features a fine cast. Nicely remastered from an archival 35mm print, this will be a welcome discovery for fans of golden-age Hollywood. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Trouble Every Day ★★

KimStim, 100 min., in French w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.99

Offering one of the strangest variations ever made on the vampire movie, this 2001 film from Claire Denis stars Béatrice Dalle as Coré, a madwoman locked in the basement of a Paris home by a physician named Léo (Alex Descas)—a woman held captive due to her propensity for literally devouring her lovers. But that doesn't stop her from luring victims to her subterranean prison with the enticement of sex. A cannibal with a visceral passion, Coré giggles, coos, and barks in pleasure as caressing and kissing turns into orgiastic biting and sex morphs into a feral drive that ends with her eating her companion for dinner. Vincent Gallo costars as Shane Brown, a similarly-afflicted American who travels to Paris in search of the doctor, with hopes of curbing his tendencies before he attacks his newlywed wife, June (Tricia Vessey). Lambasted at the time of its original release for its excesses, *Trouble Every Day* is loaded with flesh and blood and a twisted sexual hunger, but it's also a gorgeous and vivid mix of terror and erotica. Still, even while the film has its champions, this will likely seem too arty and enigmatic for either horror or foreign-movie fans. Premiering on home video in the U.S. more than a decade after its theatrical appearance, extras include an audio introduction by cinematographer Agnès Godard, and a booklet with an essay by film critic Melissa Anderson. Optional. (S. Axmaker)



### Young at Heart ★★1/2

Olive, 117 min., not rated, DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$29.95

Defying any expectations suggested by its title, this 1954 musical remake of *Four Daughters* (1938) is a dark redemption drama that is only buoyed by the sunny Doris Day and some great songs, including "Just One of Those Things," "Ready, Willing, and Able," and the title tune, one of Frank Sinatra's biggest hits. Day stars as Laurie, youngest daughter of a musical clan, who becomes engaged to Alex Burke (Gig Young), a supremely assured and gifted songwriter. Laurie's sisters, Fran and Amy (Dorothy Malone and Elisabeth Fraser, respectively), are likewise smitten with Alex, which causes



a bit of underlying tension in the otherwise pleasant small-town surroundings. Enter Barney Sloan (Sinatra), a talented but self-pitying and cynical arranger. Laurie falls for him and breaks off her commitment to Alex, threatening a breach with her family. But that's not enough for Barney, who is neither convinced that she really loves him or confident that he's good enough for her. Day and Sinatra literally make great music together in their only joint appearance on the big screen, but this creaky melodrama, directed by Gordon Douglas, has not aged quite as well as the songs. Making its Blu-ray debut, this is a strong optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)

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**Afterlife ★★½**

BBC, 2 discs, 282 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.98



A touch of the Mulder-Scully relationship from *The X-Files* is apparent in this short-lived British series, which only ran for two seasons on ITV in 2005–06 but proves to be a remarkably evocative and intriguing show. Viewers are introduced to Alison Mundy (Lesley Sharp), a psychic barraged by visits from spirits of the dead, and Dr. Robert Bridge (Andrew Lincoln), a skeptical psychology professor who grows fascinated with her when one of his students commits suicide after being confronted by the medium's apparent knowledge of her past. Each episode deals with a particular apparition, but there is also a narrative thread running throughout centered on the ghostly presence of Robert's dead son, whose encounters with Alison are impossible for the obstinate and guilt-ridden Dr. Bridge to accept. A major coincidence—Alison taking a nursing job at a retirement hospital where Robert's mother happens to be a patient—strains credulity even more than the overarching premise, and one installment that suggests Alison can commune with the spirits of those not yet dead raises more questions than it answers. But overall this is an engrossing show, played well not only by Sharp and Lincoln but also by a supporting cast of uniformly excellent British character actors. Compiling all six episodes from the debut season, DVD extras include episode commentaries. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

**The Andy Griffith Show: Season 1 ★★½**

Paramount, 4 discs, 820 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$129.99



One of the defining sitcoms of the 1960s, *The Andy Griffith Show* was an easygoing family comedy starring comedian Andy Griffith as Sheriff Andy Taylor, a widower raising a young son, Opie (little Ron Howard), while keeping the peace in the generally quiet burg of Mayberry, NC. Father and son are fussed over by doting spinster Aunt Bee (Frances Bavier), who is always free with her advice, and Andy's biggest problems ultimately come down to teaching precocious Opie proper life lessons. Much of the trouble here stems from the overzealous efforts of Andy's nervous deputy, Barney Fife (Don Knotts), a lovable incompetent who is so jittery you'd think he overdosed on espresso. Also on hand are Howard McNear as Floyd the barber, Hal Smith as town character Otis, and Elinor Donahue as Ellie, Andy's sweetheart for this first season—and these are just a few of the characters who help create the show's warm community. The homespun humor, anchored in Griffith's laconic charm and gentle authority, kept this

audience favorite alive for eight seasons and spawned two spin-offs. Today, its very datedness makes the show endearing, although it's most likely to appeal to nostalgic Baby Boomers. Compiling all 32 episodes from 1960–61, this Blu-ray debut features extras including the 1960 episode of *The Danny Thomas Show* that introduced Andy's character, on-set home movies, an interview with Griffith, and the 1986 reunion TV movie *Return to Mayberry*. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**The Bletchley Circle: Season 2 ★★½**

PBS, 2 discs, 180 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99



This follow-up to the acclaimed 2012 British mystery series—about four women who worked together in the code-breaking division of British Intelligence during World War II and then reunited in the early 1950s to solve a murder—returns with two new feature-length mysteries spread across four episodes that aired on PBS in 2014. “Blood on Their Hands” opens when Jean (Julie Graham) discovers that former Bletchley colleague Alice (Hattie Morahan, new to the show) is on trial for murder but refuses to put up a defense. Jean reunites the group to ferret out the truth, which involves the cover-up of a wartime scandal. Although the ghosts of World War II haunt the first narrative, “Uncustomed Goods” takes on the black market of postwar Britain as Millie (Rachael Stirling), who dabbles in illegal perfume and cigarettes, discovers that her suppliers are also human traffickers. This second installment feels a bit more contrived, as if writer Guy Burt was having trouble finding ways for these civilians to tackle another case; it's also the first show without Anna Maxwell Martin, who played Susan and left after “Blood.” Alice replaces Susan, with Alice's daughter Lizzie (Faye Marsay) also pitching in during the investigation, which pits the sleuths against a ruthless female racketeer (Brana Bajic). Extras include bonus cast and crew interviews. Offering an intriguing portrait of postwar Britain from the perspective of smart, talented women whose potential is dismissed by a society that expects them to take subservient roles in the workplace, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**The Bob Newhart Show: Complete Series ★★½**

Shout! Factory, 19 discs, 3,180 min., not rated, DVD: \$129.99



Button-down comedian Bob Newhart stars as TV's most famous therapist, Chicago psychologist Bob Hartley, the (outwardly) ever-calm presence in the center

of the neurotic storm, whether inhabited by friends—insecure airline pilot neighbor Howard Borden (Bill Daily) and overconfident orthodontist Jerry Robinson (Peter Bonerz)—or patients. Bob seems like a rock of stability, until seen next to his down-to-earth wife, elementary school teacher Emily (Suzanne Pleshette), who has the corner on normalcy in this professional couple. Marcia Wallace costars as Bob's lively receptionist, Carol, while Jack Riley, Florida Friebus, and John Fiedler are among the regulars in the weekly group therapy sessions in Bob's downtown office, where Hartley watches, listens, and reacts. Newhart's muted delivery and blank stares make him not only the funniest straight man on TV, but a master of the deadpan gag, the slow-motion stammer, and the delayed reaction laugh. The hit sitcom ran for six seasons, anchoring CBS's unbeatable Saturday night comedy block from 1972 to 1978, and it remains a model of the genre at its best: witty, grown-up, character-driven. The first four seasons have been previously released on DVD by Fox; this set marks the debut of the entire series. Compiling all 142 episodes, extras include episode commentaries, the pilot episode, a 1991 anniversary show, a new roundtable discussion featuring Newhart and other cast members, a gag reel, and a booklet. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Broadchurch: The Complete First Season ★★½**

Entertainment One, 3 discs, 390 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.98



This acclaimed British series about an investigation into the murder of an 11-year-old boy in a small vacation town on the Dorset coast of southern England stars David Tennant as Detective Inspector Alec Hardy, new boss of the small Broadchurch detective squad, who arrives with a shadow of scandal, and Olivia Colman as Detective Sergeant Ellie Miller, the local officer who was initially promised the promotion. So far, so familiar, and like other shows a number of secrets and lies are uncovered during the inquiry. But creator-writer Chris Chibnall powerfully focuses on how the death of a child and the revelations of hidden lives cause reverberations throughout the community, filling the drama with fully realized characters who carry long and complicated histories. Things like this aren't supposed to happen in a town like Broadchurch, which just makes it harder to fathom...and easier for emotions to spiral out of control, and suspicions that lead to quick judgments. The series was designed as an eight-episode standalone presentation (and the story here does indeed come to a very satisfying end), but it was such a hit in Britain that a second season was commissioned and



a remake announced for American TV (the original played on PBS in 2013). Extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Dean Martin Celebrity Roasts ★★1/2

Star Vista, 6 discs, 990 min., not rated, DVD: \$59.95

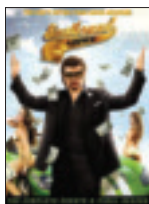
This six-disc set serves up 17 “Man/Woman of the Week” celebrity roasts. Among the guests of honor: Gabe Kaplan, Rowan & Martin, Ralph Nader, Telly Savalas, and Zsa Zsa Gabor. Are you thinking what I’m thinking: namely, this isn’t a Who’s Who so much as a Who Cares? And those roasters: Jack Benny, Red Buttons, Phyllis Diller, Eve Arden, Jimmy Stewart—I’ve seen younger faces on paper money. But all roasting aside, there actually is some A-list talent here from Hollywood’s golden age, including Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, George Burns, and Orson Welles. Unfortunately, they share the dais with the likes of Charlie Callas, LaWanda Page, Nipsey Russell, Foster Brooks, and other rejects from *Hollywood Squares*. Some of these broadcasts are 40 years old, so in a technical sense all of the jokes are oldies, but some are goodies (Dean Martin on Bette Davis: “From the very first day she arrived in Hollywood, she made love to Cary Grant, Robert Montgomery, Henry Fonda, and then she got into pictures”). The generous bonus features here include interviews with roast participants (such as Shirley Jones, Tony Danza, Carol Burnett, and Abe Vigoda), sketches from *The Dean Martin Show*, and segments on women roasters, politicians in the hot seat, and Muhammad Ali’s battle royale with Ruth Buzzi’s purse-swinging character from *Laugh-In*. Perhaps of most interest to Baby Boomers who watched too much TV growing up, this is a strong optional purchase. (D. Liebenson)



### Eastbound & Down: The Complete Fourth & Final Season ★★★

HBO, 2 discs, 240 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$24.98, Blu-ray: \$39.98

This HBO comedy starring Danny McBride as Kenny Powers—the biggest jerk (with the most unjustified ego) in professional baseball—jumps ahead a few years in this fourth season, finding Kenny in the roles of suburban husband, father of two, and civilian working at a car rental agency. A chance meeting with former-teammate-turned-TV-sports-celebrity Guy Young (Ken Marino) sends Kenny back to his debauched, viciously competitive ways as he embraces life as a cable TV personality—which, of course, takes its toll on wife April (Katy Mixon), sycophantic sidekick Stevie (Steve Little),



and everyone else (Sacha Baron Cohen guest stars as the amoral head of the cable network in the final segment). A rude show about a shallow, self-involved, oblivious character who constantly follows his worst instincts (which he then justifies with a sense of entitlement), *Eastbound & Down* builds humor around Kenny’s insensitive remarks and assumptions, especially when it comes to race and sex—making him a natural for his TV sports talk show, which thrives on conflict and humiliation. The result is a high-energy and often very funny mix of social satire and lowbrow humor, with plenty of nudity, foul language, drug consumption, and bad behavior in general. Presenting all eight episodes from the 2013 final season, extras include episode commentaries, deleted scenes, and outtakes. Sure to appeal to its small but passionate cult following, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### Falling Skies: The Complete Third Season ★★★

Warner, 440 min., TV-14, DVD: 3 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$49.99

TNT’s popular alien invasion show—starring Noah Wyle as Tom Mason, a former history professor turned guerilla soldier in the human resistance—opens its third season with Mason serving as the president of the burgeoning resistance community and working with a new ally, the lizard-like Volm species, who advise and supply technology for the human forces against the insectoid invaders. Conflict and dissent still fester in the ranks, exacerbated by the growing pains of creating a sustainable settlement (the group has lived a nomadic existence until now) and lingering suspicion over their alien allies (can the aliens be trusted to leave the planet to humans after taking their revenge on the Skitters?). A whole lot of secrets and conspiracies complicate the storyline here, although this season also falls back on more familiar plot twists while increasing the action and battle scenes. New to the series this season are Gloria Reuben as the President’s most trusted aide and Doug Jones as the alien soldier Cochise, who comes to respect the human forces. *Falling Skies* appeals to sci-fi fans with its solid mix of old-school alien invasion drama and gritty, scruffy sensibility. Compiling all 10 episodes from 2013, extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and post-episode segments from the recap/discussion show “Second Watch,” hosted by sci-fi nerd celebrity Wil Wheaton. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### I Love Lucy: Ultimate Season 1 ★★1/2

Paramount, 6 discs, 908 min., not rated, Blu-ray: \$129.99

*I Love Lucy* was a TV landmark, not only the top-rated series for four of its six seasons

during the 1950s, but also a hugely influential show that would make the situation comedy a staple for decades to come. Developed for Lucille Ball and her husband, bandleader Desi Arnaz, the series has Arnaz playing Ricky Ricardo (a fictionalized version of himself), and Ball taking the lead as dizzy redhead Lucy Ricardo, who wants to be a star just like Ricky and schemes to worm her way into show business...any way she can. Vivian Vance and William Frawley costar as Ethel and Fred Mertz, their neighbors/best friends/partners in mischief. *I Love Lucy* was the first sitcom shot on 35mm film, which resulted in high-quality masters for future reruns and syndication, and it was the first to be filmed before a live studio audience with multiple cameras. But most important, it has remained one of the most beloved shows of all time thanks to the high level of writing, superb physical comedy, and terrific chemistry between the characters, holding its own for decades after the show ended (and being syndicated in countries around the world). Compiling all 35 episodes from the 1951–52 debut season—including “Lucy Does a TV Commercial” (aka the “Vitameatavegamin” episode, ranked as one of the greatest of all time by *TV Guide*), this Blu-ray debut features extras including the unaired original pilot, select episode commentaries, archival footage, audio-only radio shows with Ball, production notes, and more. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



### Mayberry R.F.D.: The Complete First Season ★★

Warner, 4 discs, 667 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.98

This spin-off from the folksy 1960s small-town sitcom *The Andy Griffith Show* opens with the wedding of good ol’ Andy Taylor (Griffith)—which turns out to be an easy way to pass the torch to gentleman farmer and city councilman Sam Jones (Ken Berry), who joined the ensemble during the final season of the parent series and takes the lead here. Think of Sam as a younger, blander version of Griffith, another thoughtful, generous nice guy who’s also a widower with a young son, Mike (Buddy Foster). In the first episode, Sam even inherits Andy’s Aunt Bee (Frances Bavier) as his new housekeeper. Griffith makes only a few brief appearances here, but his familiar supporting cast—George Lindsey as good-natured Goober, Jack Dodson as Howard, Paul Hartman as fix-it man Emmett—are there to remind viewers that this is the same laidback rural comedy sporting family values and happy endings. Don Knotts shows up a couple of times as Barney Fife (surely the strangest moment



of *Mayberry R.F.D.* is a quick shot of Andy and his bride on their honeymoon...with Barney tagging along), and Arlene Golonka joins the troupe as Millie Swanson, the baker who is destined to become Sam's steady girl. Compiling all 26 episodes from the 1968–69 debut season, this is a harmless but rather unmemorable extension of the earlier series that largely plays like an exercise in nostalgia. Optional. (S. Axmaker)

## Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries: Series 2

★★★★½

Acorn, 727 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$59.98



The sophomore season of this Australian series—based on the novels by Kerry Greenwood featuring Phryne Fisher, a glamorous Melbourne society woman of the 1920s who sidelines as an amateur sleuth—actually improves on the first. Essie Davis has settled nicely into the lead role, curbing her earlier tendency toward smugness while maintaining the character's air of supreme self-confidence. And Nathan Page and Hugo Johnstone-Burt—as Jack Robinson and Hugh Collins, the policemen Fisher regularly assists (often to their chagrin)—also seem more comfortable. The physical production continues to impress with delicious period detail and suitably glossy cinematography enhanced by a rousing jazz score. And most important, the scripts ratchet up the cleverness. Yes, these are still traditional murder cases, but they are often situated in unusual settings—a medical college, a movie studio, a football club, a fashion salon, a radio station, a racetrack, a convent—that provide Fisher the opportunity to display her talents in various capacities (she becomes a model and a movie director, among other things). Colorful supporting roles here are filled by some great character actors, including the inimitable Miriam Margolyes as Phryne's Aunt Pru. Compiling all 13 episodes from 2013, extras include behind-the-scenes clips, and a photo gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

## Mr. Selfridge: Season 2

★★★★

PBS, 3 discs, 450 min., not rated, DVD: \$39.99, Blu-ray: \$44.99



This BBC series starring Jeremy Piven as American entrepreneur Harry Selfridge has essentially become *Downton Abbey*'s urban counterpart, a show in which British society's class divisions are constantly challenged by department store mogul Harry—a populist boss who rewards talent and innovation, promoting the best

and brightest regardless of status. As in the first season, *Mr. Selfridge* once again eschews social satire and cutting wit for a more familiar soap opera that plays out among the high and low, but creator Andrew Davies clearly likes his characters and he carefully dotes on their evolution. Opening with the store's fifth anniversary and World War I on the horizon, this set adds some wildly melodramatic subplots (Harry becomes a spy for British intelligence, and his best friend is suspected of being an enemy agent) along with romances, power struggles, and Harry's attempts to win back his wife, Rose (Frances O'Connor), following a long separation caused by his womanizing. Polly Walker costars as notorious club owner Delphine Day, who sets her sights on Harry, and Aidan McArdle is Lord Loxley, a rapacious politician who tries to smear Harry's reputation. *Mr. Selfridge* has the charms of British period drama mixed with a jolt of American maverick spirit, although the cascade of happy endings and triumphant stands by various individuals sometimes borders on contrived (even with a season-ending twist of tragedy). Compiling all 10 episodes aired on PBS in 2014, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and deleted scenes. A hardy British show with a strong U.S. following, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Murder on the Home Front ★★

PBS, 90 min., not rated, DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99



This 2013 British TV movie is a lively and witty murder mystery set in 1940 London, the harrowing time of the German Blitzkrieg bombing raids. Based on the memoirs of Molly Lefebure, *Murder on the Home Front* stars Patrick Kennedy as Dr. Lennox Collins, a civilian drafted into duty as the police coroner during the war, and Tamzin Merchant as newspaper reporter Molly (renamed Cooper for the screen adaptation), who is drafted by Lennox to be his secretary when she proves to be smart, gifted, and—most importantly—unfazed by dead bodies. The pair are a classic TV crime duo—brilliant but socially maladroit Collins clashes with conservative detectives who don't trust his science, while spirited, bubbly Cooper isn't shy about sharing her ideas or going undercover—who are dropped into the social and physical upheaval of wartime London. The plot involves a serial killer who carves swastikas on the tongues of his female victims, leading to an investigation that is complicated by interference and obstruction from the high command. While the story itself isn't new, this one is set apart from other wartime whodunnits that often take a serious, dour approach; by contrast, this tale has the lightness of a romantic thriller with

an edge of gallows humor (and the climactic chase makes memorable use of the London Underground's maze of tunnels). Although a standalone film, *Murder on the Home Front* does play like a like a potential pilot for a new series. Extras include cast and crew interviews. Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Orange Is the New Black: Season One ★★½

Lionsgate, 730 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$39.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$39.98



*Orange Is the New Black* is the latest Netflix original series, based on the memoir by Piper Kerman and developed by Jenji Kohan (*Weeds*). Golden Globe nominee Taylor Schilling stars as Piper Chapman, a middle-class entrepreneur imprisoned for an old smuggling charge dating back to her young and reckless days; but this is a different kind of prison story—a mix of social drama and social satire, with low-key humor running under the real and overarching sense of threat. As an affluent, educated woman, Chapman provides an outsider's perspective on the workings of a racially and culturally diverse world of inmates who are mostly from the poor and working classes, presenting lives and experiences not usually seen on the screen as various individuals share their narratives along the way. Among them are Galina (Kate Mulgrew), Nicky (Natasha Lyonne), Alex (Laura Prepon), and fan favorite "Crazy Eyes" (Uzo Aduba). Because *Orange Is the New Black* is otherwise only available through Netflix subscription, this release will be most welcome for non-subscribers. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2013 debut season, extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, and a gag reel. Highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)

## Ray Donovan: Season One ★★½

Paramount, 633 min., not rated, DVD: 4 discs, \$55.98; Blu-ray: 3 discs, \$76.99



This Showtime original series is ostensibly about the dirty business of covering up the scandals of the rich and famous in Los Angeles, but it is actually centered on the family drama of a Boston clan that moved west after the dad, Mickey (Jon Voigt), went to prison on a murder conviction. *Ray Donovan* opens with Mickey's early release, but the focus is on the title character played by Liev Schreiber, a tough, emotionally unflappable fixer for L.A.'s celebrities, and a protective brother who looks after his siblings: Terry (Eddie Marsan), a former boxer damaged by his years in the ring, and Bunchy (Dash Mihok), a



fragile soul still suffering from the abuse of a neighborhood priest. Ray loves his wife (Paula Malcomson) and children but is a workaholic, which puts a strain on the marriage. It's an interesting mix of cultures—the dark family drama with Boston Irish crime connections, and the show business scandals in the shadows of sunny Los Angeles. But it's also rather dour and hard to warm up to, although Schreiber delivers a strong performance as an anti-hero with a ruthless dedication to his job and a moral code. Steven Bauer costars as Ray's right hand man, and James Woods guest stars as a vicious Boston hitman modeled on Whitey Bulger. Compiling all 12 episodes from the 2013 debut season, this is a strong optional purchase. (S. Axmaker)

### Separate But Equal

★★★

Paramount, 191 min., PG, DVD: \$16.99

For want of a school bus the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case would be waged, which resulted in the desegregation of America's schools and comprised the first major victory in the fledgling Civil Rights movement. This 1991 made-for-television event is a class act that earned Emmys for Best Miniseries and Best Actor for Sidney Poitier, who stars as NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall. In his last film, Burt Lancaster costars as opposing counsel, John W. Davis ("I'm just a country lawyer at heart"). The distinguished cast also includes Richard Kiley as Chief Justice Earl Warren, who is determined to persuade the justices to vote unanimously against segregated schools and "let the backbone come from the court [to] strengthen the moral backbone of the people who live in conflict." An earnest film full of stirring language and impassioned argument, *Separate But Equal* is also somewhat undercut by its deliberate pace and earnest presentation. Still, this is a solid and essential history lesson that should find a welcome home in classrooms and libraries. Extras include "See It Now: A Study of Two Cities," a CBS News special hosted by Edward R. Murrow. Recommended. (D. Liebensohn)

### The Spider

MHz, 3 discs, 354 min., in Danish w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$39.95

Over the past couple of years, MHz has been releasing hitherto unknown programs from Scandinavian TV. One of the more intriguing exports is this 2000 six-episode Danish noir-style thriller, set in 1949 Copenhagen, where the postwar period has

not brought any evidence of prosperity or stability. Gangsters operate a lucrative black market empire, and to the uninitiated it looks as if 1920s Chicago has come back to life in the Danish capital. For young journalist Bjarne Madsen (Jakob Ceder-gren), a great story waits to be told; but his newspaper is not eager to unleash Bjarne for this assignment, as they already have a well-regarded crime reporter, H.C. Vissing (Bent Mejding)—but he's not eager to expose underworld chicanery. Needless to say, Bjarne charts his own course and begins to unravel the criminal networks while also ferreting out the political benefactor that enables Danish gangsters to control the city. In the process, he also falls in love with a captivating singer, Lisbeth Gordan (Stine Stengade)—as does his brother, Ole (Lars Mikkelsen). Director Ole Christian Madsen keeps the action moving at a crisp pace, and the visual style and tough-edged acting clearly owe more than a little to the film noir genre that defined Hollywood's postwar output. Recommended. (P. Hall)

### True Blood: The Complete Sixth Season

★★★

HBO, 4 discs, 600 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$59.99; Blu-ray: \$79.98

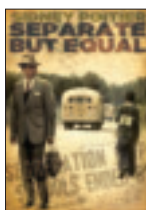
At one time the most popular original show on HBO, this splashy, sexy series about a world where vampires come out of the shadows and into society continues to revel in excess and self-indulgence in its penultimate season. New storylines here are dominated by a plot engineered by the New Orleans governor (Arliiss Howard) to declare war on vampires, built around a conspiracy to poison their blood-substitute "Tru Blood." To perfect his plan, the governor captures and experiments on vampires in a secret concentration camp. Meanwhile, vampire Bill (Stephen Moyer) evaluates his new powers in the wake of his brush with Lilith; Sookie (Anna Paquin) faces the force that killed her parents, with the help of a faerie grandfather and veteran vampire hunter (guest star Rutger Hauer); and werewolf hunk Alcide (Joe Manganiello) takes his place as a pack leader. As in previous seasons, *True Blood* adopts a slightly campy approach to southern gothic horror, filling each episode with outrageously unreal bloody violence and plenty of sex and nudity. It's more entertaining exploitation than sophisticated storytelling, but the self-aware quality and splashy, over-the-top twists have helped the show—based on the books by Charlaine Harris—maintain a strong cult following. Compiling all 10 episodes from the 2013 sixth season, extras include episode commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes (exclusive to the

Blu-ray release is a bonus featurette and an interactive character tree). Recommended. (S. Axmaker)

### True Detective

★★★1/2  
HBO, 3 discs, 458 min., TV-MA, DVD: \$59.99; Blu-ray: \$79.98

Created and written by novelist Nic Pizzolatto and directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, HBO's original series *True Detective*—telling a self-contained story—stars Matthew McConaughey as Detective Rust Cohle, a smart detective with fierce psychological insight into criminals, but poor collaborative and social skills, and Woody Harrelson as Detective Marty Hart, a family man with a more traditional approach to police work and more familiar personal issues. Not really odd couple partners, the pair are more like colliding personalities who have to work to get along enough to solve cases, and both agree that there is something troubling about their current murder investigation, which bears similarities to other unsolved murders, as cryptic clues shepherd the detectives down a murky trail that leads to a regional church, a white supremacist organization, and a history of bad police work and cover-ups. The narrative spans 17 years, framed by interviews with the two detectives years after the investigation ended without an arrest. And while it seems to head into supernatural territory, the scariest revelation here is how evil can continue for decades due to corruption, special interests, and institutional incompetence. Beautifully written and directed, with haunting imagery and challenging subject matter, *True Detective* benefits greatly from the performances by Harrelson and McConaughey, who inhabit rich, complicated, terribly flawed characters. Compiling all eight episodes from 2014, extras include episode commentaries, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, and cast and creator interviews. Sure to appeal to fans of dark, complex mysteries and sophisticated TV storytelling, this is highly recommended. (S. Axmaker)



## Video Librarian Online

Visit Video Librarian Online ([www.videolibrarian.com](http://www.videolibrarian.com)) for more reviews during July and August, including: *Arthur Hailey's The Moneychangers*, *Corazon Indomable*, *Crime Stories*, *Jack Irish: Set 2*, *Kennedy's Brain*, *Little House on the Prairie: Season Two*, *Longmire: The Complete Second Season*, *Ripper Street: Season Two*, *Republic of Doyle: Season One*, *You, Me & Them: Series 1*, 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

DD = Digital Download

Aud = Audience

K = Preschool-Kindergarten

E = Elementary (grades 1-3)

I = Intermediate (grades 4-6)

J = Jr. High (grades 7-8)

H = High School (grades 9-12)

C = Colleges & Universities

P = Public Libraries

## CHILDREN'S

### Adventure Time: The Complete Third Season ★★★★★1/2

(2011) 286 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$26.95; Blu-ray: \$32.95. Warner Home Video (avail. from most distributors).

In a behind-the-scenes extra here, *Adventure Time* creator Pendleton Ward says that at fan gatherings he is profusely thanked by parents who are grateful that his hit Cartoon Network heroic fantasy satire can be enjoyed by grownups as much as their transfixed kids. The simply-drawn setting is the magical medievalist realm of Ooo—actually our own post-apocalyptic world—where boy hero Finn, aged 13, enjoys escapades amongst a plethora of strange princesses and cultures with his roommate/stepbrother Jake, who also happens to be a talking, shape-shifting dog. Noteworthy antics here include a revelation (courtesy of a VHS tape) of the origins of not-terribly-threatening antagonist the Ice King, and the resolution of a second-season plot thread in which Finn's unattainable love, Princess Bubblegum of the Candy People, regresses in age from 18 to 13 herself, making her (briefly) potential date material (the final episode introduces a fiery—literally—new princess as a possible romantic interest for Finn). One tale even unfolds nearly dialogue-free as it chronicles the friendship between two peripheral creatures who are normally mortal enemies. Guest voices include Neil Patrick Harris, Keith David, and "Weird Al" Yankovic. Compiling all 26 episodes from the

2011-12 third season, extras include episode commentaries. A smart and entertaining series, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassidy)

### Bella Sara: Emma's Wings ★★

(2014) 75 min. DVD: \$14.98. Entertainment One (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4172-4162-4.

Based on the Danish trading card game by Gitte Odder Braendgaard, this rudimentarily animated feature film follows a 'tweenish-looking girl named Emma who loves taking care of her horse Wings. While she prepares for her Uncle Morgan's upcoming party and peruses her absent (deceased?) mother Sigga's journal about a mystical other realm, a magic necklace suddenly appears on Emma. Later, while gathering orchids with her clumsy cousin Colm, Emma is confronted by a vicious magical wolf pack and the pair find themselves transported to the land of North of North. Here, Emma meets magical Sara (a fairy?) and her fancy horse Bella, and learns that she is not only her mother's heir but also the only valkyrie who can stop Ivenna, a villainess who wants the realm or Sigga's journal...or something. A confusing tale presented with subpar animation, this is not a necessary purchase. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Betsy's Kindergarten Adventures: Volume 3 ★★★★★1/2

(2011) 120 min. DVD: \$19.95. Polka Dot Productions (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-459-6.

Aired on PBS Kids, this compilation of eight 15-minute stories from the Parents' Choice Award-winning preschool series—which features an accomplished voice cast—combines cute animation with good common sense. Five-year-old protagonist Betsy (Daveigh Chase) is back in "Tickets Please!" in which

she worries about her math skills after being placed in charge of counting tickets for prizes in a class carnival activity. "Have You Got the Time?" spotlights teacher Mrs. O'Connor (Sally Struthers), who explains how to tell time from the hands of a clock, using examples and a rhyme that separates regular parts of the day. "Introducing the Post Office" offers a behind-the-scenes look at mail sorting, while "A Berry Sore Stomach" finds Betsy and BFF Billy (Nancy "Bart Simpson" Cartwright) overloading on blueberries. The remaining four segments are "Growing, Growing, Gone," "The Treasure of Sierra Betsy," "Lyrtle the Turtle," and "The Great Gingerbread Man Mystery." Also featuring the voices of Fred Willard, Cree Summer, and Bess Armstrong, this relevant series for youngsters magically turns almost anything into a great learning opportunity. Highly recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Hooray for Amanda & Her Alligator ★★★★★

(2013) 12 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-57033-6.

Prolific children's author and illustrator Mo Willems is back with this latest family affair, featuring narration by wife Cher Willems and additional voices by Mo and their daughter Trixie, as well as music by Scotty Huff. School-aged Amanda and her stuffed pet Alligator enjoy dancing, frolicking, holding hands, and other activities in this animated adaptation of the 2011 picture book that includes "6 ½ Surprising Stories." In "A Surprising Surprise," Alligator paces with boredom as he waits for Amanda to return from the library (Amanda pores through wacky reading material such as *You Can Make It Yourself: Jet Packs*), and she eventually scares him. "An Unsurprising Surprise" falls flat for Alligator when he tries to "Boo!" her back.



### Clodette ★★★★★1/2

(2013) 12 min. DVD: \$59.95 (study guide included). Weston Woods Studios. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-545-57032-8.

Narrated by Wendy Carter, this animated adaptation of author and illustrator Tom Lichtenheld's 2011 picture book features banjo-inflected music by Jack Sundrud and Rusty Young. A very small cloud, Clodette does see some advantages in her stature, including pet names (such as "shortcake" and "small fry"), the ease of finding a good spot in a crowd watching fireworks, and the ability to sneak through tight spaces and hide in small places. However, once in awhile, Clodette feels inadequate, especially

when she witnesses the other clouds doing big things such as whooshing in a cold front, or making rivers flow. Although Clodette dreams of making a difference, she finds that after inquiring about jobs at the fire department and a car wash, "nobody seemed to need her." But when a chance storm spirals Clodette far away from her 'hood, the "cute little cumulus" ends up making a big contribution after all. Awash with natural-looking blue, gray, and yellow sky backgrounds, bonus features include a read-along option, and a workshop featurette with Lichtenheld at the Geneva History Center in Illinois. A charming tale, this is highly recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



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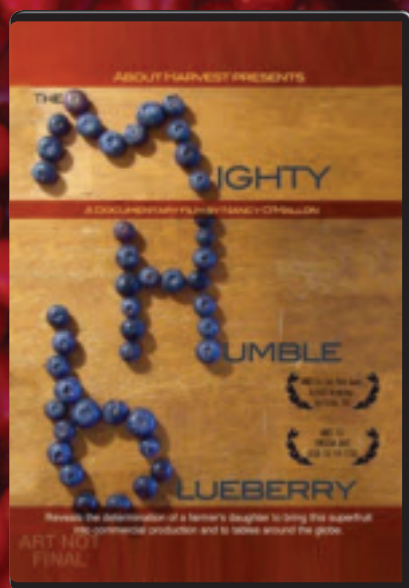
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These are followed by the less memorable “An Extra Surprise,” “A Surprising Tickle,” and “A Surprising Solution,” finishing strong with “A Surprising Value,” in which Amanda reassures her outraged friend after he discovers he’s wearing a price tag (“I was in the sale basket?!”), and “A Surprising Discovery,” which introduces a fun new buddy. Sure to be appreciated by fans of Willems’ lighthearted and lively storytelling, this is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### PAW Patrol ★★

(2013) 117 min. DVD: \$14.98. Paramount Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-4157-7647-4.

Featuring 10 stories from the high-energy Nickelodeon-aided computer-animated series, this compilation follows the adventures of a group of six rescue puppies and their 10-year-old human leader, Ryder. “Pups Save the Sea Turtles” offers up facts about the “super mini-dinosaurs” (not a fact) while the team helps the turtles avoid hungry seagulls, diverting their path to the water away from a busy road. “Pups and the Very Big Baby” finds the gang faced with a baby beached whale who they need to keep from becoming dehydrated—while also ensuring that Momma Whale stays away (the team use the whale’s sensitivity to sound in order to distract her from ending up in the same situation). Also including “Pups and the Kitt-tastrophe,” “Pups Save a Train,” “Pup Pup Boogie,” “Pups in a Fog,” “Pup Pup Goose,” “Pup Pup and Away”—are you sensing a theme here?—the set finishes with an elephant goose chase in “Pups Save the Circus,” and “Pup a Doodle Do” (Mayor Goodway’s chicken runs off). The puppies each boast special catchphrases and they pilot awesome vehicles while helping to protect Adventure Bay. Combining problem-solving skills and doggone good fun (“whenever there’s trouble, just yelp for help!”), this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Poppy Cat: Birthday Treasure and Other Adventures ★★

(2014) 80 min. DVD: \$12.98. Entertainment One (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 1-4172-3713-9.

This seven-story compilation from the animated series—based on books by the late British author and illustrator Lara Jones—follows the titular anthropomorphic pet cat in whimsical tales. “Birthday Treasure” finds the gang—including dog Zuzu, Owl, rabbit Alma, and mouse Mo—surprising Poppy with a strawberry-frosted cake and birthday presents that are not-so-coincidentally quite helpful when combined with a treasure map of a Mystery Jungle. “Bad Robot” follows the team during a rocket ship rescue of their TV show hero Rocket Cat, who is trapped on Ice Planet. Other segments include “Magic Show,” “Sunken Ship” (the crew goes un-

### Dragons Love Tacos ★★

(2014) 6 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-0-9777098-9-2.

Based on author Adam Rubin and illustrator Daniel Salmieri’s fun 2012 children’s book—featuring the duo’s characteristic speckle-background—*Dragons Love Tacos* is a sort of guide for a boy and his dog on the subject of dragon cuisine. In turns out that “tacos are key” in tempting the fiery beasts. While beef, chicken, cheese, and other mild toppings are approved, dragons—and likely a fair amount of the target audience—cannot stand salsa (if accidentally ingested, snorting sparks are the least of worries!). Narrated by Chris Patton, this amusing iconographic-animated tale features mostly muted primary colors and an inventive use of sound effects (such as sizzling meat and crunching of taco shells). Also including a read-along option, this is recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)



derwater to search shipwrecks for gold), “Bumble Fumble,” “Cheese Mountain,” and “Marshmallow Mines.” In each episode, pessimistic badger Egbert appears as some sort of foe (itchy Carlito Mosquito, Seymour the Suckerfish). Serving up preschool-friendly fun, this is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Secret Pizza Party ★★

(2014) 6 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-512-7.

Another cooperative effort between author Adam Rubin and illustrator Daniel Salmieri, this iconographic-animated adaptation of their 2013 picture book—narrated by Adam Verner—centers around a raccoon who loves pizza but (being a wild animal without any money) is usually chased from Uncle Mark’s Pizza Place with a broom. After considering the possibility of planning a secret pizza celebration and some other less than bright ideas (including wearing stilts and dressing as a human for pizza pickup), the raccoon winds up in a silly chase sequence. Featuring dark nighttime scenes (in consideration of the generally nocturnal main character) and some funny details (the raccoon keeps journals recording the times he’s eaten pizza), *Secret Pizza Party* also includes a read-along option. Recommended. Aud: K, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Under the Freedom Tree ★★

(2014) 9 min. DVD: \$38.99. Dreamscape Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62923-579-0.

Narrated by JD Jackson, this iconographic-animated adaptation of author Susan VanHecke and illustrator London Ladd’s 2014 picture book features realistic color pencil and pastel artwork. *Under the Freedom Tree* sheds light on Virginia’s true-life Grand Contraband Camp during the Civil War era, which became a refuge for slaves after the runaways Frank Baker, James Townsend, and Sheppard Mallory received asylum from the Union instead of being returned (due to Virginia’s secession from the country). Written in free verse (“glinting waves slap rotting

wood”) and backed by solid sound effects (such as rushing water and chirping birds), this short briefly outlines the evolution of the camp as others came to settle near the titular “Emancipation Oak.” Also featuring a read-along option and an audio author’s note, this engaging slice-of-history is recommended. Aud: E, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Worlds Together: Ecuador ★★

(2013) 25 min. DVD: \$29.95 (teacher’s guide included). Master Communications. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60480-158-3.

Producer Elmer Hawkes takes his camera wayyyyyy south-of-the-border in this recent program from his long-running documentary series. Following the general format of combining location footage with maps and a world music soundtrack, *Worlds Together: Ecuador* explores the South American country’s economy, particularly agriculture (which employs a quarter of the nation’s workforce, with exports including sugar, tomatoes, barley, and corn) and petroleum; the (majority) Roman Catholic and Spanish-speaking Mestizo population, who live from the Andes to the Amazon Basin; and specific cities, including the wealthy seaport of Guayaquil, the colonial-looking church-filled Cuenca, the thermal baths of Baños, the eco-tourism hotspot Tena, and the capital city of Quito. Also featuring segments on Ecuadorian music (including a bamboo-made rondador pan pipe), arts and crafts (featured in daily and weekly markets), and food (the national dish *encebollado* is a soup made from fish, onion, and corn), this informative introduction is recommended. Aud: I, J, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## PSYCHOLOGY & SELF-HELP

### Free the Mind ★★

(2013) 80 min. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

American psychologist Dr. Richard David-



son, founder of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, has earned international recognition for his innovative studies, including a citation as one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in 2006. Danish filmmaker Phie Ambo's documentary details how Davidson treated three cases of emotionally challenged individuals with a regimen that included Tibetan-inspired meditation and mental training exercises. Two of the patients were U.S. military veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder following violent tours of duty, while the third was a boy diagnosed with ADHD who experienced severe anxiety. In offering a blend of ages-old contemplative practices with the considerations of modern neuroscience, Davidson challenged the traditional approaches to medical care and psychology, with remarkable results. *Free the Mind* does an admirable job of explaining complex neuroscience theories, while the two adult patients and parents of the child express an extraordinary degree of patience in allowing their situations to be shown on camera. The only drawback here is a bombastic music score that often seems more appropriate for a Spielberg-worthy adventure flick than a science documentary. Extras include bonus featurettes (including a meeting between Davidson and the Dalai Lama; and an introduction to yoga instruction for children). Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Hidden Pictures ★★½

(2013) 56 min. DVD: \$19.95; individuals; \$49.95; public libraries; \$134.95; colleges & universities. MyDoc Productions (avail. from [www.hiddenpicturesfilm.com](http://www.hiddenpicturesfilm.com)). PPR.

Filmmaker Delaney Ruston, MD, whose 2010 documentary *Unlisted* was a cinematic memoir about her late schizophrenic father, author-poet Richard Ruston, here travels around the world to assess the state of the mentally ill (perhaps as many as 450 million are afflicted globally) and how they are treated by their respective cultures. Mostly, her findings are sad. In India, despite (or because of) strong family systems, schizophrenics are hidden away, judged unworthy for all-important marriages. In South Africa, a native woman suffering from bipolar disorder gains no benefit from the worthless potions of shamanic tribal "healers" (who believe evil spirits to be responsible); fortunately, she receives a second chance with psychotropic drugs. In China, Ruston finds an apparently normal, well-educated man lodged indefinitely in an institution mainly because of some personal disagreement with his parents. And even in France, supposedly a bastion of progressive psychiatry, a schizophrenic man remains a jobless outcast. Although one might fairly ask whether such sample cases are representative of the big picture, Dr. Ruston's plea for more understanding and compassion

for the mentally ill is compelling. Actress Glenn Close (whose sister has grappled with schizophrenia) also appears to add her voice in this strong mental-health-advocacy documentary. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### The Amish: Shunned ★★½

(2014) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-042-8.

Outside and even within the Amish community, shunning is viewed as a harsh and controversial practice that is metaphorically equivalent—as an Amishman here says—to a stoning in the New Testament. Shunning occurs when a church member is cast out for violating rules (known as the "ordnung"), after which other members are forbidden to eat at the same table or take anything from the hand of those shunned. Directed by Callie T. Wiser, this PBS-aided *American Experience* documentary presents cases of shunned young people who have left the Amish church and community (these instances take place after their allowed period of "rumspringa," or "running around" before joining the church). Some of the shunned departed because they disagreed with the rules, wanted to pursue higher education or wider opportunities, or were drawn to forbidden pursuits, such as owning a car. The decision to leave is often gradual, and always painful, but a lucky few find shelter with former Amish families, who help them transition to a different world (one former Amish man returned to his family seven times before leaving once and for all). Many join a more liberal church, but continue to miss the close-knit family ties. While the former Amish youth are shown

on camera, the voices of Amish bishops and parents—whose faces are not shown—justify the painful role of shunning, citing biblical beliefs that sinners cannot enter Heaven. A young woman named Naomi seems to be adjusting, with plans to become a nurse, while Anna has found shelter with a former church member, but can't let go of her beliefs or find her role in the wider world (in a poignant coda, Anna puts her Amish clothes back on, and returns to the fold). Some remain "lost between cultures," but an Amishman notes that for shunned family members, "a place at the table is always set." A fine companion piece to the PBS-aided *The Amish* (VL-7/12), this is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### David Brainerd: Missionary to the American Indians ★★½

(2014) 59 min. DVD: \$19.99. Gary Wilkinson (dist. by Vision Video).

Filmmaker Gary Wilkinson's stirring and illuminating documentary focuses on the short but meaningful life of David Brainerd (1718-1747), who devoted his final years to preaching Christianity to native peoples in the New England area. Born in Connecticut during the early 18th century, Brainerd learned catechism at home from his mother and father, who both died young. At age 19, Brainerd tried his hand at farming but gave up and then underwent a Christian conversion that led him to enroll at Yale University. Established in part to counter more liberal theological teachings at Harvard, many Yale students would embrace the Christian revival movement known as the Great Awakening. Brainerd, already ill with the tuberculosis that would eventually kill him, was expelled from Yale for criticizing a faculty he considered spiritually bankrupt, leading him to volunteer to travel around New England as



### Jesus: The Desire of Ages ★★½

(2014) 61 min. DVD: \$19.99. Myers Media (dist. by Vision Video).

One may well wonder what new can be brought to a dramatic retelling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but the fact that a story can be told repeatedly—through the perspectives of different generations—is a testament to the enduring power of a narrative that continues to capture the attention and imagination of people worldwide. With Paul Presly in the title role, this well-produced docudrama directed by Nancy Hamilton Myers focuses on the latter days in Jesus's ministry, during which he attained great popularity (and drew considerable negative attention from religious leaders) while fulfilling what many claimed to be Old Testament prophecy before being sentenced to die on the cross. Here, Jesus displays the full extent of the human experience, enduring tremendous pain and suffering, while also exhibiting an almost inexplicable peace and grace—especially towards those who tortured him. Within the framework of the journey to Calvary, flashbacks recount how Jesus changed the lives of 10 individuals, including the woman at the well, the leper, and a girl brought back to life. Whether or not Jesus actually rose from the dead is a matter of personal belief, but it's hard to dispute the influence of Christ's story, which is continually retold. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

an evangelist to Native Americans. The film visits the places where Brainerd did his often challenging work, and also interviews historians about Brainerd's devotion to God, as well as his chronic melancholy and the physical sacrifices he made to complete his mission. Along the way, the documentary offers insights into the mindset of Native Americans who were desperately trying to cope with white settlers and hold onto their cultures. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

### Jock Troup & the Fishermen's Revival

★★★1/2

(2012) 48 min. DVD: \$19.99. Gary Wilkinson (dist. by Vision Video).

The fascinating story of Scottish evangelist John "Jock" Troup (1896-1954) is told in this biographical documentary from filmmaker Gary Wilkinson. Born and raised in fishing villages during the boom years of Scotland's fishing industry, Troup became a master cooper (a builder of barrels)—a key job for exporting herring to the rest of the world. Enlisting in the Royal Navy Patrol Service during World War I, Troup had an "evangelical conversion" one night in Dublin in the company of a Christian couple who had invited him to tea. A changed man from that moment, Troup went uneasily back to his old life until he had a second conversion at a revival meeting in Glasgow, after which he joined forces with a traveling Baptist minister, and then began taking his formidable voice out into the street and to revival meetings throughout Scotland's fishing communities. A "Fishermen's Revival" was born, as word spread of Troup's charismatic preaching (sometimes praying while prostrate on the ground), and local meeting halls would swell with people wanting to hear him. Troup would run a revival center in Glasgow that also fed the poor during the Great Depression and gave support to troops during World War II. A variety of interviewees tell Troup's story, including historians, eyewitnesses who saw Troup preach, and Troup's daughter and grandson. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

## SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

### Approved for Adoption ★★★1/2

(2012) 75 min. DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.95. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Co-director (with Laurent Boileau) Jung Henin, who is now an accomplished comics artist/writer, was abandoned as a little boy and found in a Seoul marketplace. Jung was eventually adopted by a large Belgian family (his second foster home; a first returned him over a triviality), but while he was accepted by his non-biological siblings and parents, he struggled with feeling like an outsider,



### Campaign of Hate: Russia and Gay Propaganda ★★★1/2

(2013) 78 min. In English & Russian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$17.99. Breaking Glass Pictures (avail. from most distributors).

One of the more troubling news stories surrounding this year's Winter Olympics in Sochi centered on the status of gays and lesbians in Russia. Homosexuality was not tolerated during the Soviet era, but the post-Cold War years witnessed an even greater hostility toward gays, as political and religious factions sought to scapegoat the demographic through media attacks, legislation, and an environment that encouraged violent assaults on LGBT Russians. This documentary presents a series of interviews with Russian men and women who openly identify their sexual orientation, despite rejection by their families, discrimination, and increased threats. Some downplay their lifestyle, while others—most notably, the organizers of an LGBT film festival—attempt to force a conversation with a wider population that views homosexuality as a Western perversion. Also appearing is a Russian parliamentarian who crafted the so-called "gay propaganda" legislation that created international furor. But the real surprise here is that *Campaign of Hate* is a mature and intelligent documentary from Michael Lucas, a filmmaker notorious for directing gay porno flicks. The Russian-born Lucas appears on camera to conduct interviews with his non-English-speaking subjects—a task he handles with the professionalism of a seasoned journalist. Disturbing yet compelling, *Campaign of Hate* is a must-see for anyone interested in today's Russia, where the threat to LGBT individuals is very real. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

not quite belonging to the East or the West. Accordingly and amusingly, Jung went through a phase of intense Japan-o-philia that fed his artistic precociousness—when he wasn't engaged in running away, petty crime, and cheating (repeatedly disappointing his Belgian parents). The filming style of this exquisite animated European docu-memoir combines computer-assisted 2D renderings inspired by Jung's sketchwork (which is not Japanese anime-style, by any means) with live-action sequences of the now-adult artist-writer revisiting his ancestral Korean homeland, where he admits that he showed insufficient appreciation for his Belgian papa and maman (even as he criticizes the culture for taking in unwanted Korean children as a sort of trendy fashion statement). An artistic, engaging, and thought-provoking autobiographical documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Arctic Hip Hop ★★★

(2007) 44 min. DVD: \$79.95: public libraries & high schools; \$275: colleges & universities. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

This Canadian documentary revolves around a weeklong hip-hop workshop. In 2007, director Randy Kelly traveled to Cambridge Bay in Nunavut—a community of 1,477 (2006 census figure)—to document Stephen Leafloor, aka B-boy Buddha, and his crew at work. Leafloor, a burly white man, says he feels a connection to the Native community through his sister, who married an Inuit. He uses hip-hop dance as a means to get kids moving. Says Laurence, a student at Kiilik High School, "I didn't know how to breakdance until this week and I love it." Leafloor also teaches steps with hats and canes that look more like Bob Fosse choreography,

but he eschews a purist approach, encouraging kids to merge Inuit traditions (like throat singing) into the mix. The kids also learn about ciphers, circles, scratching, and beat-boxing. In addition, Leafloor teaches them about the origins of B-boy culture, putting an emphasis on creativity and community while also delivering a cautionary message about the violent stance espoused by some rappers, explaining that this doesn't apply to hip-hop as a whole. Kelly also folds in the narratives of two students, 15-year-old Eric Kitigon, who plans to join the military, and 21-year-old Shannon Kemukton, a single mother who works at a bingo hall. Eric, who takes on the rap *nom de plume* Justic-E, spends part of each year with his best friend's family since his mother works in a remote diamond mine. Principal Mike Simms believes the hip-hop program motivates "kids who are often difficult to motivate." At the conclusion, a battle in which everyone shows off their newfound skills while exhibiting enthusiasm appears to bear out the principal's belief in Leafloor's efforts. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Burn ★★★

(2012) 86 min. DVD: \$24.95 (avail. from most distributors), \$249 w/PPR (avail. from edu. passionriver.com). Passion River. Closed captioned.

Ostensibly a documentary about a year in the life of the Detroit Fire Department, *Burn* is just as much a portrait of a failing American city that cannot afford to sustain basic services. With two-thirds of its peak population gone—less than 800,000 people remain in the Motor City—Detroit is rife with abandoned and broken-down structures (both houses and buildings) that are essentially firetraps. Filmmakers Tom Putnam and



Brenna Sanchez's *Burn* focuses on a handful of firefighters who spend their days tackling blazes with inadequate equipment, as they try to save places that are often destined to be leveled. Ironies pile higher with the appointment of a new, tough fire commissioner who declares that some fires will not be put out in order to save money. The rank-and-file firefighters strongly disagree, arguing that you never know when someone might be living in those derelict structures, but it's all part of the new normal in Detroit. Executive produced by Denis Leary (*Rescue Me*), *Burn* follows various subjects over the course of a hard year, including the commissioner (who is seen vacuuming his own office after the cleaning crew is laid off); a young former firefighter who was disabled when a burning building collapsed; and a long-timer and recent widower who is due to retire. While the film features lots of firefighters-in-action sequences, this an engaging, personal-ity-driven documentary. The companion volume *Too Hot for Burn* (DVD: \$19.99) is also newly available. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Earth Water Woman: Community & Sustainability in Trinidad & Tobago

★★★1/2

(2013) 23 min. DVD: \$99: high schools & public libraries; \$229: colleges & universities. Good Docs (avail. from [www.gooddocs.net](http://www.gooddocs.net)). PPR.

Filmmakers Sarah Feinbloom and Alexandra Swati Guild's *Earth Water Woman* looks at how women spearheaded a reforestation project in Trinidad's Fondes Amandes. Co-founder and director of the Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation Project (FACRP), Akilah Jaramogi explains how the project began as a grassroots effort in the 1980s, and then over the next 30 years led to the planting of more than 60,000 seedlings and restoration of 125 acres of forest. The documentary quickly covers the community's

history: former slaves lost their land because they could not afford to pay taxes, but in the 1970s an uprising of unionists, students, and activists led to land reclamation by Rastafarians. FACRP grew from Jaramogi's involvement with the Rastafarian movement; while her husband and other men were focused on "freedom gatherings, bubbling food in yabba pots," she wanted to find practical ways to support Rastafarians and in particular Trinidadian women. So in the early 1980s, she and her husband started planting seedlings and educating locals about environmental conservation. Reforestation has created habitats for wildlife and jobs for humans while also supporting agriculture, conserving clean water, and preventing forest fires. And the people of Fondes Amandes have developed a protective attitude to the forest and work to preserve the ecosystem it supports. As a West Indies professor says, the FACRP is "an outstanding example of indigenous, self-propelled, community-based eco-forestry." Combining archival photographs and footage from the community, along with expository intertitles, this inspiring short documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### The Ethics of Fracking ★★1/2

(2014) 38 min. DVD: \$39.95: public libraries & high schools; \$99: colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR.

The title of this short documentary strongly hints at the position taken by its producers, who present a largely one-sided view of fracking, a relatively new technology for mining coal shale for natural gas far underground. Fracking has—to some extent—crept under the radar of environmentalists, and is largely unregulated, even though it creates water pollution, geologic instability, noise, and greenhouse gases in the form of methane. Ground zero for the growing practice are areas in the states of Montana and Pennsylvania, where

residents are often surprised to find that the mineral rights under their property—usually deeded to someone else—are being used to extract natural gas. Unfortunately, *The Ethics of Fracking* is flawed in its approach: many of the headlines on which the camera dwells are from web pages of varying degrees of credibility; and even though filmmaker Scott Cannon includes authoritative interviews with politicians, academics, and activists, they only scratch the surface in depicting the human angle—i.e., the people affected by fracking, such as the residents of rural areas who demonstrate how they can actually ignite the water coming from their kitchen tap. Better choices here would be *Gasland* (VL-11/11) and *Meet the Frackers* (VL-9/13). Optional. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

### Fists of Pride (Les Poings de la Fierté)

★★★

(2012) 64 min. DVD: \$195. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

Canadian filmmaker Hélène Choquette's *Fists of Pride* shines a spotlight on young boys who are training to be adolescent boxers in a Burmese refugee community on the border with Thailand. Martial arts competition between Thailand and Burma has a long, legendary history. In Mae Sot—a sort of wide-open "special zone" for the two countries that teems with Burmese migrant workers and refugees from Myanmar's ethnic strife—Choquette trains her camera on four young pugilists from the Burmese Karen tribe, who attempt to master Thai boxing under different (sometimes questionable) Thai coaches for their turn in the ring in an annual "Water Festival." Success with the local gamblers would help the kids' stricken families. While their parents and older brothers (some of whom tried boxing themselves) despair over the apparent exploitation of the youngsters, the boys themselves seem to take the bouts as a test of personal prowess and empowerment. When the film finally gets to the action in the ring, the competition is rather anticlimactic, but that's only because Choquette focuses less on the scorecards and more on segments of these two Asian societies that are generally overlooked. Presented in both English and French versions, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Four Horsemen ★★1/2

(2010) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$295 w/PPR). Motherlode (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-488-6.

Filmmaker Ross Ashcroft's complex documentary aims to present a kind of unified theory of everything concerning America's decline. The film's title refers to four inter-related internal and external problems for the U.S. that may eventually prove catastrophic: financial corruption, wealth inequality, and the chokehold that corporations have on government; the continued exploitation of

### Goodbye Tibet ★★1/2

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.95 (\$295 w/PPR). Suissimage (dist. by Janson Media). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-56839-473-2.

In the year 2000, filmmaker Maria Blumencron shot footage of Kelsang Jigme—a legendary guide who helped Tibetan refugees flee their China-occupied country—as he led six children over the Himalayas to freedom in India. *Goodbye Tibet* concerns events that took place after the hard journey, beginning with Blumencron and Jigme being arrested by the Chinese; the director was incarcerated for two days, while Jigme spent more than two years in a torture prison. A decade after those Tibetan children left their country, Blumencron and Jigme reunite the group in order to ascend a 20,000-ft. high mountain pass leading to the border of Tibet. Their purpose: to defy Chinese authorities by planting a forbidden Tibetan flag. The stories of those now young adults and of Jigme unfold along the way, especially their losses and sacrifices: the kids have never seen their families since departing Tibet, while Jigme recalls with anguish the destruction of his people and culture. Blumencron's footage of the climb is often spectacular, but while this may center on one of the world's tallest peaks, it is much more than a typical mountaineer film. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



other countries rich in natural resources but already high in poverty; the rise of terrorism in response to said exploitation; and environmental disasters, including climate change, from unfettered use of fossil fuels. *Four Horsemen* argues that the root problem here lies in the systemic issues of wealth creation for the few and powerful at the expense of everyone else and future generations. The bulk of the running time is devoted to the consequences of deregulation in financial services, which led to the Great Recession in 2008 and a government bailout that the majority of Americans did not support. According to the high-profile interviewees here—including Noam Chomsky, Joseph Stiglitz, and Max Keiser—the forces behind those epochal events have since only grown more powerful, controlling both political parties and further stealing from the futures of an easily-distracted and fatalistic public. A powerful, thought-provoking condemnation of the evils of economic inequality, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Gut Renovation ★★★1/2

(2013) 81 min. DVD: \$29.99; individuals; \$295; institutions. Outcast Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

In a style both humorous and heartbreaking, filmmaker Su Friedrich documents the economic and human cost of gentrification as played out in Brooklyn's Williamsburg district. Re-zoning in 2005 allowed developers to raze old buildings in an area targeted as "moribund" despite its many small businesses and long-time residents, which include a thriving artists' community. All are displaced with alarming speed as landlords sell their homes out from under them and build condomini-

ums marketed as luxury residences. Friedrich, who's lived in Williamsburg for 20 years, tracks the changes in her neighborhood over five years, as nearly 200 older structures are demolished and decades-long residents close up shop and look for new places to live, all while condo owners receive outrageous tax breaks. Filming in the streets and out the window of her loft, Friedrich creates a sharp portrait of the destruction, tempering her anger with wry commentary and music. Assured by realtors that Williamsburg offers an escape from the paparazzi, well-to-do new tenants encounter Friedrich instead, camera in hand, telling them bluntly that they're ruining the 'hood. She kvetches about newcomers walking their little dogs and yells from her second-story vantage point at a black-coated group of developers, who respond, "Have a nice day" and take her photo in return. DVD extras include an interview with Ida Susser, author of *Updated Norman Street: Poverty and Politics in an Urban Neighborhood*. A fine documentary that smartly illustrates what "urban development" can mean in practice, *Gut Renovation* is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### La Camioneta ★★★

(2012) 72 min. DVD: \$295. Follow Your Nose Films (dist. by Bullfrog Films). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 1-93777-284-5.

The title of Mark Kendall's documentary refers to a decommissioned American school bus that has been refurbished for a second life in the service of public transportation in Guatemala. *La Camioneta* follows the vehicle on a 15-day road trip from Virginia to Puerto Quetzal in Guatemala,

where it undergoes its transformation before being sold to an ex-farmer who operates a bus route. It turns out that driving a bus in Guatemala is a dangerous occupation: since 2006, more than 1,000 drivers and fare-collectors have been murdered by local gangsters demanding a hefty cut of their earnings. But Kendall doesn't focus on the violence and terror; instead, he offers a compelling consideration of how the Guatemalans work together to transform a cast-off into something that is both useful and artistically inspiring, as the yellow exterior is covered with a vibrant explosion of Central American folk art, giving it an exuberant look not seen on U.S. roads. On a more practical level, the rejuvenated bus serves an invaluable purpose in transporting poor rural Guatemalans who otherwise would have no means of getting from one place to another other than walking (the term *camioneta* is roughly translated as "chicken bus," since many folks bring their live poultry along for the ride). Featuring both the full-length documentary and a 52-minute abridged version, this engaging slice of Latin American cultural life is recommended. [Note: this is also being sold on home video for \$25 at [www.lacamionetafilm.com](http://www.lacamionetafilm.com).] Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

### Menstrual Man ★★★

(2013) 63 min. In English, Hindi & Tamil w/ English subtitles. Coup Productions (avail. from [sale.menstrualman.com/education/](http://sale.menstrualman.com/education/)). DVD: \$195. PPR. ISBN: 978-981-07-8003-6.

Amit Virmani's documentary (with a catchy title) honors Arunachalam Muruganatham, a socially ethical, grassroots Indian inventor-businessman who saw a need and filled it—despite extreme cultural taboos. Noting that menstruating women in the impoverished, lower castes of India rarely used tampons—due to a mix of personal shame and the perception of the accessory as a luxury item—and suffered serious health problems, Muruganatham set up a system to mass-produce and distribute affordable sanitary pads. Moreover, his business model and user-friendly technology deliberately employed and empowered village women themselves as much as possible (Muruganatham says he sacrificed an easy-money chance to be a millionaire-industrialist). Muruganatham, who repeatedly claims to lack education and sophistication, doggedly researched available material (plant-cellulose winning out over cotton), quizzed female medical students over preferences (most were still too shy to answer truthfully), and was abandoned by both his wife and his mother, who accused him of being a "pervert." Humorous inserts from "Bollywood" musical melodramas add a bit of levity to this interesting portrait of responsible venture capitalism, making it a nice counterpoint to the many grim exposés on Third World sweatshops. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Torture: Made In USA ★★★1/2

(2010) 87 min. DVD: \$24.99 (avail. from most distributors), \$149 w/PPR (avail. from [www.kimstim.com](http://www.kimstim.com)). KimStim.

An award-winning French documentary, filmmaker Robin Marie-Monique's *Torture: Made In USA* cannot simply be dismissed as advocacy journalism. The documentary features a remarkable number of major players from the American military and Bush-Cheney administration who were involved in the early years of America's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Interviewees include Larry Wilkerson (then-Secretary of State Colin Powell's chief of staff); General Ricardo Sanchez (former commander of coalition forces in Iraq and in charge of gathering intelligence); Matthew Waxman (former advisor to Powell's replacement, Condoleezza Rice); Janis Karpinski (a career officer who ran several Iraqi prisons, including Abu Ghraib); and Michael Scheuer, chief architect of the CIA's "extraordinary rendition" program. The film does a painstaking job of tracing the Bush team's step-by-step dismantling of the Geneva Convention rules for humane treatment of prisoners of war, along with the series of deliberately vague memoranda written by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the Department of Justice. Those memoranda would open the door to waterboarding, sleep deprivation, stress-induced pain, and other forms of torture—a slippery slope that led to both heightened forms of abuse at Abu Ghraib (wrought by a special team of military interrogators, not the so-called "bad apples" claimed by Rumsfeld) and the extraordinary renditions practice. Offering a clear and thorough explanation of exactly why the U.S. lost both prestige and moral authority worldwide during the early years of the wars, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)





**Unacceptable Levels ★★★**

(2013) 87 min. DVD: \$19.98 (avail. from most distributors), \$99 w/PPR: public libraries, \$199 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Disinformation (dist. by TDC Entertainment). ISBN: 978-1-939517-24-1.

Filmmaker Ed Brown doesn't like the smell of his drinking water. One day, he sets out to discover why and he finds—of course—that it is full of chemicals, leading him to wonder just how many industrial chemicals can be found in the average human body in the 21st century. The answer is more than 200, as Brown learns from multiple interviews with scientists and activists (including Ralph Nader) over the course of *Unacceptable Levels*. Could this have anything to do with why Brown's wife has had two miscarriages? No one knows, but what is certain is that following World War II, the demand rose for consumer products, which required new chemicals and oil-based products for manufacturing. These chemicals were absorbed in people's bodies and passed along to subsequent generations. Babies are now, according to one expert, "pre-polluted" before birth (many children in the U.S. also suffer from chronic illnesses). One of the big culprits, the documentary argues, is the pesticide industry, which is protected by laws that require no obligation to research the effects of their products on human health or even to keep any data to that effect. But there's also the fact that ordinary people as well as businesses continue to treat our water supply as a dumping ground for every kind of chemical on the market. Although discouraging and alarming, *Unacceptable Levels* is a thought-provoking documentary that raises serious questions. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

**Parents of the Revolution ★★★**

(2014) 80 min. DVD: \$24.95: individuals; \$29.95: public libraries (\$249.95 w/PPR). Dane-Gramp Productions (avail. from www.parentsoftherevolution.com).

More docu-diary than manifesto, filmmaker Dana H. Glazer's straggler in the saga of 2011's Occupy Wall Street movement focuses on activists—particularly younger anti-plutocrat protester parents—who occupied Zuccotti and Tompkins Square parks in New York City. A group formed their own niche, Parents for Occupy Wall Street, with the aim of bringing about meaningful social change for their children, who were sometimes brought to picket lines (incurring accusations of child exploitation/endorsement). Worrying about what kind of world their kids might inherit helped to galvanize these idealists, although one new mother despairs ("parents are wimps") after unsuccessfully trying to rally likeminded parent associations across the country. Viewers who saw the Occupiers as fragmented and unfocused will find ample evidence to support their views here, as the mother/child activists' topics cover Mayor Bloomberg, teacher layoffs, bullies, the environment, banks, and (most often) heavy-handed police tactics in service of the Establishment. Over the course of the narrative arc the Occupy movement loses steam (and one of the marriages fails), but the film notes that these East Coasters gained moxie in the areas of DIY organization and civics, and were essential in grassroots cleanup after Hurricane Sandy (during which the government/police were ineffective). An interesting social portrait, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

**Who Is Dayani Cristal? ★★★**

(2013) 85 min. In Spanish & English w/English subtitles. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). Kino Lorber Edu.

Actor Gael Garcia Bernal co-produced and narrates this Sundance Film Festival award-winning documentary that draws on one haunting case to illustrate the tragedy of nearly 200 corpses of undocumented migrants from Latin America that have been found dead after crossing the Mexican-U.S. border. Overtaxed government offices and mortuaries are left to handle the decomposed victims of accidents, illness, violence, or exposure; here they process a man found in August 2010 in Arizona bearing the cryptic tattoo "Dayani Cristal." Eventually becoming a rather rare instance of a positive ID finally determined, the dead man—whose odyssey into Arizona is re-enacted by Bernal—was no drug runner/gang member but rather a Honduran husband and father who, like many others, sought better income opportunities in the United States. Bit by bit, viewers are fed the poignant domestic backstory that drove this man to risk (and lose) his life. A border patrol official here repeats the rationale (which is fiercely disputed in some political quarters) that illegal immigration into America will and practically must continue because of the fact that Hispanics will accept "blue collar" jobs that U.S. citizens refuse to do, even in a bad economy. A thought-provoking documentary that takes a personal look at a large hot-button topic, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

**Grading the Teachers: An Exploration Into Teacher Evaluation ★★★**

(2014) 30 min. DVD: \$69.95. Choices, Inc. PPR. ISBN: 9-781-933724-44-7.

Filmmaker Dr. David Silverberg's *Grading the Teachers* offers some insight into current thinking about fair and meaningful ways to evaluate teacher performance at all grade levels, illustrating how evaluations—a hot topic in the U.S.—have gained extra dimensions over time. Judging a teacher's effectiveness is no longer just about student performance on tests but also about the quality of a teacher's work in the classroom. School district administrators, teachers, and other experts from eight different cities in the U.S. and Mexico here also note that it is a question of teacher goals, such as having a plan every year for growing in at least one area of the job, and setting specific benchmarks to reach. While there is a bit of redundancy in the interviews here, the comments only add credence to the fact that a broad, national consensus around teacher evaluations—one that is both fair and constructive—may be possible. Extras include an interview with the director, and a digital guidebook. Recommended. Aud: E, I, J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

**How Am I Going to Pay for College?**

★★★1/2

(2013) 20 min. DVD: \$149.95 (teacher's guide included). Human Relations Media. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-55548-795-9.

This upbeat, quick-paced guidance program offers a great overview of available resources for funding higher education. Featuring comments from two students—one attending the University of Washington-Tacoma, and the other at Harvard—as well as professional tips from, among others, Colorado Academy college counselor Cathy Nabbefeld, *How Am I Going to Pay for College?* explores how students can find ways to offset average college costs that run into thousands of dollars each year. The program covers topics such as Pell and state-need grants; merit and need-based scholarships (advising students that community groups, national organizations, and small businesses often have various options to choose from); the weight of parents' income and assets on the financial aid application process (with breakdowns of the FAFSA and CSS Profile programs); government, private, and subsidized and unsubsidized loans; and work-study programs (which can help with extras such as books, room and board, supplies, incidentals, and transportation). Noting that persistence is key in getting results, while also reminding students that "those opportunities are there...just do your

## The Address ★★★★★

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-083-1.

The cover art of Abraham Lincoln for this PBS-aired film by legendary documentarian Ken Burns may well have viewers thinking that this will be yet another historical piece on the War Between the States. Not so: Burns here discards his patented Florentine Films techniques (no voiceovers by Keith David, no slow pans over vintage photos) to depict modern life at the Vermont-based Greenwood School. Founded in 1978, the specialty boys-only boarding school is an institution of last resort for young males (no more than 50 at a time) with severe learning/behavioral disorders, including dyslexia and ADD. Many of the students here are gifted in music, athletics, puzzle-solving, and yo-yo tricks, but are also stymied by verbal communication and reading skills. A yearly contest at the school has boys reciting the Gettysburg Address (although a few students use alternates, one doing Chaplin's classic final soliloquy from *The Great Dictator*). Burns captures the hardworking, patient teachers and hopeful students (many of the latter are bullied misfits in the outside world). Of course, the filmmaker can't help resist dropping in little bits of Gettysburg history and also reprising the classic *The Civil War* theme music by Bobby Horton in the end (viewers should also watch past the closing credits for a priceless William Shatner gag). With this humane, engaging, and thought-provoking documentary, Burns continues to prove himself to be one of America's most essential nonfiction filmmakers. **Editor's Choice.** Aud: H, C, P. (C. Cassidy)



while incarcerated awaiting trial. Several brief segments also introduce a unique program at which public defenders meet in group sessions to vent about their experiences—including threats from unrepentant clients—and receive support from peers. *Gideon's Army* does an important service in meticulously revealing the behind-the-scenes workings of a judicial system that is skewed in favor of the wealthy and powerful—one that tends to deal more summarily with the less fortunate. A sober and quietly devastating documentary, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## The Poisoner's Handbook: Killer Chemistry ★★★★★

(2014) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-038-1.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, New York City's coroner position was considered a political plum—requiring connections, but little or no medical experience. Shortly after WWI, Charles Norris set out to make a change; despite opposition from the mayor, Norris was named Manhattan's chief medical examiner, and was determined to bring new scientific methods to forensic procedures in order to solve suspicious deaths. Directed by Rob Rapley and narrated by Oliver Platt, this PBS-aired *American Experience* documentary—based in part on Deborah Blum's fine history *The Poisoner's Handbook*—concerns the turbulent but productive tenure of Norris and his toxicology expert Alexander Gettler, who together championed new chemical processes in homicide investigations. Poisons were often the murderer's weapons of choice, particularly arsenic and cyanide. Norris and Gettler worked to separate accidents and negligence from lethal intent. The case of one serial poisoner ultimately resulted in three separate trials, with Gettler defending the accused one time, but years later helping to convict her in the case of another murder, for which she was executed. Another bizarre incident involved a man who woke up from a drunken stupor next to a female corpse; thinking that he murdered the woman, the man panicked—dismembering and disposing of the body. Gettler's subsequent investigation revealed that the woman actually died of accidental carbon monoxide poisoning while the “murderer” lay drunk. The two medical experts waged a long campaign against Prohibition, decrying the “mass poisoning” that ensued because a blind eye was turned to deadly, homemade alcoholic drinks peddled in “smoke bars.” Big business also often clashed with Norris and Gettler over unregulated workplaces in which workers handled dangerous elements such as lead and radium. During their long careers, both men examined thousands of bodies, and changed medical history. Despite differing personalities, they helped forge a bond between forensic science and govern-

homework,” this fine guide is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (J. Williams-Wood)

## LAW & CRIME

### A Death in St. Augustine ★★★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-023-7.

In 2010, shortly after attending a rock concert with her brother and boyfriend, Michelle O'Connell was found dead at her home from a gunshot wound to the mouth. O'Connell's boyfriend, Jeremy Banks, claimed it was suicide, but numerous red flags suggested foul play: Banks was not only a deputy in the St. Johns County police department, near St. Augustine, Florida, but O'Connell was also shot by Banks's revolver. Filmmaker Glenn Silber's PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary looks at efforts made by O'Connell's family, friends, and *New York Times* reporter Walt Bogdanich to uncover the truth. According to O'Connell's mother (who also worked the desk at the police department), her daughter had been abused by Banks, but had decided not to pursue charges. She had recently gained a job promotion at her work, was happy and optimistic about the future, was a loving and involved single mother, and had come to the difficult decision to leave Banks. Strangely, although Banks seemed near hysteria when he called 911 about the shooting, minutes later he seemed relaxed and joking while being interviewed in the comfort of a police department squad car (Banks's DNA was also missing from his own gun). Police officials seemed to consider this

a suicide from the start, and Banks a friend rather than a suspect. The main issue here is the possibility of special treatment when the police investigate one of their own. The O'Connell case is still open, and Banks (at the time this film was made) is back on the job. A provocative exposé that raises some disturbing questions, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

### Gideon's Army ★★★★★1/2

(2013) 95 min. DVD: \$80: public libraries & high schools; \$400: colleges & universities. Third World Newsreel. PPR.

The inequities of America's justice system are highlighted in Dawn Porter's excellent HBO-aired documentary *Gideon's Army*, which focuses on the work of public defenders who toil relentlessly on behalf of clients unable to afford legal counsel. Titled after *Gideon v. Wainwright* (the 1963 Supreme Court decision that mandated every defendant's right to receive representation in U.S. criminal courts), the film profiles the work of two Georgia public defenders, Travis Williams and Brandy Alexander, who strive to mount the best possible defense for their clients despite huge caseloads and meager resources—and the knowledge that many of their clients are likely guilty—all of which takes an enormous toll on their personal lives. Two cases, both involving young men charged with robbery, receive the most attention—personalizing the issues from the defendants' point of view while also showing the difficulties their lawyers face. Other cases mentioned by interviewees raise serious questions about how the system is stacked against those who can't raise bail—in one, a woman loses both her house and her job



ment. Likely to appeal to both history buffs and amateur sleuths, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

## NATURE, MATH & SCIENCE

### Amazing Science! Volume 1 ★★½

(2012) 2 discs. 240 min. DVD: \$19.99.

ScienceAndMath.com (avail. from [www.scienceandmath.com](http://www.scienceandmath.com)). PPR.

This two-disc set—hosted by Jason Gibson, a former NASA rocket scientist—features 23 fun science experiments that children or adults can do at home, dazzling relatives and friends along the way. First up is “Color Changing Milk,” which requires a bowl of milk, a few drops of food coloring, and a tiny amount of dishwashing detergent. You touch the food coloring (which is floating atop the milk) with a cotton swab soaked in detergent, and suddenly those colors burst like fireworks—a chemical reaction of soap and the fat content in milk. “Build a Lemon Battery” works by inserting a galvanized nail and a penny into the fruit (the voltage might only be half that of an AA battery but, hey, it works). Those inclined to place bets with gullible friends can profit from the “Unburnable Money” trick: wrap a dollar bill around a copper pipe and set a flame against it (the copper is such a fast and efficient conductor of heat that the bill doesn’t have time to burn). Other experiments include

creating a real cloud in a soda bottle using rubbing alcohol and a bicycle pump; and demonstrating how air pressure and water pressure sometimes cancel one another out. All of the scientific principles are explained in great detail, and an emphasis is placed on safety. Also newly available is *Mastering 5th Grade Math, Volume 1* (DVD: 2 discs, \$16.99). Highly recommended. Aud: E, I, J, P. (T. Keogh)

### Lost Rivers ★★½

(2012) 72 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Caroline Bâcle’s fascinating documentary focuses on a little-known aspect of urban growth during the 19th-century Industrial Revolution—namely, the practice of paving over rivers while also merging them with sewer systems, where they continue to flow beneath the feet of inhabitants who are often unaware of their existence. *Lost Rivers* also focuses on the modern-day movement to unearth these waters in order to both provide spaces for people to reconnect with nature and to create an environmentally sound answer to increasingly inadequate sewage-removal infrastructures. The film serves up an interesting historical explanation of why the waterways were originally forced underground and how such a demanding engineering feat was accomplished. But it’s an activist piece, showing how today’s “drainers” are exploring and mapping the submerged waters in cities such

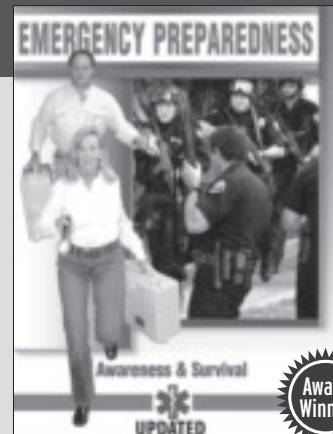
### Earthflight ★★★

(2012) 370 min. 2 discs. DVD: \$34.98; Blu-ray: \$39.98. BBC Worldwide Ltd. (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 0-7806-9637-9 (dvd), 0-7806-9638-7 (blu-ray).

Narrated by David Tennant—who doesn’t quite fill the admittedly big shoes of longtime BBC Earth host David Attenborough—*Earthflight* is a characteristically visually arresting series about birds in flight that also shows the strain of a formula that is getting a little long in the beak. Divided into six episodes named after continents (the finale is a “making-of” special), the thematic thread here is loosely woven around winged migration. A gimmick—used judiciously—attaches cameras to the fowl, giving viewers a literal bird’s-eye-view (albeit in shaky camcorder-style) that makes for some interesting take-off and landing shots. The opening episode, “North America,” follows majestic snow geese and hardy pelicans, with side glimpses of California gulls, and red-tail hawks hunting bats deep in the heart of Texas, while the second, “Africa,” spends time with vultures, white storks, and flamingos (all that pink synchronized dancing is worth the price of admission by itself), and the third, “Europe,” boasts the incredible sight of the sky over Rome, where as many as five million starlings stream into the Eternal City. On a purely eye candy level, *Earthflight* sparkles, but Tennant’s sing-song-y narration (unlike the enthusiastic Attenborough, Tennant also does not appear onscreen) can sometimes grate, and the if-it-bleeds-it-leads mindset quickly grows tiresome and predictable as the migrating bird flocks apparently find safe haven only to be attacked within moments (“but there’s trouble in paradise: here, baboons have turned killers”). Still, the soaring camerawork—for which the BBC is justly renowned—ultimately overrides the weak narrative and audience-baiting sequences. The companion feature-length abridgement *Winged Planet* is also available on DVD for \$19.98. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (R. Pitman)



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as Montreal, Toronto, and London, where rain runoff frequently overwhelms the sewer system and causes flooding. In Bresica, Italy, the buried Bova-Celato River has even been turned into a popular tourist attraction, with visitors descending below ground to glimpse Roman and medieval structures that survive alongside the buried waters. Bâcle also documents “daylighting” projects to bring rivers back to the surface, most notably in Seoul, where the Cheonggyecheon Stream has been uncovered, and Yonkers, NY, where the Saw Mill River has been returned to vibrant life—assisting urban renewal in both instances, although sometimes displacing businesses in the process. Lovingly photographed and expertly edited, *Lost Rivers* is an enlightening, entertaining, and ecologically conscious documentary. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Sand Wars ★★★1/2

(2013) 52 min. DVD: \$69; public libraries & high schools; \$250: colleges & universities. Green Planet Films. PPR.

Environmental concerns have centered on subjects such as global climate change, the state of the world’s oceans, and the growing politics of water, among other topics. Less well-known is an issue that filmmaker Denis Delestrac summarizes here with a simple statement: “The world is running out of sand.” What has traditionally been a seemingly inexhaustible resource has actually become increasingly scarce—consumed for construction (buildings and roads) and landfills. In Dubai, for instance, no more sand is available for either purpose (desert sand can’t be used because the grains are too slick and unstable, so the country is now importing from Australia). Singapore has used so much sand for landfill to expand its boundaries that most other nations in the region won’t allow it to mine their native sand, resulting in illegal scavenging that is ruining beaches in Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia. All over the world, 75 to 90 percent of beaches are in retreat (including 90 percent of those in Florida), as construction near coastlines prevents natural restoration and dams keep silt from flowing down rivers to the sea. Also, the mining of the scant sand covering the ocean floors is ruining delicate ecosystems. A timely exposé of a pressing environmental problem, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

## HEALTH & FITNESS

### Beyond the Music ★★★

(2012) 45 min. DVD: \$99. Terra Nova Films. PPR.

Music therapist Alkeiya Brown directs and narrates this Australian documentary about the benefits of music for senior citizens with psychological impairments. Brown admits



### Life According to Sam ★★★1/2

(2014) 95 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine’s HBO-aired *Life According to Sam*—on the long-list for an Academy Award for Best Documentary—focuses on the life of Sam Berns, a 16-year-old with the rare fatal disease progeria, which rapidly ages the body, giving young people the physical appearance and accompanying ailments of old age. Although he looks extremely aged here, Sam comes across as a spirited, funny, and extraordinarily intelligent young man (a bonus featurette captures Sam giving a presentation at TEDxMidAtlantic), whose zest for life is mirrored by his physician parents’ tireless work to create a research foundation with the aim of finding a cure for progeria. *Life According to Sam* is ultimately both heartbreaking and invigorating. Although progeria doomed Sam to a short life (he died at 17 earlier this year), he was able to cram a lot of living into his brief time on Earth and he inspired countless people (including rocker Dave Matthews, who became a friend). Running concurrent here with Sam’s life story is an in-depth view of the bureaucracy that often seems to stymie medical research aimed at finding drug cures for rare diseases like progeria—and one can’t help but wonder if federal regulators have much concern for the ill, given the amount of red tape obstacles thrown in the way of researchers. Also featuring a short on the Progeria Research Foundation, this memorable and deeply moving documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

that the sights and smells that greeted her first visit to the dementia-specific wing at Canberra’s Jindalee Aged Care Facility were off-putting, but she didn’t let that deter her. The residents, who suffer from a variety of age-related conditions, are not able to do much on their own, but Brown gets them to respond to their names, as well as sing, clap, and tap their feet. When Barbara, a resident, first heard about Brown, she expressed skepticism, but the therapist broke down her reserve, possibly because singing reminds her of her mother, although she doesn’t mince words when she states, “A lot of songs are stupid.” Still, Brown notes that Barbara comes to life whenever she sings. Fred, who has a more tenuous grip on reality, also enjoys singing. As Brown observes, lyrics spill out of him in an exuberant rush before he slumps back into silence. Brown goes out of her way to engage each group member; singing—for example—an Indonesian song with Suprati, who appreciates the individualized attention. As clinical nurse manager Pam Bondfield confirms, each resident reacts differently to the sessions: to some, it’s a distraction; for others, it has a calming effect. Brown harbors no illusions that she’s offering a cure, though she does talk about neuroplasticity—the brain’s ability to forge new neural pathways through creative activity. Along the way, Brown also incorporates testimony from children and spouses who appreciate the difference she has made in the lives of their loved ones. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Carol Dickman’s Bed Top Movement for Hospital and Home: Upper Body ★★★

(2014) 22 min. DVD: \$20. Yoga Enterprises. ISBN: 978-0-9645683-0-3.

Professional yoga teacher and certified

Zumba and Pilates instructor Carol Dickman takes things down a notch with this gentle routine designed for the bedridden. Clad in houndstooth PJs and lying prostrate in bed, Dickman offers demonstrations along with overlaid narration (and no music until near the end). *Upper Body* includes wrist movements in small “mindful” rotations, arm and finger stretches, rhythmical finger-tapping (“Imagine you’re playing a spritely ‘Flight of the Bumblebee’ on the piano”), shrugging and shoulder lifts, head turns, arm circles, elbow raises, and controlled breathing methods. Also newly available are *Carol Dickman’s Bed Top Movement for Hospital and Home: Lower Body* and *Carol Dickman’s Chair Movement for Hospital and Home: Whole Body*. Easy-to-follow and appropriately slow-paced—with reminders to never do anything uncomfortable—this solid wellness program is recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Forget Me Not ★★★

(2012) 88 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99 (avail. from most distributors), \$195 w/PPR (avail. from www.kimstim.com). KimStim.

An unexpectedly engaging documentary about a difficult subject, *Forget Me Not* chronicles German filmmaker David Sieveking’s visit with his aging parents, as he takes care of his mother, Gretel—who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease—while his father, Malte, goes out of town. David shows up a few days before Malte departs, which gives him time to prepare to give full-time attention to Gretel, whose memory of her own life, where she is, or who she’s with constantly vanishes. Getting her to cooperate with her treatment also proves to be a struggle, and it doesn’t take long before David looks as worn down and defeated as Malte does all the time. Despite



that, the film is full of humor and surprises; even diminished, Gretel is a charmer, and her resistance to others' expectations feels more like a display of spunk than recalcitrance. Along the way, viewers also learn some interesting details about Gretel and Malte's lives together. Having met in the 1960s (photographs reveal what a strikingly attractive couple they made), the two decided on an open relationship. Each had their affairs, yet stuck to their rule that they would never break up—a fact that makes Malte's commitment to Gretel during her decline all the more special. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

### The Story of Medicine: Pain, Pus & Poison ★★★

(2013) 2 discs. 156 min. DVD: \$39.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-173-4.

Centuries ago, physical infirmities were thought to be caused by "bad air" or humors, and treatment was guided by ignorance, superstition, or outright quackery. Even an eminent figure such as George Washington was poked, prodded, and bled on his deathbed, ultimately dying of what was likely a simple infection. In the early 19th century, the story of medicine began to change as a result of "greed, luck, and genius." Hosted by Dr. Michael Mosley, this BBC documentary series describes a two-century long effort to open "nature's medicine cabinet." A primary focus was directed toward the relief of pain, both from the progression of a disease and during surgery. The role of opium (the "joy plant") was known all the way back to the time of the ancient Sumerians; through sometimes dangerous self-experimentation, doctors were able to extract morphine from the poppy, which was highly addictive, but also effective in controlling pain. Progress, of course, often brought unintended consequences, such as when Bayer pharmaceuticals not only developed aspirin, but also promoted the healthful use of heroin. Along the way, *The Story of Medicine* serves up some little known facts (such as the origin of the phrase "slipping a mickey," which was tied to a scheming bar owner named Mickey, who spiked customers' drinks in order to rob them). Other topics include the development of the "truth drug," Dr. Ehrlich's "magic bullet" to treat the scourge of syphilis, poison gas warfare in World War I, and the discovery of penicillin (the world's greatest life-saving drug) and rush to mass produce it in time to save Allied soldiers during the coming D-Day invasion. The documentary also notes that poisons, if used properly, can cure as well as kill. Even as medicine made advances, governments were usually slow to understand the importance of regulation, but that has changed in recent decades. Likely to appeal to both medical history buffs and students of science, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Think Before You Drink: Sugar Shockers & Beverage Tips ★★★

(2014) 25 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning ZoneXpress. PPR. Closed captioned.

Packed with solid information about the pros and cons of drinking all sorts of popular beverages, *Think Before You Drink* delivers a lot of eye-opening facts. For example, an ordinary can of soda contains 10 teaspoons of sugar, which not only carries a high calorie count but also can be harmful to teeth and bone, and lead to cardiovascular problems and diabetes. Sugar also spurs an energy spike followed by a crash, which encourages consumers to keep drinking more. Artificial sweeteners in sodas have drawbacks as well, driving up the tolerance for sweets and leading to overeating. Other beverages marketed as being healthy also receive close scrutiny here, including "sports drinks" (full of sugars), vitamin-enhanced waters (also featuring addictive sugars), and energy drinks such as Red Bull (loaded with sugar and caffeine). Caffeine can also contribute to calcium loss, increased blood pressure, and digestion issues. A half-dozen teenagers are asked a variety of questions related to their perceptions of good and bad beverages; unsurprisingly, they are as wrong in their assumptions as many adult consumers. Recommended. Aud: E, I, J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

### You're Looking at Me Like I Live Here and I Don't ★★★1/2

(2012) 53 min. DVD: \$18: individuals; \$48: public libraries; \$199: community colleges; \$249: colleges & universities. Peripheral Productions (avail. from [www.yourelookingatme.com](http://www.yourelookingatme.com)). PPR.

Many filmmakers have tackled the subject of Alzheimer's disease, but few have created as heartbreaking a work as Scott Kirschenbaum, who focuses here on Lee Gorewitz, a patient at an Alzheimer's and dementia care unit in California. The documentary follows Gorewitz as she ambles through her surroundings, where life unfolds in a slow-motion series of mundane activities and interactions. Gorewitz mostly speaks in seemingly disconnected sentences that bear no relation to the questions she's asked, and the only clue that she seems to be aware of her situation is during a very brief struggle to recall her birthplace. At some moments, however, she appears lucid and even funny—performing an impromptu dance when hearing Bobby Darin's "Beyond the Sea," and adopting a mock-horror look over the idea that Kirschenbaum's camera crew will follow her into the bathroom. Around her are patients who've either retreated deep into silence or have lost their physical mobility—Gorewitz observes one sleeping woman slumped in a wheelchair and deadpans to the camera, "That one looks like it's dead." It's tragic that Gorewitz is clearly a vibrant and loving personality—she interacts with the facility's

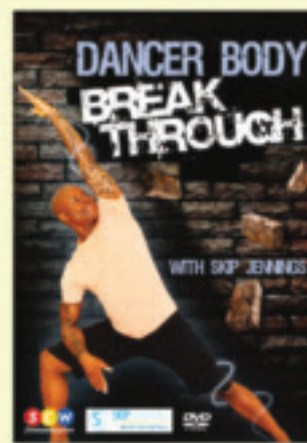
## DVD PICKS

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staff with sincerity and appreciation for their work—and her bored gaze during therapy sessions suggests someone who wants more out of her existence. Many will be moved to tears by Kirschenbaum's riveting view of an individual whose mind and body have separated. A powerful portrait of the sad ravages of Alzheimer's, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

## CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

### Children of Military Families ★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 46 min. DVD: \$34.99. Professor Child. PPR.

Currently, there are more than two million children of military families in the United States. In this documentary, 11 kids talk about what it's like when a parent is away on active duty. The interviewees describe their feelings of being "stunned" and "devastated," even when their parents downplay the length of a deployment or try to protect them from knowing too much about the potential dangers. The kids feel responsible for younger siblings and even the parent who remains at home, and address the sense of loneliness that comes from being the only child in class or the neighborhood whose parent is on active duty. One boy says he hates when people ask him if his dad ever shot someone; a girl says she didn't know what to say to her father when he returned home. The kids here offer advice to other military kids: have faith that your parent will return safely, take a lot of pictures before they go, find constructive outlets for your anger, it's okay to cry, and—heartbreakingly—don't become too attached to your school or friends. To parents they say: spend more time with your kids before you leave, tell them you're thinking of them, and find ways for your kids to socialize, especially

with other children of military families. In other segments the children also touch on things that help them cope, and what they would change if they had a magic wand. The kids are generally soft-spoken; several appear pensive and shy. But they don't want pity, just more understanding. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### First Comes Love ★★☆☆1/2

(2012) 105 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR). Baby Pictures (dist. by Passion River).

New York filmmaker Nina Davenport always wanted to have a child, but had trouble finding a partner with whom to start a family. Upon turning 41, Davenport decides to become pregnant more or less on her own, as chronicled in this HBO-aired documentary. Over the next two years, Davenport films her experience, beginning by talking to people in her life, such as a friend who opts to follow the same path, and a sister-in-law who doubts her income is equal to the challenge. Davenport's father, a retired Ford executive with little sympathy for her career choice, flatly states, "I think it's ridiculous" (Nina's two brothers have wives, children, and traditional jobs). Nonetheless, after her gay friend, Eric, agrees to serve as a donor, Davenport starts IVF treatment with help from her best friend, Amy. Although she becomes pregnant, Davenport doesn't get to share the news with her mother, who passes away during a trip to France. Her conception also takes place in the midst of a long-distance relationship, although her boyfriend, John, offers his support. Davenport documents the birth of her son, Jasper, as well as other intimate moments, with a lack of self-consciousness that may prove discomfiting to some (and doesn't necessarily add to the narrative). She may be a single mother, but Amy and Eric pitch in often, acting like a cross between co-parents and an aunt and uncle. Even her

father gets on board, but issues arise with Eric and John when Jasper begins to develop attachments. At film's end, Davenport remains single, but has no regrets about single motherhood. Although somewhat uneven, this should be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

### The Korean Wedding Chest ★★☆☆1/2

(2009) 82 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries; \$395; colleges & universities. Women Make Movies. PPR.

Filmmaker Ulrike Ottinger's *The Korean Wedding Chest* looks at how South Korean couples and their families can blend ancient traditions and modern customs when planning a wedding. Couples perform today's courtship rituals—fastening padlocks to the Seoul Tower observation deck or having "Unique! Modern!" photos taken—while the titular traditional wooden chest is also filled with symbolic items (like a small blue pouch of sticky rice for 100 years of happiness) that are wrapped in red (feminine) and blue (masculine) cloth, and looped with a swath of white fabric that customarily becomes diapers for the couple's firstborn. A messenger carries the chest like a backpack through narrow streets, past shops where age-old trades continue to thrive. Preparation and delivery of the wedding chest is only one among many rituals portrayed here. One couple is followed from the assembly of the chest through preparation for the wedding day, which starts as a largely Western-style ceremony, with a reception, and photo session afterwards. The couple next don elaborate Korean costumes and engage in a series of rituals with which they are so unfamiliar that they require constant direction from an older woman, who was apparently hired for the occasion: "Take the pot! Pour! No, not like that, with the left hand. Put it down! Take the bowls! Smile!" Interspersed throughout are scenes of Korean life that are peripheral to the wedding, including extended sequences featuring life on Korean streets, in shops, and at a temple (with monks building Buddha snowmen!) Mostly *cinéma vérité*—with no narration or commentary from anyone except Madame Kim, who assembles the wedding chest—this is a visually lovely, amusing, and ultimately informative glimpse into South Korean culture. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### Parenting Principles ★★☆☆1/2

(2014) 38 min. DVD: \$79.95 (downloadable teacher's guide available). Learning ZoneXpress. PPR. Closed captioned.

Drawing from his well-received 2004 book *The 10 Basic Principles of Good Parenting*, this guidance program features author Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D., who presents an overview of good-sense childrearing approaches with different types of parents (including couples and single mothers and fathers), along the way exploring topics from real-world perspectives. For some, these principles (such as "You Cannot Be Too Loving" or "Help Foster Your Child's Independence") will be a confirmation of their own thinking, but might be a challenge to others. Many of the moms and dads interviewed here share how their own parenting behavior (in observing Steinberg's tenets) differs from how they were raised (some found it difficult to break from the familiar, but others experienced a liberating victory). Particularly noteworthy segments include "What You Do Matters" (pointing out that, from an early age, kids observe caregivers' actions, which often speak much more loudly than words) and "Be Consistent" and "Explain Your Rules and Decisions," designed to build youngsters' integrity and confidence as they develop. Sure to benefit new parents or those struggling with how to handle certain developmental stages, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)



## FOOD & SPIRITS

### Dare to Cook: Seafood Basics ★★☆☆1/2

(2013) 164 min. DVD: 2 discs, \$34.95; Blu-ray: \$34.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-076-7 (dvd), 978-1-60490-110-8 (blu-ray).

Seattle-area Chef Tom Small's latest entry



in the *Dare to Cook* instructional series serves up a fine introduction to choosing and preparing seafood. After discussing critical details to look out for—including good seals on shellfish, and color—as well as noting differences in style (ex: Snow vs. Dungeness crab)—Small offers step-by-step real-time demonstrations for a number of recipes, including steamed clams with tarragon, mussels in a green curry sauce, raw Hood Canal oysters in mignonette sauce and classic oysters Rockefeller, Dungeness crab cakes and salt cod fish cakes, three kinds of marinated ceviche, and several styles of sushi. Also featured are toppings such as buerre rouge, lemon caper aioli, remoulade, and jalapeno cocktail sauce, as well as simple shrimp cocktail, Étouffée with andouille sausage, blackened catfish, basic chowders, and soup (including cioppino). Small also shares tips on grilling, smoking, beer-batter, and dry-breading, with a complete meal comprised of fish and chips, a po' boy sandwich, and homemade slaw. Focused and direct, Small maintains a casual but professional style throughout (even when he accidentally sticks his bare hand in the fryer!). Highly recommended. Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)

### Growing Cities ★★★

(2013) 92 min. DVD: \$39.99 (\$195 w/PPR): public libraries; \$295 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Collective Eye.

In this informative and inspiring documentary about urban agriculture, filmmakers Dan Susman and Andrew Monbouquette—buddies since elementary school—embark from Omaha on a road trip in order to talk with enthusiastic folks of varying ages and ethnicities with backyard produce gardens and intensely farmed small lots, which are proliferating all over the country. *Growing Cities* points out that the U.S. has 35 million

acres of lawn—space that could be supporting crops more useful than grass. Adopting the “victory garden” approach that cemented communities during World Wars I and II, neighborhoods might once again be able to feed residents. While other documentaries have suggested that small-scale sustainable farming is only feasible if enough people could be enticed to return to the land, Susman and Monbouquette argue urban farmers need look no farther than their own backyards or local vacant lots to “grow where you are.” In Milwaukee, for example, entrepreneur Will Allen is famous for growing food for 10,000 on 100 acres using advanced techniques such as vertical gardening (he also trains about 1,000 new farmers every year). Along the way, viewers will see lush shots of fruits and vegetables thriving in gardens in San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, New York City, Detroit, New Orleans, and elsewhere. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

## HOUSE & GARDEN

### Ron Hazelton's House Calls, Episodes 1 & 2 ★★★

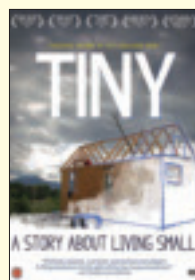
(2014) 45 min. DVD: \$39.95. Film Ideas. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60572-827-8.

Affable home improvement guru Ron Hazelton is the host for these episodes from the titular TV series (now in its 14th year of syndication) devoted to handyman and construction projects for ordinary families. Hazelton offers useful lessons on such subjects as improving the effectiveness of rain gutters and drain spouts, but the heart of his show is turning up at people's houses and working with them on creative solutions to practical problems. In the first of two episodes

### Tiny: A Story About Living Small ★★★

(2013) 62 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

This appropriately compact documentary (just over an hour) offers an eye-opening look at the growing “tiny house” movement in America. Filmmakers Merete Mueller and Christopher Smith capture a summer-long project to build Smith's postage-stamp-size cabin in a friend's backyard in Boulder, CO, which is then transported to a nearby plot of land. The same amount of effort could just as easily have gone into making a children's outdoor playhouse, but Smith is quite serious about living in his new home—which boasts an internal area of less than 200 square feet—for decades to come. And he's not the only one: *Tiny* takes viewers to various places in the U.S. West in order to meet a number of folk who have built and now live in homes that range from 84 to 200-plus sq. ft., with many of these structures sitting on wheeled platforms rather than actual foundations (in part to get around zoning rules). Quick tours of these houses underscore the obvious—an efficient use of space is crucial—but there are also fascinating little revelations, such as hidden compartments and combined functions for moveable surfaces. As to the important question of why people do this, the film argues that owners of tiny houses tend to become or remain debt-free, experience lower stress, and have greater work options. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)





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compiled here, Hazelton helps a family create a visual separation between a kitchen and living room (the two blur together) by building decorative columns. In the second, he installs a dog fence, and leads a couple through building a doghouse for an energetic border collie (Hazelton tries to measure the wiggly dog's height, width, and length, but winds up settling for approximate canine dimensions). Along the way, Hazelton makes good economic use of his time, squeezing in tidbits of information and advice on a range of topics, including how to treat a butcher block cutting board to keep it useful for years. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

## BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

### To Catch a Trader ★★1/2

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-078-7.

The rise and semi-fall of hedge fund titan Steven A. Cohen amid charges of insider trading is the focus of Nick Verbitsky's PBS-aired *Frontline* documentary. As head of SAC Capital Advisors, Cohen enjoyed substantial gains over his competition, and he happily displayed his wealth with some rather gaudy real estate, as well as a museum-worthy art collection, and a Christmas card depicting himself as a king. Of course, Cohen's uncommon good fortune raised red flags, resulting in a federal probe that led to a flurry of convictions. While Cohen, not surprisingly, declined to participate in this production, a deposition video from 2011 finds him doing a none-too-credible impersonation of a dum-dum who cannot understand the chaos swirling about him. The subject matter here could be compelling, but Verbitsky fails to turn this white-collar-crime tale into a cogent story with vibrant images (instead we get tired visuals like an oscilloscope screen vibrating

to the soundtrack of taped telephone calls). Onscreen host Martin Smith is a little too serious, delivering stern gazes and melodramatic questions to visibly uncomfortable FBI agents, while Charles Gasparino of Fox Business News and insider-trader-turned-memoirist Turney Duff provide smug, smarty-pants commentary. In the end, Cohen was forced to shut down SAC Capital, but never faced a criminal indictment, making the entire proceeding feel like an exercise in futility. An optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

## COMPUTERS & TECHNOLOGY

### Atanasoff: Father of the Computer

★★★★

(2012) 47 min. DVD: \$225. National Film Board of Canada. PPR.

This inspired Canadian documentary from filmmakers Mila Aung-Thwin and Daniel Cross tells the story of the dawn of electronic computing as a legal drama. In 1971, Honeywell Corporation, seeking a foothold in information technology, filed to overturn tightly held Sperry Rand/IBM computer patents tied to the development of the famous WWII-era "electronic brain" called ENIAC—a vacuum-tube giant filling an entire room at the University of Pennsylvania. Relevant books, however, alluded to an earlier device, the Atanasoff-Berry Computer (or ABC) at Iowa State College. Lawyers thus sought out the obscure John Vincent Atanasoff, a physicist and inventor who said he was brooding in a roadside honky-tonk when he envisioned an electronic, binary-counting machine with a capacitor-based memory—using electrons in place of the mechanical moving parts of customary adding machines. From 1939 to 1940 he worked on his \$5,000 project—a machine the size of a desk—at the school. The ABC had enough ties to ENIAC that

courts ultimately found for Honeywell, although this bombshell news that changed the computer field was completely overshadowed by the Watergate scandal. Before his death in 1995, however, Atanasoff gained belated recognition as an unsung pioneer of computing (although a few rival trailblazers here still grumble about the level of his contribution). Presenting an interesting and untold slice of technological history, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### IT Networks ★★★

(2013) 20 min. DVD: \$129.95. VEA (dist. by Films Media Group). PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-81608-740-2.

This program serves as a fine primer on the mysterious worlds of wired and wireless computer networks, those essential elements of our online world—and a mission-critical component of modern libraries. When they work, such networks are mostly invisible to users; when they don't...well. Among the important topics covered here—in layperson-friendly fashion—are the different sorts of common topologies, including LAN (Local Area Network), WAN (Wide Area Network), WAP (Wireless Access Point), and the seven-layer salad that describes how networks do their electronic thing, from the physical link (i.e., the cable you might plug into the Ethernet port on your computer) up through the use of an application (what you see in your actual day-to-day online activity). A useful guide for those working in areas related to information and communications technology, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)

### Radio Wars ★★

(2012) 96 min. DVD: \$21.98. Passion River (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

What begins as a rich history of corporate manipulation and government corruption during the early years of radio turns into a long, numbing slog through the travails of satellite radio pioneer Sirius in filmmaker Sandra Mohr's exhausting documentary *Radio Wars*. The first third of the film focuses on such shameful chapters in American media as the denial of patents to radio's real inventor, Nikola Tesla, who envisioned his creation as a free gift to the world. Viewers also see how established media forms—always fearful of disruptive new types of communication—tried to block radio's progress in its infancy, leading to the creation of networks such as NBC and CBS, which developed in-house content. Radio itself, in the AM spectrum, tried to impede the development of the FM bandwidth, followed by major media companies trying to make life difficult for satellite radio and its model of subscription-based, censorship-free broadcasts. *Radio Wars* delves into the nitty-gritty of a dirty fight to undercut Sirius's stock and wrap the company up in regulations, but Sirius—which received a

### LinkedIn for Networking and Job Search: Basic and Advanced Techniques ★★★

(2014) 30 min. DVD: \$99.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-61753-932-9.

This guide helps viewers understand the most important elements of LinkedIn—the popular online social network (200 million members and counting!) for building business and career connections—as it explains how to best utilize its free features, while also looking at for-pay benefits. Among the essentials covered here are setting up a profile that will both make it easy to be found in the LinkedIn database and maximize the right sorts of attention; helpful protocol tips (e.g., LinkedIn is like a virtual Chamber of Commerce and is not an appropriate place to share very personal information); savvy techniques for job seekers who want to keep their current employers happy; and more. Among the most intriguing premium LinkedIn elements are direct access to other paying members who aren't in your personal network, and a specific listing of who's viewing your profile. A useful guide for both newbies and users looking to take the most advantage of LinkedIn's full potential, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (C. Block)





major boost from hiring Howard Stern and merging with rival XM—has prevailed. Radio buffs may appreciate the account of Sirius's evolution, but general documentary fans may find the onslaught of details overwhelming. Optional. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

## SPORTS, GAMES & RECREATION

### Chasing Sarasota ★★★

(2011) 92 min. DVD: \$49; public libraries & high schools; \$249 w/PPR: colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

One might think of Ultimate Frisbee as more of a carefree pastime for college kids than a competitive sport, but don't tell that to the members of the Portland Rhino, whose 2011 effort to reach the Club Nationals in Florida and win a coveted championship is recounted by team captain/filmmaker Matt Mastrantuono in this engaging documentary. *Chasing Sarasota* captures the intensity that players devoted to their team over a period of six months—from initial tryouts to the game that could qualify them for the championship—while also offering insights into the lives of individual players. One suffers a concussion early on but continues to train despite the fact that he might not be able to take the field again; another gets married midseason. Tempers flare as games turn on a dime and Rhino leads suddenly disappear; dissension arises over strategy and team leadership; and as the championship contest approaches, a number of players are disqualified due to a clerical error and a struggle ensues to have them reinstated.

After watching *Chasing Sarasota*, you still might not consider Ultimate Frisbee to be a significant sport—but you'll probably enjoy having traveled with the Rhino during their often frustrating and occasionally humiliating quest for glory. Extras include deleted scenes, outtakes, a highlights reel, and footage of two complete games. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Off the Rez ★★★

(2011) 86 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries; \$395: colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-0622-0.

Director Jonathan Hock's TLC-aided documentary focuses on Shoni Schimmel, a 16-year-old Native American girl who dreams of playing college basketball. As Hock tracks Schimmel's progress over two years, *Off the Rez* broadens into a larger portrait of Schimmel's extended family, along with other Native Americans who have failed to pursue their dreams due to fear, racism, or responsibilities that make it impossible to leave home. Schimmel aims to be the first student from Oregon's Umatilla Indian Reservation to win a college scholarship. She has the support of her father, brothers, and women in her family, including her great-grandmother, Delores, who says, "That's what's keeping me alive." Her non-native grandfather, however, has never acknowledged his grandchildren, because he didn't approve of his son Rick's cohabitation relationship. When Schimmel's mother, Ceci, a basketball coach, transfers to Portland, Shoni and her six siblings accompany her, while Rick remains on the reservation to work (although he and other

relatives drive across the state for games). Schimmel plays aggressively, but her strikingly attractive, foul-mouthed mother exhibits an even tougher personality on court, partially because she wants her daughter to go farther than she herself did. Schimmel breaks her foot during her junior year (while scouts watch) and misses half the season, and her mother becomes pregnant with her eighth child. Despite financial hardships, the family remains in Portland for Shoni's senior year, which doesn't always go smoothly as she works toward a goal that is as much a collective as individual one. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

## THE ARTS

### Ghosts of the River: Out of the Shadows

★★★1/2

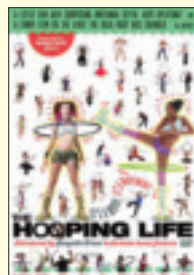
(2013) 109 min. DVD: \$150. ShadowLight Productions. PPR.

El Paso and the nearby Rio Grande hold many memories for playwright Octavio Solis, who documented his childhood impressions in a 2009 shadow play directed by Larry Reed and staged in San Jose and San Francisco. *Ghosts of the River: Out of the Shadows* features two programs: a shorter documentary by Reed and Leslie Dreyer about the conception and presentation of Solis's work—in which the actors, often masked, are seen in shadow behind a screen (and shadow puppets reminiscent of those used in Indonesian theater are employed); and a longer performance featuring an edited version of the play. *Ghosts of the River* serves up a series of engrossing and evocative "ghost" stories about the border crossing between the United States and Mexico. Two Latino youths who swim to Mexico and back end up being confronted by a hulking, fearsome immigration agent who insists that the pair are trying to enter the U.S. illegally—taunting them unmercifully when one of the boys drops a word while reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. In other scenarios, the ghost of an abused and murdered woman haunts the river shallows, and a special agent named Fiona forms an unlikely relationship with "Nacho," an 11-year-old who helps smuggle people across the border. At the end of the performance, the audience itself is filmed in silhouette during a well-deserved standing ovation. An illuminating portrait of a culture unknown to many in the U.S.—presented in a play that entertains and informs with thought-provoking stories—this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

### The Hooping Life ★★★

(2014) 70 min. DVD: \$24.95. Passion River (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

For decades, kids have played with hula hoops. Director Amy Goldstein's *The Hooping Life* concentrates on teenagers and adults who have made "hooping" a significant part of their lives. Art Linkletter, promoter of hula hooping in the 1950s, explains in archival footage that Australian kids got the party started before the phenomenon spread to the States. Suzy Melin, the widow of toymaker Wham-O founder Spud Melin, recalls telling her husband that the gyrating was too suggestive to catch on, but he set out to prove her wrong. Anah, an L.A. resident who got into hooping through the jam band circuit, finds store-bought hoops too flimsy, so she makes her own out of insulation tubing. Now she teaches workshops and performs at parties and promotional events. Karis, who lives in New York, participates in similar gatherings, except he adds a gender-bending twist to his routines, which brings him to the attention of John Cameron Mitchell and the Scissor Sisters. For Jeff, a ward of the state, hooping keeps him out of trouble. He credits an afterschool program in East L.A. for introducing him to the pastime, noting that, "It takes your mind off of a lot of things." The most recognizable subject here is NBA player Shaquille O'Neal, who loved to hoop in his younger days. Other speakers credit hooping with helping them to heal from sexual abuse and depression, which may sound like a lot of credit to give a simple plastic circle, but it's hard to find much of a downside in such a harmless practice. An entertaining and offbeat documentary, extras here include a behind-the-scenes featurette, "how-to" segments, and stills galleries. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



### Great African American Authors

★★★1/2

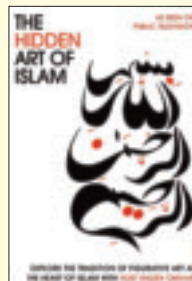
(2013) 3 discs. 232 min. DVD: \$199.99 (teacher's guide included). Ambrose Video Publishing. PPR. Closed captioned.

This fine introduction to the African

### The Hidden Art of Islam ★★½

(2012) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-885-8.

"Art and belief go hand in hand," viewers are told in this PBS-aired made-for-BBC documentary by filmmaker Faris Kermani that addresses unique traits of visual artwork in Islamic culture. The jumping off point for Kermani (and presenter Rageh Omaar) is the opening of a historic British Museum exhibition on Islam, as well as a concurrent boom in Islamic material in the auction houses. A recurring theme here is the taboo (not always observed down the centuries) against the realistic depiction of humans, living creatures, and environments, which arises from religious strictures dictated by Muslim clergy (although not specifically found anywhere in the Koran) that imitative acts of artistic creation dare to rival God, and are thus idolatry. So Islamic artists and craftsmen emphasized magnificent calligraphy (influenced by the glorious illuminated manuscripts of medieval Christian monks), abstract and intricate geometric patterns, and fanciful avoidance of real-world perspective and shading. Also covered here is the importance of the "Hajj," the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, boasting vistas that inspire artists of the Arab world, from post-modern installations to a peculiar tradition in Luxor, Egypt, of privately commissioned folk-art murals depicting aspects of the journey. Viewers will hear no recaps of the violence and murder that resulted from newspaper cartoons showing the prophet Mohammed, or the Taliban's savage vandalism of irreplaceable Buddhist monuments in the months prior to 9/11; the tone here is relentlessly upbeat and Islam-positive, complete with a reverent exhibit benediction by Prince Charles. A solid exploration of the intersection of Islamic faith and art, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassady)



American literary tradition begins with a look at the first published black author in America, Jupiter Hammon, whose 1761 poem "An Evening Thought" presented an egalitarian view of Heaven for everyone. This three-disc set starts with an overview of the history of slavery in America, looking at some oral traditions which lie at the root of African American literature, before moving on to individual published writers who contributed both to the literary arts and to reflections on black identity. Poet Phillis Wheatley, kidnapped in Senegal and sold at auction in Boston, was encouraged by her slave master to read and write, which culminated in her famous "On Being Brought from Africa to America" in 1773. Frederick Douglass' autobiographical *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) illustrated the brutality of slavery, contributing to a growing condemnation of the practice. At the dawn of the 20th century, Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote the post-slavery poem "Sympathy," about being cut off from opportunities in American life, while the great W.E.B. Du Bois's various seminal works of nonfiction (including *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903) introduced the theme of "double-consciousness," i.e., the challenge for blacks of being both American and African American. Hosted by Dr. Alphonse Kealey, *Great African American Authors* also discusses poet Langston Hughes; Zora Neale Hurston's mastery of Southern black voices in her work; writer-activist-orator James Baldwin's seminal *Go Tell It on the Mountain*; and how *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* changed the dialogue about race in America. Maya Angelou, Alex Haley,

Alice Childress, Toni Morrison, Rita Dove, and August Wilson also all receive insightful introductions. Highly recommended. Aud: J, H, C, P. (T. Keogh)

### Hollywood's Greatest Directors ★★★

(2013) 5 discs. 145 min. DVD: \$199.99 (teacher's guide included). Ambrose Video Publishing. PPR. Closed captioned.

A survey reference work presenting thumbnail sketches of important American film directors—set against a general overview of the evolution of Hollywood moviemaking—*Hollywood's Greatest Directors* is hosted by Erick Avari, who makes some rather extravagant claims for cinema's displacing literature as the primary contemporary means of investigating the human condition (as well as unreservedly embracing the *auteur* theory of directorial "authorship"). Narrated by Alphonse Kealey, the five half-hour programs here offer brief biographical accounts of select filmmakers, beginning with D.W. Griffith and ending with Kathryn Bigelow. While the coverage is compressed (Orson Welles, for example, receives less than five minutes), and some of the omissions are glaring (Alfred Hitchcock is dismissed with a single still), the drawbacks are balanced by a determined effort to include women (not only Bigelow, but also Lois Weber and Dorothy Arzner—hardly household names) and African Americans (Oscar Micheaux and Spike Lee). The division into five "epochs" (the silent era, the coming of sound, the "golden age," the "second golden age" of the '70s, and the "new wave" since then) seems a bit arbitrary, and some choices are bound

to be controversial (Mel Brooks but not Woody Allen?). But the clips here, coupled with excerpts from interviews with academicians, will serve as a useful introduction for newcomers to film studies. Extras include educator's guides, filmographies, timelines, and lists of Oscar winners. Also newly available at the same price is the five-volume companion set *The Great Directors: The Making of 21st Century Hollywood*. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)

### The Secret Policeman's Ball—USA

★★★½

(2013) 137 min. DVD: \$19.98. Blu-ray: \$24.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

*The Secret Policeman's Ball—USA* is the most recent (and also first American-based) concert-film in the series of benefit music-and-comedy revues (partially originated by members of the Monty Python troupe) for Amnesty International. Marking its 50th anniversary in 2012, this Secret Policeman's Ball moves from London to Radio City Music Hall in NYC, and features a blended U.K./U.S. cast. Eddie Izzard starts off by bashing the Tea Party as a bunch of crazies (it's an election year), and denying the existence of God (rather odd, considering the intro by Archbishop Desmond Tutu). Fred Armisen of *Saturday Night Live* sends up WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Tim Roth admits he's best known for intense roles wherein he shoots people, but nonetheless acquits himself well in the humorous milieu. Statler and Waldorf of *The Muppet Show* are informed that their heckling is a bastion of free speech, while Beavis and Butt-head affirm the basic human right to call someone a "bung-hole." One guest, Burmese storyteller Zarganar, actually served prison time for wisecracking against his military government; unsurprisingly, he plays it straight here, leaving the laughs to Russell Brand, Ben Stiller, and Sarah Silverman. Original revue founders Eric Idle, Michael Palin, and Terry Jones, seen in pre-taped bits, all send their regrets/alibis for not attending, and the show closes with a 15-minute music set by Coldplay (and a post-credit taped comedy skit starring Robert De Niro and Whoopi Goldberg). Extras include bonus backstage interviews. A sure-to-be-popular helping of political-tinged entertainment, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Cassady)

### Vinylmania ★★★½

(2011) 75 min. DVD: \$24.95. Stefilm (dist. by Janson Media). ISBN: 978-1-56839-479-4.

In this documentary love letter, writer-director Paolo Campana expresses his unabashed adoration for the most enduring format designed to capture and reproduce sound: the vinyl record, sales of which continue to break records of another sort. While many born during the digital age may find this fanaticism mystifying, aficionados feel



that it just doesn't get any better than the full-on analog sounds of a piece of plastic, which embodies the original sound wave with a realism that even includes imperfections such as clicks and pops. Campana travels to 11 cities—Tokyo, London, New York, San Francisco, and Paris, among them—to gather stories and commentary from collectors, DJs, musicians, and cover artists who talk about their passion. Along the way, Campana also visits stores where devotees seek new and vintage titles, and he stops in at a thriving manufacturing plant in Prague. Sure to appeal to platter enthusiasts, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

## HISTORY & CURRENT EVENTS

### Chasing Shackleton ★★½

(2013) 180 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-035-0.

In 1915, intrepid polar explorer Ernest Shackleton experienced his greatest challenge when his ship *Endurance* became trapped in pack ice and then sank, leaving 28 men stranded on ice floes with no chance of rescue, forced to avoid starvation by eating penguins and seal meat. Using a small lifeboat, Shackleton sailed for Elephant Island, and then traveled 800 miles across the treacherous South Arctic ocean, before making landfall on South Georgia Island and enduring a rugged hike to a whaling station, where he hoped that a ship could be dispatched to rescue the 20-odd crewmen left behind. All of this happened nearly a century ago, without the benefit of modern communications or equipment. Could such a journey be duplicated today? In this PBS documentary narrated by Brian Cox, explorer Tim Jarvis and a few hardy seamen (including a mountaineer and a round-the-world yachtsman) attempt the near impossible in an identical wooden boat, dressed in period costume, eating similar food rations, with no recourse to GPS. While Shackleton's stranding was well-documented by a crew photographer, no documentation exists of his perilous sea and overland journey. In this modern re-enactment, a backup ship is on hand, but given instructions to only intervene in a life or death emergency. Viewers will see Jarvis's men battle snow, frostbite, crashing waves, and sea sickness (readings from Shackleton's journal illustrate how little some things have changed, and some of the re-enactors drop out due to trench foot and other maladies). Even after reaching the whaling station, it took an additional three months and two rescue attempts for Shackleton to extricate his men from Elephant Island. Tragically, some crew members returned to Europe only to die in World War I combat. Shackleton himself succumbed to a heart attack at the age of 47

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when he returned to the South Pole a few years later, and is buried near the scene of his heroic journey. Sure to appeal to historians and armchair travelers, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (S. Rees)

### I Will Be Murdered ★★½

(2013) 52 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$89; high schools & public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. PRAGDA. PPR.

Justin Webster's documentary initially looks like it will be making an incendiary political statement, but it is actually more of a real-life whodunit with redeeming social value. In May 2009, a Guatemalan lawyer named Rodrigo Rosenberg was found shot to death near his home. Days later, a sinister video statement that Rosenberg had made earlier appeared on YouTube. In the clip, Rosenberg predicted his own imminent assassination—tied to earlier drive-by deaths of two of his firm's recent clients. On camera, the doomed lawyer named and condemned a culprit—Guatemala's president, Álvaro Colom, and members of the leader's family and government inner circle. Nationwide protests against Colom resulted from the bombshell video clip, although viewers are told the grim statistic that up to 98 percent of the killings in Guatemala go unsolved, following generations of civil war, death squads, narcotics trafficking, and the collapse of the judicial system (a UN-created body took over). But

as the narrative delves deeper into the slain lawyer's personal life and emotional turmoil, Rosenberg emerges less as a crusader than as a victim of obsession, paranoia, and grief—an instigator who was guilty of much duplicity himself (one interviewee here accurately compares the Rosenberg conspiracy with John le Carré's novel *The Tailor of Panama*). Mixing true-crime and Latin-American current-events, this powerful and intriguing documentary is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Karama Has No Walls ★★★

(2013) 26 min. DVD: \$99.95; public libraries & high schools; \$250; colleges & universities. The Cinema Guild. PPR. ISBN: 0-7815-1467-3.

In her Oscar-nominated short documentary (in Arabic, "karama" means dignity), Yemeni-Scottish director Sara Ishaq brings a violent protest to vivid and disturbing life. In March 2011, citizens in Sana'a, Yemen's capital city, took inspiration from the Egyptian uprising launched in Cairo at the end of January to set up a tent city where they sang, danced, and spoke out against the 33-year regime of autocratic President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Two intrepid cameramen, 19-year-old Nasr and 23-year-old Khaled, captured what happened next as the peaceful gathering in Change Square turned ugly. To their remembrances, Ishaq adds interviews with Abdulwahed and Ghaled, the fathers of two young protesters (as Abdulwahed puts it, "Anwar and his friends launched a revolu-

tion"). The trouble for the protestors began when a wall went up between the square and the neighborhood, after which armed thugs began patrolling the perimeters, and flammable substances (including gasoline and melted rubber) appeared. Soon, the wall exploded in black flames as military-backed snipers pelted the citizenry with rocks from above and gunfire from below. After the unarmed people pushed through the wall, the barrage continued, but the protestors refused to retreat, bringing the injured to a makeshift hospital inside a mosque where doctors did what they could. A total of 53 people would end up losing their lives, while hundreds more suffered critical injuries, including Ghaled's son, Saleem. Undeterred, Nasr and Khaled continued to film the unrest for the next five months as many more lives were lost. The protestors would eventually succeed in ousting Saleh from power, but as this haunting documentary makes clear they paid a steep price. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### Lost Town ★★★

(2013) 85 min. In English & Hebrew w/English subtitles. DVD: \$59; public libraries & high schools; \$249 w/PPR; colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

A horrific Holocaust episode becomes the subject of an obsessive search by the son of a survivor in this haphazardly structured but moving documentary directed by Jeremy Goldscheider and Richard Goldgewicht. The focus is on Trochenbrod, a Jewish farming town in western Ukraine whose population was almost eradicated by the Nazis in 1942, along with other Jews brought in from neighboring villages. Only 33 residents survived by hiding in makeshift bunkers and fleeing into the surrounding forest—including the father of Avrom Bendavid-Val, an American who sets out to locate the site of the vanished settlement and as many survivors as possible in order to construct a portrait of daily life. Narrated by Bendavid-Val, *Lost Town* follows his visits to Ukraine, where he engages in conversations with elderly locals—both Ukrainians and Poles—who are not only able to direct him to the field where Trochenbrod once stood, but can also describe what they saw and heard on the day of the massacre. Bendavid-Val also visits with some of those who survived the slaughter and hears the stories of how they escaped, eventually accompanying them and their families back to Ukraine, where they describe the layout of the community, which is then reconstructed in drawings. Both a haunting tale of the brutality of the so-called Final Solution, and an uplifting celebration of the Nazis' inability to efface the memory of a place that was once a vibrant center of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### 1964 ★★½

(2014) 120 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-041-1.

In hindsight, the year 1964 proved to be a milestone in American history, opening a great divide between the optimism and well-being of the postwar years, and the cultural and political turbulence of the decades to come. Directed by Stephen Ives and narrated by Oliver Platt, this PBS-aided *American Experience* documentary offers a detailed look at how the events of 1964 changed America. Even though many people felt prosperous and contented, millions were still left in poverty. Americans had their confidence shaken by the murder of JFK at the end of 1963, and they were uncertain of the path that Lyndon Johnson would take (some were willing to "go all the way with LBJ," but a growing group of conservatives who felt the country was moving in the wrong direction were looking around for a new movement standard bearer). The documentary also covers the explosion of "Beatlemania," which gave a boost to the country's morale after the Kennedy killing; the rise of Motown that won legions of fans throughout young, white America; and the triumph of boxer Cassius Clay, who scored a surprise victory over Sonny Liston, and then proudly proclaimed his new Muslim identity as Muhammad Ali. Also that year, housewives made a best-seller of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, marking the rise of a host of political, economic, and cultural feminist issues. *1964* also does a great job in resurrecting forgotten footage of the Berkeley "free speech" movement, the "Freedom Summer" in Mississippi, and the crowning of Barry Goldwater at the Republican National Convention. And, of course, Vietnam loomed in the background. One interviewee astutely characterizes the many emergent movements during 1964 as a "collective jailbreak." This isn't just nostalgia, but exciting popular history, with historians and movement leaders seeing an "emerging sense of betrayal" that Americans began to sense, which reverberates to this day. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)





### Reportero ★★½

(2012) 72 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-049-7.

Bernardo Ruiz's excellent PBS-aided documentary portrays the courageous work of the crusading Tijuana newsmagazine *Zeta*, which for decades has published investigative pieces on Mexican governmental corruption and the brutality of drug traffickers. *Reportero* traces the history of the publication from its establishment in 1980 to the present, including the murders of two of its three founders—Héctor Félix Miranda in 1988, and Francisco Ortiz Franco in 2004—and an attempted assassination on the third, Jesús Blancornelas, in 1997. Current editor Adela Navarro Bello explains how the paper is produced and distributed, as well as how stories are assigned, and the film covers some of *Zeta*'s most famous scoops. But the focus is on reporter Sergio Haro, whose dedication to his job puts both him and his family in jeopardy. Filmed while driving through the city streets to snap photos at a crime scene or attend the funeral of a murdered colleague, Haro talks (in voiceover) about the desperate plight of Tijuana's citizens in the face of unrelenting poverty and violence, while also emphasizing his own determination to keep covering the cartels—despite the danger. He emerges as a genuine modern hero, even if he admits that it often feels like he's tilting at windmills. Like *Zeta* and its staff, *Reportero* offers impassioned reportage that avoids both sentimentality and sensationalism; in this case, the simple truth is horrifying enough. Extras include a discussion guide and lesson planner. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



### Spies of Mississippi ★★★

(2013) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99. PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-048-2.

In the late 1950s and early 60s, the struggle for civil rights in Mississippi often resembled an actual battle, due to beatings, bombings, and spying. State officials were determined to preserve their "way of life" and segregation at all costs, establishing in 1956 a "sovereignty commission" to identify and infiltrate rights "agitators," particularly those from out of state (this was the greatest domestic spy-ring operation prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks). Filmmaker Dawn Porter's PBS-aided documentary looks at the attempts made by Mississippi's government—from the governor on down—to recruit blacks to attend, spy, and report on group meetings of civil rights workers. The efforts here were sometimes remarkably trivial, such as planting stolen seed on a family farm to discredit a black Korean War veteran who simply wanted to attend a state university. At other times, the tactics were brutal—information was shared with local police departments, many of which were dominated at the time by the Ku Klux Klan and its sympathizers. Apparently, some black leaders disagreed with the tactics of the Civil Rights Movement, or were concerned with maintaining their status (Martin Luther King, Jr. called this a case of having "segregated minds"). Events reached a boiling point in the summer of 1964 when local police abducted and murdered three civil rights workers who came down to the state for "Freedom Summer" to aid voter registration for black citizens. National outrage, coupled with the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights act, led to the slow demise of the sovereignty

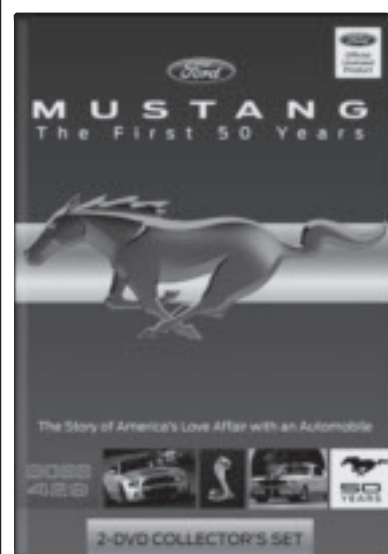
commission, and for a time its meticulous files and records were sealed to protect the identities of the guilty parties. Now, the truth is slowly emerging. While some of the state's "informational" propaganda films touting the virtues of segregation may seem incomprehensible to contemporary younger viewers, this eye-opening documentary offers a compelling history of one of America's most extensive domestic spy operations. Recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### Where Should the Birds Fly? ★★★

(2014) 82 min. In Arabic w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95: individuals; \$249.95: institutions. Choices, Inc. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-933724-43-0.

Director/narrator Fida Qishta, a Palestinian writer living in Gaza, says she taught herself filmmaking to earn a living, making videos of weddings and other celebrations among Arab neighbors. But she also captured the horrors of Israeli military action against her neighborhood during Israel's December 2008 strikes on Gaza—for being a suspected terrorist hideout. Over the course of several weeks of warfare ("Operation Cast Lead"), says Qishta, 13 Israelis died—and about a hundred times that many were killed on the Palestinian side. In interviews and after-siege footage, Qishta shows the bulldozing of her mother's home, as well as hideous wounds suffered by children hit with incendiaries. Special emphasis is put on the struggles of Gaza's farmers and fishermen, who particularly suffer under bullying Israeli patrols, and the film finds a haunting voice in self-possessed Mona, age 11, who calmly talks about the deaths of both her mother and father, who perished from a strike by three Apache

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### The Story of the Jews ★★½

(2013) 2 discs. 295 min. DVD: \$29.99 (\$59.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-001-4.

A span of 3,000 years is a lot to cover in five hours, even for a historian as deft as Columbia University's Simon Schama, who hosts this BBC series that aired on PBS; inevitably, the treatment must be selective. However, while admittedly idiosyncratic—Schama begins the discussion of the emergence of the Jews as a people with Freud's controversial work on Moses, and he concludes with a consideration of modern Israel that raises serious questions about current Israeli policy (even though Schama is himself a self-proclaimed committed Zionist)—it's also a fascinating journey across the centuries. Traveling through a wide variety of locales, conferring with numerous specialists, and drawing on a massive amount of evidence, Schama here traces the history of the ancient kingdom of Israel and its ultimate destruction by the Romans; the Jews' struggle to maintain their identity under Christian and Muslim rule during the Middle Ages; the 19th-century effort by European Jews to assimilate into wider society (which came to a disastrous end); the overwhelming role that expatriate Jews played in the culture of Broadway and Hollywood; and the movement to Palestine that eventually resulted in the birth of a modern Jewish homeland. Some might find Schama's constant presence a bit annoying—he's rarely off-screen—but he expertly turns a phrase, and the points he makes are invariably stimulating. Based on Schama's two-volume titular history (the second volume is scheduled for publication in November), this beautifully produced and richly rewarding series is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)



Rainier is potentially the more dangerous of the two. Rainier is not an explosive volcano like St. Helens, but an inevitable release of molten rock will one day melt an enormous amount of snow and ice on top of the mountain, leading to huge mudflows that will quickly travel vast distances. Setting that grim thought aside, Rainier is for now a beautiful site that provides an almost surreal backdrop to Seattle, a favorite image for photographers and artists. The fifth oldest national park in the U.S., Rainier offers an inexhaustible number of activities in summer or winter, including hikes through meadows full of late-summer wildflowers. Viewers will also see Rainier's famous Paradise Inn, built from timber culled from a forest fire in 1916 and visited over the years by presidents and celebrities. The second half of the program focuses almost entirely on St. Helens' eruption and its aftermath. As explained by a park ranger, the story of this volcano keeps changing, and scientists continue to learn from the way species are returning, forests are rebuilding, and landslide deposits are altering the landscape. Sure to appeal to armchair travelers, this is highly recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

missiles. Later, while watching a pre-attack wedding video, kids make a game of pointing to the dancing family members on the monitor and discuss who is still alive and who did not survive. Any political or terrorist sympathies remain off-camera here as Qishta serves up a troubling portrait of modern civilian "collateral damage." Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

### Yurumein (Homeland) ★★½

(2014) 50 min. DVD: \$99; high schools & public libraries; \$250; colleges & universities. New Day Films. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-57448-478-6.

The story of the indigenous populations of the Caribbean who have struggled to survive over the centuries is one of the great tragedies in the Western hemisphere. Filmmaker Andrea E. Leland's compelling documentary examines a historical chapter that is largely unknown in the United States: the history of the Carib people on St. Vincent. Also known as "Garifuna," they were disenfranchised and slaughtered by British colonial powers, with many sent into enslavement-exile in Central America. Leland follows Dr. Cadrin Gill, a St. Vincent-born physician based in Los Angeles, who returns to his homeland to help reclaim Carib heritage. A Carib dance group from Honduras also visits, bringing back traditions not seen on St. Vincent in two centuries. But the harshness of the past is difficult to erase. Today, St. Vincent's Caribs (roughly 2 percent of the population) face hostility, including being stereotyped as cannibals and idiots. Although efforts to erase all traces of Carib

identity on St. Vincent were almost successful, word-of-mouth stories passed down by generations—coupled with online research conducted by today's Caribs—have helped to restore a sense of pride and self-determination. And even St. Vincent's prime minister, Ralph Gonsalves, has embraced this new understanding: in a ceremony honoring 18th-century Carib leader Joseph Chatoyer, Gonsalves clearly identifies the treatment of the Caribs by the British as an act of genocide. Offering an important look at a long-forgotten history, this powerful film is also a marvelous tribute to the indefatigable spirit of a people who refused to disappear. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

## TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

### Discoveries...America National Parks: Mount Rainier & Mount St. Helens

★★★½

(2014) 53 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.95. Bennett-Watt HD Productions. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-60490-173-3 (dvd), 978-1-60490-196-2 (blu-ray).

This edition from Jim and Kelly Watt's excellent high-definition *Discoveries...America National Parks* series focuses on a pair of Northwest volcanoes 50 miles apart: Mount Rainier and Mount St. Helens. Although the latter is famous for a 1980 eruption that caused ecological devastation and loss of life (as well as the disappearance of the north side of the mountain), Mount

### Gringo Trails ★★½

(2013) 79 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR. Closed captioned.

Readers of Alex Garland's novel *The Beach* (and those who watched Danny Boyle's 2000 feature film starring Leonardo DiCaprio) will experience a frisson of recognition from the themes and locales visited in filmmaker Pegi Vail's *Gringo Trails*. Vail turns a questioning lens on the social and environmental damage inflicted by adventure tourism, especially the weakly regulated DIY variety commonly carried out by backpackers and avid readers of *Lonely Planet* guidebooks. One would assume these people are nice, green, "low-impact" types, but, in fact, untold thousands of hedonistic hikers, thrill-seekers, and sightseers have spoiled once-Eden-like shorelines in Thailand, triggered development on unique islands of the salt desert of Chile, and put Amazon wildlife in danger. The mountain kingdom of Bhutan, not wanting to become a jungle of Internet taverns and massage parlors, now charges foreigners a day rate of \$250, restricting tourism to the well-behaved wealthy. Writers interviewed here include Anja Mutic, Rolf Potts, Pico Iyer, *Nat Geo Traveler* editor Costas Christ, and Yossi Ghinsberg. Ghinsberg, an Israeli author whose popular 1985 memoir about a harrowing survival ordeal in the Bolivian jungle lured generations of Hebrew-speaking travelers to South America, models a workable compromise, cooperating with the Bolivians (who rescued him) on culturally sensitive, sustainable tourist projects. A thought-provoking critique, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



## BIOGRAPHY

### Hawking ★★ ★ 1/2

(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-60883-872-1.

Stephen Hawking, author and physicist, has a life story rivaling the complexity and fascination of any of his scientific theories. Now 72, Hawking has been afflicted for two-thirds of his life with a progressive motor neuron disease that leaves him confined to a wheelchair, unable to speak, but able to communicate via computer—guided only by the movement of his facial muscles. Filmmaker Stephen Finnigan's PBS-aired documentary presents a rare behind-the-scenes look at Hawking's personal journey. Born into a brilliant but eccentric family in Oxford, England, Hawking was very bright, exhibiting a passion for understanding how things worked—whether it be everyday objects or the universe itself. While at university, Hawking began to notice deterioration in his physical condition and bodily movements. Even as his body failed him, Hawking married and fathered children, lectured and mentored students, and elected to travel with his mind. With his automated voice, Hawking explains his theories on the origin of the universe ("Steady State" expansion vs. the "Big Bang" explosion), and talks about his book *A Brief History of Time*, which became a surprising, runaway bestseller (and was translated into 40 languages). With fame has come stresses on his family life. Always reluctant to accept nursing care, Hawking has learned to deal with 24-hour assistance and the accompanying lack of privacy. In between life

or death dramas, Hawking still gets around, and even experienced a simulation of zero gravity flight (he believes that space travel is necessary for human survival). Now twice divorced, Hawking insists he has led a full life, having survived well beyond the two or three years doctors predicted when he was initially diagnosed. Expertly juggling science with a compelling human interest story, this excellent profile is highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (S. Rees)

### In Search of Josephine ★★ ★

(2014) 103 min. In English & French w/English subtitles. DVD: \$19.99. Kultur (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-07697-4950-1.

Josephine de Beauharnais, the love of Napoleon's life (who became his empress, although the couple later divorced), is treated as a national heroine in this two-part French TV documentary (with overlaid English narration), which combines dramatic recreations, observations from biographers and scholars, nicely chosen artwork, and location footage. *In Search of Josephine* is an unreserved panegyric to a woman who both enjoyed considerable fame and endured many setbacks. As a girl in Martinique, Josephine survived a massive hurricane and then traveled to France for an arranged marriage to a philandering nobleman. Her husband was also involved in revolutionary activity, which brought him some admiration before eventually landing him—and Josephine—in prison to await the guillotine. Josephine and her children survived the ordeal, however, and she soon found herself romantically involved with Napoleon, whose Corsican family treated her with contempt. Napoleon was so enamored with Josephine

### Afternoon of a Faun: Tanaquil Le Clercq ★★ ★ 1/2

(2013) 96 min. DVD: \$29.95 (avail. from most distributors on June 24), \$349 w/PPR (avail. from [www.kinolorberedu.com](http://www.kinolorberedu.com)). Kino Lorber.

Nancy Buirski's documentary serves up a deeply affecting biography of Tanaquil Le Clercq, the tall, athletic prima ballerina of George Balanchine's New York City Ballet (and the choreographer's then-wife), who was stricken by polio in 1956 when she was at the height of her powers. Only 27, Le Clercq was paralyzed from the waist down, would never walk or dance again, and died in 2000. The film begins with a grainy kinescope of Le Clercq and partner Jacques d'Amboise rehearsing Jerome Robbins' *pas de deux* to Debussy's haunting title music. Stills and other archival footage follow her entrance into Balanchine's School of American Ballet at the age of 15 and her swift rise to prominence (including, ironically, the lead in *Resurgence*, a piece for a March of Dimes benefit in which she played a polio victim restored to health by donations to the group). The account of Le Clercq's falling ill during a European tour is also marked by sad irony, since—as fellow dancers and friends recount—she had decided against receiving the new vaccine for the disease just before departing. Buirski depicts Le Clercq's later years without sentimentality, using home movies and interviews to recall a woman who accepted her condition with dignity and grace, even using hand and arm movements to instruct students at the Dance Theatre of Harlem. A poignant portrait of a remarkable dancer and—as her last four decades proved—an equally extraordinary human being, this is highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)



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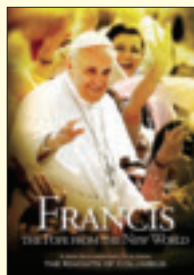
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### Francis: The Pope from the New World ★★½

(2013) 51 min. DVD: \$19.95 (\$295 w/PPR). *Knights of Columbus* (dist. by Janson Media). Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-56839-480-0.

The enormously popular Pope Francis is the subject of this delightful and informative portrait of the Argentine pontiff from filmmakers David Naglieri and Michèle Nuzzo-Naglieri. *Francis* begins on a light note with the subject's first public statement as a new pope, in which he notes that his "brother cardinals went to the ends of the Earth to choose a new Bishop of Rome." That's not quite accurate, of course: Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, hails from Buenos Aires, described here as the Paris of South America, but also a city with a pronounced dark side of poverty and crime. An enthusiast of tango and soccer, young Bergoglio was a well-liked but unimpressive youngster who had a profound religious experience after spontaneously entering a church one day and giving confession. A subsequent, near-fatal health crisis strengthened his conviction that he was destined for the seminary, and he was ordained a priest in 1969. In time Bergoglio became the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and by 2001 was made a cardinal. Along the way, he impressed many by focusing on issues related to poverty, including the lack of economic opportunities for many people. Commentators discuss how Francis always "had the courage to stand up to power," even when his emphasis on economic inequality rubbed the aristocracy the wrong way. While the documentary underscores the most popular elements of Francis's personality and his populist approach to papal leadership, it doesn't say much about his firm commitment to church doctrine on divorce, gay marriage, and adoption, or the ordination of women into the priesthood. How Francis will evolve on these issues remains a question, but for now this profile nicely summarizes the life so far of this pope who has brought activism for good causes into his global leadership. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)



that she accompanied him on his Italian campaigns, after which she returned to Paris and used her charm to help pave the way for his rise to power. Even after their divorce in 1809, Napoleon treated Josephine well—he permitted her to retain the title of empress, and her children by her first marriage benefited from his patronage. Marked more by enthusiasm than scholarly depth, *In Search of Josephine* nevertheless serves as a pleasant introduction to a woman often known only by her name. DVD extras include a pair of bonus featurettes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Mercedes Sosa: The Voice of Latin America ★★½

(2013) 93 min. DVD: \$24.95. *First Run Features* (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

A sense of hagiography pervades Rodrigo H. Vila's documentary profile of Mercedes Sosa (1935-2009), an Argentine singer who became a voice of popular protest during the 1960s and '70s, but endured death threats and exile as a result. Vila serves up a mixture of archival footage, interviews with friends and family (conducted by Sosa's son Fabian), excerpts from recorded recollections by Sosa herself, and observations from many of her colleagues and admirers (including David Byrne). Essentially a straightforward chronological narrative, the film begins with Sosa's penurious childhood, continuing up through her unexpected victory in a singing contest at the age of 15, and her subsequent

emergence as a primary exponent of the politically charged *nueva canción* (literally, "new song"), which earned her the enmity of the military junta that came to power in 1976 and led to her flight to Europe, where she would gain a considerable following. The last section records her return as a hero in 1982 and the serious depression that marked her final years, which she poignantly speaks about in a lengthy interview. As a whole, the documentary paints a moving personal portrait, but ultimately fails to provide a coherent picture of the surrounding political context. Most impressive here are the numerous excerpts from Sosa's concerts and recordings, which show off her powerful, passionate voice to perfection (fans will especially appreciate a previously unknown private duet with Ástor Piazzolla). A decent account of a remarkable woman, but one that could have been better, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Peter Simon's Through the Lens ★★½

(2014) 2 discs. 240 min. DVD: \$24.95. *Music Video Distributors* (avail. from most distributors).

Son of Richard Simon—the co-founder of Simon & Schuster—and younger brother of singer Carly Simon, Peter Simon has been taking pictures since his school days. His photographs have been featured in many magazines as well as on LP album covers and in books. Celebrating his 50th anniversary in what the shutterbug calls personalized photojournalism, *Peter Simon's Through the*

*Lens* collects examples of Simon's work spanning five decades, organized into 12 chapters (within chronological and topical parameters). Simon discusses each photo as it comes up in the resultant slideshow, aiming for a sort of photo-autobiography set within a larger historical context. After a prologue discussing his relationship with his father, Simon uses pictures to guide us through his experiences as a student, involvement in the Civil Rights and anti-war movements, days in a hippie commune, work as a news photographer, contacts with music icons, and interest in the recent Occupy Wall Street movement. Simon also draws on photos to address his own addiction problem, and looks at his comfortable life on Martha's Vineyard. As a whole, the set offers an interesting snapshot of one Baby Boomer's life, but technically it feels homespun, with Simon simply talking into the camera as the slides come up. Some might also tire of child-of-privilege Simon's constant name-dropping. Extras include two bonus segments in which Simon offers rudimentary advice to aspiring photographers. Even with its flaws, this should still be considered a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Revealing Mr. Maugham ★★½

(2012) 84 min. DVD: \$149 (\$349 w/PPR). *Kino Lorber Edu.*

W. Somerset Maugham's fame may have declined since his death in 1965, but Michael House's documentary reminds us of the quality of his writing, while also portraying the author as a troubled, ultimately rather tragic figure. Narrated in large part by biographer Selina Hastings, *Revealing Mr. Maugham* covers the writer's life from childhood to death in chronological fashion, with observations from academicians and dedicated readers who emphasize the enormous success Maugham achieved with his plays and novels during the first four decades of the 20th century (special attention is paid to Maugham's extraordinary skill in the short story form). But House balances this treatment of Maugham's remarkable literary career with a far darker portrait of his personal life, touching on Maugham's unhappy marriage to divorcée Syrie Wellcome, but more particularly concentrating on his homosexuality and long-term relationships with men—first Gerald Haxton, a gregarious American whose help in gathering material for stories proved invaluable but whose alcoholism led to his death, and then Alan Searle, who manipulated the author into disowning his family in order to inherit Maugham's estate for himself. A closing anecdote recounting how the elderly Maugham was shunned by fellow club members in London—after publishing an attack on Syrie in his memoir—provides a poignant conclusion to House's incisive portrait of



a man whose final years cast a shadow on his earlier triumphs. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## To Chris Marker: An Unsent Letter

★★★

(2013) 78 min. DVD: \$24.98. Icarus Films Home Video (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

Emiko Omori's documentary essay is a collective love letter to iconoclastic French filmmaker, writer, and intermedia artist Chris Marker, who died in 2012. Known for his stylistic inventiveness and left-wing political views, Marker was a powerful influence, evidenced by the interview excerpts included here from a wide variety of friends, colleagues, and admirers (including film critic David Thomson), most of whom especially emphasize the impact of Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), an innovative short that combined a montage of stills, voiceover, and sound to tell an impressionistic sci-fi tale about post-war experiments in time travel (it would serve as the inspiration for Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys*). Attention is also paid to Marker's idiosyncratic documentaries, including the three-hour 1977 film *A Grin Without a Cat* (VL-5/09), the title of which reflects a feline theme that was common in his work, and the controversial 1983 documentary *Sans Soleil* (VL-7/93). Since Marker not only avoided interviews but also refused to appear on film himself, Omori—who served as a cinematographer on Marker's 1989 miniseries *L'Héritage de la Chouette*—is compelled to treat her subject in a roundabout fashion. Omori's approach mimics Marker's imaginatively allusive visual style, overlaying the interviews with montages of newly-shot footage that is tangentially related to the words (and often situating clips from Marker's films on laptops and theatre screens rather than simply inserting them in the full frame, which creates a distancing effect). *To Chris Marker: An Unsent Letter* may seem more than a little precious to the uninitiated, but those who appreciate Marker's work—admittedly an acquired taste—will find this to be a fitting tribute to an elusive artist. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

## VideoLibrarianOnline

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## Series Update

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

**WordGirl: Monkey Business** (50 min., DVD: \$9.99) is the newest entry in Scholastic and PBS's educational series about verbose elementary school student superhero Becky Botsford. See review of *WordGirl: Earth Day Girl* in VL-5/10. Also newly available at the same price are **Between the Lions: Vowel Power**, **Dinosaur Train: Adventure Camp**, and **Wild Kratts: Tiny Trouble**.



The newest title in registered nurse Mary Ann Wilson's *Sit and Be Fit* public television-aired gentle exercise series is **Sit and Be Fit: Season 13** (540 min., DVD: 4 discs, \$78.95), which includes 20 episodes from 2012. See review of *Sit and Be Fit* in VL-1/97. Available from: Sit and Be Fit, P.O. Box 8033, Spokane, WA 99203; tel: 888-678-9438; web: [sitandbefit.org](http://sitandbefit.org).

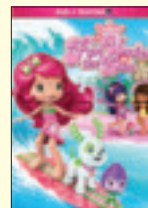
Recently released by PBS Home Video is **Craft in America: Industry** (60 min., DVD: \$19.99), the latest episode from the Peabody Award-winning series that explores the evolution and global influences of handmade and modern crafts, here focusing on the relationship between the consumer and the maker. See review of *Craft in America: Messages* in VL-11/11.

Newly available from Shout! Factory Kids is **Littlest Pet Shop: Strike a Pose!** (110 min., DVD: \$14.98), which includes five episodes featuring animal whisperer Blythe and her creature pals, as well as a bonus sing-along. See review of *Littlest Pet Shop: Petacular Escapades* in VL-11/13. Also newly available is **The Adventures of Chuck & Friends: Top Gear Trucks**.

**Shiva Rea: Meditations** (107 min., DVD: \$19.99) is the latest addition to Acacia and RLJ Entertainment's workout series featuring yoga expert Shiva Rea, who provides instruction for several meditations culled from previous releases, along with a bonus "flow meditation." See review of *Shiva Rea: Mama & Baby Yoga* in VL-7/12.



Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment is releasing **Strawberry Shortcake: Fun Under the Sun** (66 min., DVD: \$14.98), which finds fun protagonist Strawberry and pals enjoying outdoor adventures in a compilation that includes "No Blueberry Is an Island," "Where the Berry Breeze Blows," and "The Berry Best Vacation," as well as a music video. See review of *Strawberry Shortcake: The Sweet Dreams Movie* in VL-5/07.



The most recent entry in Paramount and Nickelodeon's long-running preschool-friendly cartoon series is **Dora the Explorer: Dora's Magical Sleepover** (71 min., DVD: \$14.98), featuring Dora the Explorer and friends Diego and Boots as they enjoy a whimsical sleepover at a museum, along with two bonus episodes. See review of *Dora the Explorer: Big Sister Dora* in VL-5/05.

Also newly released by Paramount is **SpongeBob, You're Fired!** (186 min., DVD: \$14.98), which finds Krusty Krab restaurant-owner Mr. Krabs putting fry-cook SpongeBob's career on the line in the titular two-part episode, and serves up 13 other stories from the Nickelodeon animated series. See review of *SpongeBob SquarePants: Tide and Seek* in VL-9/03.

Newly available from PBS is **Pioneers of Television: Season 4** (240 min., DVD: 2 discs, \$24.99), which compiles the 2014 fourth season of the insightful documentary series chronicling the evolution of popular TV genres, here narrated by Benjamin Bratt and featuring the episodes "Standup to Sitcom," "Acting Funny," "Doctors and Nurses," and "Breaking Barriers." See review of *Pioneers of Television: Season 2* in VL-5/11.

Compiling the 2013 seventh season of the History-aired series from Lionsgate Home Entertainment and A&E, **The Universe: Season 7: Ancient Mysteries Solved** (176 min., DVD: \$19.98, Blu-ray: \$19.99) includes the episodes "Stonehenge," "Pyramids," "Heavenly Destruction," and "Star of Bethlehem." See review of *The Universe: The Complete Season One* in VL-3/08.



## Ebiten: Complete Collection ★★1/2

(2012) 2 discs. 250 min. DVD: \$49.98, Blu-ray: \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5498-1 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5499-8 (blu-ray).



Not unlike the *Scary Movie* series, this is a burlesque mishmash drawing upon Japanese fantasy, sci-fi, anime, manga, and TV shows, referencing and spoofing *Ultra Seven*, *DragonBall Z*, *Megazone 23*, *Sailor Moon*, *K-On!*, and just about everything in between. An underpopulated high school student-stargazing society composed of BFF girls (thus the nickname "Astronomical Club") is so irrelevant on campus that its faculty advisor is a distracted teacher's cat. The group faces closure due to a lack of members and the fact that they really don't accomplish much. The parody-strewn episodes (copying even the artwork style and theme songs of the material being satirized) largely center on the young ladies—drawn in hyper-cute "moe" style—embracing and/or tormenting would-be recruits, especially freshman Itsuki, who is really a boy, forced to cross-dress to maintain the female status quo. Itsuki also has a secret secondary personality as a supervillain (foretold by Nostradamus), who is plotting to Take Over the World with pheromones. In a meta-epilogue, our heroines invade the very anime and manga studios creating them. Given the mission of sending up anime clichés, one should not be surprised at the "fan service" panty flashes, breast gropes, gratuitous nudity, and gay-lesbian tropes trotted out. Almost none of this is meant to be taken seriously, although it could have cult mojo amongst more knowledgeable anime fans. Compiling all 10 episodes (and an OVA) from 2012 in separate Blu-ray and DVD editions, in Japanese with English subtitles, rated TV-MA, extras include bonus shorts and music videos. A strong optional purchase. (C. Cassidy)

## Eureka Seven: Part One ★★1/2

(2005) 650 min. DVD: 5 discs, \$34.98; Blu-ray: 4 discs, \$44.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2792-5 (dvd).



Teenager Renton is a mechanic in a dreary, isolated town, which is particularly maddening for the lad, since Renton's father was part of a rebel pilot squadron called Gekkostate. A fortuitous visit by the beautiful Eureka (who, in typical anime fashion, literally falls out of the sky) sets off a chain of events that allows Renton to live out his dreams as a Gekkostate pilot. However, the dream come true also leads to new and unexpected hazards—especially when Renton finds that his presence among

the Gekko rebels is not enthusiastically welcomed. While *Eureka Seven* deserves praise for its thrilling mecha dogfight sequences and the imaginative nature of its sci-fi storyline, its real strength lies in bringing a genuine love story to the center of the action. The relationship between Renton and Eureka is compelling and charming, with the pair forming a genuine emotional bond that adds a depth and scope that is lacking in many anime protagonists. There is also a remarkably mature subplot rivalry between Renton and Holland, a would-be suitor of Eureka—sparking a romantic triangle that leads to Renton leaving Gekkostate, a move that creates unexpected developments as the story hurtles towards a superb cliffhanger. Presenting the first 26 episodes from 2005 in separately available dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, extras include audio commentaries, and interviews with voice actors. Highly recommended. [Note: *Eureka Seven: Part Two* is also newly available.] (P. Hall)

## The Familiar of Zero: Complete Collection ★★1/2

(2006) 325 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$49.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$59.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5503-2 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5504-9 (blu-ray).



Misfit kids find trouble and intrigue at a magical school for budding wizards. Sound familiar? If cynics can stop making *Harry Potter*/Worst Witch comparisons (and there's a Dumbledore-lookalike headmaster), *The Familiar of Zero* is a fairly entertaining comics-derived series. On the distant planet of Halkeginia, where magic-wielders form an imperious ruling class (everyone else are "peasants"), Louise is a nobly-descended schoolgirl at Tristain Academy of Magic whose spells chronically go awry. When the student mages summon their permanent "familiars" (i.e. magical creatures/helpmates), Louise scandalizes both her peers and herself by materializing an ordinary boy—bewildered teen Hiraga Saito, who is teleported from Tokyo. Saito adapts poorly to treatment as an abused servant in the alien culture, but in typical harem-comedy fashion he winds up being an object of affection and seduction for comely girls at the Academy, including his "master"—temperamental, possessive Louise (and Saito may actually possess latent magic mojo himself). The saucier elements (Saito must wash Louise's lingerie, emphasis on panties) are not too grating, a minor magical feat in itself. Compiling all 13 episodes from the 2006 first season in separately available dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, this is recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## From the New World, Collection 1 ★★1/2

(2012) 325 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5505-6 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5506-3 (blu-ray).



Derived from an acclaimed novel by Yūsuke Kishi, this mind-blowing sci-fi anime series opens at a pastoral school complex where adolescents practice telekinesis in a Zen-like spiritual milieu. When five boys and girls leave the safe zone on a canoe trip they accidentally learn their world's secret history: one millennium ago—in 2011—a percentage of the human race developed ESP superpowers and plunged Earth into centuries of war and bloody rampages under homicidally psychic emperors, warlords, and bandits. A surviving fragment of Japanese society maintains peace through Buddhist-inspired discipline, self-hypnosis, and reverence—and ruthlessly watches children for possible deviance, punishable by quick termination. But in learning the truth, these kids have transgressed badly. After escaping a clash between orc-like armies (who regard humans as gods), the protagonists think that their escapade has gone unnoticed by authorities. But, of course, it hasn't. The violence here is stylized and more suggested than shown (the same goes for frankly acknowledged underage sex and homoeroticism). Compiling the first 13 episodes from the 2012 debut season in separately available dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

## Gatchaman: Complete Collection ★★1/2

(1974) 2,770 min. DVD: 22 discs, \$129.98; Blu-ray: 14 discs, \$149.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5413-4 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5414-1 (blu-ray).



Hailing from Tatsunoko Productions—the Japanese animation house behind *Speed Racer*—the 1970s cartoon fantasy *Gatchaman* first gained Western attention in the drastically rewritten syndicated TV versions *G-Force* and *Battle of the Planets* (shows that were tweaked to be more like *Star Wars*). The simple premise finds a quintet of youthful "Science Ninjas," led by hothead Ken (aka Gatchaman), fighting the all-purpose villain organization Galactor, whose henchmen torment Earth with their seemingly inexhaustible arsenal of high-tech weapons and giant robots. Some of the more bizarre mechas include a molten-lava giant with the head of Jesus (!) and a colossal flying/laser-shooting Buddha (!!). Meanwhile, the teen fighters sport caped uniforms with the features of various birds: eagle, condor, swan, swallow,



and owl. Compiling all 105 episodes from the 1972-74 series (along with three previously unreleased OVAs) in a dual-language set, rated TV-PG, extras include audio commentaries and behind-the-scenes featurettes. A hand-somely presented old-school classic anime, this is highly recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### Maria Holic Alive: Complete Collection

★★★

(2011) 300 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5447-9 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5448-6 (blu-ray).



Despite frequent lesbian references—including a hilarious opening anthem sung by a priest (!)—the raunch quotient is pretty tame for the madcap *Maria Holic* anime comedy series (of which *Alive* is the second episode cycle). Kanako Miyamae, a “yuri girl” teen lesbian who literally has allergic reactions to males, enrolls in the Catholic-run all-female Ame Kasaki Girls’ Academy in order to sate her Sapphic urges. But nothing ever happens for her, except chronic nosebleeds triggered by sexual stress. Worse, her roommate Mariya, a wealthy blonde with a full-time maid named Matsurika, is actually a cross-dressing boy (for non-sex-fetish reasons, explained in the first series). Serving up an utterly daffy, anything-goes style of humor (reminiscent of America’s *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*), *Maria Holic Alive* mocks Japanese fads and pop-culture, turns characters into mecha or SD (super-deformed) versions, and throws in a cameo by *CSI Miami*’s Horatio Caine. Presenting all 12 episodes from 2011 in separate dual-language DVD and Blu-ray editions, rated TV-14, extras include audio commentaries by the Japanese vocal cast. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

### Psycho-Pass: Season One, Part One ★★★1/2

(2012) 4 discs. 275 min. Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$64.98. Funimation (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 1-4210-2855-7.



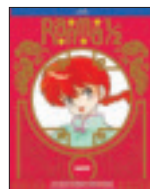
A century from now in a world of hologram-based environments, drone-robots, and 3D cosplay avatars, the omnipotent Sibyl computer runs brain scans on the populace, ever vigilant for deviant thoughts and personalities. An elite corps of inspectors—armed with mind-reading guns that can either stun or execute—hunt such “latent criminals.” Naïve rookie police-woman Akane quickly discovers that officers aren’t immune either; a cop whose “crime coefficient” goes too high is demoted to a pariah caste of “enforcers.” Yet, Akane forms a strong bond with just such a tainted lawman, Kogami, as they work together on a succes-

sion of sometimes nail-biting homicide cases that are linked by a shadowy master villain who mentors murderers in the name of free will. The noir-ish material borrows liberally from films such as *Minority Report* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, but this title should also have crossover appeal for fans of police procedurals (J.D. Robb’s *Eve Dallas* series comes to mind). The heavy violence here includes dismemberments, as well as briefly bared breasts in gruesome art installations/murder scenes. Compiling the first 11 episodes from the 2012-13 first season in a dual-language Blu-ray/DVD Combo set, rated TV-MA, extras include audio commentaries, and interviews with the Japanese production team at a fan convention. Highly recommended. [Note: *Psycho-Pass: Season One, Part Two* is also newly available.] (C. Cassidy)

### Ranma 1/2, Set 1

★★★★1/2

(2011) 3 discs. 530 min. DVD: \$44.98, Blu-ray: \$54.98. Viz Media (avail. from most distributors).



Twenty-five years after its initial TV appearance, Rumiko Takahashi’s classic action/comedy/romance anime *Ranma 1/2*—based on the equally popular manga—receives an overdue re-release, with cleaned-up animation that is both sharp and colorful, bringing to life character designs that have aged amazingly well. Ranma Saotome and his father, Genma, arrive in Tokyo following long years of martial arts training in China, after which they visit Genma’s old friend Soun Tendo. Before long, a simple marriage arrangement between Ranma and one of Soun’s three daughters grows complicated due to the effects of the mysterious cursed pools that Ranma and his dad both fell into while in China, which causes Ranma to change into a girl whenever he encounters cold water and Genma to be transformed into a giant panda (hot water changes them back, but icy aqua is ridiculously prevalent everywhere). Ranma’s fiancée, Akane, changes her mind, and turns her attention to literally fighting off an assortment of other suitors. Ranma is also pursued by various women—each displaying her own quirky fighting technique and, like Ranma, having the highly disconcerting habit of transforming (into, for instance, a cute pig and a cat). Confusion and hijinks follow, but the action is always grounded in the grudgingly friendly relationship between Ranma and Akane. Compiling the first 23 episodes in a dual-language set, rated TV-14 (due to boob flashes and occasional stolen panties), extras include a 2012 New York Comic Con highlights reel. Highly recommended. [Note: *Ranma 1/2, Set 2* is also newly available.] (L. Martincic)

### Saint Seiya: Sanctuary

★★★

(2014) 11 discs. 1,721 min. In Japanese w/English subtitles. DVD: \$99.95. Cinedigm Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



This epic 1986 anime series was first made available on this side of the Pacific in a heavily edited and recklessly dubbed Cartoon Network broadcast in 2003 (that version, along with the original Japanese-language offering, was released on DVD in 2009, albeit only the first 60 episodes). *Saint Seiya: Sanctuary* is more comprehensive, compiling the first 73 episodes. The eponymous saints are Japanese boy warriors who wear sacred armor with designs derived from constellations. The deity at the center of their sacred devotion is the Greek goddess Athena, and these modern saints have sworn to defend her spirit against rival Hellenic deities. Actually, having Japanese lads engaging in battle on behalf of the pre-Christian Greek deities is the least confusing aspect of this noisy and frequently baffling show. But while the series may be lacking in coherence and logic, it more than compensates with imaginative and energetic battle sequences. Presented in a dual-language set, suitable for 13-up, this will be a must-watch for classic anime addicts. Recommended. (P. Hall)

### Say I Love You: Complete Collection ★★★

(2012) 325 min. DVD: 3 discs, \$59.98; Blu-ray: 2 discs, \$69.98. Sentai Filmworks (avail. from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-6161-5427-1 (dvd), 978-1-6161-5428-8 (blu-ray).



A super-vulnerable rather than super-powered heroine propels this non-fantasy youth romance derived from “shojo” manga (girls’-story comics). Mei Tachibana is a class loner and mopey outcast in a high-school environment rife with gossip, mean girls, and bullying. She gets her surprise first kiss from Yamato Kurosawa—the school’s most popular boy—leading to an impromptu relationship that shakes up the hothouse student mini-society. A ladies’ man since junior high, yet also good-hearted and sensitive, Yamato has nonetheless gone from one sweet-heart to another, and love-starved Mei fears she’ll just be another of his many exes, so she agonizes over whether their togetherness is indeed true and lasting. Mei’s neediness and timidity are a bit grating at times, but these characters have depth—even the farfetched trope of a teen supermodel who abruptly enrolls at school as a potential rival for poor melancholy Mei. Although the narrative is snail-paced, teen American viewers will empathize with the issues here. Presenting all 13 episodes from 2012 in a dual-language set, rated TV-14, extras include comic vignettes. Recommended. (C. Cassidy)

**Boris Godunov** ★★½  
(2013) 139 min. DVD: \$29.99;  
Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air  
Classiques (dist. by Naxos of  
America).



Musically, this 2013 Bayerische Staatsoper production of Modest Mussorgsky's famed opera—the story of the 17th-century tsar whose murder of the rightful heir to the throne leads to his own destruction—is quite good. The Munich orchestra and chorus give their best to outgoing music director Kent Nagano, who paces the score well, while the vocalism is magnificent, with Alexander Tsybalyuk a sonorous Boris and the supporting cast strong across the board. But there are also serious flaws: the version used here is the 1869 original, a relatively compact piece in seven tableaux that omits all of the additions from the 1872 revision, including the Kromy Forest sequence and the entire Polish-set act, as well as the sumptuous orchestration of the later Rimsky-Korsakov editions. As a result, much marvelous music is missing. More seriously, Calixto Bieito's staging updates the action to today's Russia, recasting it as a critique of politicians like Vladimir Putin who cater to the wealthy while forcibly keeping the populace in thrall. In the process, the work's overtly spiritual overtones are reduced to near negligibility—an example of a stage director's penchant for preferring his own message to the composer's. The sets and costumes also lack the splendor of more traditional mountings such as Konchalovsky's from Turin (VL-11/11), which employs the 1869 score but includes the Kromy Forest sequence (although not the Polish act). Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this ultimately cannot be preferred to existing alternatives, and is therefore an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

**Brian May & Kerry Ellis: The Candlelight Concerts—Live at Montreux 2013** ★★★  
(2013) 92 min. DVD: \$19.98  
(audio CD included), Blu-ray:  
\$24.98 (audio CD included).  
Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most  
distributors).



When they aren't playing Queen covers, guitarist Brian May and vocalist Kerry Ellis make music that's as far from May's iconic band as Robert Plant's work with Alison Krauss was from Led Zeppelin. Remaining seated through most of the show, May and Ellis perform a 16-song acoustic set at Switzerland's Montreux Jazz Festival at the tail end of a tour that began in 2012. The duo alone present the first song, Leiber and Stoller's "I Who Have Nothing," before being joined by Jeff Leach on keyboards. Ellis, who starred

in the Queen-themed musical *We Will Rock You*, has a strong voice, although her carefully controlled style draws more from the theater tradition than the arena rock of Queen's Freddie Mercury. When she sings "Born Free," in recognition of Africa's endangered lions, Ellis brings to mind Julie Andrews from *The Sound of Music* era, while her later rendition of "The Way We Were" underscores her link with balladeers such as Barbra Streisand (by contrast, Ellis seems a little stiff on George Harrison's "Something," which calls for a more fluid approach). Although Ellis handles most of the vocals, May joins her for a few songs, including the Queen audience favorites "Somebody to Love" and "We Will Rock You." Aside from the vocal selections, May also plugs in his guitar for a fusion-oriented workout with Leach. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray edition) and LPCM stereo, extras include a music video of Virginia McKenna's "Nothing Really Has Changed," and the 12-song *Acoustic by Candlelight* live CD. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

**Chaplin** ★★★  
(2013) 100 min. DVD: \$24.99,  
Blu-ray: \$39.99. EuroArts (dist.  
by Naxos of America).



Many silent-screen comedians have been lauded for their physical grace, so it seems perfectly reasonable that Mario Schröder, director of the Leipzig Ballet, would choose the most renowned of silent-era comics as the subject of his latest work for the company. An imaginative 19-part take on the life of Charlie Chaplin, the ballet begins with Chaplin's childhood and ends with his exile from the U.S. as a result of his unpopular political views. The music is a pastiche: five of the segments are set to pieces Chaplin himself wrote for his movies, while the remaining 14 draw on compositions from diverse composers—including a few from the 19th century (Brahms, Wagner, Leoncavallo), but mostly more modern figures (including Ives, Britten, Barber, Henze, Schnittke, and John Adams)—all played well by the Gewandhaus Orchestra under Matthias Foremny. Schröder's overarching concept distinguishes between Chaplin the artist (danced by Tyler Galster) and his screen persona of the Little Tramp (Amelia Waller), and he surrounds the two principals with other characters—particularly Chaplin's family and the women in his life—while also folding in allusions to Chaplin's films, such as *Modern Times* and *The Great Dictator*. This interesting conceit produces some striking moments, including ensembles in which lines of iconic tramps and glamorous Hollywood stars parade across the stage, but it does occasionally become heavy-handed—especially toward the close, which is as sentimental as any of Chaplin's movies. All in all, however, this is an intriguing modern ballet. Presented in Dolby Digital

5.1, DTS 5.1, and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

**Coppélia** ★★★  
(2013) 88 min. DVD: \$24.99,  
Blu-ray: \$39.99. EuroArts (dist.  
by Naxos of America).



Modern directors seem averse to traditional stagings of Léo Delibes' popular 1870 ballet about a man who falls in love with a mechanical doll that is fashioned by the ingenious Dr. Coppélius in a turn of events that threatens his relationship with his fiancée (a silly premise, granted, but this is fantasy, after all). Unlike Patrice Bart's production for the Paris Opera (VL-3/12), which not only altered the triangle (a single woman and two men) but also replaced most of the original score with other work by Delibes, Eduardo Lao's rethinking for the Ballet Victor Ullate Comunidad de Madrid—filmed at the Opéra Royal du Château de Versailles in 2013—isn't quite so radical a revision (most of the 1870 music is included). Still, the three acts are here compressed into two; the original libretto is substantially altered, with the action situated in a modern factory where Franz, who falls for Coppélia, is the chief janitor; and the automaton is magically transformed, like Pinocchio, into a real person to allow for a happy ending. Whether these changes are improvements is debatable, but the piece retains its charm when danced as well as it is here by Sophie Cassegrain (Coppélia), Yester Mulens (Coppélius), Cristian Oliveri (Franz), and the rest of the company. The filming is nicely done, with a short prologue in the halls of the Versailles theater as Coppélius wends his way toward the stage, but the orchestra and conductor oddly go unidentified, and the sound is limited to PCM stereo only on both the DVD and Blu-ray editions. Still, this can be recommended. (F. Swietek)

**The Curse of the Gothic Symphony** ★★★  
(2011) 82 min. DVD: \$24.95.  
First Run Features (avail. from  
most distributors). Closed  
captioned.



Haverlag Brian (1876–1972), a mostly self-taught British composer, was 78 before any one of his eventual 32 symphonies were performed. The first—subtitled *The Gothic*, and composed between 1919 and 1927—did not receive its first public airing until 1961. A sprawling work in four movements (the last, a *Te Deum* that spans more than an hour), *The Gothic* requires an orchestra of 180 players, four brass bands, four vocal soloists, and four mixed choirs (plus a children's chorus!). Given these extraordinary demands, it's not surprising that the work has taken on an



almost mystical status for Brian devotees, as well as generated vague talk of a “curse” on those who try to perform it. Randall Wood’s engaging documentary follows a project led by Australian fan Gary Thorpe to mount a performance in Brisbane. Although Thorpe had been working away for nearly a quarter-century, it was the intervention of producer Veronica Fury in 2005—including help with fundraising and administration—that proved instrumental, and in 2010 Thorpe finally realized his dream. Wood shows here how the hundreds of singers and players were assembled, and how a conductor and choral director were persuaded to coordinate them. Viewers will also see considerable rehearsal coverage, as well as interview excerpts with participants, archival footage featuring Brian, and clips offering reminiscences by his elderly, tart-tongued daughter, Olga. Some comically spooky animation emphasizing the aforementioned curse seems a bit silly, but otherwise this is an entertaining record of a once-in-a-lifetime musical event, one that appears to come off quite successfully. DVD extras include a text bio of Brian, and a photo gallery. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### The Dave Clark Five and Beyond: Glad All Over

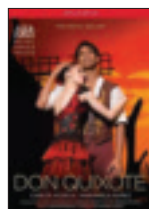
★★★  
(2014) 2 discs. 120 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. PBS Video (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-008-3 (dvd), 978-1-62789-018-2 (blu-ray).



Actor and drummer Dave Clark formed the Dave Clark Five during the musical explosion known as the British Invasion, and he managed the group into becoming one of the most successful rock bands of its era. They had 15 straight Top 20 hits (including “Glad All Over”) between 1964 and 1966, more than any other band except The Beatles, yet their high-energy pop-oriented rock ‘n’ roll has been overshadowed by less popular but more inventive and influential bands. This documentary, directed and produced by Clark himself for British TV and aired in the U.S. on PBS, looks back at the band and their influence through new interviews with such music legends as Elton John, Paul McCartney, Bruce Springsteen, and Stevie Wonder, along with mainly archival interviews with members of the DC5 (most of whom had already died when Clark was making the film). It’s full of interesting information but little insight, more notable for its nostalgic wealth of archival performances and film and TV clips, as well as the small spotlight it shines on Mike Smith, the band’s underrated lead singer. But the real focus here is on Clark himself, who wrote or co-wrote all of the group’s original songs, served as producer, maintained ownership of their catalog, and after disbanding the DC5 at the end of the

’60s went on to write and produce the stage musical *Time*. It’s not quite autobiography, but just as Clark controlled every aspect of the band’s career, he’s now in essence controlling its history. Even so, this is a solid music documentary that will be a welcome addition to pop culture collections. Extras include extended interviews, performances, and archival footage from *Time*. Sure to find favor with Baby Boomers, this is recommended. (S. Axmaker)

**Don Quixote** ★★½  
(2013) 125 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Ludwig Minkus’s tuneful 1869 ballet is loosely based on Cervantes’s epic novel, although it doesn’t focus on the wandering knight and his faithful squire, Sancho Panza, but rather on handsome barber Basilio and his beloved Kitri, who runs off with the impecunious haircutter even though her father plans to marry her off to a wealthy fop. Accompanied by Sancho, Don Quixote is a secondary figure here, who intervenes to keep the lovers together. This 2013 production from London’s Royal Ballet is the first to be mounted by the company in more than a decade, and it is a truly sumptuous one, featuring colorful costumes and inventive sets. It also boasts the star power of Carlos Acosta, who not only plays Basilio (one of Acosta’s signature roles in his native Cuba) but also choreographed this piece after Marius Petipa’s original. Even at the age of 40, Acosta is capable of astonishing physical feats, and he remains a charismatic stage presence. He’s teamed with the lovely Marianela Núñez, whose performance emphasizes Kitri’s sweetness and charm, while Christopher Saunders and Philip Mosley play Don Quixote and Sancho less farcically than is often the case. The remaining dancers do outstanding work in Minkus’s numerous divertissements, while the orchestra of the Royal Opera House delivers the score—adapted and re-orchestrated by conductor Martin Yates—with both dash and delicacy. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray edition) and LPCM stereo, extras include introductions to Acts II and III, and a cast gallery. Offering a fine modern alternative to the 1973 Nureyev version (VL-7/12), this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

**The Fiery Angel** ★★½  
(1993) 124 min. In Russian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



Presented at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, this is a 1993 production of Sergei Prokofiev’s operatic adaptation of Valery Bryusov’s novel about

madness, occultism, obsession, religious mania, and the destructive power of misguided love. Set in Cologne, Germany, circa 1534, the story focuses on the doomed union of the knight Ruprecht and his fascination with the emotional Renata, whose childhood visions of a fiery angel turned into the living vision of a nobleman with whom she had a brief but disastrous affair. Ruprecht’s attachment to Renata makes him an outcast, while Renata’s use of alchemy and occult manuscripts to locate and reunite with her aristocratic ex-lover unleashes events that test the bonds of faith and sanity. Galina Gorchakova’s Renata is a masterwork of mixed passions—her wild-eyed gaze during fits of terror dissolves into poised self-assurance as she mixes various potions to call back her lost love. Sergei Leiferkus’ Ruprecht is a commanding study of a once-sturdy figure’s slow-motion descent into madness and tragedy. Stage director David Freeman frames the action with a squadron of muscular men (the St. Petersburg Mariinsky Acrobatic Troupe) covered in volcanic ash-color body paint, who represent the demons observing Renata and Ruprecht’s self-destructive frenzy. Nicely performed by the house orchestra under the baton of Valéry Gergiev, this thoroughly entertaining production—presented in PCM stereo—is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

### A History of Dance on Screen

★★★  
(2013) 90 min. DVD: \$24.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America). ISBN: 978-3-86923-156-3.



Filmmaker Reiner E. Moritz’s aptly-titled documentary traces the history of dance in cinema from the beginnings up through the present, starting with clips from two very different representations of Stravinsky’s 1913 ballet masterpiece *Le Sacre du Printemps*—a modern version and an attempted reconstruction of the original staging. But the focus here is not simply on the classical, as Moritz quickly moves on to the Lumière brothers’ 1896 footage of Loie Fuller doing her famous Serpentine Dance. And throughout, Moritz alternates between ballet and more popular forms, featuring clips of Anna Pavlova and Isadora Duncan, Rudolf Nureyev and Fred Astaire. Analysis is offered here by a variety of commentators, most notably two Brits who represent very different styles—Clement Crisp, the dean of English dance criticism, who delivers definitive judgments in an almost comically oracular tone, and Bob Lockyer, a mild-mannered BBC director who has specialized in dance films. Additional observations come from dancer-teachers such as The BalletBoyz (Michael Nunn and Billy Trevitt), who note how the qualities prized in dancers have changed over time, and choreographers including Matthew

Bourne, who emphasizes the need for close collaboration between choreographers and film directors. *A History of Dance on Screen* serves up an eclectic mix, and while the clips might have been longer, the tantalizing glimpses presented of numerous works and performers might well encourage viewers to follow up on watching the films themselves. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Juliet & Romeo ★★

(2013) 108 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).



The title of Mats Ek's commission for the Royal Swedish Ballet clearly indicates his desire to be different, so it's no surprise that his 2013 version of Shakespeare's classic romantic tragedy elects not to use Prokofiev's score, instead cobbling together bits and pieces from Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, First Piano Concerto, *Capriccio Italien*, Variations on a Rococo Theme, and other works. And a stripped-down rethought tale it is: gone are the swordfights, Friar Lawrence, Juliet's sleeping potion, and Romeo's suicide. The setting isn't Renaissance Verona, although some of the costumes feel vaguely period—in marked contrast here to the prevailing jeans and hoodies, as well as Segways that characters ride around on. The ambience is more reminiscent of *West Side Story*, with the Duke striding about ominously through a spare set, terrorizing a glum populace with his street soldiers—apparently including Romeo and his comrades—who are considered beneath wealthy families like Juliet's. The dance moves also clash, veering abruptly from angular thrusts to graceful leaps. The performance itself is excellent, with Mariko Kida a delicate Juliet, Anthony Lomuljo an eager Romeo, and the remainder of the soloists also strong. Nor can one fault the company dancers or the playing of the Royal Swedish Orchestra under Alexander Polianichko. Although unlikely to displace more faithful adaptations of the famous tale of doomed young love, this is an intriguing new take. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray version), this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Madama Butterfly

★★1/2

(2012) 137 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).



You might think that there's nothing new to be said concerning Puccini's much-loved 1904 tragic opera about lovely Cio-Cio San, the geisha who commits suicide after being abandoned—along with their son—by her husband, American naval officer Pinkerton. Vincent Boussard, the director of this 2012

Staatsoper Hamburg production, obviously disagrees—here turning the opera, which is traditionally presented as a straightforward tale of romantic betrayal and cultural prejudice, into a psychological drama that emphasizes the doomed heroine's dark demons. While the set—centered on a white spiral staircase—remains constant, video projections are used to indicate changes of season and mood, and a mixture of traditional and modern costumes lends a timeless feel to the tale. And by using a doll in the last act, Boussard suggests that Butterfly's child might not be real, but rather simply a fevered obsession. This is an intriguing, if not entirely persuasive, take on the well-worn piece, nicely performed by the cast, with Alexia Voulgaridou a moving, well-sung Butterfly, and Teodor Ilincai a decent Pinkerton. The remainder of the cast is also solid, as is the Hamburg Philharmonic under the baton of Alexander Joel. Presented in PCM stereo on DVD and Blu-ray, this effort can't displace previous entries—whether traditional (VL-11/11) or minimalist (VL-7/06)—but it does make for an interesting supplement, and therefore should be considered a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

### Porgy and Bess ★★1/2

(2009) 158 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. EuroArts (dist. by Naxos of America).



George Gershwin's popular masterpiece about the unlikely romantic triangle involving crippled beggar Porgy, "fallen woman" Bess, and her brutal lover Crown has always skirted the line between opera and musical theater, but this 2009 production from the San Francisco Opera shows that with the right sort of performance it fits easily into the former category. *Porgy and Bess* is presented here in the 1935 original form, restoring the omissions of later versions as well as the sung recitative that has often been replaced with spoken dialogue. The conductor is John DeMain, who helped reconstruct the score for the now-famous 1976 mounting at the Houston Grand Opera, here eliciting a galvanizing performance from the company orchestra and chorus that beautifully captures the work's combination of folk, jazz, and classical elements. Eric Owens makes a powerful Porgy, in both stature and voice, while Laquita Mitchell is a passionate Bess (their duets are among the high points of the production). For the most part, the secondary characters—including Lester Lynch as Crown—deliver impressive performances as well (only Chauncey Packer, as sleazy drug dealer Sportin' Life, is slightly disappointing). Peter J. Davison's set design, which makes Catfish Row a cavernous welter of corrugated metal walls, isn't as evocative as one might expect, but it's adequate for director Francesca Zambello's traditional

concept. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

### Punk in Africa ★★

(2012) 82 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



*Punk in Africa* bears an accurate, if slightly misleading title, since co-directors Keith Jones and Deon Maas concentrate on South Africa rather than the continent as a whole. To Benjy Mudie, A&R representative for WEA Records, 1976's Soweto Uprising provided fertile ground for punk as years of oppression and required military service had taken its toll on young people, black and white. Steve Moni of the Safari Suits also suggests that simple boredom played a role: with nothing better to do, punk turned out to be a great way to fill the time and to blow off steam. Nonetheless, most of the acts shown here are white, possibly because segregation remained in effect until 1994 (there are also few female players). The band National Wake featured mixed membership, however, although they would move in a reggae direction in years to come. KOOS, a group consisting of Afrikaans members, also stands out for their avant garde approach to composition and performance (KOOS actually comes across as more post-punk than punk for the way they integrated jazz and theater into their act). The directors chart the punk movement through the 1980s as apartheid comes to an end, Nelson Mandela leaves prison, and punk itself gives way to ska. The anger and energy fueling the early material mellows into the more party-oriented music of 1990s acts like Hog Hoggidy Hog and Sibling Rivalry. Outside of South Africa, the filmmakers also cover Pretoria's Sticky Antlers, Mozambique's 340ml, and Zimbabwe's Evicted. An off-the-beaten-path punk documentary, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)

### The Rise and Fall of the Clash ★★1/2

(2014) 90 min. DVD: \$14.98. Shout! Factory (avail. from most distributors).



Although the title suggests a full reckoning, director Danny Garcia's *The Rise and Fall of the Clash* concentrates more on the second half of the equation, with friends and associates providing most of the commentary, since only guitarist Mick Jones and drummer Terry Chimes speak for the group (not counting the hired guns that joined the band at the end). Punk singer Pearl Harbour believes that the greatness of the Clash stemmed from each member bringing a different influence to the mix, from R&B (singer Joe Strummer)



to jazz (on-again, off-again drummer Topper Headon), although other speakers point to the quality of the songwriting and the passion of the band's politics. Some praise manager Bernie Rhodes, but others believe he did more harm than good (Viv Albertine of the Slits dismisses him as "a rude, socially inept person"). While Strummer enjoyed a close relationship with Rhodes, he alienated so many others that the group fired him before eventually welcoming him back. The players' diverse interests would also cause problems, as Jones moved more into hip-hop, and Strummer gravitated towards rockabilly. When Headon became addicted to heroin, the band let him go. Strummer and bassist Paul Simonon followed up by firing Jones and bringing in new players (Vince White, Nick Sheppard, and Pete Howard) who only received a pittance for their efforts. When Strummer left, the band was essentially done, although Rhodes made a last-ditch effort to hire a new singer. Strummer (who died in 2002) and Jones would eventually make their peace—but not in time to save the Clash. A somewhat uneven account, this should still be considered a strong optional purchase. (K. Fennessy)

### Salome ★★★1/2

(2010) 109 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).

This innovative production of Richard Strauss's 1905 opera—inspired by Oscar Wilde's play—was staged by Teatro Comunale di Bologna and broadcast on Italian television in 2010. Stage director Gabriele Lavia opts for a modern-dress presentation, which works since the story's wild mix of envelope-pushing political, religious, and emotional obsessions carries a deep resonance in a contemporary world that is often terrified of ideas that dare to challenge the comfortable status quo. Set designer Alessandro Camera creates an astonishing opening sequence with a huge crack in the floor of the stage, symbolizing the pit where Jochanaan (John the Baptist to English-speaking viewers) is imprisoned—a scene suggesting that the complacency of Herod's court has been wrenched open by beliefs that the ruler futilely attempts to bury. Erika Sunnegårdh's Salome is a bold mix of physical sophistication and internal confusion: her fascination with the imprisoned Jochanaan (played with intellectual ferocity by a hirsute Mark S. Doss) and her inability to grasp his religious mania ignite a riot of feelings that ultimately leads to the famous sexually-charged dance that brutally seals the prophet's doom. The house orchestra shines under the baton of Nicola Luisotti in this fascinating interpretation of Strauss's celebrated work that boasts ample amounts of grace and style. Presented in



Dolby Digital 5.0 and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (P. Hall)

### Suzanne Vega Live: Solitude Standing ★★★

(2003) 62 min. DVD: \$14.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

This intimate concert captures neo-folk singer Suzanne Vega live at the Rome Auditorium in 2003 (the same year that A&M released *Retrospective: The Best of Suzanne Vega*). While the two-story venue is large, Vega's calm, spare performance makes it feel more like a nightclub or coffee shop. To her 13-song set, Vega adds four poems, performing the latter a capella and the former with her own acoustic guitar, backed on bass by Michael Visceglia. Italian singer-songwriter Valerio Piccolo translates the poems, including "Italy in Spring" and "Anti-Hero," which are consistent with the imagistic lyrics found in songs such as "Small Blue Thing" and "Marlene on the Wall." Vega also performs the spoken-word torch song "Tom's Diner," to which the audience adds whistles and hand claps. Regarding the readings, Vega explains to the audience that she has previously gone on poetry tours through Italy and Spain, and there is actually little distinction between her conversational singing style and her soft, yet steady speaking voice. *Solitude Standing* offers a fine introduction to (or refresher course on) Vega, who here performs all of her best-known songs, including "Luka." Extras include a black-and-white slideshow that plays over a "Tom's Diner" remix, and an interview with Piccolo and Vega, who admits that, "the stage, for me, is like someone who is afraid of heights deciding to become a parachute jumper." Presented in stereo on DVD, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)



### Turandot ★★★

(2013) 125 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

This 2013 production of Puccini's final opera from the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden is presented with the standard version of the score (completed by Franco Alfano), but is actually a revival of Andrei Serban's utterly traditional 1984 staging—newly directed here with little imagination by Andrew Sinclair. The sets and costumes remain impressive, but musically this is somewhat uneven. Lise Lindstrom possesses exactly the right sort of powerful and clear soprano voice to personify the cruel Chinese princess who uses riddles to condemn her suitors to death—and she masterfully conveys her character's steely resolve. Unfortunately, she's



paired with beefy Marco Berti, whose performance as Calaf—the man who eventually outwits Turandot and earns her love—hasn't improved much since his appearance in the Valencia production (VL-3/10). His tenor has the proper timbre but sounds oddly strained, and his acting is virtually nonexistent. The supporting cast is excellent (with Eri Nakamura a lovely, fragile Liù), and Henrik Nánási conducts smartly. If only it boasted a better Calaf, this would have been a stronger contender in a curiously weak field. Presented in DTS 5.1 and LPCM stereo on DVD and Blu-ray, extras include a brief introduction to the opera, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and a cast gallery. As good a performance as most that are currently available, this is recommended, overall. (F. Swietek)

### The Who—Sensation: The Story of Tommy

★★★1/2

(2013) 113 min. DVD: \$14.98, Blu-ray: \$19.98. Eagle Vision (avail. from most distributors). 113 min.



Whether or not The Who's groundbreaking 1969 tri-fold double-LP was the first rock opera is debatable, but there's no doubt that *Tommy* instantly propelled the band to a new level of influence while sealing their legacy as rock pioneers. In this extended edition of a 2013 BBC TV documentary directed by Martin R. Smith, guitarist Pete Townshend and lead singer Roger Daltrey dig deep into their memory banks to tell the tale of their younger selves (accompanied by archival clips of the late other members—drummer Keith Moon and bassist John Entwistle). Townshend was tired of writing singles that he felt were underappreciated and wanted to steer the foursome toward a vanguard of progressive pop that blended his talent and intensely personal creative need. He poured multiple threads of his own life's journey into a compelling narrative suite about a "deaf, dumb, and blind kid" whose anguished existence is upended when he becomes a cult messiah. The exhaustive backstory presented here—including arcana about Townshend's tortured past and lots of insider info regarding the concept, composition, production, and impact of *Tommy*—is supplemented by talking-head remembrances from music critics and figures from The Who's inner circle, along with tantalizingly brief performance clips from their early career. These electrifying onstage moments make all the talk bearable but also leave one craving more of the real thing. Extras include footage from a 1969 *Beat Club* German TV episode (with studio performances and an interview with Townshend). 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 likely to appeal to only the most dedicated of Who fans. Optional. (T. Fry)

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

**Ambrose Video Publishing**  
145 W. 45th St., Ste. 1115  
New York, NY 10036  
Tel: (800) 526-4663  
Web: ambrosevideo.com

**Bennett-Watt HD Productions**  
13021 244th Ave. SE  
Issaquah, WA 98027  
Tel: (800) 327-2893  
Web: bennett-watt.com

**Bullfrog Films**  
P.O. Box 149  
Oley, PA 19547  
Tel: (800) 543-3764  
Web: bullfrogfilms.com

**Choices, Inc.**  
369 S. Doheny Dr. PMB 1105  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211  
Tel: (888) 570-5400  
Web: choicesvideo.net

**The Cinema Guild**  
115 W. 30th St., Ste. 800  
New York, NY 10001  
Tel: (800) 723-5522  
Web: cinemaguild.com

**Collective Eye**  
2305 SE Yamhill St.  
Portland, OR 97214  
Tel: (503) 232-5345  
Web: collectiveeye.org

**Dreamscape Media**  
6940 Hall St.  
Holland, OH 43528  
Tel: (877) 983-7326  
Web: dreamscapeab.com

**Entertainment One**  
22 Harbor Park Dr.  
Port Washington, NY 11050  
Tel: (516) 484-1000  
Web: us.eonefilms.com

**Film Ideas**  
308 N. Wolf Rd.  
Wheeling, IL 60090  
Tel: (800) 475-3456  
Web: filmideas.com

**Film Movement**  
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# Title Index

3 Days to Kill .....	18
7 Boxes .....	18
12 O'Clock Boys .....	18
1964 .....	62
Address, The .....	52
Adventure Time: Complete Third Season .....	44
After Tiller .....	18
Afterlife .....	40
Afternoon of a Faun .....	65
Agony and the Ecstasy, The .....	33
Alice .....	33
Amazing Catfish, The .....	18
Amazing Science! Volume 1 .....	53
Amish: Shunned .....	47
Andy Griffith Show: Season 1 .....	40
Approved for Adoption .....	48
Arctic Hip Hop .....	48
As High as the Sky .....	19
Atanasoff: Father of the Computer .....	58
Bastards .....	19
Bayou Blue .....	19
Being Ginger .....	20
Bella Sara: Emma's Wings .....	44
Best Offer, The .....	20
Betsy's Kindergarten Adventures: Vol. 3 .....	44
Beyond the Music .....	54
Bicycling With Molière .....	20
Black Jack .....	34
Bletchley Circle: Season 2 .....	40
Bob Newhart Show: Complete Series .....	40
Boris Godunov .....	70
Breaking Through .....	20
Brian May & Kerry Ellis .....	70
Broadchurch: Complete First Season .....	40
Brownian Movement .....	20
Burn .....	48
Bushido Man: Seven Deadly Battles .....	21
Call Me Crazy: A Five Film .....	21
Calloused Hands .....	21
Campaign of Hate: Russia and Gay Propaganda .....	48
Carol Dickman's Bed Top Movement .....	54
Chaplin .....	70
Chasing Sarasota .....	59
Chasing Shackleton .....	61
Children of Military Families .....	56
Child's Pose .....	21
Clouette .....	44
Color of Lies, The .....	34
Confession of Murder .....	21
Coppélia .....	70
Cuban Fury .....	22

Curse of the Gothic Symphony, The .....	70
Dare to Cook: Seafood Basics .....	56
Dave Clark Five and Beyond .....	71
David Brainerd .....	47
Dean Martin Celebrity Roasts .....	41
Death in St. Augustine, A .....	52
Devil's Knot .....	22
Discoveries...America National Parks: Mount Rainier & Mount St. Helens .....	64
Divergent .....	22
Dom Hemingway .....	22
Don Quixote .....	71
Don't Ask Me Questions .....	22
Dragon City .....	22
Dragons Love Tacos .....	46
Earth Water Woman .....	49
Earthflight .....	53
Eastbound & Down: Fourth & Final Season .....	41
Ebiten: Complete Collection .....	68
Ethics of Fracking, The .....	49
Eureka Seven: Part One .....	68
Everyday .....	24
Falling Skies: Complete Third Season .....	41
Familiar of Zero: Complete Collection .....	68
Fiery Angel, The .....	71
First Comes Love .....	56
Fists of Pride (Les Poings de la Fierté) .....	49
Forget Me Not .....	54
Four Horsemen .....	49
Francis: The Pope from the New World .....	66
Frankie & Alice .....	24
Free the Mind .....	46
Freshman, The .....	34
From the New World, Collection 1 .....	68
Gatchaman: Complete Collection .....	68
Generation Iron .....	24
Ghosts of the River: Out of the Shadows .....	59
Gideon's Army .....	52
God Loves Uganda .....	3
God's Not Dead .....	24
Godzilla: Tokyo S.O.S. / Godzilla: Final Wars .....	34
Goodbye Tibet .....	49
Grading the Teachers .....	51
Grand Budapest Hotel, The .....	24
Grand Piano .....	25
Great African American Authors .....	59
Great Expectations .....	25
Gringo Trails .....	64
Growing Cities .....	57
Gut Renovation .....	50
Harold's Going Stiff .....	25
Harry Dean Stanton: Partly Fiction .....	25
Hawking .....	65
Heaven Is for Real .....	25
Hidden Art of Islam, The .....	60
Hidden Pictures .....	47
Hide and Seek .....	26
History of Dance on Screen, A .....	71
Hollywood's Greatest Directors .....	60
Home of the Brave .....	34
Hooping Life, The .....	59
Hooray for Amanda & Her Alligator .....	44
Hot Guys with Guns .....	26
How Am I Going to Pay for College? .....	51
I Love Lucy: Ultimate Season 1 .....	41
I Will Be Murdered .....	62
Il Sorpasso .....	36
In Search of Josephine .....	65
In the Name Of .....	26
IT Networks .....	58
Jesus: The Desire of Ages .....	47
Jewish Cardinal, The .....	26
Jock Troup & the Fishermen's Revival .....	48
Jodorowsky's Dune .....	26
Joe .....	27
Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons .....	27
Juliet & Romeo .....	72
Karama Has No Walls .....	62
Korean Wedding Chest, The .....	56
La Camioneta .....	50
Le Week-End .....	27
Lego Movie, The .....	28
Life According to Sam .....	54
Like Someone in Love .....	28
LinkedIn for Networking and Job Search .....	58
Locke .....	28
Lone Survivor .....	28
Lost Rivers .....	53

Lost Town .....	62
Madama Butterfly .....	72
Maria Holc Alive: Complete Collection .....	69
Mayberry R.F.D.: Complete First Season .....	41
Men in War .....	36
Menstrual Man .....	50
Mercedes Sosa: The Voice of Latin America .....	66
Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries: Series 2 .....	42
Mr. Magoo: The Theatrical Collection 1949-1959 .....	36
Mr. Selfridge: Season 2 .....	42
Muppets Most Wanted .....	28
Murder on the Home Front .....	42
New World .....	29
Noah .....	29
Norma Rae .....	36
Off the Rez .....	59
Omar .....	30
Orange Is the New Black: Season One .....	42
Oversimplification of Her Beauty .....	30
Parenting Principles .....	56
Parents of the Revolution .....	51
PAW Patrol .....	46
Pawnbroker, The .....	37
People vs. Paul Crump, The .....	37
Performance .....	67
Persona .....	67
Peter Simon's Through the Lens .....	66
Poisoner's Handbook: Killer Chemistry .....	52
Poppy Cat: Birthday Treasure .....	46
Porgy and Bess .....	72
Psycho-Pass: Season One, Part One .....	69
Punk in Africa .....	72
Quiet Ones, The .....	30
Radio Wars .....	58
Raid 2, The .....	30
Ranma 1/2, Set 1 .....	69
Ray Donovan: Season One .....	42
Red River .....	67
Reportero .....	63
Revealing Mr. Maugham .....	66
Riot in Cell Block 11 .....	38
Rise and Fall of the Clash .....	72
Rocket, The .....	30
Rodgers & Hammerstein Collection .....	38
Ron Hazelton's House Calls, Episodes 1 & 2 .....	57
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary .....	69
Salome .....	73
Sand Wars .....	54
Say I Love You: Complete Collection .....	69
Secret Pizza Party .....	46
Secret Policeman's Ball—USA .....	60
Selfish Giant, The .....	32
Separate But Equal .....	43
Small Time .....	32
Sorcerer .....	38
Spider, The .....	43
Spies of Mississippi .....	63
Stalingrad .....	32
Story of Medicine: Pain, Pus & Poison .....	55
Story of the Jews, The .....	64
Strange Woman, The .....	38
Suzanne Vega Live: Solitude Standing .....	73
Tanta Agua .....	32
These Birds Walk .....	32
Think Before You Drink .....	55
Tim's Vermeer .....	32
Tiny: A Story About Living Small .....	57
To Catch a Trader .....	58
To Chris Marker: An Unsent Letter .....	67
Torture: Made In USA .....	50
Trouble Every Day .....	39
True Blood: Complete Sixth Season .....	43
True Detective .....	43
Turandot .....	73
Unacceptable Levels .....	51
Under the Freedom Tree .....	46
Under the Skin .....	33
Vinylmania .....	60
What's In a Name? .....	33
Where Should the Birds Fly? .....	63
Who—Sensation: Story of Tommy .....	73
Who Is Dayani Cristal? .....	51
Worlds Together: Ecuador .....	46
You're Looking at Me Like I Live Here and I Don't .....	55
Young at Heart .....	39
Yurumein (Homeland) .....	64
Zero Charisma .....	33

## Advertiser Directory

Action! Library Media Service .....	65
Against the Grain .....	8
Alexander Street Press .....	9
Apogee Communications Group .....	53
Baker & Taylor Entertainment .....	2
BayView Entertainment .....	55
Bennett-Watt HD Productions .....	65
Criterion .....	77
Dark Hollow Films .....	57
Disinformation/TDC .....	4
Dreamscape .....	45
Entertainment One .....	15, 19
Film Movement .....	79
Films Media Group .....	61
First Run Features .....	7
Janson Media .....	13
Kino Lorber Education .....	35
KJ Releasing .....	29
Learning ZoneXpress .....	53
Master Communications, Inc. .....	6
Midwest Tape .....	80
Music Box Films .....	75
MVD Entertainment .....	27
Oscilloscope Pictures .....	31
Passion River Films .....	11
Strand Releasing .....	23
TM Books & Video .....	63
TMG Creative .....	39
True Mind/TDC .....	5
Vision Video .....	17





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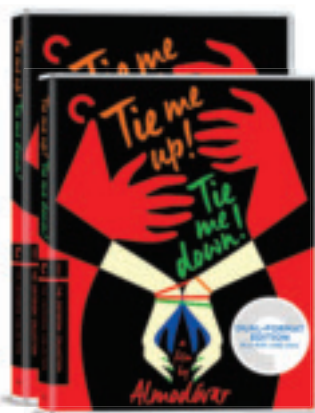
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